

# The role of Traditional Female cook's and Tourist in the Markets of Bogotá

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**Abstract:** What is the role of female traditional cooks as carriers of culinary knowledge for tourism development in some of the food markets in Bogotá? This research analyses the role of the female cook as a carrier of culinary knowledge, determines contributions to gastronomic heritage that allows tourism development and generates resources for tourism use around local gastronomic heritage. Thus, interviews to traditional female cooks were conducted face to face in order to analyse the knowledge they have about Colombian Cuisine, and where they obtain this knowledge from, as well as their perception on gender division of labour on their kitchens. About methodology, a qualitative approach was used, from the action-participation research method with a process that allows a collective learning of their reality. As a result, traditional cooks are bearers of intangible cultural heritage and are representatives of Colombian cultural identity; most of their culinary knowledge has been obtained in empirical processes due to family tradition or work experience. In conclusion, their role is to keep the recipes intact and teach them to other generations to maintain cultural heritage as living heritage in the gastronomic tourism chain.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Living Heritage, Gender Roles, Culinary

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## 1. Introduction

Historically, the role of the cook for men and women are understood as different concepts, as Sánchez-Valdés et al. (2020) states, women are referring to as cooks and men as chefs, although women keep working hard to get some recognition, men get more attention and more credit as chefs in the restaurant industry. In addition, the concept of cook falls below the hierarchy of the chef in a kitchen brigade. As established by Herkes and Redden (2017), professional cooking is a man's activity and home cooking is a woman's activity linked to domestic work.

The gastronomic sector has long been a sector with a larger participation of men, but in recent years the industry recognition associations, such as Michelin guide with their Michelin Stars, which are used to rate food and service from all over the world and The World's Fifty Best Restaurants list by William Reed enterprise, which is a list made by more than a thousand experts that provides the best culinary experiences for gastronomic tourism, have worked to give greater visibility to the work of women as chefs. For instance, The World's Fifty Best Restaurants recently named the Colombian chef Leonor Espinoza as the best female chef ("The World's 50 Best Restaurants | The List and Awards", 2022). Castilla and Vernot (2017), on their research on gender and identities on Colombian kitchens, establish that one of the reasons women do not make it to these lists is that the knowledge learned as a woman, such as domestic practical knowledge from activities like cooking, is not yet recognized as it should, and emphasize that there may be other factors related such as class and race. As a money driven industry, money could be added as another factor.

The Preliminary findings of the Global Report on Women in Tourism, presented on 2011 by the World Tourism Organization, have acknowledged the lack of recognition towards inequality in the distribution of benefits between men and women in the tourism sector, it also states that discrimination and gender stereotypes keep women doing kitchen, cleaning and hospitality jobs (UNWTO and UN Women, 2011). In the second edition of the Global report on Women in Tourism, it is concluded that women are more than half of the workforce and do not achieve sufficient leadership and management positions (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

In Colombia, according to the National Planning Department (DANE), entity in charge of national statistics, in its report on Participation of Women on the Labour Market, there is an unequal distribution of work between men and women, with the total daily workload of women being 2 hours and 10 minutes higher, in addition, most of the hours worked are unpaid, restricting their economic autonomy (DANE, 2020). In terms of salary, the pay gap has decreased, but a difference on the income of women remains 12% less than men.

In Mexico, the figure of the female traditional cook has been used as a national emblem and this figure has been used by hosting touristic events, such as *Encuentro de Cocineras Tradicionales* - Convention of Traditional (female) Cooks as Reyes-May et al. (2017) and Matta (2019) mention, to highlight the work of these female cooks, who are bearers of gastronomic heritage. In Colombia, very few projects that propel female cooks as living heritage and as a representation of cultural heritage, one of them is a project on female cooks from in Popayan markets on the south region, Gálvez-Abadía (2013). Although, significant steps are being taken on the pacific coast (south) of Colombia, as Ruíz-Chanchi and Blandón-Caicedo (2020), Galak and Escobar (2019) and Escobar-Rivera, J. C. (2015) research traditional female cooks as study subjects there are no studies found from other regions of Colombia.

This research takes place on *plazas* from Bogotá, as Stadel and del-Alba-Moya (1988) refer to, *plazas* are market locations where periodic markets show up, these markets or *plazas* are locations where social intersections occur, rural and urban merge as economic, cultural relations and transactions happen. In this case, the *plazas* chosen for this study are daily markets in these locations, where agricultural produce is kept and sold; prepared food, cultural artefacts, flowers and herbs are traded.

This paper aims to highlight the role of women as traditional cooks, in order to contribute to tourism development of these markets through them, as bearers of knowledge. Consequently, the research is seeking the answer to the question: what is the role of the traditional cook as a bearer of culinary knowledge for tourism development at four markets of Bogotá? Therefore, the traditional cooks of the district markets of Bogotá can be made visible for the dissemination of heritage and the generation of resources for tourist use.

### **1.1 Gastronomic Heritage**

Heritage keeps traditional knowledge and customs of our ancestors, which is transmitted through generations (Baratero et al., 2020). Similarly, the identity of a society refers to its culture and history, which local communities use as a value proposition to enhance the tourist offer (Kravets and De-Cornago, 2008). Especially gastronomy, which has become one of the main attractions as it promotes cultural exchange (Carvache-Franco et al., 2017). With gastronomy you can live a different life experience and obtain a cultural knowledge from it (Mora, 2019). Likewise, this is a trace of identity of the communities that reflects their own elements such as agriculture, products, traditional dishes and customs, the way of eating and serving, which can be attractive to foreigners (Acle-Mena et al., 2020). A consolidated heritage tourism requires a good quality gastronomic offer, an agri-food sector and a public sector involvement, as well as public policies to promote and safeguard the gastronomic and cultural heritage (Aguirregoitia-Martínez and Fernández-Poyatos, 2017). Furthermore, it implies that between culinary and gastronomy there is a solid relationship with rural life and services segment (Baratero et al., 2020).

Therefore, the elements of the territory must be identified, and actions must be generated to save the gastronomic heritage (Skowronek et al., 2019). Therefore, the valorisation of agri-food heritage can play a part on the economic revitalization of the territory, based on the possible articulations from food products, particularly favouring the rural area, where the insertion of new activities is a tool for the generation of complementary income, additional to traditional activities (Thomé-Ortiz et al., 2017). Consequently, it is important to develop sustainable strategies that helps the community improve their lifestyle and promoting tourism that contributes to their local economy (Mora et al., 2019; Mora-Forero and Pérez, 2021). The value of building gastronomic routes must be highlighted, to involve environmental, landscape and cultural aspects, considering the opinions and perceptions of tourists to meet their needs (Castellón-Valdez and Fontecha-Fontecha, 2018). Consequently, public, private and academic institutions will have to guarantee safeguarding, conservation and promotion of traditional cuisine, for which these institutions must respond to specific plans, programs and projects in different fields (Meléndez-Torres and Cañez, 2009). Hence, the main objective of the policy is to value and safeguard the diversity and cultural knowledge, food practices and products of traditional kitchens of Colombia, as fundamental factors of identity, belonging and well-being of its population.

### **1.2 Gastronomic Tourism**

Currently, according to Mora (2019), gastronomy is considered a tourist attraction, due to its relationship with the patrimonial aspects. Likewise, the communities have been interested in developing tourism products related to gastronomy. In fact, according to Oliveira (2011), some travellers carry out gastronomic activities in order to get to know the territory and see it as a tourism experience. Even Acle and Mena (2020) state that for some tourist's gastronomy is their main motivation, because they see the possibility of learning more about the culture

just by trying the traditional dishes of each destination. In addition to this, Saavedra et al. (2021) affirm that it is essential to link the community and sustainability aspects in order to guarantee the success of tourism initiatives. The motivation of the gastronomic tourist shows that, above all, they choose the destination to try new products and traditional dishes (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018). Thus, it is, where the importance of gastronomy as cultural heritage stands out; the influential aspects brought on by the fact that there is a cuisine with its own identity. Similarly, Testa et al. (2019) state that another motivational factor is the social and environmental sustainability of these places, which puts sustainability in a fundamental role in the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

Orgaz-Agüera and López-Guzmán (2015), assure that it is a great opportunity to improve the tourist offer since the historical-cultural potential combined with the local gastronomy is considered. As well as for Carvache-Franco et al. (2017) tourist enjoy the new culinary proposals and consider it as a potential when it comes to visit a destination.

Torres-Oñate (2017) states that some countries use molecular mixology with cocktails that represent the destination, contributing to national and cultural diversity, thus favouring tourist activity. Additionally, Su (2015) affirms that some tourists like to try new food in the places they visit in order to experience a different gastronomic culture, attending festivals that motivate their trip and turn gastronomy into a key factor to offer a destination. For that reason, Ascanio (2009) states that the proposal of activities such as gastronomic routes is significant to increase the number of visitors, since this is considered an important option to expose and know the places where traditional gastronomy unfolds. Martinez et al. (2012) conclude that the type of traveller who appreciates the gastronomy of a place has a tourism is also a promoter and enhancer of sociocultural changes, progressively influencing the construction of daily life in the territories of human populations (Huerta et al., 2022)

### **1.3 Gender roles in the kitchen**

The gender role in the kitchen is marked by the division of paid and unpaid jobs, the latter being exclusive to women, on a recent study on gender gaps in Colombia (ONU Women, DANE and CPEM, 2020) authors mention that the responsibility on feeding the family still falls on women, moreover, unpaid care and domestic work is one of the restrictions women face on getting more hours to work. As Meah and Jackson (2013) reviewed the relationships of men and women with the domestic kitchen has changed, in some households men also take part of cooking, but as a hobby not as a constant activity, however the responsibility of feeding the family keeps falling on women.

Kurnatz et al. (2018) show in their research that it is possible for women to achieve their recognition in professional kitchens, but they must work more than men and having their acceptance is also a key factor. The authors also emphasize that some advantages of women chefs are their patience, organization and teamwork, however, among the disadvantages: being physically weak, the difficulty of adapting to work hours, considering that they are long shifts that require specific cooking times either very early or very late at night. Additionally, they state that the mistreatment, humiliation and in some cases the workplace harassment to which they are exposed is what bothers women chefs the most in professional kitchens.

Matta (2021) highlights the great empowerment that women cooks have had in the gastronomy and cultural heritage sector, but also shows the great pressure that the heritage sector puts on these representatives of traditional cuisine.

Political factors intervene many times and overshadow the aim and efforts of these events such as presenting the gastronomy of indigenous women who want to stand out, to make their cultural patrimony known and valued. Likewise, this author relates to the term of empowerment, in this field of traditional cooks and states that empowerment refers to the ideals of entrepreneurship of these women, who have the idea that only they are responsible for improving their living conditions through these activities. The traditional cooks of the marketplaces are these working women, in charge of disseminating culinary heritage, who work to support their families, but their work and knowledge are not recognized (Sarmiento-Méndez, 2018).

## **2. Methodology**

The purpose of this research was making visible the role of the traditional cook as a woman carrier of culinary knowledge and determining the contributions to the gastronomic heritage in order to develop tourist products around the local gastronomic heritage. The methodological structure used for this research is based on a

qualitative approach and the type of research is descriptive type. The participants of this study were approached at the markets from November 2021 to April 2022 and participation was voluntary. Only touristic markets were chosen for this study; the relationship between markets and the number of participants is shown on Figure 1.

**Table 1:** Number of cooks per market

Markets names	Number of participants
Plaza de Mercado La Perseverancia	6
Plaza de Mercado La Concordia	5
Plaza de Mercado El 12 de Octubre	2
Plaza de Mercado Paloquemao.	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

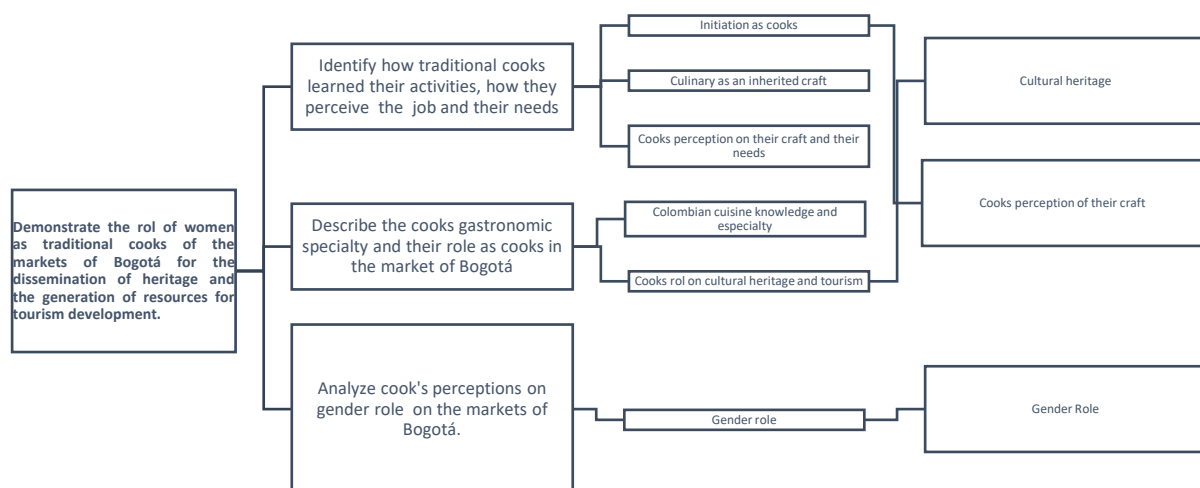
Purposive sampling method was carried out, as it allows an homogenous sampling were participant share similar characteristics in terms of gender, job, culture and life experiences (Etikan et al,2016) this helps to focus on the participants that will do a better contribution to the research’s aim.

Face-to-face interviews were applied to a total of 18 cooks from different restaurants on the markets, interviews were recorded with signed consents from each cook. The interview had 12 open-ended questions, towards three categories: Cultural heritage, cooks perception on their craft and gender role.

As the chosen period still had a restriction on Bogotá because of covid-cases, some restaurants were closed at the visits.

For the analysis of the data collected, multiple triangulation method was used, which is defined as the combination of two or more types of triangulations, such as methodological, theoretical, data and observer triangulation. It is based on using more than one level of analysis (Aguilar-Gavira and Barroso-Osuna, 2015) which allows determining a solution to the existing problem.

Analysis categories for the development of interviews were proposed though research objectives as shown on the following figure (1):



**Figure 1:** Development of categories of study

### 3. Findings and discussion

Findings on this research are presented on the following section in order to analyse the role of women as traditional cooks and as actors on gastronomic and cultural heritage for tourism.

### 3.1 On Culinary knowledge and Cultural heritage

Results of interviews are presented in this section; findings were obtained after an analysis and compilation of qualitative data. The following tables are descriptive data from the interviews.

**Table 2:** initiation as cooks

Categories	Family heritage	Job to meet needs	Empowerment	Technical studies
Answers related to initiation on cooking	Most of the cooks interviewed started cooking as a family tradition, mothers and grandmothers instilled cooking in them at a young age. Families come from cooks background.	Some of the cooks mentioned they became cooks as a need to meet their needs and responsibilities.	Other cooks mention they started their business on the markets with family support.	One of the cooks mentioned she started with courses on basic cooking and has kept an interest in cooking so she started working in this.

As described on table 2, the main starting point on cooking was family heritage, for these cooks is a craft that is inherited, taught to them on their family homes. Participants also highlighted empowerment and the need to work to meet their needs, as a reason to have started working as cooks.

**Table 3:** Perception on their craft

Categories	Answers
Culinary as an inherited craft	Most of the traditional female cooks mention that they learned the skills and recipes from mothers and grandmothers and learned their recipes from the family cradle. And a few of them mentioned they gained their knowledge through time and practice, working in this type of restaurants from a young age. One of the cooks mentions this craft comes with their mindsets as it was "within their souls".
Cooks perception on their craft	Female cooks mention that they like their job, although some started out of obligation, today they have grown fond of the work and carry out their tasks with pleasure, only one of them mentions that it is out of obligation, some of them mention that what they like most is how clients show gratitude towards them, when diners tell them that their dishes are good. One of them mentions that this job is a vocation since one must like it, to continue doing it with pleasure and to teach it to others.
Needs	Several of the cooks mention that one of their needs is to stay up to date, to keep learning and to be able to attend training, as it is a time demanding job. One participant said that they would like to see a greater commitment from restaurant staff, another mentioned that they would like to have more space in the market since it is very small, among other things related to the restaurants. Half say that they do not have any specific needs and one of them does mention having economic needs.

As show on table 3, not all cooks got their culinary knowledge from their family background but also got their knowledge from working, so it is an inherited and empirical craft. Cooks appreciate their jobs and feel gratitude towards it. It is not a very well-paid job for some.

On the following table (4) traditional female cooks explained the different cuisines they represent on their stalls.

**Table 4:** Culinary and cultural Heritage

Categories	Data
Colombian cuisine Knowledge and specialty	Five of the cooks establish that the restaurants where they carry out their work represent the cuisine of the Boyaca region, which is located on the center region. Three of them from the Caribbean Region, 5 of the ladies stated that the restaurants where they work have dishes from different regions, therefore they are traditional Colombian food restaurants but not from a particular region. In relation to the cuisines that they represent and the typical dishes that they prepare and prefer to prepare, one group represents Boyacá and Cundinamarca cuisine, these are two central regions, but only one cook represents traditional Bogotan cuisine. The other half tend to prepare dishes from all regions, without representing any, but they do stand out for a dish that is the one they usually sell the most and their preparation usually receives praise.
Cooks role on cultural heritage and tourism	The cooks feel very good in their role as cooks and state that they are satisfied and happy with their activities at the markets. They said that it is a grateful job since the gratitude of the diners feels very good and they also show gratitude towards the job as that is what they have lived on, and their families have sustained from it.

On table number information about their perception on gender roles in these kitchens is described.

**Table 5:** Findings on gender role

Categories	Data
Gender role	Some of the cooks mention that they see a few differences between male and female cooks. Some of them agree that there is inequality in the tasks assigned and in the amount of work, one of them says that it is more demeaning, the tasks that women must do are more humiliating than those of men, such as cleaning tasks. One of them mentions that she does see differences, but not precisely in the restaurant where she works. One of them, despite answering that she does not see any differences, says that men have taken an important role in the kitchen but there are not many men working in these kitchens, which shows that in these market kitchen's the strongest role is that of the female cook. Fourteen of the participants agree that there are no notable differences in terms of the work of men and women in the kitchen of these markets, they say that there is respect and equality of conditions, they feel that there is good teamwork.

#### **4. Conclusion and suggestions**

It was identified that traditional female cooks learning processes occurred through transfer of knowledge, inherited from the family, some learned empirically, some out of necessity, but all cooks have great passion towards their jobs and are very proud of the work they do. Gratitude towards their job and the gratitude clients show to them, are very important perceptions of their labour as cooks.

Traditional female cooks needs are educational mostly and the needs of some of them, the ones that own the stalls, are mostly towards space and capacity of the markets.

Most of the cooks say that they know how to prepare dishes from different regions. This shows that the culinary profession is varied, which demonstrates the great capacity they must adapt to their role as cooks. Additionally, most of them feel satisfied in their role and it is something very gratifying since they do a job that they like and allows them to have economic support.

Traditional cuisine and restaurants in the markets have a greater representation of women in their kitchens. Most of the female cooks in these kitchens do not feel there is great difference between the work of men and women in their restaurants. However, those who state there is inequality perceive these differences in workload. They assure it is heavier and emphasize on the assignment of tasks, since they are responsible for the cleaning tasks and prior preparation of food. It is important to mention that some participants or their families own their businesses, which shows us that they are empowered women, responsible for improving the conditions of their families through their work and effort in these kitchens.

To conclude female traditional cooks, maintain the cultural heritage of gastronomy through teaching these dishes to future generations, preparing those dishes for tourist of these marketplaces, so that more people get to know the traditional dishes of Bogota and Colombia. It is these female cooks who, with their daily work in these marketplaces, allow the gastronomic heritage to remain alive, teaching their techniques and recipes to the people who come to work with them, whether they are family members, empirical cooks or students; the cooks make it possible for more people to get to know the dishes of this city through these cultural, economic and social scenarios where the tourist knows the entrails of the city. One of the problems they face is the lack of recognition and lack of support from the community, they represent gastronomy as intangible cultural heritage and their work is not given such value, more importantly, they do not recognize the value of their work themselves.

Even though being a cook is, sometimes, an activity out of necessity, it can be concluded that most of them express gratitude for their work and say they do it with pleasure and love for what they do every day. One interesting finding is the perception of gender differences of these cooks in the marketplaces is low, contrary to expected, although they do show some differences such as workload and assignment of tasks, not all of them perceive these. One possible explanation for this is that being the head of the kitchen, the traditional female cook oversees the kitchen, or if it is a family business, or also because of the large number of female cooks who work in the marketplaces compared to a few male cooks.

These results reflect those of Baratero et al. (2020) that women cooks do use their knowledge to enhance the tourist offer of places with the support of other entities. This author agrees with Carvache-Franco et al. (2017)

since they promote cultural exchange through their work. This research coincides with that proposed by Meah and Jackson (2013), where the presentation of the domestic kitchen is feminine and the professional one is masculine, but we found that the figure of the traditional kitchen is more of a domestic kitchen than a professional kitchen.

When contrasting the revised theory, we can observe that, as mentioned by Matta (2021), women as cooks in the marketplaces represent that empowerment and that resilient capacity to get ahead on their own, with their businesses or their jobs in these restaurants. In traditional cuisine, women cooks do not perceive that there is a noticeable gender difference, contrary to what Kurnatz et al. (2018) affirm about professional cooking. However, it is necessary to highlight that the traditional cuisine of the markets is recognized by a greater participation of women than men. Home cooking and professional cooking merge at these Kitchens, through these women as the representation of empowerment, heritage and the service to clients, tourist and market workers who get traditional home cooked meals in these kitchens.

In future investigations on this area of research, other theoretical categories are recommended such as empowerment and entrepreneurship of women in the markets and traditional female cooks as entrepreneurs. Regarding gender role studies, the comparison of the activities carried out by male and female cooks can be reviewed, so that the degrees of difficulty of the tasks can be studied. Subsequently as cultural project, a proposal in which traditional cooks are the teaching bond to traditional Colombian cuisine. It is necessary that the academy sector supports these cultural actors through training processes so that they can also empower themselves in their role as bearers of intangible cultural heritage.

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