

Copioba cassava flour, heritage, and production processes:

Comparative study between ovens with clay bowls and with stainless steel basins

Abstract

Copioba cassava flour, in the Recôncavo region of Bahia, Brazil, is an artisanal product of indigenous origin known for its crispiness, texture, and flavor. Historically produced manually, with roasting in wood-fired ovens with clay bowls, from the 1980s onwards, it began to present variations in its know-how with the advent of rural electrification and adopting a semi-mechanized roasting system with stainless steel basins. This change calls into question the quality of this flour and its classification in the Geographical Indication process. Thus, this study sought to analyze this production in its two traditional processes (manual with clay bowls and semi-mechanized in ovens with stainless steel basins) and identify the similarities and differences between them and their impacts on the characteristics of the final product. The study involved a literature review and a comparative multiple case study, monitoring four traditional productions from the territory, chosen by rational selection, and interviews with farmers. According to the producers, the results showed that it is possible to produce traditional Copioba flour of differentiated quality, both in manual and semi-mechanized processes. In these processes, the know-how and experience of the master flour maker were considered the determinants of the product's final quality. Manual production resulted in a product of great distinction due to its ancestral and superior traditional characteristics; on the other hand, it involves a small-scale activity. Production in a semi-mechanized oven, in turn, allowed operating with larger volumes and producing flour whose characteristics are similar to those obtained manually. The study shows that, despite technological changes and the incorporation of new equipment, know-how allowed the production of Copioba flour of superior quality for Geographical Indication. However, farmers recognize the uniqueness of the flour obtained by the manual process.

Keywords: cassava; traditional foods; technological processes; sensorial attributes.