



*La cultura alimentaria de los inmigrantes venezolanos en Riobamba: un análisis de la preservación y evolución de las tradiciones gastronómicas en un contexto migratorio*

*The Food Culture of Venezuelan Immigrants in Riobamba: An Analysis of the Preservation and Evolution of Gastronomic Traditions in a Context of Migration*

*A cultura alimentar dos imigrantes venezolanos em Riobamba: uma análise da preservação e evolução das tradições gastronómicas num contexto de migração*

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## Resumen

Desde mediados de la década de 2010, América Latina ha experimentado uno de los movimientos migratorios más grandes de su historia reciente como consecuencia de la crisis en Venezuela. Este escenario puede extrapolarse a las comunidades migrantes en Ecuador con ingresos limitados. Uno de los aspectos menos explorados de la migración venezolana en Ecuador, pero no menos importante, es el impacto de este proceso en las prácticas alimentarias, las tradiciones culinarias y las dinámicas identitarias vinculadas a la comida. Objetivo: Determinar el impacto social y económico del proceso migratorio en las prácticas alimentarias, las tradiciones culinarias y las dinámicas vinculadas a la comida, con el propósito de explorar cómo las prácticas gastronómicas de los migrantes reflejan procesos de transformación e integración cultural en contextos de movilidad humana forzada, con especial énfasis en las dinámicas observadas en las provincias de la región Sierra del Ecuador. Métodos: Esta investigación es parte de una revisión bibliográfica no sistemática con un enfoque cualitativo orientado al análisis interpretativo de la literatura científica relacionada con los cambios ocurridos en la cultura alimentaria de los inmigrantes venezolanos. También permite una mayor flexibilidad en la inclusión de diversas fuentes, considerando no solo artículos empíricos, sino también revisiones teóricas, estudios de caso, investigación cualitativa y análisis regional. Resultados: La investigación nos ha permitido explorar en profundidad la cultura alimentaria de los inmigrantes venezolanos en Ecuador, particularmente en el contexto geográfico y sociocultural de la ciudad de Riobamba y la región andina. La información recopilada y analizada en las diferentes secciones temáticas demuestra que la alimentación es mucho más que una necesidad biológica: es una práctica profundamente cultural, identitaria, política y simbólica que adquiere nuevos significados cuando ocurre en el contexto de la migración forzada.

**Palabras Clave:** Migración venezolana; impacto; prácticas gastronómicas; economía; identidad.

## Abstract

Since the mid-2010s, Latin America has experienced one of the largest migratory movements in its recent history as a consequence of the crisis in Venezuela. This scenario can be extrapolated to migrant communities in Ecuador with limited incomes. One of the less explored aspects of Venezuelan migration in Ecuador—but no less important—is the impact of this process on food practices, culinary traditions, and identity dynamics linked to food. Objective: To determine the social and economic impact of the migration process on food practices, culinary traditions, and

dynamics linked to food, with the purpose of exploring how migrant gastronomic practices reflect processes of transformation and cultural integration in contexts of forced human mobility, with special emphasis on the dynamics observed in the provinces of the Sierra region of Ecuador. Methods: This research is part of a non-systematic bibliographic review with a qualitative approach oriented towards the interpretive analysis of scientific literature related to the changes occurring in the food culture of Venezuelan immigrants. It also allows for greater flexibility in the inclusion of diverse sources, considering not only empirical articles but also theoretical reviews, case studies, qualitative research and regional analysis. Results: The research has allowed us to explore in depth the food culture of Venezuelan immigrants in Ecuador, particularly in the geographic and sociocultural context of the city of Riobamba and the Andean region. The information collected and analyzed throughout the different thematic sections demonstrates that food is much more than a biological necessity: it is a deeply cultural, identity-based, political, and symbolic practice that takes on new meanings when it occurs within the context of forced migration.

**Keywords:** Venezuelan migration; impact; gastronomic practices; economic; identity.

## Resumo

Desde meados da década de 2010 que a América Latina tem vivido um dos maiores movimentos migratórios da sua história recente, como consequência da crise na Venezuela. Este cenário pode ser extrapolado para as comunidades migrantes no Equador com rendimentos limitados. Um dos aspetos menos explorados da migração venezuelana no Equador — mas não menos importante — é o impacto deste processo nas práticas alimentares, nas tradições culinárias e nas dinâmicas identitárias ligadas à alimentação. Objectivo: Determinar o impacto social e económico do processo migratório nas práticas alimentares, tradições culinárias e dinâmicas ligadas à alimentação, com o propósito de explorar como as práticas gastronómicas migrantes reflectem processos de transformação e integração cultural em contextos de mobilidade humana forçada, com especial ênfase nas dinâmicas observadas nas províncias da região da Serra do Equador. Métodos: Esta investigação é parte de uma revisão bibliográfica não sistemática com uma abordagem qualitativa orientada para a análise interpretativa da literatura científica relacionada com as mudanças ocorridas na cultura alimentar dos imigrantes venezuelanos. Permite também uma maior flexibilidade na inclusão de fontes diversas, considerando não só artigos empíricos, mas também revisões teóricas, estudos de caso, investigação qualitativa e análises regionais. Resultados: A

investigação permitiu explorar em profundidade a cultura alimentar dos imigrantes venezuelanos no Equador, particularmente no contexto geográfico e sociocultural da cidade de Riobamba e da região andina. A informação recolhida e analisada ao longo das diferentes secções temáticas demonstra que a alimentação é muito mais do que uma necessidade biológica: é uma prática profundamente cultural, identitária, política e simbólica que assume novos significados quando ocorre no contexto da migração forçada.

**Palavras-chave:** Migração venezuelana; impacto; práticas gastronómicas; econômica; identidade.

## Introduction

Since the mid-2010s, Latin America has experienced one of the largest migratory movements in its recent history as a result of the social, economic, and political crisis in Venezuela. Venezuelan citizens have left their country in search of better living conditions, causing a significant impact on host countries. Ecuador, in particular, has become one of the main destinations for this diaspora, ranking fourth in Latin America in terms of the number of countries with the largest presence of Venezuelan immigrants after Colombia, Peru, and **Chile**, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

This migratory flow has posed significant economic, political, and social challenges for Ecuador. While institutional responses have varied, ranging from initial openness policies to restrictive measures in subsequent years, some works, such as that of Sebastián and Flores (2020), have highlighted the limitations of the Ecuadorian regulatory framework in guaranteeing international protection for Venezuelans, especially regarding access to social rights, formal employment, and basic services (Sebastián & Flores, 2020).

One of the less explored aspects of Venezuelan migration in Ecuador, but no less important, is the impact of this process on food practices, culinary traditions, and identity dynamics linked to food. Eating is not only a physiological necessity but also a deeply symbolic act, laden with values, memories, and cultural expressions that are challenged in migratory contexts.

The arrival of thousands of Venezuelans to Ecuadorian cities has meant the introduction of new ways of preparing, consuming, and understanding food. However, this integration has not been without obstacles. One of these is the limited availability of foods characteristic of Venezuelan gastronomy. This, in contrast to the economic difficulties in accessing traditional products, and the need to adapt to local food customs, has generated processes of transformation and cultural

resistance. This raises a key question: how have Venezuelan immigrants in Ecuador, and specifically in mountain provinces such as Chimborazo, preserved or modified their eating habits? In this sense, the phenomenon of food becomes a critical dimension for understanding not only the social integration of migrants but also the reproduction of their cultural identity in exile. As Ruíz (2019) states, food acts as a tangible bridge between the migrant past and present, functioning as a tool for emotional and social rooting in a new environment (Ruíz, 2019).

Added to this are the challenges of food insecurity, reported in similar research in contexts of poverty, such as the case of rural families in Colombia studied by Pertuz-Guzmán et al. (2024), where education, household size, and income directly impact diet quality (Pertuz-Guzmán et al., 2024). This scenario can be extrapolated to migrant communities in Ecuador with limited incomes. Food is a privileged way to explore the migratory experience from a cultural and emotional perspective. Places like the kitchen are identity markers that accompany the immigrant, strengthening their sense of belonging and helping them negotiate their place in the host society, as argued by research conducted by Bellia et al. (2022), who argue that culinary spaces can empower immigrant women and also offer economic opportunities for their families (Bellia et al., 2022).

Riobamba, like other towns in the Ecuadorian highlands, represents particularly fertile spaces for this analysis, not only due to the growing presence of Venezuelan immigrants, but also due to the coexistence of indigenous and mestizo culinary traditions deeply rooted in the region. This meeting of cuisines presents a unique opportunity to study processes of intercultural food, highlighting relevant aspects such as the preservation and transformation of traditional recipes, ingredients, and techniques of Venezuelan cuisine. The literature specialized in immigration has begun to pay attention to the role of food in the social integration of populations. Studies such as that of Graterol (2024) on Latin migrants in Madrid show that kitchen spaces function as places of resistance and cultural adaptation (Graterol, 2024). In the same way, in Latin America, authors such as Trapaga (2024) explored how immigrant restaurants act socioculturally as platforms for visibility and integration in cities such as Tijuana (Trapaga, 2024).

These observations project comparative hypotheses with the Ecuadorian context. Despite the material and regulatory limitations they face, Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador have managed to establish spaces where their culinary traditions are not only preserved but also adapted to the receiving environment. The preparation of arepas, empanadas, pabellón criollo, and cachapas in



small businesses, community fairs, and street vendors is evidence of a process of “migrant gastronomy” that involves culture, memory, and innovation.

This phenomenon can also be observed in the ability to adapt local ingredients to replicate the flavors of Venezuelan cuisine. For example, in the absence of imported precooked corn flour, some immigrants use local alternatives to make arepas, giving rise to hybrid versions that combine tradition and context. These types of adaptations have been documented in other Latin American regions as a sign of cultural resilience (Ruíz, 2019; Bellia et al., 2022).

Likewise, the participation of Venezuelan migrants in food fairs, as observed in Ecuadorian provinces, has contributed to a slow but significant incorporation of Venezuelan dishes into the local food culture. While traditional Ecuadorian cuisine, especially mountain cuisine, continues to occupy a central place in everyday diets, phenomena such as these pave the way for a cultural food diversity that enriches the local gastronomic offering.

## Methodology

This research is framed within a non-systematic bibliographic review with a qualitative approach oriented toward the interpretive analysis of scientific literature related to the changes occurring in the food culture of Venezuelan immigrants and, in addition, in other Latin American countries. The objective and purpose of this work is to explore how migrant culinary practices reflect processes of cultural transformation and integration in contexts of forced human mobility, with special emphasis on the dynamics observed in the provinces of the Ecuadorian highlands.

The methodological approach adopted responds to the need for a reflective, contextual, and broad presentation of the phenomenon studied. Unlike systematic reviews, this approach allows for greater flexibility in the inclusion of diverse sources, considering not only empirical articles but also theoretical reviews, case studies, qualitative research, and regional analyses. This proposed methodological breadth is especially pertinent given the relative multidimensionality of the object of study and the interaction between migration and cultural identity among Venezuelan communities settled in the country.

### **Literature Selection Criteria**

The documents analyzed were selected based on the following criteria:

Studies were included that addressed at least one of the following topics: Venezuelan migration in Latin America (with an emphasis on Ecuador), food culture, gastronomic practices, cultural identity, social integration, food security, or economic and political aspects of migration. Prioritizing works published between 2019 and 2024 to ensure the timeliness of information, considering the acceleration of Venezuelan migration flows during this period. Research published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and relevant institutional documents, such as studies by Oxfam or UNHCR, and articles available in recognized databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Scielo, were also selected.

For geographical coverage, references to studies conducted in Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Brazil were incorporated for comparative purposes, provided they contribute relevant elements to the analysis of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon from a cultural and food perspective. Methodological approach: Both quantitative and qualitative studies were included, with special attention to those employing ethnographic methods, interviews, focus groups, or narrative analysis, due to their potential to capture migrants' subjective experiences.

### **Search and Analysis Process**

The initial search for sources was conducted using a dedicated search engine such as Google Scholar and institutional academic databases. After an initial review of more than 70 potentially relevant articles, an exploratory reading of abstracts, introductions, and conclusions was conducted to identify the suitability of each document to the defined criteria.

Like any non-systematic bibliographic review, this research does not aspire to the quantitative exhaustiveness or replicability of a systematic review. The selection of sources, although guided by clear criteria, contains a subjective component in identifying the relevance and pertinence of each study. Likewise, the main focus of this study is specifically directed at the case of Ecuador, with special attention to the Sierra provinces, specifically the Chimborazo province in the Riobamba canton.

This choice implies an intentional geographic delimitation that excludes other national or regional contexts, which could offer additional perspectives but are not the central focus of this review. However, we believe this methodological strategy allows for a detailed and situated approach to

the object of study, which is important for understanding the complexity of immigrants' experiences from a cultural perspective in the context of food.

### **Documentary Analysis**

A review of the existing literature on Venezuelan immigration in Ecuador reveals how the migration phenomenon, beyond its economic or legal dimensions, entails a profound transformation at the symbolic and cultural levels. Among these, food culture occupies a prominent place, serving simultaneously as a form of rootedness, a daily practice of identity resistance, and a path to social integration. This analysis examines how Venezuelan migrants have preserved, adapted, and redefined their culinary practices in Ecuador, with particular attention to the city of Riobamba and other towns in the Andean highlands. Contextualización de la inmigración venezolana en Ecuador

Since 2014, Ecuador has been one of the most important destinations for the Venezuelan diaspora in South America. With more than 500,000 Venezuelans present in the country, it is estimated that a considerable portion has chosen to settle in intermediate cities such as Riobamba, Ambato, and Cuenca, in search of lower costs of living and lower levels of social saturation compared to Quito or Guayaquil (Pinto-Alvarez et al., 2024).

Recent studies show that the city of Riobamba has become a strategic point for migrant settlement, both due to its geographic location and its history of interculturality and ethnic diversity. According to Villalva Guevara and Inga Aguagallo (2021), the city has a cultural-gastronomic wealth anchored in ancestral practices that still survive in everyday life, which makes Riobamba a fertile space for intercultural dialogue (Villalva Guevara & Inga Aguagallo, 2021). At the structural level, however, access to formal employment, healthcare, and food remains unequal for Venezuelan migrants. Serrano Córdova et al. (2023) document how integration policies have been inconsistent and often exclusionary, creating gaps in access to services and decent living conditions (Serrano Córdova et al., 2023). These limitations directly impact the food dimension.

### **Cooking as a Cultural Refuge and Affective Strategy**

Food culture is one of the most resilient pillars of migrant identity. For Venezuelans in Ecuador, preparing and consuming traditional foods such as arepas, pabellón criollo, hallacas, or cachapas has become an act of emotional resistance in the face of displacement. According to Ruíz (2019),



cooking allows one not only to remember the country left behind, but also to build a sense of "home" in a foreign territory (Ruíz, 2019).

This phenomenon has been extensively documented by Graterol (2024), who describes how migrant cuisine functions as a capsule of identity, especially among women, who are often the bearers and reproducers of culinary knowledge in migrant households (Graterol, 2024). In Riobamba, the phenomenon is no different. Various testimonial reports show how Venezuelan families recreate their food traditions even in precarious conditions, adapting available ingredients without sacrificing the flavor or meaning of their dishes. Adaptación alimentaria e innovación culinaria en Riobamba

The lack of ingredients specific to Venezuelan cuisine has forced migrants to redesign their recipes. PAN flour, for example, is not always available or is very expensive, so many migrants have opted for Ecuadorian ground corn flours or even combined mountain ingredients such as quinoa or potatoes to create new versions of arepas and empanadas. This hybridization process is part of what Barbieri et al. (2019) call the "reconfiguration of the migrant foodscape," in which the flavors of the country of origin intertwine with those of the host country to form new cultural expressions (Barbieri et al., 2019). In Riobamba, local studies identify that food businesses, including those run by migrants, use social media and apps to promote their products, reaching diverse clients and establishing new markets.

Furthermore, Venezuelan cuisine has begun to be incorporated into cultural events, food fairs, and intercultural celebrations in Chimborazo. Villalva Guevara & Inga Aguagallo (2021) argue that this visibility has contributed to a gradual, though still incipient, recognition of migrant gastronomy as part of the local urban landscape.

### **Food Entrepreneurship as an Economic Integration Strategy**

Gastronomy has been one of the most accessible sectors for Venezuelan migrants to develop microenterprises. From street vendors selling arepas to delivering Creole food, many have found in the kitchen a source of income and a way to assert their place in the city. This phenomenon has been addressed by Trapaga (2024), who points out that migrant restaurants and food services function as "laboratories of cultural and economic integration" (Trapaga, 2024). In the specific case of Riobamba, Ayala Cali (2020) investigated marketing strategies in food business, demonstrating that the use of the digital environment and a reputation based on gastronomic authenticity are key

to the positioning of these businesses (Ayala Cali, 2020). These ventures are not without challenges. Many operate in informal conditions, with limited access to credit, health licenses, or adequate infrastructure.

However, its resilience and ability to generate employment have been recognized by various local stakeholders, including migrant support organizations and municipal governments.

Food Insecurity and Structural Gaps Food insecurity is a constant among migrant families, especially those who have not yet established a stable source of income. Studies conducted in Quito by Latorre et al. (2022) show how migrants often rely on informal networks to access basic food supplies, and how women prioritize their children's nutrition even at the expense of their own food (Latorre et al., 2022). In Riobamba, conditions are not very different. Despite the lower cost of living compared to other cities, many Venezuelan families live in overcrowded conditions, with incomes below the minimum wage and without access to food subsidies. This directly impacts the quantity and quality of food they can consume. According to Milán & Martens (2023), there is a direct correlation between irregular migration status and severe food insecurity, which affects the physical and cognitive development of children and adolescents (Milán & Martens, 2023). Despite this situation, some local programs and NGOs have begun to organize community kitchens, charity fairs, and food assistance, although their reach remains limited.

### **Cultural Tensions and Symbolic Integration**

The encounter between cuisines has not always been harmonious. In some communities, acts of xenophobia or rejection of foods or customs considered "foreign" have been recorded. Mantilla (2020) documents how these tensions manifest themselves not only in social discourses but also in consumption practices, where the local is considered "authentic" and the migrant "threatening" (Mantilla, 2020). However, other works such as that of Barbieri et al. (2019) show that food can also act as a bridge. Through taste, curiosity, and exchange, migrant cuisines manage to establish a dialogue with the host community, generating recognition and empathy. In Riobamba, this process is visible in markets, fairs, and restaurants that have begun to include Venezuelan dishes on their menus or offer culinary fusions such as quinoa arepa or empanada de morocho.

The analysis of the selected literature allowed us to explore a wide range of recent studies (2019–2024) on the links between food culture, migration, and identity. The 28 selected studies were organized thematically to offer a holistic view of the phenomenon, considering methodological

diversity, geographical context, and key findings. A detailed analysis by category is presented below.

### **1. Food Culture as a Tool for Identity and Adaptation**

Several studies show that food acts as a symbolic axis that allows migrants to reaffirm their cultural belonging. González León (2020) highlights how cultural expressions, including gastronomy, allow for a redefinition of the migratory experience. Graterol (2024) observes that in contexts like Madrid, Latin American food culture not only preserves the memory of the country of origin but also becomes a strategy for integration and resistance. Trapaga (2024), using an ethnographic approach, shows that gastronomy becomes a means of subsistence and cultural integration for migrants in Tijuana. These studies support the central hypothesis of this work: traditional dishes are not only preserved by tradition, but are also reinvented as a mechanism of belonging and inclusion.

### **2. Culinary Adaptation and Migratory Transformations**

Food adaptation is not static. Ruíz's (2019) study provides an emotional perspective on how migrant women use the kitchen to cope with family breakdown. Similarly, Manzano-Munguía et al. (2022) examine Chinese restaurants in Mexico as spaces of symbolic creation, where traditions and local contexts merge. Bellia et al. (2022) argue that these practices can empower migrant communities through collective dynamics. Evidence suggests that migrants not only transfer recipes but also adapt them to local availability, as is the case with Venezuelans in the city of Riobamba in the face of a shortage of traditional ingredients.

### **3. Structural conditions that impact migrant food practices**

The review revealed multiple obstacles that migrants face in their food practices, including economic, political, and health factors. Ventura et al. (2021) point out that unequal access to basic services affects the food security of migrants in Latin America. Stoesslé (2022) highlights how "culturalist" explanations for health end up reinforcing stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Likewise, Ileri (2019) and Stang Alva et al. (2020) denounce how securitizing discourse justifies migration policies that limit migrants' agency. These conditions impact the ability to maintain their own culinary practices, forcing an adaptation that is not always desired.

#### **4. Gender perspectives and gastronomy**

Several studies show how migrant women play a key role in cultural reproduction and transformation through food. Rebolledo Gámez & Casado (2020) address the feminization of migration from a human rights perspective. Mata Navarro (2020) explores transnational motherhood, highlighting how women continue to transmit cultural values through food. García & Sarceda Gorgoso (2019) show that women returning from Venezuela face integration challenges, many of which are mediated by their traditional roles in the domestic sphere. This approach is essential for the case study in Riobamba, where many women lead gastronomic ventures or maintain family culinary practices.

#### **5. Education, Media, and Representation of Migrant Culture**

The institutional and symbolic context also influences the dynamics of migrant food. Cárdua & Ponce (2020) and Mora Olate (2019) warn about the lack of inclusive policies in education, where cultural diversity is often not recognized or valued. In parallel, Quezada (2021) exposes how the media contributes to consolidating stigmas toward migrants, conditioning their reception in local environments. These factors indirectly influence food practices, both through available resources and the recognition (or lack thereof) of migrant cuisine as part of the local cultural landscape.

The studies reviewed confirm that food culture is much more than an act of consumption: it is a space of memory, negotiation, and power. In the specific case of Venezuelan immigrants in Riobamba, this analysis supports the hypothesis that food acts as a mechanism of cultural resistance, but also of opening toward the new. The tensions between continuity and transformation are constant, but not mutually exclusive. Far from disappearing, culinary traditions are adapting, redefining their meaning, and projecting themselves into public spaces.

The PRISMA systematic review not only identified solid academic sources but also developed a conceptual map that guides theoretical discussion and future interpretation of field data. These findings confirm the need to approach the migration phenomenon from an interdisciplinary perspective that considers the symbolic, the structural, and the everyday.

#### **Final Comments**

This literature review has provided a deeper understanding of food culture as a central dimension of migration processes, particularly in the case of Venezuelan immigrants settled in the city of

Riobamba, Chimborazo province. Far from constituting a neutral domestic practice, food is positioned as an articulating axis of identity, memory, resilience, and cultural adaptation.

The literature reviewed shows that, in migratory contexts, gastronomy becomes a symbolic mechanism of cultural continuity. Authors such as Graterol (2024) and González León (2020) highlight how the reproduction of traditional recipes not only preserves culinary heritage but also serves as an act of affirmation in the face of displacement. In this sense, food becomes a space of resistance to loss, an emotional refuge, and a strategy for rebuilding "home" in foreign territories. At the same time, migrant food culture cannot be understood as static. Evidence shows that it constantly adapts to available resources, the socioeconomic conditions of the host environment, and interactions with other local gastronomic cultures. Studies such as those by Trapaga (2024) and Manzano-Munguía et al. (2022) point out how migrant cuisines in Latin America adopt local ingredients and techniques, generating hybrid culinary forms that express both continuity and transformation.

In this process of gastronomic reconstruction, migrant women play a particularly significant role. As Mata Navarro (2020) and Bellia et al. (2022) emphasize, they are the ones who largely assume the symbolic reproduction of culinary practices, acting as cultural mediators in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Furthermore, these practices often become economic subsistence strategies through informal food entrepreneurship, which highlights a dual function: cultural and material.

However, the review also reveals structural tensions that limit the full development of these practices. Media stigmatization (Quezada, 2021), restrictive immigration policies (Villalobos & Ramírez, 2019), the lack of interculturality in the educational system (Mora Olate, 2019), and decontextualized healthcare (Stoesslé, 2022) are some of the factors that directly affect the free exercise of cultural identity through food. These structural conditions reinforce dynamics of invisibility or folklorization of migrant cuisine.

In the specific context of Riobamba, a city located in the heart of the Ecuadorian highlands, migrant food culture has begun to integrate into the local urban and culinary landscape. Despite the economic and regulatory constraints migrants face—such as informality, lack of permits, and unequal access to resources—they have managed to establish small businesses and retail outlets offering Venezuelan products to an increasingly interested clientele. This phenomenon suggests a



progressive openness on the part of the host society to new culinary expressions, although it still coexists with unresolved stereotypes and cultural tensions.

From an anthropological perspective, happening in cities like Riobamba can be interpreted as a form of food fusion, where the flavors, ingredients, and techniques of different traditions begin to intertwine within the same geography. The incorporation of Andean products such as quinoa, papa chola, and mote corn into Venezuelan recipes reflects a process of creative hybridization that transforms migrant cuisine without stripping it of its identity. This type of culinary innovation demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of cultures in motion and presents interesting opportunities for strengthening intercultural dialogue in the country.

At the same time, this review has highlighted the multiple vulnerabilities faced by Venezuelan migrants in terms of food security. Numerous studies reveal that a considerable proportion of this population faces moderate or severe food insecurity, especially women and children. This situation is exacerbated in contexts where immigration status is irregular, which prevents access to state assistance programs or social protection mechanisms. The fact that migrant women sacrifice their own food to ensure that of their children reflects not only the material precariousness in which they live, but also the symbolic weight of food as an act of care and family support.

Ecuadorian public policies, while they have made efforts to offer protection to the migrant population, continue to present significant gaps in terms of social inclusion, access to rights, and cultural recognition. In the area of food, this translates into a weak connection between social assistance programs and the specific needs of migrants, who are often left out of subsidies, school programs, or community networks. Therefore, a critical review of government strategies is required, based on interculturality and human rights, to address these structural inequalities in a more equitable and effective manner.

Another relevant aspect emerging from the review is the role of gastronomy as a mechanism for symbolic integration. Although prejudices toward "foreign" foods and customs still exist, many community and educational spaces are beginning to recognize the value of migrant cuisine as a pedagogical and social cohesion tool. Intercultural events, food fairs, and school programs with a multicultural approach can constitute valuable platforms for promoting respect, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. The city of Riobamba, due to its mestizo tradition and its medium-sized population, has particular potential to become a laboratory for inclusive experiences in this regard.

From an academic perspective, this non-systematic bibliographic review also identifies certain limitations and gaps in the existing literature. While there has been a significant amount of research on Venezuelan migration in Ecuador, relatively few studies address the phenomenon from the perspective of food culture, and even fewer focus on intermediate-sized cities like Riobamba.

Most of the reviewed works take a macro approach, focusing on the structural conditions of migration (employment, health, public policy), neglecting the cultural and symbolic dimensions of the migrant experience. This gap represents an opportunity for future, more in-depth, interdisciplinary, and situated research that considers food not only as a necessity but as an integral social and cultural phenomenon.

Likewise, it would be desirable for future lines of research to incorporate participatory methodologies that give migrants a direct voice, allowing for knowledge to be built from their experiences, stories, and knowledge. Ethnographic studies, interviews, discourse analysis, and food mapping could enrich our understanding of how cultural identity is negotiated, reproduced, or redefined in everyday cooking. It would also be useful to expand the comparative perspective to other Andean cities, such as Ambato, Loja, and Cuenca, to identify common patterns or territorial particularities in the culinary integration of Venezuelan migrants. In terms of public policy, the findings of this review suggest the need to promote more decisive actions in favor of the food inclusion of migrants. This implies not only guaranteeing access to sufficient and nutritious food, but also promoting cultural food sovereignty: that is, the right of people to access the foods that are part of their history, tradition, and identity. In this sense, local governments could play a key role by designing intercultural markets, lines of credit for gastronomic entrepreneurs, culinary training programs with a migrant focus, and spaces to promote Venezuelan cuisine in the public sphere.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that food, in its cultural dimension, can be one of the most powerful tools for building a more plural, supportive, and cohesive society. In a world marked by human mobility, forced displacement, and tensions between cultures, food offers common ground for mutual recognition, empathy, and the celebration of diversity. When migrant cuisines are allowed to flourish, new forms of citizenship, hospitality, and coexistence also flourish.

In conclusion, the food culture of Venezuelan immigrants in Riobamba and Andean Ecuador not only survives displacement, but is reinvented, shared, and transformed. In every arepa sold on a street corner, in every empanada served in a market, in every recipe adapted with local ingredients, a story of struggle, hope, and belonging is woven. Recognizing, protecting, and learning from these

practices is not only an act of justice for those who have been displaced, but also an opportunity to enrich the social fabric of the country that hosts them. The kitchen, as a symbolic territory, reminds us that we all have something to offer, and much to share.

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