

# "In Portugal eating is important": does literature confirm this?

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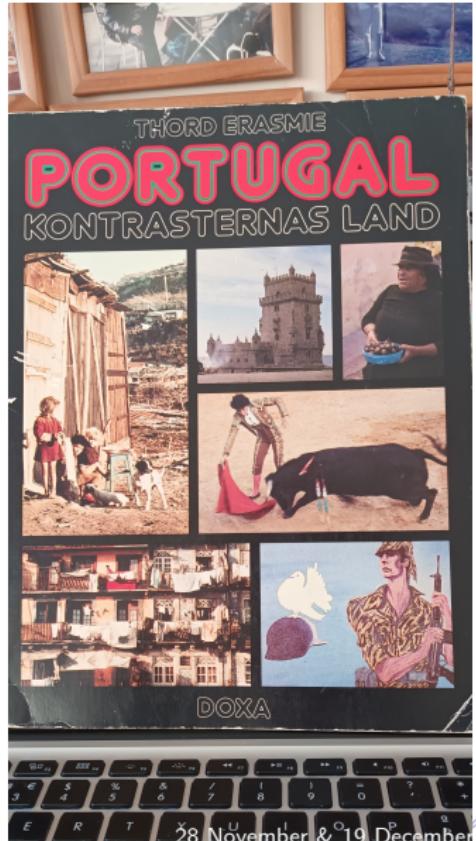


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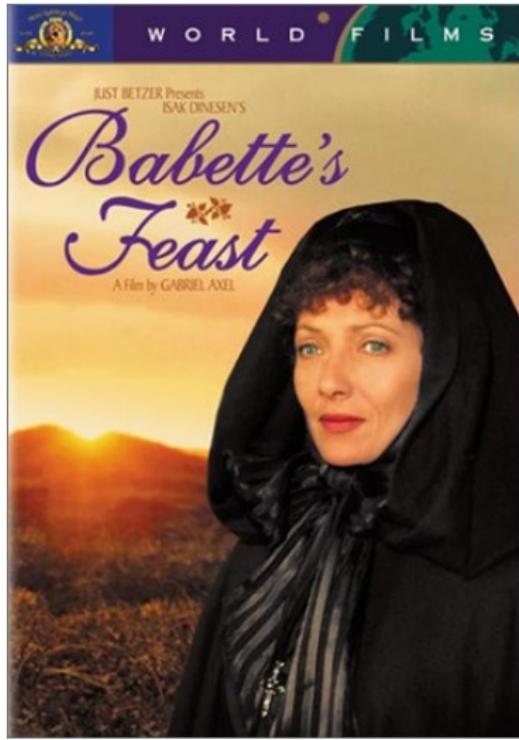
# My personal association

Much prior to have any knowledge of Scandinavia, I heard about this true story, involving a Swedish writer who wrote a book about Portugal:  
He started one of the book's chapters by this sentence:

*In Portugal, food is important.*



# My literary association: Karen Blixen and Babette's feast



- the connection between culture and food
- two opposite worlds connected by goodness
- the magic of a perfect meal
- the tragedy of immigration

Vieira de Andrade (2021):

*Throughout the centuries, food and consumption habits have been among the most widely used resources in creating fictional identities and highlighting social differences between characters or groups in Portuguese literature.*

- PhD in anthropology
- Has written books on the immaterial patrimonium of some regions in Portugal, especially wine practices and bread. *Os vinhos que vêm do frio* (2022); *Vale: património imaterial do Tâmega e Sousa* (2014).
- owns a company for anthropological, patrimonial and museological projects, Baba Yaga

Éca de Queirós (Textos de imprensa):

*O caráter de uma raça pode ser deduzido simplesmente do seu método de assar a carne. Um lombo de vaca (...) faz compreender melhor as diferenças intelectuais destes povos do que o estudo das suas literaturas.*

in Portugal the meat is a loin of veal roasted in the oven with all the seasonings until well cooked; in France the fat and skin cut out, tied, seasoned and cooked in the oven; and in England, it goes to the oven without preparation, to be consumed raw inside and toasted on the outside. Mustard, salt and pepper are on the table for each person to season it to their liking.

*the table has always been one of the strongest, if not the strongest foundation of human societies.*

# Food and identity

Ramalho Ortigão:

*the way one cooks marks the index of civilization of a people,*

Júlio Dinis:

*A cozinha de João Semana era de um carácter portuguesíssimo, e eu, ainda que me valha a confissão os desagrados de alguma leitora elegante, francamente declaro aqui que, para mim, a cozinha portuguesa é das melhores cozinhas do mundo .*

*(...) de preferência aos manjares exóticos, cuja nomenclatura tem a propriedade de fazer ignorar ao conviva o que lhe dão a comer.*

*(...) Hoje, época de programas, inventaram-se os programas dos jantares à imitação dos dos concertos, dos deputados e dos ministros. Com oito dias de antecipação publica-se o elenco de um banquete, para que cada qual procure decifrar o que vai comer, e estude a maneira como se come.*

*(As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor, 1867)*

Interview of Carlos Reis, Univ. of Coimbra:

*A literatura portuguesa parece ter sido privilegiada pelas imagens do alimento.*

*a comida é, como bem se sabe, semantizada e investida de marcas sociais.*

# Food as source of metaphors or similes

Álvaro de Campos/Fernando Pessoa, “Dobrada à moda do Porto”:

*Um dia, num restaurante, fora do espaço e do tempo,  
Serviram-me o amor como dobrada fria.  
Disse delicadamente ao missionário da cozinha  
Que a preferia quente,  
Que a dobrada (e era a do Porto) nunca se come fria*

They served me love as cold “doblada”...

Of course, it is in other places and in other periods that hunger is most important:

- For example, a renowned Brazilian film director discusses the new cinema from Latin America in 1965, Glauber Rocha: “Eztetyka da fome” (1965), and promotes hunger as a principle to create new thinking.
- Neorealism in both Portugal and Brazil does thematize hunger in many ways and works. For example the descriptions of meals or food in Ferreira de Castro in *A Lã e a Neve*, or *Vidas secas* by Graciliano Ramos, or Christmas without food in the *O meu pé de Laranja lima* by José Mauro de Vasconcelos, or the theft of cakes by poor children in *Esteiros* by Soeiro Pereira Gomes.

# Episodes or scenes

I did some accounting of food scenes in Júlio Dinis, from memory:

- the first meal when Henrique comes to his aunt's home
- Madalena feeding her young cousins
- the Christmas party
- the party at the *Águia de Ouro*
- Mr. Whitestone's birthday dinner
- the usual tea time at Cecília's
- the party at Casa Mourisca
- the meals by João Semana

then I checked the books, and discovered many more!

## Episodes or scenes

José de Alencar (Kaspar, 2014):

- change of eating behaviour in a meal as a sign of intimate trouble (*Senhora*)
- comic incident at table hides one character's tears (*O tronco de ipê*)

Camilo Castelo Branco:

*Food and dinner scenes with people at the table are textual elements frequent in the Camilian novel, since Camilo uses the detailed descriptions of meals, on the one hand, as a resource to draw the passage to different narrative sequences, and on the other hand as a “cultural and identitary fund”.*

(Rossi, 2020)

## “Other religion”-inspired themes

(Jewish) religion has shaped a lot of food habits/specialties in Portugal, but I am not aware of special literary treatments of it, not even in the historical novels.

Alheira



# Stereotypical characters

- the gluton friar or priest

*Podia dizer-se que ele dividia ali o tempo entre duas ocupações exclusivas: comer e esperar com impaciência as horas da comida.*  
(One could say he divided time between two exclusive occupations: eat; and wait impatiently for eating hours)

(Júlio Dinis, *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca*)

- the drunkard
- the wonderful cook (mistress/help)
- the young woman who hardly eats

# Júlio Dinis (1839-1871)



- pseudonym of Joaquim Guilherme Gomes Coelho
- novelist, also wrote comedies and poetry
- doctor, from Porto (second city of Portugal)
- usually classified as romantic-realist
- women are very important in his plots
- almost all his characters are orphans of mother

## “Chá” in *Uma família inglesa*

- Chapter 13, entitled *Vida Portuense* “Life in Porto” (pp. 122-138), describes the usual evening at Manuel Quintino’s home, a bookkeeper with a daughter, Cecília, and a waitress, Antónia.
- A part of those evenings is the visit of Sr. José Fortunato, a neighbour.
- And a part of this (daily) visit is tea (pp. 134-137)
- The start and end of the meal are clearly identified

*Desta vez os bocejos ficaram em meio, graças à entrada de Cecília e de Antónia com o tabuleiro do chá.*

This time yawning stopped, due to Cecilia and Antónia entering with the teatray.

*Terminou o chá. O ardor da conversa baixou. ( . . ) Davam enfim nove horas.*

The tea ended. Talk became less. ( . . ) The clock struck nine.

## “Chá” in *Uma família inglesa*: purposes

- show a typical small bourgeois home and the sort of things mentioned there
- characterize Sr. José Fortunato, as a quite ridiculous character, stupid and insensitive
- show the mood differences in Cecília whenever Carlos Whitestone (one of the main characters) is mentioned (with comments from the narrator)
  - forgets to fill JF's cup, is admonished by her father and blushes
  - talks harshly to JF asking about sugar
  - talks sweetly to her father suggesting he chooses cakes
  - orders Antónia to serve JF instead of her

The chapter ends with a nightmare by Cecilia, where she is in a boat and JF is rowing and sipping tea, Carlos attempts to rescue her but ends in a theater where there is danger.

## Children's lunch in *A morgadinha dos canaviais*

- Chapter 4 (pp. 44-59), where Henrique de Souselas (and the readers) meets Madalena (and Augusto in passing), starts by his arrival at her house, and is mainly about their first conversation, where he discovers – in a comic scene – that she is the *morgadinha*, and where he tries to flatter her, and she lectures him on how to live in a village
- When Henrique comes in, he sees that a woman is standing near two children, sitting in front of two good smelling soup bowls. They interrupt the meal to look at him
- In the middle of the talk, the adults get interrupted by a fight: one child is putting the soup into the other's bowl, and Madalena has to intervene, menacing to fetch their mother
- Henrique mentions Goethe's *Werther*, comparing Madalena to Carlota, and gets to know that she has read it too
- After further talk, Madalena interrupts it to “give the kids a slice of cheese each”

# Children's lunch in *A morgadinha dos canaviais*

- And finally, continuing the conversation:

*desatando o babeiro das crianças, que tinham terminado o «lunch»*  
untying the children's napkins, who had finished lunch

Purpose of this meal in the book

- to show village life, unpretentious
- to allow for the comparison with Carlotta, showing how read Madalena is
- to give one more reason why Henrique became interested in Madalena (not having known family life)

But the meal is impossible to trace automatically. When does it start? It is clearly a side plot, only important because Madalena shows herself in that context.

# Comparison between the two scenes

- neither is about food
- both try to convey daily life (in two very different settings)
- both characterize (or even introduce) characters, but is not through the way they eat, but through what they say
- number of food related terms:
  - *tabuleiro do chá, tostas (2), leite (2), gustativa, ambrósia, açúcar (2), colherinha (2), chá (3), bolos (2), xícara (2), chávena: 11 (19)*
  - *mesa de jantar, louça inglesa, babeiros (3), prato de odorífera sopa, «lunch» (2), refeição, banquete, sopa, prato, rações, almocei, fatia de queijo, guardanapo, sala de jantar: 14 (17)*
- density of food related terms:
  - 19 in 1092 words: 0.0174
  - 17 in 3288 words: 0.00517

- The Literateca corpus, with more than 37 million words, containing 26.8 fiction prose (mostly 19th century and early 20th century)
- coming from 6 different corpora (Vercial, OBras, NOBRE, Colonia, Tycho and PANTERA)
- annotated by PALAVRAS, developed by Eckhard Bick
- semantically annotated and revised in several domains
- publicly available for interaction on the Web, through the AC/DC interface (to Open CWB)

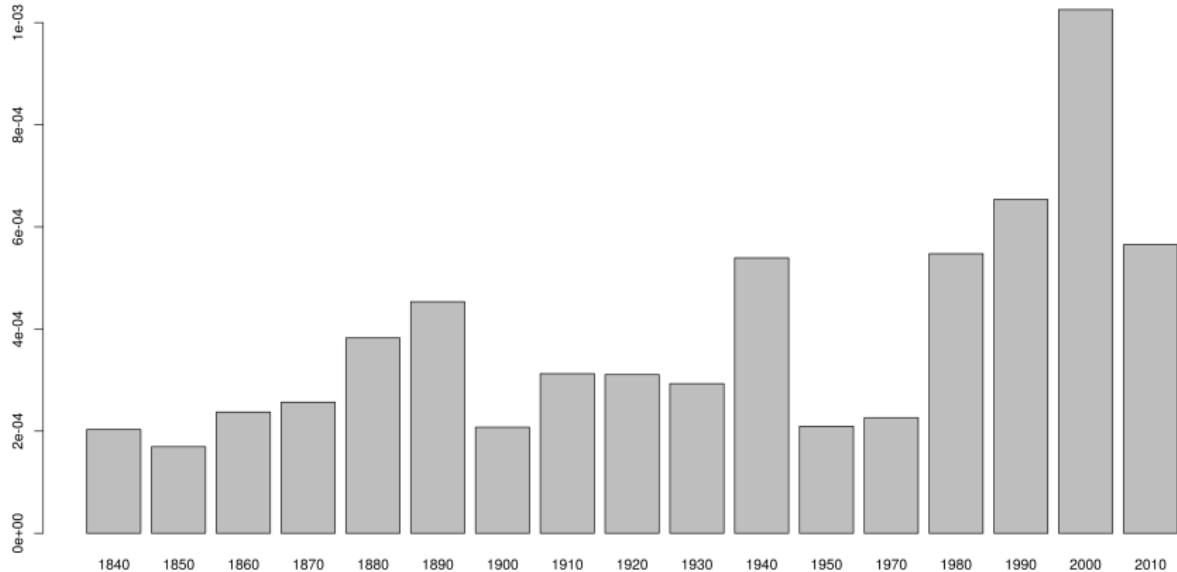
# Preliminary studies

jantar	5776
comer	4860
beber	3663
café	2220
almoço	1755
chá	1274
almoçar	1099
ceia	1094
comida	663
cear	517
refeição	415
bebida	295
iguaria	179
manjar	126
merenda	103
repasto	84
farnel	64
lanchar	43

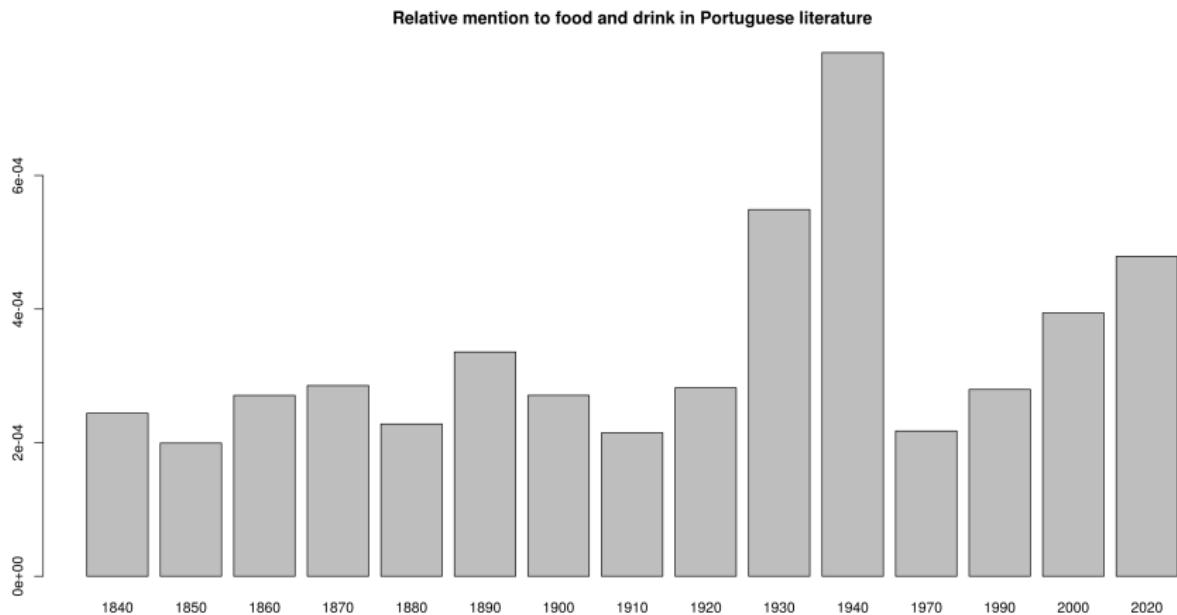
- names for meals: dinner, lunch, tea, etc
- names for food or drink
- names for taking meals (or eating/drinking)
- some cases are problematic: *café* means coffee shop ca half of the times, *chá* means tea as often as tea meal, or infusion

# Preliminary studies - time distribution per decade

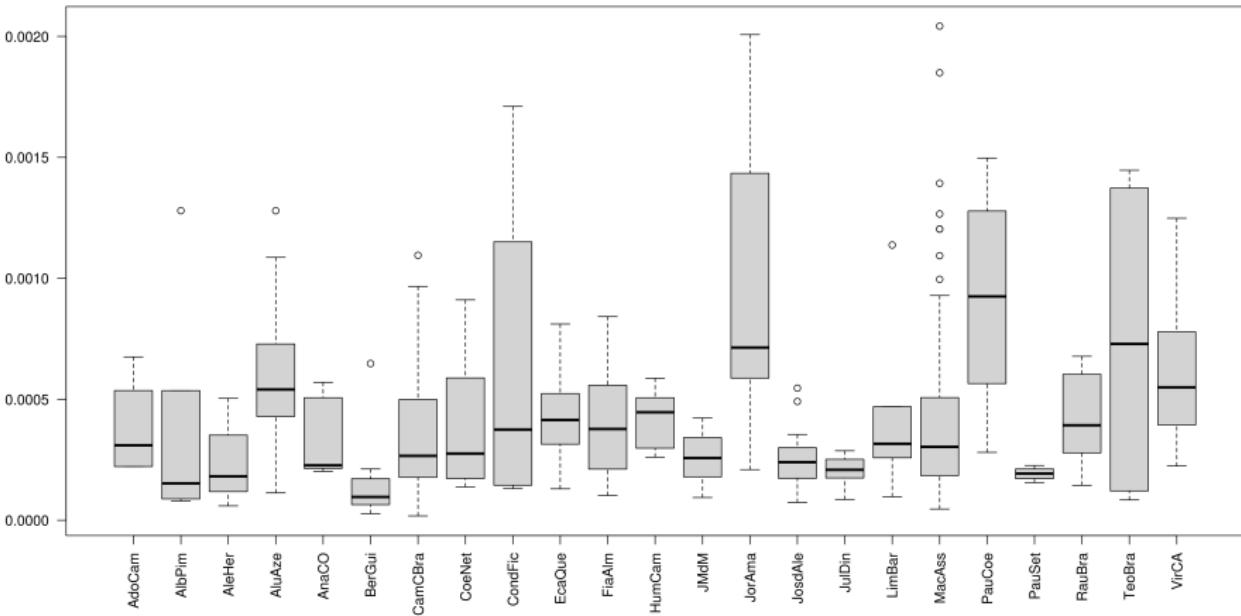
Relative mention to food and drink in Brazilian literature



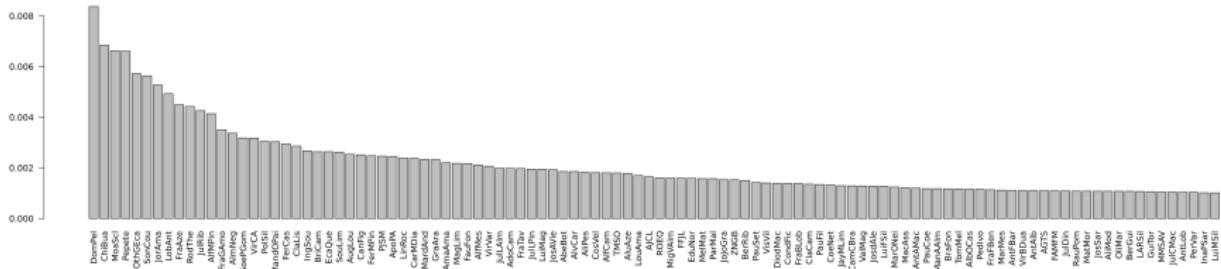
# Preliminary studies - time distribution per decade



# Preliminary studies - author distribution



## Using PALAVRAS' unrevised annotation, in novels



Note that the data from PANTERA contains excerpts and not full works, and therefore can have an artificially high relative frequency of food, as is the case of the leftmost authors in this barplot.

# Looking at *gosto*, *sabor* and *paladar*

## Distribuição

Houve 3 valores diferentes de **lema**.

gosto 5497

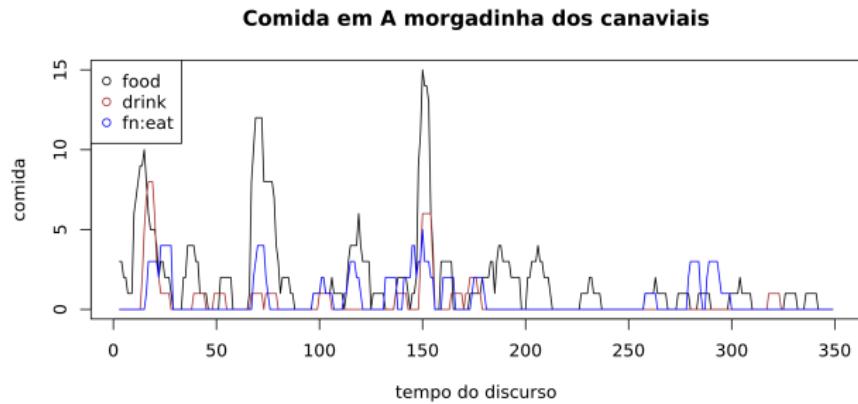
sabor 857

paladar 205

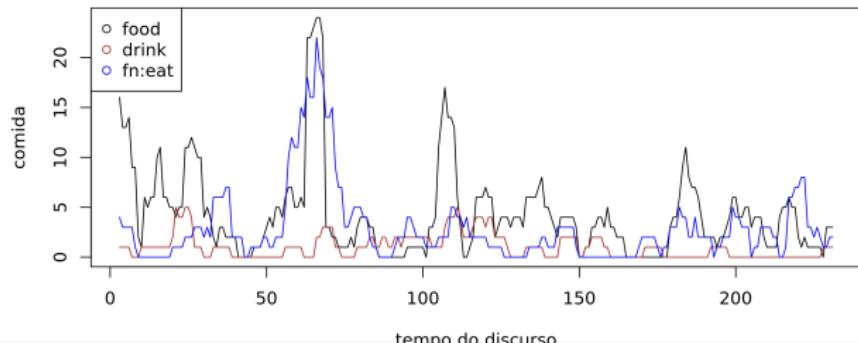
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bom	393
mau	224
muito	224
todo=o	82
grande	75
tanto	49
certo	21
fino	20
imenso	12

# Food and drink through plot



**Comida em O missionario**



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