

*The Art of
Brazilian
Cooking*

The Art of
Brazilian
Cooking

By Sandra Cuza
Photography by Mauro Holanda



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRETNA 2012

Copyright © 2012
By Sandra Cuza
All rights reserved

*The word "Pelican" and the depiction of a pelican
are trademarks of Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.,
and are registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cuza, Sandra.

The art of Brazilian cooking / by Sandra Cuza ; photography by Mauro Holanda.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-4556-1645-9 (hardcover : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-1-4556-1646-6
(e-book) 1. Cooking, Brazilian. I. Title.

TX716.B6C89 2012

641.59'2698--dc23

2012008174

Food styling by Tereza Galante



Printed in China

Published by Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.

1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana 70053

This book is for my husband, Luis. Without his skill and expertise with the computer, his encouragement, his willingness to sample every recipe, and his companionship at the feira and in the kitchen, this book could not have been written and my sense of humor would have been lost.



Contents

Acknowledgments	9
Introduction	11
Chapter 1: Onions, Garlic, Rice, and Beans	19
Chapter 2: Seafood	41
Chapter 3: Fruit	77
Chapter 4: Chicken and Other Fowl	113
Chapter 5: Vegetables	129
Chapter 6: Coco/Coconut	151
Chapter 7: Bananas	165
Chapter 8: Meat	175
Chapter 9: Desserts	199
Chapter 10: Miscellaneous	215
Glossary	237
Sources of Brazilian Food Ingredients and Products	241
Index	245

Acknowledgments

Special thanks go to Deborah Riveros for suggesting this book and contributing so many recipes and to Adeline Remy for her recipes and her research into the culinary history of Brazil, including the origin and background of the fruits grown here.

I am grateful to the many friends who have sampled the recipe tests and have given their honest evaluations and to those who have provided guidance over the years in mastering this cuisine and have contributed recipes that have been incorporated into my collection. I am indebted to those that have provided recipes specifically for this book, especially Dulce Muniz; Vanda Pereira de Souza; Lenina Pomeranz; Laura de Borba; Jean Boyd; Maria de Fatima Honorato; Chef Claudia Anailde; Jean Smith; Susie Lund; Chef Fernando Ricardo Couto and his wife, Christina, owners of Confraria do Sabor restaurant; Dona Teta; Dona Anita; and Marlice Bach. I also wish to thank Chef Quintin Geenen de Saint Maur and his publisher, A&A Comunicação Ltda., for allowing me to include two recipes from his book *Muito Prazer, Brasil*.

Thanks also to my agent, Al Longden, for his unfailing help and support, and to my editors, Nina Kooij and Heather Green.

I feel extremely lucky to have been able to work with food photographer Mauro Holanda, whose enthusiasm for this project was equaled only by his enormous skill and creativity, and with food designer Tereza Galante, who deserves a special bow for her artistry in this field. Thanks also to the photographer's assistant, Jennifer Besse.

Both Tereza and I thank the following São Paulo establishments: Amoa Konoya Arte Indígena, M. Dragonetti, Roberto Simões Casa, Roupas de Mesa, and Stella Ferraz Cerâmica.

Introduction

For decades, exotic Brazil has been the consummate ideal for beaches, dental floss bikinis, samba music, and beautiful women but very little else about the country ever drew the attention of the United States public. Only recently, when former president Lula led the country to a position of worldwide importance, both diplomatically and economically, was awareness and curiosity aroused. After the announcement that Brazil would host both the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games, there was a surge of enthusiasm concerning all aspects of Brazil. Bossa nova and samba music were revived, and a rash of carnivals sprang up across America. Portuguese newspapers and on-line publications flourished while increasing numbers of universities and language schools offered opportunities for exchange students and courses in Portuguese.

Not surprisingly, cuisine generated the keenest interest. Although small Brazilian cafés had existed for many years in Brazilian- and Portuguese-immigrant enclaves, the arrival of the upscale restaurant Fogo de Chão in the United States ushered in a wave of high-quality Brazilian restaurants. Specialty shops began to carry Brazilian foodstuffs, and an enterprising butcher in Pennsylvania devoted one day a month to slaughtering a cow in order to provide the cuts of meat favored by Brazilians. Meanwhile, adventurous gourmet cooks searched for recipes. But what exactly is Brazilian cuisine?

Modern Brazilian fare is rooted in a combination of Portuguese and African cookery and, to a much lesser extent, that of the indigenous Indians. Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral landed in Bahia in 1500, beginning the influx of Portuguese immigrants, followed by the first slave ship in 1538. Since slavery was not abolished until 1888 and 3.5 million Africans (six times the number brought to the U.S.) survived the Atlantic crossing, virtually every white Brazilian from Rio de Janeiro to Salvador owned at least one slave for the better part of three hundred years, and these slaves controlled the kitchens. Finding many familiar comestibles in their new environment—palm oil, coconut, bananas, nuts, peppers, and fish—African cooks used their traditional cooking methods, ingredients,

and techniques and combined them with the food of their masters, including *bacalhau*, or salt cod. Gradually indigenous foods and new cooking skills learned from the Indians were incorporated into their repertoire. Because relatively few Portuguese women had immigrated to Brazil, liaisons and occasional intermarriage between female slaves and masters was tolerated, and these unions firmly established the Portuguese/African diet. *Feijoada*, the national dish, which is religiously served for Wednesday and Saturday lunch throughout Brazil accompanied by ground, toasted manioc meal called *farofa*, comes directly from slave kitchens; the ultrasweet desserts made with eggs and sugar have their origins in Portugal.

When, in 1763, the capital of the colony moved from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro, the cuisine moved with it, remaining unchanged throughout the rule of Portuguese king João VI in the 1800s. Not until the arrival of the Japanese in 1908 as contract laborers on the São Paulo coffee plantations did the Brazilian diet—short on fruits, in a country where they were to be found in abundance, and vegetables in any form—alter radically. Within thirty years, thousands of Japanese had arrived, managed to purchase small farms, and were growing almost half of all fresh produce in the state, which they introduced to an urban São Paulo population that was just awakening to the delights of more sophisticated, less parochial cuisine. In the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, Brazil welcomed Italian, Polish, and German immigrants to the south where they left an indelible mark on the food of that area.

Today, traditional fare still prevails in the smaller cities and rural areas of every state, particularly the Amazon, which is separated from the rest of the country by vast jungles and a network of rivers. Only local ingredients found in that region and nowhere else in Brazil are used in food preparation. Migrants to the city of São Paulo, however, brought their culinary arts with them. In this metropolis of 22 million people, distinctive regional culinary arts lost their edge, mixed and blended, and were transformed into the sophisticated dishes of São Paulo that have become known as Brazilian cuisine.

The Art of Brazilian Cooking introduces this cuisine, including traditional dishes, to the reader through São Paulo's *feiras*, the time-honored street markets that are an integral part of the country's culture. Both Brazilian *feiras* and the farmers' markets of America are held outdoors and sell from stalls. However, in São Paulo, the sellers are no longer farmers who bring their crops to the marketplace but are professional vendors who have specialized in one type of foodstuff, are licensed by the city, and work in a

different feiras every day of the week but Monday. These are not random moves; sellers are assigned specific locations in each of the markets and may not move from one designated spot to another or change feiras without the city's permission, although they may sell their stall, if they wish. Highly organized, present-day feiras are a continuum of pre-supermarket days when the city was smaller and the farmers were also the sellers, offering produce that was only available in the open-air market. Despite the crush and noise of an enormous city, the flavor of old-time markets has been preserved in the feiras of São Paulo.

Feiras vary considerably in size, variety of produce offered, and price. The street market featured in this book is fairly small—two blocks long—but many others are much larger, and at least two take place in football stadiums. The economic level of each neighborhood, rather than the size of the feira, determines both the foodstuffs sold and the prices asked. In the upscale Jardims district, for example, it is not difficult to find asparagus, baby lettuce, romaine, endive, French green beans, out-of-season strawberries, and imported cherries at the feira, all commanding high prices. Conversely, foodstuffs in a poor area would be restricted to carrots, cabbage, papaya, and other low-cost comestibles. The focus of *The Art of Brazilian Cooking* is a feira located in a mixed, downtown area that is the center of São Paulo's experimental theaters and, therefore, caters to a wide variety of tastes and pocketbooks. Although an extensive selection of food is offered at fair prices, exotic imported fruits and vegetables are missing.

In the state of São Paulo, the breadbasket of the country, huge trucks from the interior haul produce, dairy products, and poultry to either CEAGESP, the enormous wholesale market in the city of São Paulo, where ten thousand tons of food plus flowers are sold daily, or to a similarly large market located in nearby Serra do Cantareira. Fish are trucked from the coast around 3:00 A.M., and feira vendors converge on these markets to buy fresh food to sell that day. By 5:30 A.M., these vendors have left the wholesale markets and are setting up their stalls all over the city, arranging pieces of fruit and vegetables, mountains of eggs, and rows of fish in attractive, artistic displays. Customers, almost always residents of the surrounding area, begin to arrive at 7:00 A.M., dragging the wire, wheeled shopping carts that will soon be stuffed and overflowing. A little later, young boys appear, offering their services as *carregadores*, or porters, to carry purchases or pull the increasingly heavy carts, accompanying their temporary employer through the feira and then on to the patron's home.

From poor families, these boys will earn one or two reais (between \$0.60 and \$1.20 U.S.) per customer.

By 10:00 A.M., the feira is packed with buyers and noisy with the competing shouts of vendors as they broadcast their prices and wares. Oddly, although the feiras teem with strangers, they are some of the safest places in the city; in crime-prone São Paulo, theft in the street markets rarely happens. As early afternoon approaches, vendors' cries become more desperate, prices drop, and the bargain hunters move in along with street dwellers who wait to collect any discarded, unsold food. At 2:00 P.M., closing time is mandated so that city workers may clean up the premises before rush hour. Although there are exceptions, most of these street markets are two to three blocks long and held in city thoroughfares that are closed to traffic on feira days. Regardless of the weather, stalls are set up on both sides of the street in an arrangement that obstructs both traffic and the driveways of homes and businesses. Since feiras are a traditional part of the Brazilian culture, those affected take it in stride, uncomplainingly using alternative transportation routes and methods.

Who shops at the feira? Just about everyone. The arrival of supermarkets did not diminish the popularity of these markets, where the best prices and freshest foods were and are to be found, along with the expertise of vendors to advise and help in the selection of any product they sell. In past times, patrons depended on the feira not just for food but for socialization; this was where friends met, gossiped, and exchanged news before finally making purchases, always from the same vendors.

Prior to the 1970s, women in the upper and relatively small middle classes did not cook; this domestic chore was entrusted to hired help who shopped for the food they would then prepare in small, dark, badly equipped kitchens that were, no doubt, holdovers from slave days. Around the mid-1970s, the situation changed when a very upscale company that designed and sold efficient and beautiful kitchens arrived in São Paulo, and it became fashionable to include this room in the overall design of the home or apartment. Her interest piqued by a spacious and well-planned kitchen that was often the envy of her friends, the *dona da casa*, or lady of the house, gradually involved herself in the preparation of family and guest meals.

Today, feira shoppers are Brazilians of all classes who do not depend on the street market for social life and conversation but prefer the fresher foodstuffs of the feira to those of the supermarkets. Most feiras have a number of stalls selling the same type of produce, but shoppers invariably patronize the same vendors week after week because they like the selection of food carried by

their chosen vendor and are confident that he or she will never cheat them on either price or quality. And although many of these male and female feira workers have little formal education, they invariably remember the likes and dislikes of their regular customers in each feira of the week, easily recall what every patron purchased last week, and counsel on items that are particularly outstanding or not really up to par.

Written by an American woman who has lived since the 1990s in São Paulo preparing the food of the country, *The Art of Brazilian Cooking* is a guide for those who want to recreate Brazilian cuisine in their own kitchens with ease and confidence. Throughout the book, authentic Brazilian recipes using ingredients available in the United States are offered, together with interesting histories and folk beliefs connected to the various foodstuffs.

*The Art of
Brazilian
Cooking*