

From *Peixefritismo* to Yellow-bean Stew: Angolan National Cuisine in the Pot and in the Novel

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Abstract: As part of the ideology of nationalism, every nation is supposed to have a national cuisine. During recent decades, African national cuisines have emerged in a number of states, in particular in Lusophone Africa. Cookbooks on African cuisines have been published in Europe and parts of Africa and the national cuisine proclaimed on official websites. This article reviews the appearance of these cuisines and then focuses on the development of the “national cuisine” of Angola and on national dishes such as *muamba de galinha*. Finally, how food is portrayed in a number of Angolan novels is discussed, and the question raised: why should cuisine appear in some works and not in others?

Cozinha Tradicional de Angola (Cabral) assembles a collection of recipes from Angola, a geographical space only finally established in 1891 following the scramble for Africa. In the introduction we are told that “Angola é uma terra de fascínio, cor, alegria; uma natureza vibrante, um povo afável, paisagens lindas. Mas entre as suas muitas riquezas, encontramos verdadeiras pérolas para o paladar. A gastronomia angolana é deliciosa e variada” (11). How then has this “delicious and varied” cuisine emerged?

Catherine Palmer has pointed out that food, landscape, and the body have been aspects of the modern material world that have been important to both individual and collective identities: she calls these the “three flags of

identity" (183). In the developed world today it is taken for granted that every nation has its own cuisine: an Angolan nation must have its own cuisine. As Ohnuki-Tierney has stressed, it is the sharing of food together that is important: "Commensality is an important cultural institution everywhere, whether at a family table or at a college in Oxford or Cambridge and it is a crucial cultural institution whereby people who eat together become 'we' as opposed to 'they,' and the food shared becomes a metaphor for a social group" (9). As a nation is a group of people so numerous that it can only be imagined (Anderson), for the group to share the same meal the nation's food must be defined as belonging to it and to it alone.

The word "cuisine" itself comes with some baggage and carries with it a hint of elitism and perhaps an association with restaurants, cookery books, and male chefs. In Africa, this "cuisine" is far from the "eating of anything for survival" that many Africans are facing today. Indeed, perhaps discussing a national cuisine at a time of famine would seem to be grossly inappropriate. We are, however, addressing cuisine in the context of the modern state and where the construction of a sense of national identity may be crucial to that state's long-term survival. The building of a notion of a national cuisine is just one, though important, contributor to this project, and even if in some African countries only a small elite actually consume the national dishes, many other people will be aware of their national symbolism.

This article, after a brief review of the emergence of African national cuisines, concentrates on the development of Angolan cuisine and its links to Portugal and Portuguese cuisine. This cuisine makes some erratic appearances in a number of Angolan novels and the article asks why should food and cuisine infiltrate the pages of certain novels and be absent from others.

African national cuisines

When examining African cuisines we are also exploring the relationship of "everyday life" to the social, cultural, and political history of particular parts of Africa. These cuisines are firmly linked to the colonial past as well as to the postcolonial history, globalized food markets, to emergency food aid, to patriarchal, traditional, and religious ideologies, and to many centres of power and their associated or constitutive discourses. However, when examining African cuisine it is inevitably the colonial "inheritance" that comes into focus. For example, the colonial encounter has been crucial to modern Senegalese cuisine. The French began to grow ground nuts about 1870, so

that by the 1930s over half of the agricultural land in Senegal was taken up by this crop. Meanwhile, in Indochina, the French were producing rice, so that importing the poor quality broken-rice to Senegal from there made sense, while the premium product, carried in the same ships, was sent on to France. Senegal is now a major importer of broken rice from the Far East. As a result, the government of independent Senegal is burdened with an enormous rice import bill and wants to boost the consumption of local grains such as millet and sorghum (Barrot 93-94).

As I have discussed elsewhere, national cuisines are currently being claimed by a number of African states and official national websites show such cuisines as part of the national cultural heritage ("Recipes" 207-25). Cookery books play an important part in the assembling of national cuisines, as can be seen from the examples of India or Mexico. In recent decades, in the West, there has been a considerable interest in African cuisine and a great number of cookery books has been published—in the US, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. These African cuisines often include African-American, Caribbean, or Brazilian dishes and, indeed, for African Americans, "African" and "African-American" dishes are often conflated. Again in the West, a few country-specific cookery books can also be found. For example, a Tanzanian cookery book has been published in the United States and books on Ghanaian and Nigerian cookery can be found in the UK and US ("Recipes" 223-25). Books on the cuisines of specific North African countries and on Madagascar, Cameroon, Congo, and Mauritius have also appeared in France and at least one on Senegalese cooking in Spain ("Pots, pens" 294-96).

In Anglophone Africa, a considerable number of cookery books has now been published: in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Gambia, Nigeria, and especially in South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya ("Pots, pens" 223-225). Fewer cookery books have been traced from Francophone Africa although national dishes appear to be well recognised, perhaps as an overseas extension of French esteem for obscure regional delicacies. Senegal has a number of national dishes including *le thiéboudienne* (rice and fish) and *Poulet Yassa*, from the Casamance region. The very dominance of French culture in its former colonies, and the importance of French cuisine as a component of that culture, may have suppressed the more widespread proclaiming of national cuisines in Francophone Africa.

It must however be remembered that cuisine in Africa is usually handed down orally, mainly from mother to daughter. Radio and television cookery

programmes are also common in many African countries, while newspapers and magazines, which have generally flourished in much of Africa in recent years, have also included columns giving recipes.

The cuisines of Portugal and Lusophone Africa

What about the five Lusophone African countries? Here a more developed sense of a national cuisine seems to have emerged. The key is perhaps to be found in the importance placed by Portugal on maintaining cultural links to the Lusophone world. The promotion of a worldwide Lusophone cuisine by the Portuguese might be seen as an echo of the *lusotropicalista* doctrine, and, indeed, the postcolonial Lusophone state's willing compliance with this Portuguese culinary interpenetration might suggest that some remnants of this lusotropicalism still have some purchase in Portugal's former African colonies. However, just as lusotropicalism in Africa was mainly a myth concocted by the ideologues of the *Estado Novo*, the whole history of Portugal's encounter with colonial cuisines was one of separation of the cuisines and, according to Alfredo Margarido, this remained so for the whole period of Portuguese colonialism (42-45). For example, in Angola, if you wanted to become an *assimilado* you had to show you had abandoned native food (42). Notwithstanding this, present-day Portugal remains happy to promote Lusophone cuisines, believing—rightly—that Portugal has been crucial in their construction both through bringing many foodstuffs from the Americas and by directly influencing many recipes.

So what makes Portuguese cuisine different from, say, Spanish cuisine? Is it just a collection of regional recipes, like many other cuisines, drawn together to form what is typically Portuguese? Certainly one of the more widely used cookery books, Maria de Lourdes Modesto's *Cozinha Tradicional Portuguesa* is made up of the "representative," "authentic," and "most characteristic" dishes taken from each region. Great numbers of cookery books on the regional cuisines of Portugal have been published—from Estremadura, Minho, Alentejo, Madeira, etc. Alternatively, perhaps Portuguese cuisine is different because of the influence of the Moors and the Sephardic Jews on some of these regional dishes?

More pertinently for our discussion, has the food of the former empire influenced Portuguese cuisine? Cherie Y. Hamilton points out in her book of Lusophone cuisines that many recipes in the present-day former colonies are based on Portuguese regional dishes. Thus, for instance, *pastelão de atum*, tuna

frittata, from São Tomé and Príncipe is an adaptation of a Portuguese *pastelão* but using tuna, palm oil, and a hot sauce (Hamilton 83).¹ However, there seems very little influence the other way around and those other Africans, the Moors, probably have had more impact on Portuguese cuisine. Alfredo Margarido (43) has argued that returning African colonial settlers sneered at dishes such as *muamba* from Angola or *catchupa* from Cape Verde and this may more accurately reflect Portuguese attitudes to “a cozinha dos outros.”

Nevertheless, today Portugal seems to be fascinated by the cuisine of its former colonies—and it is the Portuguese input that fascinates—and maintains a number of websites on Lusophone gastronomy. For instance *Portugal em linha—Os Sabores Lusófonos* asserts that it is not just the Portuguese language but other cultural traits, including cuisine, that “characterise the Lusophone peoples.” Another active website is the *Roteiro Gastronómico de Portugal*, which is sponsored by wine-makers, restaurants, food producers and many other groups. Here the choice of web pages offered to the reader is shown on a task bar across the top of the page—“Home // Recipes // Sweets // Regional Recipes // International // *Lusofonia* [my italics] // Restaurants.” A click on *Lusofonia* leads you to “*Sabores da Lusofonia*,” where a picture of and a quotation from Camões is displayed alongside the flags of the Lusophone world. Clicking on these flags leads in turn to a list of recipes from each country displayed alongside a picture (and biography) of Infante D. Henrique. Thus, for the Portuguese, the cuisines of the Lusophone world are closely linked to the Portuguese age of the discoveries. Marques da Cruz’s book, entitled *À mesa com Luís Vaz de Camões ou o romance da cozinha no Portugal das descobertas*, confirms the strong Portuguese association between the “great discoverers” and gastronomy. All this suggests that it is this focus on the former empire, and the importance of that component of Portuguese national identity, that has driven Portugal to nurture the growth of interest in cuisines in its former colonies.

There are a number of cookery books published in Portugal focused on Africa, as well as on other parts of the Lusophone world. Maria Odette Cortes Valente claims that all Lusophone cooking in Africa, Brazil, Goa, Macao and East Timor was the discovery of the Portuguese—as if it would not have existed at all without the Portuguese. Maria de Lourdes Chantre has also written *111 Receitas de Cozinha Africana* and a book on the cuisine of Cape Verde. The most comprehensive book on Lusophone cuisines is probably, however, one published in English, Cherie Y. Hamilton’s *Cuisines of Portuguese Encounters*. Here the emphasis is placed on the interrelationship of

all the Lusophone cuisines with related dishes from different countries following each other in the text.

Before examining Angolan cuisine in a little more detail, it is useful to briefly recall the role played by the Portuguese in introducing so many food-stuffs, and cuisine, to Africa. Many of the staple foods of Africa came originally from the Americas—peanuts, manioc, corn, and tomatoes for example. Three items were brought by the Portuguese to all the areas they controlled: olive oil, wine, and cheese (da Cruz 154). Hamilton gives an excellent example of Portuguese agency in spreading food culture. She follows the progress of dishes based on okra, a vegetable native to West Africa. The Portuguese first carried okra to Brazil, where it resembled a local plant that was called *caruru* by the local Tupi-Guarani Indians. An Afro-Brazilian shrimp and okra dish was then “concocted” and named *caruru*, only then to be brought back to Angola to become part of Angolan cuisine—the *calulu* of the official Angolan national webpage on the cuisine of Angola under the heading “Art and Culture.” The dish then moved on to São Tomé and Príncipe, brought there by contract workers in the cocoa plantations, so that now a chicken and okra dish called *kalulu de galinha* is a typical national dish (Hamilton 10, 119). Thanks to the Portuguese, the okra has moved in a full circle.

Culinária angolana

The anthropologist Mesquitela Lima, writing the introduction to *111 Receitas de Cozinha Africana* in 1981, acknowledges an already existing Angolan cuisine. She writes “[a]ssim se pode falar de cozinha chinesa, africana, hindu, índia das pradarias, russa, portuguesa, cabo-verdiana, guineense, angolana ou de outras que não são mais do que fixações, ‘cristalizações’ produtos de articulações constantes de procura de misturas de alimentos com o único objetivo de agradar ao paladar, ao gosto dos homens dessas culturas” (Lima 12). Here Angolan cuisine seems to have firmly crystallized alongside Russian and Chinese cuisine.

Angola, which has only just achieved peace after some forty years of liberation and then civil war, might not be seen as a successful attempt at nation-building. Those thousands of Angolans suffering from the recent famine will have had little concern for any notion of an Angolan cuisine. However, the parties that fought the Angolan civil war all fought for control of an Angola set within the fixed boundaries inherited from the colonial power, not just for part of it. The ruling elite’s project of nation-building,

which has deep roots in the centralised and authoritarian colonial state, will include the assemblage of a national cuisine. We should note that the Angolan novelist and ethnographer, Óscar Ribas, wrote the first short book on Angolan “alimentação” in 1965—some ten years prior to independence. Interestingly this was first published as a book by the *Centro de Informação e Turismo de Angola*, showing an early link between tourism promotion and the definition of a national cuisine.

The recently published *Cozinha Tradicional de Angola* (Cabral) was one of a series of cookery books on *Cozinha Internacional*, which also includes Paola Rolletta’s *Cozinha Tradicional de Moçambique*. Cabral’s recipes are divided into four sections: *Peixe e Marisco*, *Carne*, *Acompanhamentos*, and *Doces*. The recipes include ingredients that would be found in Angola, such as *dinhungo* (*abóbora carneira*) but with suggestions as to substitutes that might be used in Portugal—a large courgette in this instance (8). This is a book aimed at both an Angolan and Portuguese reader—and cook. Cabral writes “[q]ue este livro ofereça a todos os angolanas e portugueses que viveram em Angola pratos com sabor a este belo país, e a todos aqueles que nunca proveram a gastronomia angolana uma oportunidade para o fazerem, é aquilo que desejo” (12). These recipes, like the fifteen Angolan dishes set out in Chantre’s 1981 book, have an authentic ring, using palm oil for example, and they appear less adapted to the European—or American kitchen—than many Anglo-Saxon books on African cooking seem to be. To the non-Lusophone reader some of the recipes listed on the website of the *Roteiro Gastronómico de Portugal* might seem more authentically Angolan. For example, in the recipe for an Angolan version of *Galinha de Cabidela* we are told to “[m]ate a galinha e aproveite o sangue, ao qual se deve misturar vinagre para não coagular” <<http://www.gastronomias.com/lusfonia/ang013.html>>. However, this dish is typically Portuguese, so that this apparent Angolan authenticity is actually that of the Portuguese peasant.²

It is not surprising that “Angolan cuisine” is proclaimed, in English, on the official website as an important part of Angolan culture. A list of dishes is provided under the heading “Cuisine of Angola,” including Palm Oil Beans, Fish Calulu, Corn Funge, and Chicken Muamba. *Funge* is a type of porridge made of corn or manioc and is eaten with meat and vegetable stews, while *muamba de galinha*, variants of which are common to much of South West Africa, consists of chicken cooked in palm oil, onion, garlic, and okra. This might be claimed as the national dish of Angola and will certainly be

found in Angolan restaurants in Lisbon and elsewhere. Another typical dish is the Angolan version of *feijoada* cooked with palm oil (*demdem*), which produces the yellow colour of the yellow bean stew. However, Afonso Praça suggests that there are two essential dishes of Angolan cuisine, the *muamba* and the *mufete*, a dish of grilled small fish and manioc meal. On another website (terravista 1) an anonymous author declares: “Frescura e simplicidade são as características chaves da cozinha Angolana. Não há molhos complicados nem decorações sofisticados. É o honesto sabor dos produtos da terra Mãe, subtilmente acentuado com as especiarias apropriadas, que confere aos produtos mais comuns a nota de originalidade própria da Cozinha Angolana.” Such claims of simplicity are a common feature of much gastro-nationalism.

Compared with many other African nations, Angola does have a number of widely accepted national dishes: *muamba de galinha*, *feijão com óleo de palma*, *calulu*, and *mufete*—served with toasted manioc meal and palm oil (Hamilton 181). For most of the recipes in the recently published cookery books no specific regional origins are attributed, although many appear to come from the Luanda area. For example, Hamilton often mentions eating a particular dish on the island in Luanda or, for example, that *Doce de Amendoim* “is very popular in Muxiluanda, a suburb of Luanda” (296), or that the *Couves Cozidos com Óleo-de Palma e Amendoim* is a “traditional dish of the Kimbundu people around (...) Luanda” (124). Occasionally she ventures away from the capital. Thus she recalls how, in 1979, she first ate *Muamba de Peixe* (172) with the governor of the district of Moçâmedes. Neither Cabral nor Chantre (*111 Receitas*) gives any comment at all on the regional origins of the dishes. Perhaps this is not surprising for books written in Portugal.

However, in Ribas’s *Alimentação Regional Angolana*, as might be expected, some sense of regional origins is given. This is not a cookery book with detailed food recipes but consists of a short introduction, some photographs of Angolan food, along with an alphabetical list headed *Culinária e bebidas*. Here, the male author pays particular attention to the drinks, with descriptions of many Angolan regional spirits and beers along with some details of their preparation: these include the *aguardentes*, *capitica* made from bananas (Cuanza Norte), *caporroto* or *catombe* from maize (Malanje), and *Caxipembe* from sweet-potato (planalto central) and a type of beer made from sorghum called *macau* (Huíla) (23-4, 36). The food includes *Muamba*, *mufete*, *funje* (here *funji*), and *feijão de azeite de palma*.

One distinction between recipes is made by Lima when she points out that some of the 111 recipes are “produtos de contactos” while others are “criações no interior das próprias culturas” (16). When it comes to food it would seem however that there are very few dishes that are not products of contact and Hamilton (4) perhaps reflects the position better when she writes that “[what] fascinated me were the prevailing commonalities among so many dishes found in seven Portuguese-speaking countries on three continents.”

Many Angolans living in Luanda and other cities will be aware of the many restaurants from different countries that line some streets in Luanda. Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, Indian, Korean, Brazilian, Spanish, Cuban, Vietnamese, as well as Angolan cuisines are on offer. Angolan cuisine can be found, for example, at the takeaway called Pimentinha near the Kinaxixe circle. If local Angolans do venture inside, say to the SoTam 8 Vietnamese restaurant, they will be offered an eclectic menu including Saigon spring rolls, Swedish meat balls, and *Pizza Vesuvio* (see the SoTam8 website and then “click on the dragon to see our menu”). Both the diner and the passer-by in Luanda, as in most African cities, are being reminded that all nations have cuisines.

Apart from the Portuguese effort, no cookery books have been published in Angola. Cuisine was clearly not a priority of the Union of Angolan Writers (*União dos Escritores Angolanos*). However, in 1996, the Portuguese embassy in Luanda published *A Alimentação do Muxiluanda* (Santos), which includes recipes for many local dishes—from those based around the island of Luanda—where many of Luanda’s restaurants mentioned above are located. No doubt, as the present oil boom stimulates economic activity, some local publisher will soon produce a more home-grown cookery book and the notion of an Angolan national cuisine will be further solidified.

Cuisine in Angolan Literature

Many novels make no mention at all of any of the daily bodily functions of the hero. Just as visits to the toilet are seldom chronicled (or the absence of such visits noted by the reader) so these same characters can appear to pass through life without any need to eat or drink. It is possible that in African literature, often written in a continent of food shortages and famine, food might play a more central role than elsewhere, although other factors might be more indicative of the appearance or not of food.

How food is treated will vary greatly, starting from just a passing reference, to a brief description of the food, taken to a full recipe with details of

the process of cooking and preparation. The narrator may be one of the characters and share activities such as the partaking of food, while with other narrators, such as the *Deus ex machina*, this possibility is excluded. Whom the author is addressing, the narratee, might also be important, and feminist criticism has pointed out, for example, how European and American narratives “posit a male reader” (Culler 87). Sometimes the plot of a novel will depend on food as in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*. In exotic colonial literature, food may appear in abundance where the ethnographic detail sets the colonial subject in an exotic land. In general, food and cooking does not appear in the romantic novel—the romantic hero has other matters in mind—opium not soup is more likely to make an appearance.³ Perhaps it is to the realist writers that one has to look for cuisine—and here it is the realist writers of Northeast Brazil that are important because of the model set by this large Portuguese-speaking nation for the new Lusophone states of Africa. The aim of nationalist literary entrepreneurs was the same on both continents, which was to fashion a literature specific to the local peoples, built on an experience they could recognise based in their local culture. Here, cuisine has had a part to play.

Great banquets and eating to excess come with carnival, when the populace is given some licence to mock authority. The carnival in Luanda has been established since the early days of the Portuguese presence and has shown remarkable continuity. In Manuel Rui’s comic novel about life in “Marxist” Angola, *Quem me dera ser onda*, the authorities are certainly mercilessly mocked. The story is focused on a pig named *Carnaval da Vitória* that is raised illegally by Diogo in a flat where his two children, Zeca and Ruca, do everything they can to protect their new friend, the pig. Indeed, food and drink play a very important role throughout Rui’s novel. For instance, we are told details such as the fried fish sandwiches that the children take to school (18). We should note that fried fish has a particular connotation in the novel, that is, of the mundane; furthermore, the consumption of meat, as opposed to fish, connotes wealth, power and perhaps “counter-revolution.” Diogo exclaims to his wife “[d]eixa lá os ismos, mulher, que isso não enche barriga. Ismo é peixefritismo, fungismo e outros ismos da barriga da gente” (9). Indeed, Niyi Afolabi has suggested that “peixefritismo is a metaphor of survival” (107).

The children also make attempts to dissuade their father from eating the pig—by obtaining, for example, meat from a smart hotel, which they acquire by claiming it is destined for the “state” police dogs (50). This meat is served by their mother, Liloca along with manioc, all to their father’s great delight.

The food preparation is not generally described in any detail though poor *Carnaval da vitória* is finally “well peppered” and grilled on four braziers built on the seventh-floor balcony where he was raised (65).

Manuel Rui’s *Crónica de um Mujimbo* is another book where food and drink play a role at the core of the novel. The story revolves around the life of the bourgeois elite of Luanda and of a ministerial department where there is growing concern about an unspecified rumor, or *mujimbo*. Henrique Feijó, a high-level civil servant bemoans the disorder of the neocolonial state while his wife is mainly concerned with losing weight and finding the special fruits she needs to diet (see also Peres 101). A typical passage, as the family picnic on the beach, runs:

“Que pão é este, mãe?”

“Pão integral, o melhor pão.”

“A mãe não trouxe peixe frito?”

“Vê só Rico. Em casa torce o nariz ao peixe frito e aqui apetece-lhe. Deixa prà proxima.” (48-49)

Manuel Rui, in depicting and satirizing life in petit bourgeois postcolonial Luanda, focuses on the travails of everyday life, a life where food and drink play a central role. There is no promotion of any romantic utopian view of the future, only a gentle mocking of those who might think they are involved in such a project.

José Luandino Vieira, who was born in Portugal and who was brought up in a *musseque* in Luanda, was an Angolan nationalist. It was in the Tarrafal prison in Cape Verde that he wrote his best known works. Angolan cuisine often appears in his stories in perhaps a little more detail than in Manuel Rui’s novels. For example, in *The Loves of João Vêncio*, the hero is in jail in Angola for attempted murder, where he tells of the loves of his life. He is awaiting a visit from his Bailundu girlfriend—the woman he tried to strangle—who is bringing a “muamba supimpa” (35). At the end of the novel he is still waiting and tells us that “minha bailunda vai chegar com suas cúrias da famosa [sic] muambá do molho d’oiro, moda desses benguelenses-catum-belas, sulanos” (117).

In Luandino Vieira’s short stories, *Luuanda*, food again makes its appearance with, for instance, the hungry Zeca watching his friend eating “um guisado de feijão, um cheiroso quitande amarelo” (31).⁴ Later, in “estória do

ladrão e do papagaio,” Kam’tuta, a starving boy with a crippled leg, joins his friends who are going to eat as they “começaram desamarar o embrulho das coisas: panela de feijão d’azeite-palma, farinha, peixe frito, banana, pão. Comida de gente de musseque” (120). At first he is reluctant to join, but he shivers and “[O] cuspo nasceu na boca, pensou o feijão amarelo a brilhar na panela, a farinha a misturar” (120). Vieira, perhaps looking back on his adopted land from distant Tarrafal prison in Cape Verde, is thinking of yellow bean stew and *muamba*, perhaps today, two essentials of Angolan national cuisine.

Reviewing the great range of work of different genres written by Pepetela, it is difficult, if not futile, to try and categorize him as a romantic, modernist, realist, or even postmodern writer. However, if the focus is purely on his treatment of food, perhaps it is possible to trace a move from romantic utopianism to postmodern pastiche. He does not present food in his early works in the same way as Luandino Vieira as there is no sense of something delicious to be eaten, no saliva. Food is mentioned *en passant*. Perhaps in *Mayombe*, a story of MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) guerrillas fighting the Portuguese in the jungles of Cabinda you would expect little detail of cuisine, although a central theme is the failure of supplies from the fighters’ headquarters across the border in Congo-Brazzaville. Thus, the exhausted guerrillas “[s]ó beberam leite. A comida estava molhada, a xikuonga desfizera-se com a água. Restava-lhes o arroz e as latarias, aliás raras” (54). A typical Pepetela reference to food might also be when the guerrilla leader Sem Medo has a rather sparse dinner with Ondina where they “[c]omiam o pão com chá, em silêncio” (219). And then, in *Yaka*, a family saga of Portuguese settlers covering a period from the late nineteenth century to independence, you might perhaps have expected a little more culinary detail. This is not the case: “[l]eva um prato de comida aí para o cipaio. Mas bem cheio, que ele come muito. Comeram em silêncio” (285). In *O Desejo de Kianda*, Carmina, who has flourished as a party member both in socialist and capitalist Luanda, comes home for lunch “trazendo um termo dum restaurante com comida” (105). Thus here we have a bleak picture of the process of eating, as if eating, especially with women, is to be endured in silence. Now and then, in Pepetela’s works, perhaps because of the very extent of his *oeuvre*, just a little more detail is given. For example, in *A Geração da Utopia*, when Sara, a white Angolan doctor, is visiting Aníbal, a disillusioned former guerrilla leader, who now dives in the sea for his food, she regrets the lack of lemon for a grilled fish, a *pargo*.

When we come to the *Jaime Bunda* books, a different world of food seems to emerge. Pepetela has now finally abandoned “romanticism,” the struggle for a utopian socialist future for Angola, and veered into writing a postmodern Angolan parody of the mid-twentieth-century American detective novel, which, incidentally, allows him to picture women as available but unreliable sexual objects in an era when such treatment is frowned upon. When Jaime Bunda visits Kiko’s bar, a famous restaurant and has “funje de carne seca de pacaça,” the reader for the first time feels that the author is imagining an enjoyable meal (32). The secret agent, in a restaurant on the island of Luanda, also greatly savours succulent *muamba de galinha*, accompanied by *funje* (175). In *Jaime Bunda e a morte do Americano*, food and drink are never far away. As soon as Jaime Bunda arrives in Benguela to investigate the death of the American, he is told that the meals in the hotel are splendid. He takes to the terrace where “com o mar lá bem à frente, duas cervejas já derrotadas e muitos pastéis, pica-paus e quitabas ingeridos, Jaime se sentiu melhor” (27). Quitaba is an Angolan snack, a mixture of ground-up roasted peanuts, piri-piri, and salt. Later, “Bunda iniciou as hostilidades gastronómicas com uma entrada de gamas (...) deviam passar imediatamente (...) a anunciada caldeirada de cabrito.” The goat-meat stew, greatly appreciated by Jaime Bunda, is a dish often cooked to celebrate the anniversary of Angolan independence, on the 11th of November (Hamilton 117). Perhaps, because of this more “realist” genre of the *Jaime Bunda* novels, Angolan food—with copious whiskey—is allowed to move to the centre. Whiskey, wine, and beer do make frequent appearances in Pepetela’s other novels, but for food we need to look at *Jaime Bunda*.

Of the Angolan writers discussed here, we certainly have to turn to José Luandino Vieira to get any sustained notion of Angolan cuisine: maybe it is the realist influence here that is crucial, as Vieira wants to describe the real life of the dwellers in the Luandan *musseques* and uses the street language, a mixture of Kimbundu and Portuguese, as well as the food, to tell the tales.

Conclusions

It is clear that in a number of Lusophone African states, including Angola, a national cuisine is in the process of emerging, encouraged by the former colonial power whose own identity is still firmly linked to the age of the great discoverers. Food was an important part of those “discoveries” and the Portuguese played a crucial role in the globalisation of food some five hundred years ago.

The national cuisine is proclaimed on the official Angolan website and national dishes like *muamba de galinha* are recognised by many Angolans.

In Angolan literature, Luandino Vieira and Manuel Rui, who want to capture an *Angolanidade* in their prose, focus on the everyday life of the ordinary peoples and these writers savour the characteristics of the dishes of their country. Pepetela, while focusing on building a “romantic” utopian socialist future, tends to ignore food, or have his male characters eat in silence with their women. However, in the Jaime Bunda novels, Angolan cuisine emerges to induce the reader’s saliva. A nationalism pointing to a glorious socialist utopia for the Angolan people has been replaced by a more mundane gastro-nationalism.⁶

Notes

¹ Margarido would not agree and argues that Portuguese influence is being lost in Brazil (44).

² The Brazilian *galinha ao molho pardo* is a variant of the original Portuguese dish.

³ I would like to thank David Brookshaw for this thought.

⁴ *Quintande*, a bean and palm oil stew (Cabral 83).

⁵ It was also included in the second of three volumes or pamphlets entitled *Misoso* in 1964 (Ribas 3).

⁶ Since the completion of this essay Pepetela’s new novel, *Predadores*, has been published. Here food appears a little less frequently than in the Jaime Bunda novels. However, when the main protagonist, Vladimiro Caposso, is taking his new girlfriend Danúzia to a swanky restaurant in Luanda, Pepetela makes the following aside: “Curiosos, os leitores estão ansiosos por uma descrição da ementa e do que comeu o nosso parzinho. Desiludam-se, aqui não entra publicidade de borla. Foi um jantar ligeiro (...) com base em mariscos (...). Mais acrescento, foi jantar internacional, recusados os funjes, cabidelas ou kisakas da tradição” (63).

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