

Food as chef of a television format: MasterChef Brazil versus MasterChef Colombia

A comida como chef de um formato televisivo: MasterChef Brasil versus MasterChef Colômbia¹

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Abstract: *The main objective of this paper is to understand how a reality show of cookery deals with local phenomena, despite of being a TV format that emphasizes global elements. To do so, the paper analyses MasterChef Brazil and MasterChef Colombia in order to see how their similarities and differences are able to explain the relation between the global and the local in both contexts. The analysis points out three perspectives: the judges' identities, the contestants' geographic and social origins and how these TV shows deal with food. The work considers that food, when mediatically explored, evokes elements related to global culture and, at the same time, with local identities and local media characteristics.*

Keywords: *television format; MasterChef Brazil; MasterChef Colombia; reality TV.*

Resumo: *O objetivo do trabalho é entender como um reality show de comida, a despeito de ser um formato televisivo e, portanto, trabalhar elementos globalizados, lida com questões vinculadas ao contexto onde o programa é produzido e exibido. A proposta é comparar o MasterChef Brasil ao MasterChef Colômbia para compreender de que maneira as similaridades e diferenças explicitam relações entre o global e o local. A análise enfatiza a identidade dos jurados, a origem geográfica e social dos competidores e a maneira como lidam com a alimentação. Como premissa, considera-se que a comida, quando explorada midiaticamente,*

1 A version of this paper was presented at the work group Studies of Television at the 25th Annual Meeting of Compós, at UFG, Goiânia, from June 07th to 10th, 2016.

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evoca elementos vinculados à cultura globalizada e à identidade do local onde se desenvolve.

Palavras-chave: *formato televisivo; MasterChef Brasil; MasterChef Colômbia; reality show.*

Introduction

At a first glance, both shows seem to be the same. On one side, the channel Bandeirantes broadcasts *Masterchef Brazil*, a reality show which has the objective to choose, through an intense gastronomic competition, who would be the chef of the hour. On the other side, RCN Televisión broadcasts *Masterchef Colômbia*, TV show that shares the same objective as its brazilian colleague. Each version uses similar strategies and edition rhythm: Three judges specialized in gastronomy taste the dishes prepared by the competitors, one presenter explains the challenges, the challenges have similar objectives, the edition dramatically explores the moments of expectation, such as choosing the one who would be eliminated. The same dynamic is developed wherever *Masterchef* is being produced: Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, Mexico, Ukraine... Originally developed by BBC, the franchise was already produced in over 40 countries, and every time a channel intends to produce the show, this has to be done in regional grounds, as long as it maintains the characteristics that create unity with the *Masterchef* brand. It is, thus, a television format, a type of content which production logic has as an objective the transnationalization of a model that is potentially developed anywhere (CHALABY, 2015).

What happens is, when analyzed closely, *MasterChef Brazil* and *MasterChef Colombia* are very different from each other. Firstly, since they are produced in different contexts, each show evokes elements that are necessarily linked to each country, which work in perspective with global elements that the format demands to be recognized as such. Secondly, it is essential to have in mind that *MasterChef* turns food into the main character. The food, in turn, does not act only as an instrument through which the competitors are hierarchized; the food is the main element that individualize the *MasterChefs*. The type of cuisine valued in the challenges, the gastronomic identity of the judges, the ingredients offered to the competitors and other elements linked to the food may be perceived as fundamental pieces that “speak” and help clarify phenomena related to each context.

The objective of this paper, however, is to understand in what way a television format linked to food clarify phenomena related to the culture where the show is made and the way it relates with the global phenomena it demands. To do so, the idea is to make an analysis of two of the most popular MasterChefs of Latin America: The Brazilian and the Colombian versions, both broadcasted in 2015. In order to do that, first the paper creates a discussion around food as a tool which translates social phenomena related to the place where it is produced. Later, the role of the contemporary TV formats will be discussed and the relation which mark between local and global. Finally, the idea is to analyze MasterChef Brazil and MasterChef Colombia through three categories: the identity of the judges, the geographic and social origin of the contestants and the value of native food in relation to international cuisine. It is important to emphasize that, instead of performing a mediatic analysis per se, the approach has the intention of analyzing the content of these TV shows and the way their elements relate with wider social aspects, those necessarily linked to the mediatic culture developed in each context and added to different mediatic phenomena perceived in a social perspective.

Food that stratifies

To eat never was a mere physical act. Probably due to the vital function that food carries, it holds an aura that transforms it in important social foundations in different contexts. Lévi-Strauss (2004, p. 1) argues that, behind the way society deals with food, there are “conceptual tools to isolate abstract notions and chain them together in propositions”. The anthropologist emphasizes that: 1) The ways in which food is handled; 2) the expressions used during the manipulation (raw, cooked, rotten, fresh...); and 3) the value of certain foods in relation to others are contextual forms of interpretation of the world that hierarchize specifically social elements. One of the most revealing elements of contemporary societies, in turn, is based on the manners people have on the table, during meals. About this matter, Norbert Elias (2011) reminds us that

natural behavior does not exist, it is rather historically constructed. The author considers that the historical process that settled the behavior based on “good manners” was based on an intense verticalized process that put in prominence the behavior of the Eurocentric elites of the Middle Age and Modernity. These, formed by the aristocracy and later by the bourgeoisie, had in these rituals an important support to differentiate them from the commoners, that did not have access to education or to culinary and table utensils that encouraged specific behaviors related to the act of eating. Good manners, thus, constitute a powerful symbol of social stratification that has the western Europe as an important reference.

The sociology of food has appropriated this observation to explain phenomena related to food in the 20th century. Goody (1982) reminds us, for example, that many foods are historically linked to the elite, even in different societies and historic periods, and that characteristic was consolidated by the junction of social stratification and the offer or lack of certain foods. Meat, for example, in many cases, receive the adjective “noble”, either by being rare or by being more common between the aristocracy. And in this context, from a logic that has its origins in Bourdieu (1996), it is possible to socially hierarchize the types and cuts of meat, in a way that some are related to the elite (lamb meat, for example), while others were historically linked to the poor (guts). Historical processes such as the Industrial Revolution intensified the relation between capitalism and food, especially because the huge importance that technology got in preparations. Tinned and frozen foods and instantaneous seasonings, for example, caused a profound change in the relation between society and food; even so, there is, currently, a diversity of brands and prices that turn certain foods in popular foods while other types of food are usually consumed only by people who can afford it.

Nowadays, the ingestion of food was transformed into a mediatic phenomenon, which intensifies the relation of food with social stratification. If the existence of culinary books dates back to at least the 17th century (BRAGA, 2008), the 20th century watched the proliferation

of journalistic and entertainment programs that have food as the main theme. In journalism, the existence of gastronomy columns has been increasingly common in newspapers, magazines and websites that seem to sell the ideal of “eating well” that still owes much to the aristocratic eurocentrism evidenced by Elias. Furthermore, they act in the choice and preparation of food for many people, as Jennifer Cole (2014) points out, which boosts the role of media as an institution that directs the value of certain preparations over others. In entertainment, the TV shows which talk about food transform the act of cooking in one of the most celebrated practices since 1937, when the “TV chef” Xavier Marcel Boulestin appeared on BBC (OREN, 2013). Right after the Second World War, there were at least two cooking shows in the anglo-saxon context: *Cookery (1946) in the United Kingdom*, and *I Love to Eat (1946-1947)*, in the United States. In Brazil, Ofélia Ramos Anunciato premiered a cooking show in 1958 on TV Tupi and, later on, hosted for 30 years *A Cozinha Maravilhosa de Ofélia* on Bandeirantes (DEMOZZI, 2012). Initially, these shows had as brand a kind of gastronomic ABC’s for the audience, given that they carried highly didactic content which had as objective to teach especially the female audience on how to cook “well”. Nowadays, most TV shows have a different dynamic, based on competitions that are broadcast on TV’s primetime (WEI; MARTIN, 2015), which is the case in cooking reality shows.

Television formats between global and local

The television formats exist, at least, since the 50’s, although the idea was already present in radio since the previous decade (CHALABY, 2012). In the last 20 years, however, television formats have grown in number and complexity, which points for two characteristics that the context holds: 1) its great capability of flexibility and adaptation to different social contexts; and 2) being a product that intends to be international (KEANE; MORAN, 2008).

From the media company’s point of view, formats are one of the most strategic television contents, considering they are models that gather

basic rules and that, after they are licensed, can be globally produced. With that, they supply for at least two geographically different markets: Companies specialized in the creation and sale of these formats and those who acquire them and become responsible for their production and/or exhibition. In a first moment, this model developed shows with low cost and easy production, such as game shows, which encouraged its expansion in channels throughout the world (CHALABY, 2012, 2015). Between 1980-1990, formats benefit from a bigger transnationalization of mediatic content and the privatization of a large number of channels, which allowed them not only to have a bigger participation on the television schedule, but, mainly, to begin working with new content, which expanded their schedule and their potentially attainable audience.

At a first glance, the popularization of formats seems to boost the pasteurization of content and the erasure of local television characteristics. What happens is, as Waisbord (2004) points out, formats encourage a bigger economic integration and present in their content many characteristics from the place where they are produced. A format only makes sense if it enables, with a nice dosage of flexibility, that the producers bring some kind of local identity, even to raise audience ratings to the show. From this point of view, formats develop hybrid content that comprise a complex mixture of global and local characteristics. Furthermore, if, on one hand, big format exporters, usually coming from the mainstream media, benefit from a bigger demand for this content, on the other, it is increasingly higher the number of independent producers that have been specializing in creating and selling formats in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and in the East Europe region.

The relationship between local and global in the context of formats is particularly visible on reality shows, "a global phenomenon that has the capability of overcoming cultural barriers and selling for different markets" (HETSRONI, 2010, p. VII). Reality shows are a television

genre commonly transformed into a format³ that, in general, work with the premise that the contestants are “real” people; that is, they are the main responsible for regionalizing the format, giving a high dosage of local culture. Some reality shows, such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor* and *The Farm* potentialize the regionalization of the genre because they explore, in many ways, the day-to-day life of these contestants (CANN, 2013; HAYES; DUNBAR, 2010; HUFF, 2006; RAICHEVA-STOVER, 2010). This way, each program develops a daily ritual linked to the local identity, which comprises, for example, how to dress, historically contextualized accents, preference for a certain kind of leisure (pool, sunbath, parties, etc) among other activities. Moreover, the audience has an important role in the regionalization of the formats related to reality shows. After all, they are the ones who help select, in many cases, the winner of the show. In addition to, at times, expand the television experience in virtual communities and other spaces, as Campanella (2012) and Hill (2005) pointed out.

Cooking reality shows, in turn, complexify the relation between local and global, especially due to the way they build the authority of the judges and the relationship they have with food. Instead of highlighting the daily life of the contestants, these shows focus on the food preparation and the choice of the “best” cook. This choice, in turn, is, usually, integrally made by the judges - therefore, without the participation of the audience (who usually cannot taste the dishes) and through highly subjective criteria. The judges usually say that such preparation is not good because they “don't like it” of one of the ingredients or they praise a preparation saying that it is similar to the “original”. The judges' authority is not put to the test, especially because of the place of speech they have - usually, they are renowned chefs in a global and mediatic context, owners of famous restaurants that are filled with gastronomic reviews. As the bigger objective of the contestants is to please the judges, they

3 The idea of gender is associated with the narrative structure developed in reference to more or less socially established conventions. The television format is linked mainly to modes of production, business models, workflows and publicity and marketing strategies (KEANE e MORAN, 2008).

need to create a dialog between their local experiences and knowledge and a more global demand from the judges.

In regards to the relation they have with the food, contestants of cooking reality shows are obligated to use ingredients exclusively chosen by the show, regardless of the type of cuisine that each one is acquainted with. In many cases, the show chooses an international dish and demands that the candidates reproduce the preparation. It is very explicit that who succeeds in these competitions usually is the contestant that can travel through global types of cuisine and have knowledge about the hegemonic references of "good cooking" Each competitor, however, develops strategies to deal with these elements, adding splashes of their regional experiences.

MasterChef Brazil vs MasterChef Colombia: Combining global with local

Even though they are developed in different ways, television in Brazil and in Colombia show similar characteristics. Both countries have big, consolidated media companies, which act almost as monopolies, especially in open TV. While in Brazil great conglomerates are proprietors of the main open television channels, in Colombia, two big groups, also private, share the main slice of television in the country: the Santo Domingo group, owner of Caracol Televisión, and the Ardila Lulle group, owner of the RCN Televisión.

Until the 90's, Brazilian television had more international projection than Colombian television, especially due to the exportation of Globo's telenovelas. While in Brazil the open television was developed with big participation of private corporations, Colombia developed a television that was more controlled by the government. In 1954, the television in this country was instituted by the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. In 1963, the country created a mixed system, in which the government controlled property, regulation and concession of the commercial television and the private companies explored the production and the

programming of the channels. Because of a big market pressure, César Gaviria's government instituted, in the Constitution of 1991, the privatization of television and telecommunication companies, giving this space of the market to the big economic groups (MONTROYA-LONDOÑO, 2014). Today, Colombia is one of the seven biggest television markets in America Latina (PIÑON, 2014). During the last 10 years, Brazil and Colombia have imported a significant array of television formats, especially reality shows.

In Brazil, *MasterChef* is broadcasted by *Bandeirantes* and they have produced four seasons already (2014-2017), all presented by the journalist Ana Paula Padrão and judged by the chefs Henrique Fogaça, Erick Jacquin and Paola Carosella. In Colombia, the first season was released in 2015, broadcasted by *RCN* and presented by the model and presenter Claudia Bahamón. The three judges were the chefs Paco Roncero, Jorge Rausch and Nicolás de Zubiría. In both cases, the show is broadcasted during the week, in the evening (Tuesdays, at 10:30 PM, in Brazil; Mondays and Fridays, 8PM, in Colombia) and 18 contestants are selected to compete. They had good audience ratings: In Brazil, the last episode of the season in 2015, for example, led the ratings during 19 minutes according to *Ibope*.⁴ *MasterChef Colombia* was the eighth most watched program in 2015 and the fourth most popular program of *RCN* throughout the year.⁵

MasterChef franchise, in turn, is one of the most important shows of *Endemol Shine Group*, one of the main creators, producers and distributors of content in the United Kingdom. The format was already exported for over 30 countries and broadcasted in at least 200 territories. The idea was created in 1990, when Franc Roddam produced it for *BBC*. In 2005, the show was modified and transformed into a format, and, since then, reaches high audience ratings in many countries that broadcast the show in prime time. In Australia, for example, it became the third most watched show in history (ETTER, 2010).

4 Information available at: <http://goo.gl/pZx3oF>. Accessed in: jun. 2015.

5 Information available at <http://goo.gl/14IBHe>. Accessed in: jun. 2015.

The objective of MasterChef is to find the best amateur cook through a cooking competition. In each episode, the competitors must prepare dishes that are appraised by three or four renowned chefs through themed challenges, which may comprise a specific ingredient to be worked on (pork, goat cheese, chocolate, etc.), a type of cuisine to be celebrated (French, vegan, Amazonian...) or an event (wedding, children's birthday, happy hour etc.). To create a rhythm of competition to the challenges, all versions use at least three strategies that, combined, generate an environment of tension and expectation: The preparations must be made in a fixed timeframe, the judges appraise the dishes without sparing criticism and the challenges include preparations made individually and in groups. In order to understand how MasterChef works the relation global vs local in Brazil and in Colombia, both versions will be analyzed under three perspectives: the identity of the judges, the geographic and social origin of the contestants and the value of native food in relation to international cuisine.

Identity of the judges

Considering the subjectivity contained in the evaluation of a dish (for example, how much salt separates a dull plate from a salty one?), it is important to have in mind the history of the judge and their food preferences can influence their selection of a dish as being "tastier" than another. The perception of flavor is historic and contextually constructed, as Lévi-Strauss observed. The Brazilian and Colombian versions of MasterChef adopted a format with a triad of judges to evaluate their preparations. In Brazil, MasterChef chose to have only one Brazilian judge, Henrique Fogaça, in addition to an Argentinian judge, Paola Carosella, and a French judge, Erick Jacquin, which indicates the intention of the program to conceive a cosmopolitan nature to the evaluations. While Paola frequently repeats, during the show, that she grew with Italian grandmothers and that, therefore, she has a great knowledge about this type of cuisine, Jacquin is clearly a connoisseur of French haute cuisine and values complex preparations and artistic presentation

of the plates. Jacquín, in numerous occasions, criticized a preparation saying it was “ugly”, in addition to criticizing dishes that were inspired by French cuisine, but, in his opinion, were badly executed. Paola, in turn, values the professionalization of a preparation. In the second episode, she refused to taste a dish of a contestant because he had used pickled palm hearts, saying that “I don't eat canned things”.

The Brazilian judge Fogaça brings to the show an urban identity and he is known in the gastronomic field as an expert in street food, normally made in an artisanal way. However, his concept of urban is contextualized: He developed his career entirely in the streets of São Paulo. This state, thus, is transformed into a metonymy of what would mean Brazilian food for the show. In addition to that, the three judges run famous restaurants in São Paulo, whose target audience are artists and connoisseurs of the “paulista night”. Finally, it is important to highlight the legitimacy of the three judges happens on the mainstream media, because all of them received prizes from magazines such as *Veja* and *Prazeres da Mesa*.

MasterChef Colombia deals with the identity of the judges in a different way. Firstly, there are two Colombians – Jorge Rausch and Nicolás de Zubiría – and one Spanish judge – Paco Roncero. This characteristic enhances the presence of the nationality and the Hispanic identity through the eyes of the judges. Jorge Rausch, particularly, has restaurants in many parts of Colômbia, such as Bogotá, Medellín and Cartagena, which makes him knowledgeable of many parts of the country. Nicolás, in turn, has restaurants in Bogota, but he is originally from Cartagena, besides being an expert in street food. The cosmopolitan part of the show is shown indirectly, since the three judges studied gastronomy outside of the country, and Jorge was specialized in French cuisine. The image of Paco Roncero is important in this sense, because, besides being a foreigner, he owns many restaurants throughout the world, in Madrid, Ibiza and Shanghai. Just like the Brazilian version, the judges won prizes from important institutions, including the Michelin Guide, renowned French gastronomic guide.

The biggest presence of a Colombian identity among the judges do not mean that the regional cuisine is more valued in relation to the international cuisine; it only means that the way they perceive regional cuisine has a different tone. In the fourth episode of *MasterChef Colômbia*, the participants were still appraised so the show would get to the final 18 contestants. They, then, had had to create a dish whose protagonist would be the egg. The contestant Mayra made a dish inspired on her motherland, the city of Valledupar, but she was eliminated. The only reason for that was given by Paco Roncero: “I believe you have to cook other things that are not always inspired by your land”, which clarified a certain tendency from the judges to value a more globalized cuisine.

Geographic and social origin of the contestants

In *MasterChef Brazil*, out of 18 competitors, 7 are from the state of São Paulo, which represents approximately 38% of the total, four participants being from the capital and three from the countryside (São Roque, Santos e Parapuã). In second place there is Rio de Janeiro (exclusively the capital), with three participants (16%), followed by Minas Gerais and Bahia, with two participants each (11%), one from the capital (Belo Horizonte and Salvador) and one from the countryside (Araguari and Porto Seguro, respectively) Finally, there is one participant from the state of Paraná (Londrina), one from Mato Grosso (Cuiabá), and one from the federal district. Besides the 17 participants, there is one Chinese participant, representing the “global” contestant. It is very clear that *MasterChef Brazil* prioritizes the representation from the Southeast region of Brazil, especially São Paulo, considering that only six participants - less than the number of paulistas - are from other regions. The six participants, in turn, seem to be selected in a way of composing a heterogeneous landscape that adds people from different parts of Brazil and the world, even though there aren't any contestants from the North. The heterogeneity, thus, is marked by an assumption that considers other parts of Brazil as secondary.

The 18 competitors from Colombia act towards a slightly more heterogeneous representation. Four competitors are from the capital, Bogotá (22%), four are from Medellín and three are from Barranquilla (16%). In the other cases, there is a competitor from Palmira, Ipiales, Ocaña, Santa Marta, Quibdó, Cúcuta e Bordo de Cauca Even though these cities belong to only seven of the 33 Colombian states, they geographically comprise regions from the whole country. In only one case there is two cities from a same state: Ocaña and Cúcuta, that integrate the northern state of Santander. The priority for choosing competitors lies on the more politically important cities: Bogota, Medellín and Barranquilla, but there isn't a region of the country that dominates the identity of the competitors as it happens with São Paulo in the Brazilian version. On the other hand, the fact that they have exactly the same number of competitors from Bogotá and Medellín, two of the most populated cities, besides being strongly present in the recent political history of the country, is symptomatic. There seems to be a selection with a high degree of direction, although there is a bigger representation in relation to the geography of the country.

The social status of the competitors is also different when we compare MasterChef Brazil to MasterChef Colombia. The vast majority is employed, however, in the Brazilian version, a bigger part of the competitors holds positions usually related to the urban middle class: Event producer, advertising person, administrator, lawyer, artist, stacionian, etc. Only one competitor can be framed professionally into a different social category: Iranete Santana, from Bahia, who is a housekeeper. In the Colombian version, there are many competitors with professions that are similar to the Brazilian contestants: Lawyer, advertising person, architect, etc., but the number of participants whose professions are linked to lower classes is bigger: Painter, housekeeper, telemarketing agent, restaurant clerk and barman. Colombia seems to conciliate better the social complexity of the country by dealing with the social status of the participants in a slightly more heterogeneous way.

This difference in relation to the social representation of the participants causes a major difference in the show's narrative. The Colombian version explores many situations in which many competitors do not know certain preparations considered popular, using this lack of knowledge as a tool to boost the tension. In the 14th episode, the competitor Diorlin Andrade says she never had risotto, a dish she would have to make next. At the same time, in various occasions, the edition of the show builds a biography of Diorlin so that they can clarify the financial struggle she had that made her change paths instead of investing on the career of being a chef. The Brazilian version, on the other hand, explore less the personal problems of the participants and focus only on the conflict generated inside the competition.

Native elements: Regional food in relation to international cuisine

Both in the Brazilian and the Colombian versions, there is the tendency of prioritizing the international cuisine considered as “good cooking” according to the common sense, especially regarding Eurocentric references of eating “well”. On both versions of MasterChef, the competitors had to make a beef Wellington, typical dish from the United Kingdom. In the sixth episode of MasterChef Brazil, the competitors had to prepare a lasagna, typical Italian dish, and serve it at the house of the general consul of France, Damien Loras. In Masterchef Colômbia, the 14th episode divided the participants into three categories that should create three Italian dishes: Risotto, lasagna and gnocchi.

Beyond the strong presence of an Eurocentric cuisine, it is very common for MasterChef to elaborate challenges that include unusual dishes according to the competitors eyes. In the Colombian version, the contestants had to guess the ingredients and reproduce a borsch, a Russian soup that was unknown to the competitors. In the Brazilian version, one of the most difficult challenges was the creation, in the seventh episode, of a crème patissière, one of the bases for French sweet cuisine. To teach the preparation, the show invited the French chef Fabrice Le Nud, giving a highly Eurocentric tone to the demands made for the competitors.

What differentiates MasterChef Brazil from MasterChef Colombia in the way they deal with food is the presence of cuisines related to the regional identity of each country. In the Brazilian version: the regional is normally defined by what does not belong to the Southeast region; and, generally, 2) there is a tendency of distancing the regional food and turning into an exotic dish. When the show decides to deal with the regional, there is an emphasis on the cuisine from the North and Northeast region and the challenges are thought in a way of distancing from the familiarity of the participants. In the 12th episode, the competitors flew to Manaus, place filled with “different”, “unusual”, “weird” ingredients, as the competitors said throughout the episode. They strolled around the City Market and the video edition built an environment of surprise, fear and lack of knowledge about the ingredients from the competitors perspective. Some of them looked choked when they saw “for the first time” a pirarucu (typical Amazonian fish) and handled tucupi (yellow sauce extracted from wild manioc root), in addition to looking overwhelmed when they knew they had to cook with some of these delicacies. The show invited Felipe Schaedler, owner of a famous restaurant in Manaus, who worked as a teacher, teaching the use of Amazonian ingredients and helping competitors understand the food of the region. To increase the exotic experience, competitors had to create their dishes on boats crossing the Amazonas river. Fernando Kawasaki, from São Paulo, described what his team prepared and said he felt like “talking like an indian”, in a behavior that distances the competitor from this regional cuisine and stereotypes the place.

In MasterChef Colombia: Regional cuisine is shown in a particular way and defines the identity of the competitors; and 2) the regional aspect is defined not only through Colombian aspects, but it comprises South American elements in a broader sense. Although, as previously analyzed, the judges are accustomed to an international cuisine, competitors, in many cases, use the challenges as a way of reinforcing their local identity. On one side, many challenges are planned to celebrate South American cuisine: In the fifth episode, the competitors had to

work with lamb from Patagonia and with tuna – “typical from the Mediterranean cuisine, but also found here in the Pacific ocean”, said the judge Paco Roncero. On the other side, in many episodes, the competitors created dishes inspired by their regions, in addition to pay an homage to their family, expressing with pride many feelings linked to their roots. At the beginning of the 15th episode, the judge Jorge Rausch said that the competitors must prepare “a completely South American dish. This dish is prepared in Peru. It is also prepared in Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico... In all the countries of the region”. Next, he shows a preparation made inside a cup. Immediately, the participant Wilmar Sánchez sighs smiling and says: “Ah, ceviche!”. The contestant Diorlin, in turn, says she already prepared ceviche before and looks very calm while she cooks. In the end of the preparation, Wilmar says, moved, that he was having the chance to use ingredients “that represent my land, Ocaña. For me it is an honor to make this delicious plate”. He also cites his parents and grandmother and says he is inspired by them. During the episode, the elimination challenge is made thinking about the approximation there is between the food and the cook, which ends up balancing the value on global cuisine that happens in other moments of the show.

Final considerations

A television format is so much more than a formula of a global television show. It brings together, in a complex way, social elements related to the transnationalization, but also to the regionalization of cultural products. This phenomenon is particularly relevant when we analyze cooking reality shows, given that the food is an omnipresent element which instrumentalizes contextual ways of interpretation of the society where it is developed. When it turns into a protagonist of a mediatic product, food starts revealing characteristics from the media itself.

The analysis of MasterChef Brazil and MasterChef Colombia showed two seemingly opposite sides of the same phenomenon. On one side, it was possible to perceive how a television format has similar elements

even though it is produced in different contexts. In both versions, the program presented a food competition formed by similar challenges, by three highly critical judges, and an edition with intense dramatical load. On the other side, the way how the shows dealt with food turned them into unique experiences, whose characteristics reflected social and mediatic behaviors around the act of cooking.

Both in MasterChef Brazil and in MasterChef Colombia, the effort made by the production was very clear in giving a more cosmopolitan and Eurocentric environment regarding the preparations of the contestants. Remarkable cuisines, such as French and Italian, are recurrently cited and mark the judgement from the judges. However, while in Brazil French cuisine gains special attention, in Colombia this construction is less dependent from legitimate figures, in addition to sharing space with the local and Hispanic identity of the judges. Perhaps this characteristic reveal the judgement created by each country related to what is foreign. In Brazil, for example, the western Europe, and France, in particular, form an important reference of good cuisine.

The origin of the competitors, in turn, reveal many sides in relation to the way mainstream media perceive their audience. While in the MasterChef Brazil São Paulo and the Southeast are highlighted with bigger representation, in MasterChef Colombia the emphasis lies on the three most populated and important cities: Bogota, Medellín and Barranquilla. In a similar way, the almost omnipresence of representation of the urban middle class in the Brazilian version reveals, perhaps, a mediatic desire to build an "ideal" group of characters that relates with the audience. In the case of MasterChef Colombia, there is a slightly bigger balance (although it is far from ideal) in relation to the social differences of the country.

Finally, it is central to perceive how both versions deal with food. If there is a tendency on reinforcing international cuisine, especially European, the presence of regional cuisine is relevant in both versions of MasterChef. In Brazil, the reality show builds the idea of regional as an exotic element, whose elements are defined especially for what it

does not belong to the Southeast region. In the Columbian version, on the other hand, the regional is defined in an expressive way by the competitors, who use elements linked to their roots as a way of legitimizing what they cook.

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Date of submission: 08/08/2016

Date of acceptance: 03/15/2017