

**Artículo / Article**

## **Eating out in Brazil today / Comer fuera de casa en Brasil hoy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article aims to explore the meanings and practices of eating out in Brazilian daily life. Since the mid-1980s, this practice has been spreading and diversifying in Brazil. Based on a series of three qualitative/quantitative surveys carried out between 2005 and 2015 in major Brazilian urban centres, we identified a clear distinction between eating out at weekdays and at weekends. At weekdays, by association with work, commitments and studies, this practice is perceived as both an obligation and an expense. At weekends, however, its association with leisure, family and friends makes it a pleasant investment and a cultural product. In this context, the meanings of eating at home versus eating out change, as well as the sense of the meals, selection of restaurants, sociability patterns and even the ethos of eating.*

**Keywords:** *Food habits in Brazil. Eating out. Healthy food. Sociability. Income.*

### **RESUMEN**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo explorar los significados y las prácticas del 'comer fuera de casa' en la vida diaria brasileña. Desde mediados de la década de 1980, esta práctica se ha extendido y diversificado en Brasil. Sobre la base de una serie de tres encuestas cualitativas/cuantitativas, llevadas a cabo entre 2005 y 2015 en los principales centros urbanos de Brasil, identificamos una clara distinción entre comer afuera los días de semana y los fines de semana. En los días de la semana, por asociación con el trabajo, los compromisos y los estudios, esta práctica se percibe como una obligación y un gasto. Los fines de semana, sin embargo, su asociación con el ocio, la familia y los amigos la convierte en una inversión agradable y un producto cultural. En este contexto, los significados de comer en casa versus comer afuera cambian, así como el sentido de las comidas, la selección de restaurantes, los patrones de sociabilidad e incluso el *ethos* de la comida.

**Palabras Clave:** Hábitos alimentares en Brasil. Comer fuera de casa. Comida saludable. Sociabilidad. Ingresos.

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies have been experiencing many changes, some related to social dynamics, technologies and the organization of work, while others to culture and the political sphere. Nevertheless, other changes can also be perceived, with regard to behaviour and individual practices, among which food and dining occupy a special place. In Western societies, the practice of “eating out” or “eating away from home” is a relatively recent social practice connected with modernity<sup>1</sup>.

Recent studies show that the practice of eating out is a sociological phenomenon related to three core processes, namely: globalization, commodification and *aestheticization* (Warde, 2016)<sup>2</sup>. The frequency with which men, women and families go to various commercial establishments for eating food prepared outside the home has shown a significant increase in recent years. Nevertheless, the origins of such practices date back to eighteenth-century Europe, and more specifically, Paris, where the denomination ‘restaurant’ appeared in reference to a hearty “restoring” soup served in some dining establishments (Spang, 2003). Other authors, how-

ever, consider that the origin of this invention belongs to the British (Pembroke, 2003; Pitte, 1998). Either way, the “eating out” market started its development in that century, among both English and French elites (Mennel, et al., 1992, p. 83).

Regardless of the historical moment and place of appearance of what we now call restaurants, the fact is that this form of eating has become a social practice of the modern “Western” world and became part of the daily life of contemporary societies. In our times, the food sector, which includes restaurants and other spaces dedicated to serving food, has become a thriving branch of the economy called ‘Foodservice’<sup>3</sup> which, according to market surveys, is steadily growing. Available data indicate that, in 2012, the turnover of the food industry in Brazil was R\$431.6 billion, out of which Food Service channels alone accounted for R\$100.5 billion, around 24 % of the total.

According to ABIA (Brazilian Association of Food Industries), this market has been growing at average rates of over 13 % per year over the last 10 years, and today this sector accounts for about 9 % of GDP. Were it not for the economic crisis, according to projections for 2015, industry growth would be near 25 % per year. In this context, eating out would account for 38 % of the average expenditure on food, which equates with the amount spent in a number of other countries. For example, in the US the average spending on food away from home is 50 %<sup>4</sup>; in England, around 29 % and, in Spain, 32 % (DEFRA, 2014; MAGRAMA, 2014).

According to the HBS 2008/2009 survey (Household Budget Survey)<sup>5</sup> – conducted by IBGE

1 This seems not to be the case for the East generally, and particularly for China, where there are accounts of existing eating places aimed not only to fulfil the “needs” derived from travels or work, but also for leisure, which date back to 618 and 907 A.D., during the Tang dynasty of Chinese Empire, therefore, much earlier than in the West (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997, pg. 104). See also Xiaomin, (2006).

2 The commoditization refers to the standardization of ingredients, raw materials and dishes, which are sold in the same way, content and sometimes for the same price, the icons of this process have been the big chains of fast food. At the same time, globalization goes through the process of expanding food supply and increasing the circulation of goods and people around the world, increasing significantly the cultural exchanges between countries, regions and peoples, especially from the second half of the twentieth century. Finally, the *aestheticization* process has been driven by the expansion of the eating out phenomenon, mainly due to the increase in the supply of restaurant services around the world, which contributed to the themes of dishes, especially through the preparation of exotic foods and their cultural adaptation to local palates.

3 *Foodservice* is defined as the industry comprised of businesses responsible for the supply of meals prepared outside home by restaurants, bakeries, cafeterias, catering operations and others, to be either consumed at the establishment or taken away ([www.ecdfoodservice.com.br/downloads/01.pdf](http://www.ecdfoodservice.com.br/downloads/01.pdf)).

4 In 2014, for the first time in US history, the total expenditure with food eaten away from home exceeded spending with food at home <<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-expenditures.aspx>>

5 In Brazil, the first HBS survey (POF – Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares) was conducted in 1987/88, and the next ones in 1995/96, 2002/03 and 2008/09. This survey aims to contribute for the formulation of the consumer

(Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) – that collects household-level data on Brazilians' budgets and consumption in different sectors of daily life, on average, 30 % of Brazilians' food bill is spent on food away from home. This same database also indicates that, on average, food spending accounts for 19.8 % of Brazilian families' consumption expenditure. Considering just lower income households, this spending reaches 29.6 % on average, whereas for higher income households the average is 12.7 %. Between 2003 and 2009, spending on food away from home increased by 29 %. Among households in the 5th quintile of income distribution in Brazil, this figure was higher in 2009, representing 43 % of total expenditure on food, while for households in the 1st quintile expenditure of this activity represented 17 % of total household income<sup>6</sup>.

Despite its economic and social importance, the practice and the meaning of eating out/away from home has not received the amount of academic attention it deserves compared to its economic and social role, not only in Brazil but also internationally. However, this picture has started to change with the growing interest in food and eating in general that has emerged in recent decades (Barbosa, 2009; Poulain, 2006; Fischler, 2013). In this new context eating out has come to the fore and has been the subject matter of monographs, dissertations and academic and popular articles in different academic areas. In Brazil, the same is the case, and we have identified four lines of research where the study of eating out has been stimulating a growing interest. The first is related to nutrition

and medical science, the area where we find the greatest number of works. The main points of concern addressed here are the relations between the habits of eating out and the nutritious quality of the food consumed (the amount of sugar, carbohydrates and fat, ingested daily by different social groups of the Brazilian population); the "healthiness" of eating out compared to eating at home; the relation between food consumption outside home and obesity in different types of venues; and the consumption of fast and processed food and their links with changes in the food habits and lifestyles of Brazilian populations in a context of high urbanization<sup>7</sup>. From the methodological point of view they use predominantly quantitative data and have substantially drawn on data from POF (the Household Budget Survey, conducted by IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), especially POF 2002-2003 and POF 2007-2008. Good examples of these different types of discussion are Abreu and Torres (2003), Mendonça (2004), Carús (2013), Hoffman (2013), Bezerra and Sichiery (2009), Bezerra *et al.* (2012), Bezerra *et al.* (2013), Gorgulho (2012), and Santos (2011).

History is the second area where research on food and eating and particularly eating out has been flourishing. Although the main focus has been on the historical development of different commercial forms of eating out throughout Brazilian history, such as "Das casas de Pastos", street vendors from colonial times to the present day, restaurants and so on, these works have contributed with many themes. Discussion of the role public spaces played within the urban space of different Brazilian cities, the different models of sociability they entailed, the logics of commensality among strangers and the type of food served provides valuable and complementary data to more sociological types of approaches. Good examples include Silva (2008) on street vendors in São Paulo during the nineteenth century, Reinhart (2010) on "Padaria America" (a famous bakery), Saucedo (2002) on the restaurant Bologna and Carvalho (2005) on the "Das casas de Pastos" on restaurants in Curitiba.

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price index, besides estimating the household expenses, in the calculation of the national accounts. From these data, it is also possible, in some aspects, to study the evolution of consumption habits of the families, in addition to other studies on planning related to income distribution, concentration and inequality, to demographical and socioeconomic aspects. etc.

6 Quintile is any of five equal groups into which a population or a set of data can be divided according to the distribution of values of a particular variable. In the case of income distribution, the 5<sup>th</sup> or the highest quintile represents the wealthiest 20 % and the 1<sup>st</sup> or the lowest quintile represents the poorest 20 % of the whole population.

7 85 % of Brazilian population are concentrated in urban areas.

In the field of social sciences, the third area, the subject of “eating out” has begun to attract attention, and a literature addressing its practices, symbolic representations, driving forces, explanations and contingencies is growing. Here, again, research on different types of venues selling food in urban centres coupled with questions of commensality, sociability, gender (Abdalla, 2012), income (Claro, *et al.* 2009), educational level, and status has a central place (Araujo, 2012). Garcia’s (1997a and 1997b) is one of the pioneer works. He explores different symbolic representations relating them to the spaces of “the street” and “the home” in Brazilian urban centres, especially in the city of São Paulo. A similarly pioneering study of eating out in Brazil is that by Rial (1992, 1996a, 1996b), who produces three of the first studies about fast food in Brazil based on an anthropological approach. She explores not only the meaning of this new practice, but also its implications for our food and eating habits. Ribeiro (2012), in a similar vein, but directing his analytic focus to “quilo restaurants” (a Brazilian type of self service buffet where the consumer pays by the food’s weight) explores the new meanings that food and eating have acquired since the establishment of this type of restaurant in Brazil. Eating out, as the author points out, for certain groups and in certain circumstances came to be cheaper than eating at home but also and mainly it was a new source of gustatory experience, pleasure and entertainment. Also about “quilo” restaurants and changes in Brazilian eating habits in urban centers we have the work of Abreu and Torres (2003) and Garcia (1997a, 1997b) followed by those of Collaço, (2003, 2008, 2014). Taking as her starting point particular types of food venues, Collaço explores the symbolic representations of food and eating in the food courts of São Paulo’s shopping malls and the “quilo restaurants” of Rio de Janeiro during lunch time. The author relates these symbolic representation to the social dynamic and diversity of social groups in different weekdays and places but also to ideas of health, nutrition, body size and the construction of subjectivities. Abdala (2005a, 2007, 1997), building on a previous work on food and identity in Minas Gerais, investigates the symbolic representations of several

families of different cities of Minas Gerais State that changed their food and eating habits and that now eat as families, in a everyday basis, at self-service buffets. They perceive this kind of venue as an extension of their home kitchen and a better substitute for modern technologies such as freezer and micro waves, since these places, according to the interviewees, offer them a food similar to their fresh home cooking. Maia and Torre Chao (2016) in an interesting piece of research about the “Yabás Fair “ in Madureira, a Rio de Janeiro’s suburb, subverts the idea and meaning of eating out. They demonstrate how the traditional Sunday family lunch of residents in the fair’s area, moved from the interior of the houses to the sidewalk of the street, with families “eating out” around their tables and mingling socially with the participants/visitors to the event. Case studies and studies of particular types of groups are also part of the picture such as Braga and Paternez, (2011). Another particular approach is that of Rezende and Silva (2014), Avelar and Rezende (2013), Rezende and Avelar (2012) who took as their main theoretical reference the study of Warde and Martens (2003) on “eating out” in England, and conducted a similar research in the city of Lavras, MG, with interesting results.

Management and tourism make up the fourth line of studies about eating out in Brazil. Discussion on the issue is still quite dispersed including sociological approaches, as in Silva (2011), Gimenes (2011), and Soares (2014, with a growing corpus of empirical work on areas with high touristic potential, such as coastal regions (Rocha and Amaral, 2012), or which seek to redeem or value historical and cultural aspects of a given region (Grechinsk and Cardozo, 2008). However, these are usually focused on exploiting the economic potential of a particular place through its food, by attracting visitors across Brazil and/or from other countries, highlighting culture and landscape.

Considering this brief literature review, we believe we may contribute to understanding the practice of eating out in Brazilian society with regard to three aspects. First, by adding knowledge to the concept itself, through exploring its limits, its different meanings, and the patterns of sociability involved, among other aspects that have not

yet been explored in other works in the context of Brazilian society. Second, by providing an overview of the phenomenon for Brazil as a whole – one that is not restricted to geographic regions or to particular businesses and groups, insofar as it is based on statistically representative surveys of the Brazilian population. And, finally, by providing a dialogue with existing literature, corroborating existing perceptions and introducing new issues.

The main objective of the present work is, then, to fill the gaps in the literature by providing a sociological perspective on eating out and associated behaviours in Brazilian society. To this end, this article is divided into five sections besides this introduction. Following the introduction, the general and methodological characteristics of the empirical data used in this article are presented. Then, a conceptual discussion on the empirical and symbolic boundaries that outline what is “eating out” in the Brazilian context is presented in sections three and four. The fifth section presents the results of Food Habits surveys and, finally, the sixth provides preliminary conclusions and issues suggested for further investigation within future research agendas.

### **SURVEYS ON BRAZILIAN FOOD HABITS: 2005, 2011 AND 2015<sup>8</sup>**

The present article draws on data collected by three different empirical researches on the food habits of Brazilians, which were conducted in 2005, 2011 and 2015 by the same team of researchers and which allowed for a time series over a period of ten years. Each of these researches – hereafter referred to as FH I, FH II and FH III – involved a qualitative stage, which provided the basis for the formulation of the quantitative stage, and are limited to the Brazilian urban context.

8 The survey *Hábitos Alimentares Brasileiros* (Brazilian Food Habits) is funded by a pool of organizations that buy participation quotas based on a questionnaire elaborated by and under the responsibility of sociologist Maria Aparecida Toledo, of Toledo Associados, and the anthropologist Livia Barbosa, of Socius Consultoria Ltda.

The first two editions of the FH covered ten Brazilian capitals with populations over one million – São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Belém. Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Distrito Federal and Fortaleza – which included all Brazilian regions, namely: North, Northeast, South, Southeast and Center-West. The third FH, conducted in 2015, covered fourteen cities including the above mentioned ten capitals and spanning all five regions of the country, plus four cities in the state of São Paulo: Campinas, Bauru, Ribeirão Preto and São José do Rio Preto.

Quantitative sampling was probabilistic and samples were selected from clusters, city blocks and households. Upon selection of the households, quotas by sex, age and socioeconomic classes (A, B, C, D/E) were established by the interviewer. Individual questionnaires were applied, which included open and closed questions. All three editions of the survey can be deemed as representative of Brazilian population, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 %.

The different kinds of data will be indicated by the following names: Focal Group (FG), Respondents (R), when referring to interviews for filling the structured questionnaire, and Interviewee (I), when referring to in-depth interviews over these ten years of research.

### **SOME CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Our analysis on the meaning and practices on eating out in Brazil assumes that this domain of food consumption – eating out – although having its own dynamic, must be examined primarily in relation to eating at home and vice versa, (Murcott, 1982; Wood, 1995; Collaço, 2014; Garcia, 1993, 1997a). This theoretical approach assumes that the meaning of things is never absolute, but rather relational – it stems from the interactions between the components of a given system; in this particular case, the food system.

Food choices when eating out are related to at-home food consumption patterns, and are either opposed or complementary. Such a constitutive and essential relationship is already present in the very

**Table 1** - The relationship between eating *in* and *out*.

Interviews excerpt	Interviewee
"At home, we eat more relaxed, calmly"	Man, married, class C, age 45, Focal Group, 2011
"I prefer home food, I get wearied of eating out every day"	Woman, married, class C, age 39, Focal Group, 2005
"I loved a sauce that I ate at the restaurant and I'm trying to make it at home"	Man, married, class A, age over 60, Focal Group, 2015

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I, II e III

terms used. "Eating out" in itself brings the opposite possibility, of "eating in", at home, suggesting that the meanings of both social activities are defined in relation to each other. This relationship is based not only on the contrast between these physical spaces, but also on the transactions established between them, the types and modes of food preparation, the kinds of sociability they engender and the value hierarchies to which each of these spaces adheres in the contemporary context, (Habermas, 1984; Robinson, 1972; Finklestein, 1980; Menell, 1985). Moreover, in the case of Brazilian society, such spaces appear as symbolic spaces that both define and structure our specificities as a society (Da Matta 1979; Freyre, 2003; Gomes Barbosa, *et al.*, 2000)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, eating out, as an activity carried out in the public space, has its own meanings, practices and dynamics, which are conditioned by the logic that constitutes and prevail in it; much as "eating in" is conditioned by the logic and practices considered relevant and appropriate to home. In these contexts, some objects and food items are appropriated differently than originally intended by their producers and established by the society, that is, they are personified by users, appropriated by them in ways that are meaningful in the context of their daily lives (Miller, 2010).

9 Furthermore, Brazilian history shows that what now are considered separate spaces were once communicating vessels. As Collaço (2008, pg. 148) reminds us, "the first establishments to serve meals in the new ethnic neighbourhoods were predominantly ambiguous spaces, mingling domestic and public [...] and where the same food was served to family members and customers".

The survey's interviewees and respondents often pointed out spontaneously the differences between regular eating in each of these spaces, revealing their intrinsic relationship.

From Table 1 above, it becomes clear that the meanings assigned to the way one eats, what is eaten and the practices of eating *in* and *out* are interdependent.

Having lunch at fast food restaurants during the week can be seen as the ultimate indication of lacking time for a "proper meal" and of unhealthy food habits (Lee, 2012; Fonseca *et al.*, 2011; Davis and Carpenter, 2009; Tardio and Falcão, 2006). On the other hand, going out with friends to this kind of restaurant after work, in the evening, can be seen as a time of leisure and relief from the various daily pressures, and even as a quest for a healthy food, something that the media, health professionals, government and food industry constantly remind us (Collaço, 2003).

Given the various possibilities and perspectives opened up in the study of eating out in view of its relationship with eating at home, a delimitation of the issue here examined is necessary. Like any delimitation, this is also arbitrary, and is only justified on the grounds of being virtually impossible to cover, in a single paper, all the dimensions provided by the data collected in the various editions of the FHs survey (2005, 2011 and 2015). Thus, we will circumscribe our analysis to the meanings ascribed to and the practices involving "eating out" as opposed to "eating at home", focusing on "Brazilian traditional meals" (Barbosa, 2007) eaten outside home both on weekdays and at weekends. In this sense, practices of eating at friends' and relatives' house, take-away food and food delivery will not be considered here.

**Table 2** - Meaning of eating out

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"Eating out is eating something different, something I went out to eat"	Woman, single, class B, age 21, Individual interview, 2015
"Though I am very fond of cooking, eating away from home is eating something different"	Woman, married, class C, age between 25-40, Focal Group, 2011
"[Eating out is] fun, interaction, chatting"	Woman, married without children, class C, age between 17-24, Focal Group, 2011
"Eating out includes meeting friends, chatting, eating something tasty at a cool place"	Woman, class A/B, age between 25-40, Focal Group, 2011

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

### MEANINGS OF "EATING OUT" IN BRAZIL

As in any qualitative research, the way a question is asked somewhat defines its answer, inasmuch as any question carries a number of implicit assumptions, especially when both researcher and respondents are members of the same society, as is the case of the surveys that underpin our analysis. We take for granted things that sound "familiar" to us, and find it difficult to put into perspective things we know well, because they become naturalized, taken as a given. That is, we find it difficult to transform what is familiar into exotic and what is exotic into familiar and known (Da Matta 1981; Velho, 1978). Therefore, to avoid confusion with known and familiar conceptions, we were careful to use two distinct questions to grasp the meaning of eating out, asked randomly to both interviewees and participants in focus groups. One question was asked directly: "what does eating out mean for you?". The second one, indirectly: "Who has the habit of eating out?". Despite variations according to the question, the overall responses maintained a clear internal consistency. In this way, we constructed the "field of meanings associated with eating out".

When we asked respondents/interviewees about the **meaning of eating out**, we realized that most of them replied assuming it referred either to weekdays or weekends, and to particular establishments as *a la carte* restaurants, steakhouses, pizzerias and pay-per-kilo buffets<sup>10</sup>. Only a few interviewees

sought to further detail the question, asking questions like "at weekdays or at weekends?", "eating at restaurants or at somebody's home?", "does eating fast food mean eating out?". Our response was always the same: it was up to the respondents to choose. In this context, the meaning emerging from the three Food Habits surveys was that eating out means "eating something different", "varying the flavour" or eating something "that you like very much" or "that you long to eat" as implicitly opposed to what you eat regularly at home. Moreover, this "something different" generally means something more elaborate, which is defined as tasty, palatable and exceptional.

Other features appear associated with this search for something different (which may or may not be new, but is certainly not routine), such as being an opportunity to have "fun", "leisure", "pleasure" and sociability, either with family or with friends.

However, such sociability has an important characteristic – it should be enjoyed calmly, without haste or preoccupation with returning to work as it happens on weekdays. Therefore, the meaning of tranquillity attributed to eating out at weekends appears as opposed to the haste that marks this activity during the week, when food intake and conversations are both restricted to the available time and not defined by sociability dynamics.

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savoury dishes, hot and cold, regional or international, and desserts, where you pay what you choose by weighing the dish at the end of the buffet counter.

10 Pay per Kilo buffets are a common type of self-service restaurants in Brazil, characterized by a wide variety of

**Table 3** - Justification for eating out for convenience

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"Having a day or a moment to rest" "Having no dishes to wash" "Having no need of devising what to cook – feeling free" "Breaking the routine" "Taking a break from cooking"	Woman, class C, age between 50-65, Focal Group, 2011
"Eating out is having nothing to do, being served, especially for me, who must cook every day"	Woman, married, class C, age 35, Individual interview, 2015
"I think it is a relief [eating out], you can relax like everyone else, there is no need to leave the table and go to the kitchen"	Woman, married, class A/B, age between 55-65, Focal Group, 2011
"The housewife also deserves a resting day"	Woman, married, class A/B, age between 41-55, Focal Group, 2011

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

**Table 4** - Eating out for sociability

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"On Sundays, we all go out together! It's very good to gather the whole family!"	Woman, married, class B, age between 41-55, Focal Group, 2005
" During the week I cannot be with my daughters, on the weekend I can"	Woman, married, class C, age between 41-65, Focal Group, 2011

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

**Table 5** - Eating out as pleasure

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"I love dressing up for dinning out, it creates a pleasant climate [...]"	Woman, class C, age between 25-44, Focal Group, 2011
"It is to show off, feel good, feel important. Feel that somebody recognizes you"	Woman, class C, age between 41-55, Focal Group, 2015

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

For these women, who are mostly responsible for proving food for family members, eating out means fully enjoying the meal, in the broad sense, without worrying about preparing, serving and cleaning.

Eating out also means gathering the family together, updating news, and getting the latest on everything and everyone.

Eating out can be also "glorious", "a great time", an opportunity to feel good about oneself, to dress up, as some women put on special clothes for the occasion.

However, eating out also has its unpleasant perspectives. It can mean the extension of daily routine.



**Table 6** - Eating out as obligation

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"Eating out? [...] Hum... [...] I find more pleasure in staying at home over the weekend, because I always eat out during the week. Over the weekend, at least on Saturdays, I like to cook"	Woman, married, class B, age between 45-55, Focal Group, 2011
"Eating at home is inconvenient, but if I could, I would rather do it"	Woman, married without children, class A/B, age between 45-55, Focal Group, 2011

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

Else it means an expense, an economic concern.

**Table 7** - The high cost of eating out

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"When the credit card bill comes [...]"	Man, married, class C, age between 25-40, Focal Group, 2011
"At the end of the month, when you do the bookkeeping, you think you could have refrained from it"	Man, single parent, class C, age between 25-40, Focal Group, 2011

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

Another negative aspect attributed to eating out is related to the processes of food preparation – issues concerning hygiene of both establishments and staff: "I don't know how the food is prepared, if it's all pretty clean as I do"; the care taken in preparation: "at home food is made with care, with love"; and the quality of ingredients: "restaurant food tastes all the same", "at home I know how things are made, the hygiene, the quality of the products I am using".

However, when we asked "**Who has the habit of eating out?**", responses varied a lot. This suggests that, when asked in this way, most people took weekdays as the reference. In this case, the pleasure/leisure, both physical of tasting a new flavour or dish, and subjective of "an experience" have been replaced by the idea of obligation and lack of alternative.

Eating out during the week is a consequence of working and/or studying outside the home. This is not a conscious and deliberate choice as

it happens to be at weekends. In this latter case, one chooses to leave home in order to eat the kind of food he/she wishes and appreciates, at a most suitable restaurant and with the people one chooses to be with – family, friends or partners. In these conditions, we are masters of our time, and relaxation and pleasure are the predominant ethos of the meals.

Conversely, at weekdays, it is convenience that chooses. Thus, the option is the restaurant nearer to the workplace, the one that offers the fastest services, the greatest variety of food, and to which one goes either alone or accompanied by colleagues.

There is a fixed time frame allowed for eating, and the predominant *ethos* of the practice is that of haste, of convenience, of speed. In economic terms, it is an expense, an outlay which, if possible, would be avoided. One eats out, because he/she has a job or is studying, or both, and thus has no time at all to eat at home.

**Table 8** - Eating out for obligation

Interview excerpt	Interviewee
"Eating out at weekdays is imperative, because there is not enough time to go home and be back"	Man, married, class C, age between 17-24, Focal Group, 2015
"[...] during the week it is an obligation. During the week I have to eat fast, must control the time, have to go back to work"	Woman, married, class B, age between 41-55, Focal Group, 2011
"Eating out during the week is routine, at weekends is leisure"	Man, married, class A/B, age between 41-55, Focal Group, 2011
"I think that during the week is an expense, at weekends, it is pleasure"	Woman, married, class A/B, age between 25-40, Focal Group, 2015)

Source: Interviews from Food Habits I,II e III

Individual compliance with a time frame (as that of a job, for example) makes eating out during the week more a negative than a positive practice. The reference meal is lunch, defined in Brazil as the most important in terms of nutrients, which includes cooked food, generally rice, beans, a "mix" (some kind of meat or fish) and side dishes such as French fries, *farofa*, stewed vegetables, pastas etc. Eating a sandwich is not deemed as "having lunch" and some answers to the question "Did you have lunch today?" are illustrative of these different cultural categories: "No, I ate a sandwich!" or "I had no time, I just ordered a sandwich!"<sup>11</sup>. When "eating out" during the week is contrasted with "eating in" during the week, home food is described as superior, in every aspect, to the food served in the various restaurants. It is qualified as "healthier and tastier", "more safe and trustable", "made more carefully and with love". "You get bored of restaurant food". "You never know how the restaurant food has been prepared", "restaurant food is heavy, you should not eat it every day".

These are some of the arguments used in defence of home cooking in the context of eating out during the week. By contrasting the statements, we can see that the assessments signs are reversed, what appears as positive on weekends gets negative con-

notations during the week. There are several factors that promote this transformation. First, compliance to a time frame during the week that dominates the ethos of the meal, from the selection of the place to the dynamics of sociability, constraining individuality and reducing the moments of freedom (Barbosa, 2009). Second, growing concerns about food healthiness has led to an appreciation of home cooking, ideally deemed as healthier, even if home cooking, in practice, is far from adopting appropriate healthy practices, such as eating less sugar, salt and oil and eating more fruits and vegetables. Third, in the context of week days, the domestic sphere acquires contours diametrically opposed to the public sphere and to the work environment. It is an environment that allows one to express her/his individuality, to relax and be tranquil.

## THE PRACTICE OF EATING OUT IN BRAZIL

In this section, some quantitative data from FH surveys will be examined with a focus on the profile of the research subjects who commonly eat out, on the sociability surrounding this practice, who people usually dine out with, and the kind of meals that are eaten away from home.

A comparison of quantitative data from the three surveys on Food Habits shows that, in the first (2005), 54 % of sampled households had at least one family member who usually ate out at week-

11 This refusal by Brazilians to consider a sandwich or other fast food as a meal, either lunch or dinner, is recurrent. See also Abdala (2005).

days. In 2011, this figure increased to 70 % and, in 2015, declined to 63 %. Despite this 7 % decline, a 9 % increase remains in relation to 2005. With regard to gender, in 2005, 55 % of men and 54 % of women usually ate out; in 2011 this figure increased to 72 % for men and 68 % for women; and, in 2015, declined to 64 % and 62 % respectively for men and women.

In 2005, higher income groups, in relative terms – A (78 %), B (66 %), C (54 %), D (45 %) and E (32 %) – prevailed among those who usually ate away from home. This class distribution remains relatively unchanged for both 2011 and 2015: in 2011, 70 % (A), 75 % (B), 69 % (C) and 58 % (D/E) reported eating out regularly; and, in 2015, they were 70 % (A), 63 % (B), 64 % (C) and 55 % (D/E). The data suggests that the frequency of eating out is directly proportional to income. The higher the income, the higher the frequency of eating out, which corroborates data from POF 2008/2009.

Regarding age groups, data for 2005 are not comparable with 2011 and 2015, due to different segmentation, but the latter two years follow the same pattern<sup>12</sup>. In 2011, the segment of individuals between 17 and 24 years old showed the highest frequency for eating out (78 %), followed respectively by those of 25 to 40 years (70 %), 41 to 55 years (68 %) and 56 to 65 years (64 %). In 2015, the distribution is similar: the youngest, aged between 17 and 24, are those who most frequently eat out (71 %), followed by the groups of 25/40 years (64 %), 41/55 years (63 %) and 56/70 years (54 %). That is, age seems to be inversely proportional to the frequency of eating out. In addition, data from the three surveys suggest that those who use to eat out do so frequently. For example, in 2015, the question regarding the frequency of eating out, the three most frequent answers were, in order, “every day”, “every weekend”, and “two or three times per week/month”. The same was true of the two previous surveys.

And what about the household context? Who within family most frequently eats out at weekdays? The man, in a role of father/husband or provider,

is still the family member who most frequently eats away from home. However, a 6 % decline is observed in 2015 as compared to 2005 and 2011. In the case of women/wives and mothers, it was the reverse. The percentage of women who eat out during the week increased in 2015 in relation to both 2011 and 2005. This change could be a consequence of the Brazilian economic crisis beginning in 2014 and the increasing integration of women in the labour market. Another possible explanation for this increase could be the growing number of elderly and families that begin to have lunch at pay per kilo buffets during the week on the grounds of simplifying housekeeping (Abdala, 2005a).

## **SOCIABILITY RELATIONS RELATED TO THE HABIT OF EATING OUT**

In 2005, information about people with whom survey participants used to eat out was not disaggregated by weekdays and weekend, which only occurred as from the 2011 survey. However, considering the categories of companion mentioned as the most frequent for eating out, it can be inferred that respondents, in 2005, were mainly referring to weekdays, since 53 % out of them said that they were accompanied by co-workers. This figure drops to 41.5 % in 2011. With regard to the kind of companion chosen to eat out with, data suggests that there is no difference between income, age and gender groups. Alone, i.e. without companion, is the second most frequent answer in both surveys, followed by children, husband and wife, in this order, for 2005, and by husband, wife and children, for 2011. From data of 2011 survey, a change is observed when the reference time is the weekend. In this context, companionship for eating out is completely different. Instead of eating alone or with workmates, family – children (38 %), wife (35 %) and husband (25 %), followed by other relatives (25 %) as parents, parents-in-law, brothers and uncles/aunts – and friends (14 %) are the predominant companions. Although data on weekends for 2005 are not available, it is fair to suppose that the same hierarchy of companionship found in 2011 was valid in 2005. See Table 9 below.

12 In 2005 six age groups were defined, namely: 17/19, 20/29,30/39,40/49,50/59,60/65.

**Table 9** Categories of companion for eating out

Categories of companion	FH I - 2005	FH II - 2011 Weekdays	FH II - 2011 Weekend
Co-workers	53 %	41 %	4,6 %
Alone	27 %	15 %	3,4 %
Children	15 %	14,5 %	38 %
Husband	14 %	19 %	25 %
Wife	13 %	15 %	35 %
Schoolmate	4 %	2,9 %	X
Other relatives	11,8 %	12 %	25 %
Friends	X	9 %	14 %
Do not dine out - weekdays	X	5,3	X
Do not dine out - weekend	X	X	26 %
Do not know	0,3 %	X	X
Did not answered	0,2 %	X	X
Respondent base	1162/ M.I. =1,4	2108 M.I. = 1,3	2108 M.I =1,7

Source: Surveys of Food Habits I and II

The 2015 survey did not collect quantitative data on “who are our companions when we eat out”. On the other hand, the questionnaire included two questions on this same topic – with whom people used to eat out –, although in a reversed way. We asked: (a) What meal do you most usually share with your family at weekdays? And (b) what meal you and your family most usually have together at weekends? The results regarding the three main meals – breakfast, lunch and dinner – were as follows. During the week, dinner is the meal that respondents mostly share with their families, accounting for 37 %; it is followed by lunch, with 28 %, and breakfast, with 24 %, what corroborates what we had already indicated (Barbosa, 2007), that dinner is the most sociable meal during the week. At the end of the week, this relation is reverted: 76 % indicate lunch; 13 % indicate breakfast; and 8 %, dinner with family.

By contrasting this information with those of FHs I and II surveys, we find that dinner, as a proper meal, tends to turn into one of the types of eating out and can take the form of delivery or even take away. Thus, as weekend approaches, dinner acquires nuances of a more casual, less formal meal, although no less sociable (Barbosa, 2009).

As we may see from Table II (below), the frequency of dining out is higher at weekends than during the week. So, if the frequency of family dinner decreases at weekends (from 37 % during the week to 8 % at the weekend) as noted above, and dinner away from home becomes more frequent at weekends (11 % at weekdays and 23 % at weekends, for 2015 data), we can infer a change in the kind of sociability that prevails during the week as compared to that of the weekend, and that of “home” in relation to “outside”.

Thus, we observe that having dinner away from home is more common at weekends, but that this is a meal of a social character less connected with family life and rather focused on dating, on a couple’s relationship. On the other hand, having dinner away from home is less frequent during the week, and at weekdays this meal is highly marked by familial sociability. In short, dinners during the week are shared with family, at weekends with friends, other relatives, husband or wife, or even, though with low frequency (3.4 %), alone. Further research would be needed in order to better explain this finding.

**Table 10** – Meals eaten away from home during the week and at weekends

<b>Comparison between meals eaten away from home during the week and at weekends</b>			
<b>Meal</b>	<b>FH.I 2005</b>	<b>FH.II 2011</b>	<b>FH.III 2015</b>
Breakfast - week	13 %	16 %	11 %
Breakfast - weekend	3 %	8 %	6 %
Lunch - week	83 %	87 %	76 %
Lunch - weekend	49 %	76 %	49 %
Dinner - week	5 %	10 %	11 %
Dinner - weekend	13 %	29 %	23 %
Snacks – morning - week	5 %	9 %	8 %
Snacks – afternoon - week	19 %	30 %	24 %
Snacks – afternoon - weekend	6 %	9 %	8 %
Snacks – evening - week	3 %	9 %	12 %
Snacks – evening - weekend	9 %	18 %	14 %
Respondents base (# of respondents)	2.136 M.I.=2.1	3.000 M.I = 3.0	1.077 M.I=2.4

Source: Survey on Food Habits I,II e III

## FREQUENCY OF MEALS IN EATING OUT

With regard to this issue, there are specific data from each survey, which provide a clear picture of the changes in food habits occurred in the latter 10 years. Table 10 above indicates these changes in terms of the percentage of increase and/or decrease for each kind of meal in a comparison between the three surveys.

Taking 2005 as the base year, it is observed that the frequency of eating out increased for all meals in 2011, and for almost all in 2015. That is, in 2005 the periodicity at which Brazilians used to eat out was much lower than in the next years surveyed, both for leisure and on the grounds of work or study commitments. However, the comparison between 2011 and 2015 shows a decline in the frequency of eating out for almost every meal. A immediate explanation for such a decline could be found in the economic crisis of 2015, which was already showing clear signs in 2014. However, although this might be the easiest and most obvious explanation for the reduction in the frequency of eating out in 2015, it does not exhaust the full potential of data, since, despite a fall in relation to 2011, many meals maintained significantly higher percentages in comparison to

2005. This is the case for all meals except lunch, as much at weekdays as at weekends. The frequency of having lunch away from home during the week, in 2015, fell both in relation to 2005 and to 2011. Considering weekends, 2015 showed a still sharper drop as compared to 2011, returning to the rate of 2005.

As regards lunch at weekdays, this decline can be explained mainly on economic grounds, but also in terms of sociocultural issues. Although lacking data for 2005 and 2011 regarding the use of lunch boxes by respondents of the surveys, the symbolic redefinition of lunch boxes in Brazilian society among young people, sporty people and higher-income women led us to include a question about their use in the 2015 survey, which may account in part for the reduction in the frequency of eating lunch away from home<sup>13</sup>. Out of a total 1,720

13 In recent years, the lunch box, a stigma of the working classes, has gained new designs and position in the Brazilian social hierarchy. It became a hallmark of those who care about food healthiness and body health. It is no longer simply a token of lower income and has come to designate some sorts of social awareness. In this process it was redesigned and associated to a now emerging notion, denominated “food mobility”, among other terms.

respondents, 22 % informed taking lunch boxes to work or to school. Out of these, 72 % said they do so on economic grounds, 22 % cited caring about food healthiness, 21 % because they do not like food prepared away from home, 15 % on the grounds of aesthetic diets and to gain muscle mass, and 3 % on health concerns<sup>14</sup>.

Despite the variation in frequency of eating out, lunch is still the meal that people, in all three surveys, report eating out more often, both during the week and at weekends. This result does not surprise, insofar as this is considered the most important meal of the day by Brazilians, in terms of nutrition – not necessarily the preferred one – meaning that which provides the most energy and satiation, and is also the one involving most sociability at weekends.

Dinner away from home at weekends, supposedly another ideal target of economic constraints during crises, also decreased between 2011 and 2015, although it remained above the levels of 2005. The same is true regarding breakfast and all kinds of snacks, both during the week and at weekends. In this context, it is worth considering other dimensions in addition to the raise or decrease of the population's income. The transformation of eating practices into leisure, pleasure and cultural products, reflecting the aestheticization of food in daily life, is an important element that must be taken into account for explaining the habit of eating out that, although decreasing from 2011 to 2015, remained at levels above those of 2005.

Having dinner and snacks away from home at weekends is most of all a matter of leisure, recreation and sociability, practices that increased respectively 77 % and 55.5 % between 2005 and 2015. The financial constraints during crises, however important, do not significantly lessen the practice of eating out as a matter of leisure and recreation, which was demonstrated by the increased frequencies registered for weekends, from 2005 to 2015.

14 The question's multiplicity index (which represents the number of times each person marked possible answers) is 1.3.

## CONCLUSIONS

The meaning attributed to eating out in Brazil comprises a vast semantic field that varies according to the respective time segment – weekend or weekdays. Eating out at weekends would be characterized by the enjoyment for new tastes (eating different foods), eating leisurely, without haste and together with family and friends. Since it is a moment associated with family gathering and carefree chatting, it is considered an opportunity to deepen affections and strengthen family ties. Although the costs of eating out are always a matter of concern, at weekends they tend to be seen as an investment in leisure and pleasure, instead of a superfluous expenditure that could be avoided.

According to data from the surveys on Food Habits, people “appreciate eating out”. Conversely to the fears about a possible disruption of family life due to lack of sociability around the meals, the practice of eating out promoted by “the market” does not seem to be associated to any “loss” of sociability, corroborating what was found by Warde and Martens (2003) in the case of England.

Similarly, dimensions related to status and social performativity do not seem to play a role in weekend considerations and even less during the week, as suggested by some authors (Finkelstein, 1980)<sup>15</sup>. Regarding the meanings of eating out during the week, data show that leisure and pleasure are, in this case, replaced by the lack of an alternative. Compliance to a time frame – that of work/study – imposes a particular dynamic upon meals that takes away their pleasure aspects and either restricts sociability to co-workers or makes it a lonely practice.

In this context, both the ethos and sociability of meals are dictated by the clock, compelling one to do in haste what could be a pleasure. The choices of where and what to eat are subjected to the logic of convenience; proximity and cost are key selection

15 Nevertheless, this possibility must be taken into account when we're referring to specific groups and social moments, such as in the case of foodies and professional gourmets among others – people for whom eating becomes a lifestyle, and going to *haute cuisine* restaurants is an essential element of their social capital.

criteria for deciding. In this context, home food assumes an extremely positive dimension, almost like “comfort food”, where elements such as love, affection, care, hygiene, origin of products and flavour are the main ingredients, (Collaço, 2003; Abdala, 2005; Silva, 2011).

Despite the contrasting representations of eating out associated with the two time segments, data suggests that this does not mean that the dimensions that characterize this practice at weekends are not present in meals eaten during the week and vice versa. As weekend approaches, meal practices acquire a more ambiguous character, as it can be the case of lunches on Fridays. The same is true in times of celebrations, such as the end of the year or ritual occasions, as the birthday of a colleague for example (Barbosa, 2009).

Another finding worth highlighting in this study is that the habit of eating out has spread significantly between 2005 and 2015, in Brazil. Data demonstrates that the practice of eating out by Brazilian people is currently much more common than it was a decade ago. While growth in Brazilians' income and policies aimed at workers' food safety may in part account for such spread, they are not sufficient explanations. We found that the practice of eating out is considered to be leisure/enjoyment for all income segments of Brazilian society. This becomes clear in view of the findings that, even in the current scenario of economic crisis, the two meals that Brazilians have the habit of eating out for leisure – dinner and evening snack at weekends – showed increased frequency in relation to 2005. On the other hand, it is also true that the main meal eaten out for pleasure at weekends – the family lunch – had its frequency back to 2005 figures. Although this may seem contradictory to the previous assertion, we must take into account that it is much less expensive for a couple having dinner, or for a family having an evening snack away from home, than the whole family having lunch at a restaurant or a steakhouse on Sunday.

Regarding the kinds of meals eaten out either during the week or at the weekend, lunch is the one with the highest frequency. It is considered the most important meal of the day in terms of “nutrition” and energy (Barbosa, 2009). The second kind

of food more frequently eaten out during the week is the afternoon snack. This snack, as observed by the interviewees in the focus groups, is not related to hunger; it rather acts as a break at work, a moment of leisure and pleasure in a stressful day. At weekends, dinner and evening snacks are the meals most frequently consumed away from home.

Research data on Brazilians' eating habits showed that dinner away from home is more usual at weekends than during the week, since its frequency increases significantly, from 11 % to 23 %, based on 2015 data. On the other hand, it is a meal generally shared with the family at home during the week, 37 %, which is sharply reduced at weekends, 8 %, according to 2015 data. This finding raises questions that need further investigation regarding the sociability around this meal, both in terms of the occasion (weekday or weekend) and in relation to space (“at home” or “away from home”).

Regarding further research, another aspect worth focusing on is the study of sociability related to eating out involving other meals (lunch, afternoon snack, breakfast) as well as different periods (weekdays, weekends, holidays, vacations etc.). We observed a significant impact of income variables on the practice of eating out, but there are other aspects associated with health, food ideologies (veganism, vegetarianism etc.), body and, particularly, special diets, (Dukan, alkaline, gluten-free, volumetric, etc.), as well as processes of social distinction, which should not be disregarded and must be analysed.

Finally, the present study suggests some new research questions regarding the practice of eating out, which should be deepened. It would be important, for instance, to compare Brazilians' eating habits with those of people of other countries. What are the common features and what the differences? Such questions point to the need for international comparative research agendas in order to allow dialogue and reflection on this phenomenon through coordinated theoretical and methodological approaches.

Another issue worth investigating refers to the expansion of the practice of online food ordering: how does online food ordering and delivery come up? How do consumers choose “apps” and food

deliveries, such as iFood (in Brazil) and Just-Eat (in Europe)? On the other hand, old ways of eating out make a comeback, as happens with lunch boxes – meals prepared at home to be eaten at work or school, especially during the week. Thus, we can see that a better understanding of the processes that ascribe a new meaning to the practice of eating out may offer useful hints to understand not only the individual eating habits, but also the processes of food transition in Brazil as well as the strategies of food suppliers.

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