

# Revaluating Ancestral Culinary Techniques through Sustainable Use in Contemporary Gastronomy: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** Contemporary gastronomy faces the challenge of maintaining a balance between culinary innovation and the preservation of traditional knowledge that shapes cultural identity. In this context, ancestral culinary techniques have re-emerged as a valuable source of knowledge for developing sustainable gastronomic models that integrate ecological, cultural, and social dimensions. The purpose of this research is to analyse the reevaluation of ancestral culinary techniques from a sustainability perspective, identifying their contribution to cultural, ecological, and economic innovation in contemporary gastronomy. The applied methodology corresponds to an integrative literature review based on scientific articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, with priority given to studies published in Q1 and Q2 journals. A qualitative interpretative analysis was conducted to identify patterns and trends regarding the incorporation of traditional knowledge into modern culinary innovation processes. The findings reveal that practices such as earth oven cooking, natural fermentation, the use of clay utensils, and the inclusion of wild ingredients have gained prominence in contemporary gastronomy, providing symbolic value, authenticity, and sustainability to culinary experiences. These techniques not only contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage but also promote fairer and more resilient food systems that respect the environment. However, theoretical gaps remain regarding the integration of ancestral knowledge into sustainable gastronomy policies and technological innovation frameworks. This highlights the need to strengthen interdisciplinary research linking culinary tradition, sustainability, and responsible tourism, fostering a dialogue between local knowledge and emerging sustainable development trends. In conclusion, the reevaluation of ancestral culinary techniques constitutes a key strategy for promoting gastronomic innovation and reinforcing cultural identity, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9, which focuses on innovation and sustainability.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Gastronomy, Ancestral Techniques, Cultural Innovation, Sustainability, Integrative Review.

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## 1. Introduction

Over recent decades, gastronomy has witnessed a renewed interest in ancestral culinary techniques, understood as traditional practices transmitted across generations that are now re-emerging as sustainable alternatives to contemporary challenges associated with biodiversity loss, food disconnection, and the socio-environmental impacts of industrial production systems (Nguyen and Tran, 2024; Cordova-Buiza et al., 2024). Techniques such as natural fermentation, solar drying, earth oven cooking, or the responsible use of wild ingredients not only embody expressions of culinary identity but also represent functional bodies of knowledge deeply adapted to local environments. These practices are capable of fostering resilient, ethical, and low-impact food systems, while also enhancing visitor motivation and satisfaction (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2021).

In contrast to the standardisation imposed by the food industry, ancestral methods offer viable alternatives to intensive models that have contributed to ecosystem degradation and the displacement of local communities (Kabacık, 2024; Hassan et al., 2024). From a gastronomic perspective, their incorporation into contemporary kitchens responds not merely to a logic of heritage preservation, but to an active process of innovation in which chefs, producers, and communities collaborate to adapt these practices to new demands without compromising their original essence (Collado, 2025).

Clear examples of this articulation can be observed in identity-based restaurants, rural food-processing cooperatives, and culinary experiences linked to sustainable tourism (García and López, 2024). This phenomenon also generates significant social and economic impacts by contributing to community empowerment, stimulating rural entrepreneurship, and energising local economic circuits. At the same time, it enables the construction of narratives that highlight the origin and cultural meaning of food, fostering a more ethical and conscious relationship with consumption (Montesdeoca-Calderón and Gil-Saura, 2023). Within this context, ancestral techniques hold a dual value, functioning both as living heritage and as strategies for sustainable innovation. Their reevaluation provides technical responses to current challenges through approaches grounded in circularity, efficient resource use, and the preservation of endemic varieties or non-refrigerated preservation methods. This framework aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 9, which

promotes resilient infrastructure, inclusive industrialisation, and responsible innovation (Villacis-Zambrano et al., 2023).

From both theoretical and practical standpoints, this study proposes an integrated perspective that positions ancestral techniques as part of an innovative ecosystem of solutions to contemporary food-related challenges. At a theoretical level, the analysis contributes to a reinterpretation of the concept of innovation by incorporating cultural and territorial dimensions that have traditionally been excluded from mainstream discourse. From a practical perspective, the findings may be valuable to chefs, gastronomic entrepreneurs, policy makers, and communities interested in integrating these forms of knowledge into new dynamics of production, tourism, and ethical trade. In this sense, the active recovery of ancestral culinary techniques does not constitute a nostalgic exercise, but rather a concrete strategy for transforming contemporary gastronomy towards more humane, sustainable, and culturally rooted food systems.

In Latin American countries, whose biocultural diversity is among the richest in the world, culinary techniques inherited from Indigenous peoples have profoundly shaped national food identities. Nevertheless, these practices face significant challenges, including the loss of traditional knowledge, substitution by globalised techniques, and limited systematic documentation (López-Maldonado et al., 2024). In response, recent studies emphasise that the recovery of traditional knowledge must go beyond a nostalgic approach and be articulated with strategies for sustainable territorial development and responsible tourism (de Souza and da Silva, 2024; Avram and Şoaita, 2025). Furthermore, the use of local products and traditional knowledge in gastronomy can act as a mechanism of cultural resistance to the global homogenisation of flavours, strengthening identity, social cohesion, and the economic vitality of rural communities (Chatzidakis and Chronis, 2025; Bakr et al., 2025).

The biocultural approach further enables the articulation of the value of culinary techniques as nodes of intergenerational knowledge, biodiversity, and food justice. In this regard, López-Maldonado et al. (2024) contend that traditional food plants, when embedded within local knowledge systems, contribute to food security and environmental conservation. Barros et al. (2024), in northern Portugal, demonstrate that the transmission of recipes and traditional methods strengthens community cohesion and promotes respect for sustainable production cycles. Similarly, Duarte and Bressan (2024) show that in rural areas of southern Europe, traditional gastronomy acts as a catalyst for the empowerment of local actors, particularly women and small-scale producers. These findings suggest that ancestral techniques are not merely symbolic resources, but active drivers of equity and economic resilience in the regions where they are practised.

Moreover, de Souza and da Silva (2024) emphasise that incorporating traditional “knowledge and flavours” into sustainable territorial development policies can reconnect communities with their roots and foster new forms of cultural citizenship. This holistic vision reinforces the idea that traditional cuisine is not only a legacy of the past, but also a contemporary tool for social transformation. Taken together, these contributions indicate that the integration of ancestral culinary techniques into contemporary gastronomy requires a comprehensive approach that considers ethical, economic, ecological, and symbolic dimensions, reaffirming their potential to generate tangible impacts on communities, the environment, and living culture.

Despite the growing body of literature on sustainable gastronomy and culinary heritage, existing studies tend to approach ancestral culinary techniques either from a cultural preservation perspective or through isolated sustainability frameworks. There remains a notable lack of integrative analyses that examine these techniques simultaneously as cultural heritage, drivers of innovation, and practical tools for sustainable gastronomic systems. This gap is particularly evident within contemporary gastronomy, where traditional knowledge is increasingly reintroduced without sufficient analytical linkage to sustainability policies, innovation processes, and territorial development strategies.

The general objective of this research is to analyse the revaluation of ancestral techniques through their sustainable use in contemporary gastronomy, as well as their practical contribution as tools for cultural and ecological innovation. From this overarching aim derive the specific objectives, which are to assess the viability of ancestral techniques as sustainable practices for modern cuisine; to identify ancestral culinary techniques that have been successfully reintroduced into contemporary gastronomy; to evaluate their social, economic, and environmental impacts; to examine the technical and cultural challenges associated with their integration into gastronomic systems; and to explore their relationship with principles of sustainability and territorial development.

## 2. Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with an exploratory and descriptive scope, employing an integrative literature review that enabled the synthesis and critical analysis of recent studies on ancestral culinary techniques and sustainability within contemporary gastronomy. The literature review method is particularly suitable for examining phenomena of a cultural, social, environmental, and economic nature, as demonstrated by recent research in the field of sustainable gastronomy (Kabacık, 2024).

The information search was carried out exclusively in the Scopus and Web of Science databases, selected for their reliability, academic standards, and broad international coverage. To ensure the relevance and timeliness of the sources, filters were applied to restrict the review to empirical articles published between 2023 and 2025, written in English, and appearing in journals indexed in the Q1 and Q2 quartiles. The selected studies focused on gastronomy, sustainability, cultural heritage, and tourism. In addition, other literature reviews and scholarly books were incorporated to complement the analysis.

The search strategy was structured around four core thematic axes: food sustainability, circular economy, cultural identity, and ancestral techniques. Boolean operators were used to combine key terms, employing search strings such as “ancestral culinary techniques” AND “sustainability”, “traditional gastronomy” AND “cultural heritage”, and “indigenous food knowledge” AND “gastronomic innovation”. The inclusion criteria comprised publication recency, direct relevance to the study objectives, academic credibility through peer review, an interdisciplinary perspective, and theoretical contributions applicable to the Latin American context. Conversely, documents with limited methodological rigour, redundant findings, or those falling outside the defined time frame were excluded.

A critical reading of 22 selected sources was undertaken, allowing the identification of key findings, research gaps, and emerging trends. Studies such as those by Barros et al. (2024) emphasise the role of traditional techniques in cultural preservation and local development. Similarly, Duarte and Bressan (2024) highlight their potential to stimulate rural economies, while de Souza and da Silva (2024) examine their impact on territorial sustainability. These contributions served as key references for strengthening the conceptual framework of the present research. Through this methodological process, a robust theoretical foundation was established, enabling a critical analysis of ancestral culinary techniques as tools for sustainability, cultural innovation, and the evolution of contemporary gastronomic systems. Furthermore, the review process followed a transparent and replicable protocol to ensure methodological rigour and analytical consistency.

## 3. Results and Discussion

To facilitate the analytical organisation of the findings, the results and discussion were structured into thematic categories derived from a qualitative interpretative synthesis of the 22 selected studies. This process involved an iterative reading and comparison of the literature, through which recurring concepts, analytical patterns, and convergent discussions were identified. The grouping of results into thematic sections responded to shared conceptual emphases across the reviewed papers, particularly regarding sustainability conditions, the reintroduction of ancestral techniques, their social, economic and environmental impacts, the challenges associated with their implementation, and their alignment with innovation and sustainable development frameworks. This thematic structuring allowed for an integrated discussion that connects empirical insights with broader theoretical debates in sustainable gastronomy.

### 3.1 Conditions of Viability for Integrating Ancestral Techniques Into Sustainable Systems

The integration of ancestral techniques into sustainable gastronomic systems depends on a combination of ecological, institutional, and sociocultural factors that shape their applicability. From an environmental perspective, Ghosh (2025) highlights that methods such as natural preservation and the use of locally available resources significantly reduce ecological impact and offer adaptive responses to climate change. In a similar vein, Nguyen and Tran (2024) emphasise that these practices contribute to the resilience of supply chains, particularly in territories with limited access to modern technology. Complementarily, Barroetaveña and Pildain (2022) underscore their potential to foster local development models that are respectful of biodiversity.

Within the educational sphere, Franchini et al. (2024) examine how certain gastronomic institutions have begun to incorporate content related to traditional practices into their curricula, thereby promoting their academic recognition and legitimacy. Along these lines, Cordova-Buiza et al. (2025) note that digital strategies on social media platforms have played a key role in the revaluation and dissemination of traditional cuisines,

while Kabacık (2024) highlights the role of gastronomic festivals as spaces for visibility and cultural exchange. From a sociocultural standpoint, García and López (2024) identify these techniques as symbolic expressions that reinforce local identity, and Montesdeoca-Calderón and Gil-Saura (2023) demonstrate their contribution to the empowerment of women entrepreneurs engaged in sustainable cooking practices in rural contexts in Ecuador.

Taken together, these perspectives indicate that the viability of ancestral techniques depends not solely on their practical efficiency, but on their capacity to generate cultural, environmental, and educational value in the construction of a more sustainable gastronomic model. In this sense, the use of ancestral culinary techniques emerges as a viable alternative for promoting more sustainable food systems.

### **3.2 Ancestral Culinary Techniques Reintroduced in Contemporary Gastronomy**

The literature consistently points to a renewed interest in recovering and adapting traditional techniques widely used in pre-industrial culinary systems as a strategy to preserve their original meaning. Among the most frequently highlighted practices are natural fermentation, sun drying, cooking in clay or earth ovens, hot-stone cooking, the use of natural leaves to wrap food, and stone grinding. Beyond preserving nutrients and enhancing flavours, these techniques align closely with contemporary sustainability principles due to their low energy consumption and their grounding in local ecological knowledge. Furthermore, evidence suggests that innovative gastronomy rooted in cultural identity tends to achieve higher levels of consumer acceptance, particularly when associated with values such as ethics, authenticity, and territorial pride (Siddiqui et al., 2023).

Their application has expanded from rural restaurants to signature and fine-dining kitchens seeking differentiation through proposals linked to territorial identity, where these techniques enable the creation of deeper sensory and emotional experiences that strengthen the bond between diners and place. In addition, the use of wild plants and non-domesticated products forms part of this revaluation process, requiring a profound understanding of the environment and the active participation of harvesting communities (Toribio-Tamayo et al., 2024).

Moreover, professional training in gastronomy is no longer centred exclusively on Western or modern techniques, but increasingly incorporates local forms of knowledge with high cultural value. This shift demonstrates that traditional cuisine is not incompatible with modernity, but can actively contribute to contemporary innovation, beginning with the incorporation of ancestral techniques as expressions of authenticity and as means of reconnecting with history and territory (García and López, 2024).

### **3.3 Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts of Ancestral Techniques**

The results indicate that the integration of ancestral techniques generates significant impacts across three key dimensions. At the social level, these practices strengthen cultural identity, preserve intergenerational knowledge, and reinforce a sense of belonging among communities that act as custodians of this heritage, particularly in rural regions where traditional cooking is transmitted orally and serves as a central axis of social cohesion (Zegarra-Alva et al., 2024).

From an economic perspective, their application facilitates the creation of value-added products linked to local identity, which can be incorporated into tourism circuits, niche markets, or short supply chains. This benefits small-scale producers, reduces dependence on imported or highly industrialised products, promotes circular economy dynamics, and strengthens business models grounded in sustainability (Haid et al., 2024).

At the environmental level, the techniques reviewed offer substantial advantages. Practices such as natural drying, chemical-free fermentation, and cooking with locally sourced materials reduce the use of energy, water, and industrial chemicals. They also encourage the sustainable management of native or wild species and help prevent the overexploitation of cultivated resources. Overall, the evidence suggests that ancestral culinary techniques are not merely acts of cultural preservation, but practical responses to contemporary food system challenges. Their application supports ecological sustainability, reinforces social cohesion, and sustains local economies through circular practices and community-based food production. These findings highlight the capacity of traditional techniques to function as scalable and context-sensitive tools for sustainable gastronomic development (Montesdeoca-Calderón and Gil-Saura, 2023).

### 3.4 Technical, Ethical, and Cultural Challenges in Integrating Traditional Techniques

Despite their potential, the incorporation of ancestral techniques faces technical, cultural, and ethical barriers that condition their adoption. From a technical standpoint, the lack of standardisation complicates their application in professional kitchens or industrial contexts, as many of these practices depend on climatic conditions, sensory judgement, or the empirical knowledge of the cook, making uniform replication difficult. At the cultural level, persistent negative perceptions associate these practices with “outdated” or “improvised” forms of cooking, limiting their acceptance in contemporary settings. This is compounded by limited professional training in traditional knowledge, which generates gaps in understanding regarding their proper implementation (Brako, 2024).

From an ethical perspective, cultural appropriation represents one of the most critical challenges. The use of ancestral techniques without recognition of the communities that safeguard them entails a loss of meaning, origin, and collective value. As Orozco and Poonamallee (2014) warn, the absence of legal frameworks protecting ancestral knowledge leaves these practices vulnerable to commercial exploitation that disregards their identity and may lead to their distortion or trivialisation. Nevertheless, the reviewed literature also documents cases in which direct collaboration with communities has enabled the development of responsible gastronomic projects grounded in mutual respect and shared benefits (Zakrzewska et al., 2024).

### 3.5 Connection with SDG 9: Innovation and Sustainable Development

Ancestral culinary techniques align closely with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 9, which seeks to foster innovation, promote resilient infrastructure, and strengthen sustainable productive systems. These practices, based on efficient resource use, decentralised local economies, and low dependence on industrial inputs, represent forms of appropriate innovation for developing rural territories, generating new ways of creating value without compromising sustainability or cultural identity (Chukwurah et al., 2025).

Practices such as sun drying, natural fermentation, and earth-oven cooking enable food production without reliance on electricity, fuel, or chemical inputs, thereby reinforcing the resilience of food systems. At the same time, their application stimulates local economies, encourages rural entrepreneurship, and strengthens ethical trade circuits. As Kabacik (2024) notes, recovering these techniques not only preserves culinary heritage but also constitutes a concrete pathway towards more humane, responsible, and culturally inclusive food models.

From the perspective of sustainable innovation, these techniques also contribute to strengthening a form of cultural infrastructure that complements the productive infrastructure promoted under SDG 9. Their incorporation into responsible gastronomic policies has enhanced culinary creativity, fostering processes of controlled experimentation, the recovery of forgotten practices, and their adaptation within contemporary proposals supported by sustainable and culturally grounded narratives (Shakya and Vagnarelli, 2024).

## 4. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyse the revaluation of ancestral culinary techniques and their sustainable use within contemporary gastronomy, as well as their practical contribution as tools for cultural and ecological innovation. The findings demonstrate that these practices represent not only living cultural heritage, but also relevant alternatives to current challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss, food homogenisation, and the growing disconnection between production and consumption. The literature review identified a range of techniques that have been preserved, adapted, or reintroduced in both rural and urban contexts across different regions of the world, highlighting their continued relevance and applicability within contemporary food systems.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms that ancestral techniques generate positive impacts across social, economic, and environmental dimensions by strengthening cultural identity, stimulating local economies, and promoting culinary practices with low ecological impact. Their integration is also closely linked to processes of sustainable innovation aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 9, as they support resilient productive infrastructures, encourage territorial entrepreneurship, and foster culinary creativity grounded in cultural values. In this regard, the study provides a conceptual foundation for understanding these practices as legitimate forms of innovation capable of transforming food systems in ethical, sustainable, and territorially coherent ways.

Nevertheless, the analysis also revealed several limitations that constrain the full integration of ancestral techniques into contemporary gastronomy. These include the lack of technical standardisation, limited scientific documentation, persistent negative perceptions associated with traditional practices, and the risks of cultural appropriation when such techniques are applied without proper recognition of the communities that safeguard them. These barriers highlight the need to promote legal frameworks, educational programmes, and collaborative processes that ensure the responsible and respectful use of ancestral culinary knowledge.

Finally, further interdisciplinary research is recommended to empirically assess the environmental, nutritional, social, and economic impacts of these techniques, as well as to develop applied case studies across diverse territories. Exploring their incorporation into intercultural public policies, sustainable gastronomic initiatives, and circular economy models would contribute to consolidating a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective.

From an academic standpoint, this study contributes to the existing literature by reframing ancestral culinary techniques as legitimate forms of innovation within sustainable gastronomy, rather than as static or nostalgic practices. By integrating perspectives on cultural heritage, sustainability, and innovation, the research offers a conceptual basis for future empirical studies and policy-oriented discussions, particularly in contexts characterised by rich biocultural diversity.

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## Ethics Declaration

This study is based on secondary data from published academic literature and did not require ethical approval.

## AI Declaration

Artificial intelligence tools were used only to support language editing. The authors are fully responsible for the content of this paper.

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