

Food practices of workers at a Citizen Restaurant: sociocultural factors and the work environment

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Resumo: The study aimed at analyzing how the work environment of a group of low-income workers sets up eating practices in the urban environment. Ten in-depth interviews were held with workers from a food service company for the *Restaurante Cidadão*. Eating out was prevalent and the workspace proved to be the main place for meals. A disruption of historically and culturally consolidated eating practices were identified regarding the time and type of food. Once a month, some workers prepare a meal chosen and paid by them. It was through “food made by them and for them” that a relationship was created, or the existing relationship was strengthened. The discussion brings forward how a social space intertwined with political-economic forces, biological needs and symbolic systems structure the eating practices of a social group. The work showed a close relationship between man and his food routine.

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Introduction

The increase in the prevalence of obesity in Brazil between the 2002-2003 Family Budget Survey and the 2019 National Health Survey (IBGE, 2020) has generated significant concern among researchers and public food policy makers. In 2019, 25.9% of the adult population were obese, with a higher prevalence of obesity among female adults (29.5%) than among male adults (21.8%) (IBGE, 2020).

The recognition of obesity as an epidemic disease resulting from unhealthy diets and light physical activities has led researchers to identify, in different contexts, biopsychosocial factors that could be associated with it, with the individual's food choices together with the political, economic, social, and cultural "environment" assuming a strategic place in State intervention proposals to reduce their impact and economic burden of obesity (GLANZ, 2005; SCHWARTZ *et al.*, 2017; SWINBURN *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, most public health interventions against obesity have focused on a socioecological approach that considers that health behaviors are influenced by the interaction between individual behavior, social context, and environmental conditions (STOKOLS, 1996) and, thus, informative and behavioral strategies that promote change in eating habits and physical activity are encouraged in different clinical, community, and work environments (ANDERSON *et al.*, 2009).

Much of the research on space, health, and food investigates the presence of food-related infrastructure and resources in the surroundings of school environments (CARMO *et al.*, 2018), work (MICHIMI; WIMBERLY, 2015,) and others (CANELLA *et al.*, 2014; MONTEIRO *et al.*, 2018). Particularly in the work environment, physical, psychosocial, and socioeconomic conditions are important for workers' health (NOBREGA *et al.*, 2016). However, studies investigating how eating behavior is affected by the workplace are still incipient, especially on the subjectivities involving food and eating practices. It is known that the act of eating represents a complex symbolic system, which permeates social, cultural, affective, political, religious, ethical; and aesthetic issues, among others. Thus, when thinking about food, one must consider the practices and attributions of meanings that individuals attribute to themselves and what they eat (FISCHLER, 1995) in different social contexts.

Under this perspective, food can determine a social group, linking identities to certain meanings. That is: what is put on the plate feeds the body and can increase the feeling of belonging or even exclusion to a community, serving as a way of

recognition and social distinction. Thus, food communicates and even classifies social groups and subgroups within different societies, considering that a change in social place can imply a change in eating habits and their meanings (BONIZIO; JIMENEZ-JIMENEZ, 2018).

Feelings, emotions, memories, and desires are part of the dynamic eating process. These issues can directly influence the choice of food and who to eat with or not. According to Contreras and Gracia (2015), food is a primary element of reciprocity, being fundamental in sustaining interpersonal relationships. Thus, who one eats with and where and what one eats can indicate socially established patterns, and eating habits can change when these patterns change due to behavioral reformulations (FARIA; RINALDI; ABDALA, 2015).

Thus, the relationships established in the workspace are correlated with eating behavior, as what to eat is not chosen solely by the person eating, but is a collective responsibility (POUILAIN, 2004). Since at least the industrial revolution of the 19th century, eating habits in cities have directly been affected by constraints of working life which limit the time and type of meals, sometimes categorizing them as a simple replacement of energy (FISCHLER, 1995). High physical demands, long working hours, little opportunity to influence how and when work is performed are characteristics attributed to low-paid jobs and associated with the food choices of low-income workers (NOBREGA *et al.*, 2016).

Therefore, this study aimed at analyzing how the work environment of a group of low-income workers influences eating practices in urban areas.¹ As national and international health organizations recognize the complex interactions between food choices, social norms, and economic and environmental factors and the need to consider local cultural and socioeconomic circumstances, exploring the local manifestations of this problem with an emphasis on understanding the conditions and sociability at work can contribute to discussions about the limitations that individuals face when changing their personal “choices” and preparing proposals to transform adverse contexts that contribute to obesity.

In the light of this debate, it is opportune and pertinent to include public food and nutrition facilities, as they are included in several programs to guarantee the Food and Nutritional Security of the population, whose principle is to offer adequate and healthy food to its users, whether they are the direct beneficiaries of the equipment or the workers who contribute to the realization of this right.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study with data collection by individual semi-structured interviews (DUARTE, 2004) and direct observation (FERNANDES, 2011). Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with workers from a food service company that works for a Citizen Restaurant (*Restaurante Cidadão*), located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The interviewees were chosen by the nutritionist in charge, who let the employees being interviewed depending on their activities at that time. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Rio de Janeiro/SR2 (number 1,514,655).

The interviews followed a script that addressed commensality, places and times, structure and content of meals, and food in the workplace. The information gathered from observation was recorded in a field diary. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and two other researchers reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. Finally, we analyzed the data collected using a conceptual approach based on authors from the Sociology and Social Anthropology of Food field.

The Citizen Restaurant

Citizen Restaurant² was part of a set of 16 public facilities built by the State Government, with support from the Federal Government, and managed by the State Secretariat for Social Assistance and Human Rights. Together, they offered an average of 51,325 lunches per day 5 days a week (from Monday to Friday) from 10 am to 3 pm. In addition to lunch, they offered breakfast, from 6 am to 9 am, totaling an average of 19,875 breakfasts offered throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro. Citizens paid R\$ 0.35 for breakfast and R\$ 1.00 for lunch. They are public spaces intended for the production and sale of nutritionally balanced meals, originating from safe processes, at affordable prices, mostly to low-income formal and informal workers, including the unemployed, students, retirees, homeless people, and families at risk of food and nutritional insecurity, whose main and often only meal of the day is consumed in these restaurants (SEASDH, 2016).

These restaurants had, on average, a staff of 50 people usually holding the positions of pantry worker, kitchen assistant, cook, butcher, stock clerk, general service assistant, cashier, security guard, administrative assistant, and nutritionist.

The supply of meals at the Citizen Restaurant units was outsourced to food service companies, which produced and distributed them, under the technical responsibility of a nutritionist. The lunch menu consisted of soup, three types of salad, main course, protein option, garnish, side dish (rice and beans), dessert, which was usually a fruit, and a fruit-based soft drink.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, they were based on the districts of Bangu, Bonsucesso, Campo Grande, Centro, Irajá, Jacarepaguá, Madureira, and Méier. The fieldwork was conducted in one of these restaurants.

Description of study workers

At the time of the fieldwork, from September to December 2015, 62 employees worked at the restaurant (39 men and 23 women). Of these, six pantry workers (four men and two women), a butcher, a butcher's assistant, a kitchen assistant, and a stock assistant were interviewed. On average, respondents had worked in kitchens for 9.3 years, ranging from two to 29 years of work. Their average age was 42 years.

The average monthly gross income of the workers interviewed was R\$ 1,006.80. Most of the interviewees worked 44 hours a week at the Restaurant, from Monday to Friday. Of the 10 respondents, two had other occupations on weekends to earn extra income, one working as a furniture assembler and the other as a bricklayer assistant at neighbors and friends' houses. Two of the interviewees reported receiving the *Bolsa Família* benefit, as their children were still young.

Results

The dynamics of work in the urban centers of modern western society implies that many people spend hours outside their homes. The workers at the Citizen Restaurant consume three meals at the workplace and, except for the workplace, they rarely eat outside. At home, most respondents have a snack, such as bread and butter. Only a few reported preferring taking dinner.

At Citizen Restaurant, breakfast for workers was the same as that offered to service users, and generally consisted of pure coffee or milk and a bread with a “thin layer” of margarine, as they emphasize. This meal usually took place at 6 am, when workers arrived at the Restaurant to start their working day.

Most of the workers had lunch between 9-10 am, and at 10 am everyone had to be ready to work before the opening of the establishment to the clients. In this meal,

the workers could freely consume the preparations that had already been placed on the distribution counter in the cafeteria in the Restaurant. Lunch was usually served on a plate placed on a tray and consisted mostly of a large portion of rice and beans, a piece of meat or a “protein”, as they called it, and the salad that some placed on a bowl to later mix with the rest of the food on the plate. Accompanying the preparations, they drank a glass of industrialized fruit-based soft drink and for dessert, the fruit of the day, usually bananas, apples, or oranges, was offered as dessert. They usually had their meals in the hall, gathered in small groups, where, later, users of the restaurant had lunch. Some ate lunch quickly to be able, in the remaining time, to rest a little, and others used their lunch time to eat calmly and chat with co-workers.

Workers could also quickly have a second lunch at 3 pm, when the Restaurant was closed to clients, but this meal was made up of what was left of lunch, and they could, again, eat freely. As they said, rice and beans always had enough left over for everyone to eat, but protein and salad usually didn't have much. So, they shared, some ate the rice and beans, others just a piece of meat with a glass of refreshment and others the bread left over from breakfast with a cup of coffee. There was also always a fruit to complement the second lunch.

When asked about their “nibbles”, that is, what was eaten between the three meals, the answers varied according to the position they held and the function they performed. The one who worked on the distribution line usually did not have time to eat while lunch was being served. Approximately one thousand meals were distributed in those five hours and, according to the interviewees, many of the users were demanding and complained if they had to wait in the distribution queue. Taking a few sips of the soft drink ended up being the only possibility of consuming something during the users' lunch, as they were able to drink the soft drink when they stopped to go to the bathroom or get some material for replacement at the distribution counter.

Some interviewees reported having a “community lunch” inside the Restaurant. Despite the workers having access to food during the working day and having few economic resources, approximately once a month, a group of workers bought ingredients and prepared a meal of their own choosing. So, they gave the money to one of the pantry workers who, according to them, cooked very well, to bring the “pratão” – big plate, as they called it and, on the day, everyone shared that meal. On a colder day, they asked her to make a “green broth”, for example, or a

“ribeye”, on a Friday. These were different foods from the ones usually prepared at the Citizen Restaurant. Sometimes, the preparations were the same as that served at the Restaurant, but, according to them, prepared differently, with care and having a delicious taste, similar to the meals they prepared at home. As reported by one of the interviewees: “I think we do this because the food served at home tastes better and, besides that, we play games, get together, and such” (Interviewee FL).

Some workers reported preparing a “mega salada - mega salad”. Each day one of them were responsible for the preparation, which was composed of “everything worth having”, that is, all the ingredients they had in stock that day. The Citizen Restaurant menu already included a salad, but they reported that it was a ‘poor’ salad. According to the interviewee, they “incremented” the preparation: “here, the salad is composed of three items, such as in any restaurant, while in our salad we put everything! Whatever we have in stock, oranges, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, carrots, chayote, whatever we have we add to it.” (Interviewee SLL).

Discussion

One of the structuring factors of social organization is commensality, that is, sharing the same time and place of meals, establishing, and reinforcing sociability. “It is through cooking and table manners that the most fundamental social learning takes place and that a society transmits and allows the internalization of its values” (POULAIN, 2013, for. 182). From this perspective, food and commensality go beyond simply eating together and reveal the structure of everyday life, and eating practices are directly related to the meaning we give ourselves and our social identity (MINTZ, 2001; BOUTAUD, 2011).

In modern forms, commensality deals with its contradictions searching for new meanings or responses to the pressures of current life. For the workers interviewed, eating away from home prevails and the workspace is the place where they more frequently have meals. It may seem natural for the worker of a company that produces food to eat there. However, it is reasonable to suppose that there is more at stake: in addition to the distance between home and work, the economic issue is another important element in this socially constructed phenomenon. The company provides food as a benefit to the worker and, as described above, the gross monthly income is slightly higher than the minimum wage. In Brazil, it is known that it

is insufficient to meet the basic vital needs of workers and their families, such as housing, food, education, health, leisure, clothing, hygiene, transport.

For many, breakfast was the first meal of the day. Of the ten respondents, two reported that before leaving home they had a cup of coffee but left the bread to eat at work. The “thin layer” of margarine is a clear representation of Brazil, with two movements being made with the knife over the bread: passing the knife to put the butter and passing it again to remove the butter. It is the idea of pettiness, the avarice of the boss in serving their employees or, in this case, of the company that provide food to these restaurants. In the equation of capital accumulation, of the profit built at the expense of poverty, every tiny portion of food “saved” while preparing meals becomes extremely important. After all, thousands of meals are served in many restaurants and, on this industrial scale, the minimum at one point is the maximum result in assembly lines affecting the planned, achieved, and ideal profit. After all, this food is “for the poor” and therein lies the naturalization of this food practice and its (un)veiled questioning in the emphasis given to the “thin layer” of butter in the bread.

It is known that contemporary commensality in urban areas is guided by new demands generated by the *modus vivendi* that imposes on a large part of the Brazilian population the need to reorganize life according to their conditions, such as time, financial resources, places where they can eat, location and frequency of purchases, among others (GARCIA, 2003). Taste and preferences and the access and availability of food also contribute to the construction of food practices in society (OAK; LIGHT, 2011; LEONEL; MENASCHE, 2017).

Thus, work and its conditions influence this process and are closely related to *food modernity*,³ modifying the relationship between human beings and their food. If before the industrial revolution the main meals were prepared at home, with the advent of specialized work and the development of cities, among others, meals away from home increasingly gained space. In the case of these workers, in addition to having meals at the workplace during the working week, we observed a disruption in the time and type of food, as they had the main meal of the day - lunch, between 9 and 10 am in the morning. This lunch time was not common for many Brazilians living in urban areas, not even for these workers who, on weekends, did not repeat this practice at home. This was because the restaurant was open to the public at 10 am and they could not stop their activities until 3 pm,

when the Restaurant closed. During this period, there were not enough employees to assume the activities, thus not allowing their food culture to be respected and encouraged as a culture and identity of a people.

As the work process included a lunch time usually considered early, many of them reported having a second lunch, because, after five straight hours serving users standing, having only to go to the bathroom or to solve eventual problems, they were already starving. The hunger they felt and that justified having another lunch before finishing their workday was attributed to the heavy workload until the end of the distribution of lunch to users. This meal was considered by them as a complement to the first lunch and usually took place quickly, lasting about 15 minutes, as they had to leave everything clean and organized before returning to their homes.

The “flexibility” of these workers’ mealtimes is considered a disorganization of historically consolidated eating practices, and the food these workers prepare makes the disruption of their culture and identity more acute and subtle, weakening them as a social group. Having as ultimate goal the accumulation of capital by the holders of the means of production of these outsourced companies, which are remunerated with public money collected through taxes by the state and federal governments, this path - publicized as a food and nutritional security policy that promotes a balanced and adequate diet, without any demerit for the possible results – represents a cruel way of compromising the ideal of good eating and good living as care for oneself and for others, considering the hunger that reaches the poorest strata of society.

This issue also makes us reflect on what public policies on food and nutrition in Brazil consider as healthy eating behavior. According to the recent Food Guide for the Brazilian population (BRASIL, 2014), eating regularly and carefully, in appropriate environments and with other people are the three guidelines on eating and commensality. Despite the discussion about the normalizing character of food guidelines (MENEZES *et al.*, 2015), we started to ask ourselves with indignation: how was it possible that a public facility guided by such policies imposed on its workers activities that involved standing for so many hours, without the minimum rest and that did not respect the culturally established times of having what is considered, among Brazilians, the main meal of the day?

Conversely, in line with the discourse of the need to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables, they at least had access to fruits, even if to a limited variety (banana, orange, or apple). Interestingly, there was a certain distinction among the

Citizen Restaurant workers and between them and the users. We noted during the interviews that those who worked in the stock had more access to the food that was there, which included fruit. “Fruit is what we eat the most in stock. It’s what we have the most access to,” said the inventory assistant.

Thus, some consumption practices can contribute to the construction of boundaries between groups or even bring out distinctions within an existing group, and this confrontation can take place in an unrecognizable way, with differences arising from the position in the distribution of instruments of appropriation being transmuted in symbolic distinctions (BOURDIEU; SAINT-MARTIN, 1976; YACCOUB, 2011).

Another interesting fact was the horizontal (unifying) symbolic dimension of commensality (BOUTAUD, 2011), which was evident when workers gathered to prepare a “community lunch”. Even having access to the food available at the Restaurant during the working day and with few economic resources, some workers contributed financially and organized a lunch consisting of a preparation chosen by them and made by whoever they chose.

This joint action reveals that although the workers could eat together at Citizen Restaurant, it was through the 'food made by them and for them' and whatever they chose to eat and with whom that a relationship was created or a existing relationship was strengthened. The 'tasty and homemade' food expressed the meaning of social relationships around the table linked to personal experiences, the sign of friendship, in which:

The practice of coexistence in its proper sense, the very image of life in common (*cum vivere*), has always strengthened the idea that eating and drinking with others favors empathy, mutual understanding, and communion of feelings. (BOUTAUD, 2011, p. 1215).

In addition to the traditional sense of sharing food with a certain degree of reciprocal involvement, commensality can be inclusive or exclusive within a group, as well as exclude those who are not part of the group. It can manifest equality or hierarchy among those who share the table (BOUTAUD, 2011; FISCHLER, 2011), causing identity gaps between those who are paid and those who are not part of the group and who, probably, do not share the same way of life. The interviewees did not explain why some participated and others did not, but we observed that most of the group that prepared the “community lunch” was made up of workers who were younger compared to the others, which may indicate that they had

greater affinity and were closer. Thus, on the one hand, commensality, eating at the same table, can create bonds, bring people together, and promote sociability, on the other hand, this will not occur without pain and, of course, without resulting in exclusion (FISCHLER, 2011).

The initiative to buy ingredients and prepare a meal different from the one served at work also reinforces the idea that food does not only fulfill the biological function of nourishing oneself. DaMatta (1986), when studying identity in societies, stated that food is not only a food substance, but also a way of eating and that the way of eating defines what is consumed and the one who consumes it.

According to the author, food is something universal. Carrier of nutrients, it is something that concerns all human beings: friends or enemies, people from near or far, from the street or from home, from heaven or earth. Food is something that defines a domain and brings things into focus. Thus, food corresponds to the old “repast”, an expression equivalent to a meal, as is the word *food*. Conversely, food refers to something customary and healthy, something that helps to establish an identity, thus defining a group, class or person. Food is the symbolized food; loaded with meanings and specific meanings for different groups in society. Food is a mediator of unique social relationships, above all.

It is from this conception that we look at the “pratao” and the “mega salada”, and not at the everyday food at Citizen Restaurant as something customary and healthy, which helps to establish a group’s identity.

It can be said that it is in the social and cultural dimension of food that bonds are established between those who eat and with the different dynamics that involve and build commensality (FISCHLER, 2011).

The choice of food is not primarily based on the nutritional option, but is influenced by everyday social life, whether in family relationships, in the workplace, at school and in other spaces where exchange of experiences occurs through social relationships, contributing to the construction of the food system of individuals, that is, their *habitus* (DELORMIER *et al.*, 2009).

We understand that the concept of *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2009) can help us to understand the eating practices of the subjects in this study, serving as a guidance system that workers may sometimes be aware of, sometimes not. *Habitus* is a mediating matrix that makes us think about the relationship, the correspondence between individual practices, the subjectivity of subjects and the social conditioning

of existence, emphasizing the character of interdependence between individual and society. It is a cultural matrix that predisposes individuals to make their choices considering their positions in the social context and that, “it is a system in constant reformulation besides being seen as a system engendered in the past and oriented towards action in the present” (SETTON, 2009, p. 61).

When considering human food linked to personal experiences and traditional requirements, it is reasonable to consider that culture directly influenced the choice of food of this group of workers. The choice was for the “pratão” and the “mega salada”. These issues lead us to consider the access to healthy foods as a factor that influence the change in the diet of people in search of healthy habits, in terms of building a *habitus*.

Workers' actions tend to adjust, in a practical sense, to the needs imposed by a specific social configuration. If most of the actions of social agents are the product of an encounter between a *habitus* and a conjuncture, then behavioral strategies, sometimes premeditated and sometimes not, are practices stimulated by a certain situation or several historical situations based on a specific social context. Thus, increasing access to healthy foods seems to be insufficient to change behavior.

That is, the praxiological theory, when escaping from the determinism of practices, presupposes a dialectical relationship between subject and society, a two-way relationship between individual *habitus* and the structure of a socially determined field. From this point of view, individual actions, behaviors, choices, or aspirations do not derive from calculations or planning, but rather are products of the relationship between a *habitus* and the pressures and stimuli of a conjuncture. (SETTON, 2009, p. 5).

According to the social environment in which they, agents can eat a meal or another, have a snack or have a bite to eat, for capitalizing symbols and meanings according to structured propensities and, with this, (re)orienting their lives, and, consequently, their social trajectory.

In contemporary society, food is dynamically addressed and incorporated or rejected in order to link biomedical regulations and/or other social spheres and values. Klotz (2015) says that sometimes some agents, sometimes others, or several, simultaneously think, act, and feel in specific ways in response to each situation or a set of them. It is in this relationship between the set of situations that agents define what to eat, where to eat, how to eat, and with whom to eat through durable dispositions or previously learned capabilities that guide them in the construction of responses to demands and limitations of the social spaces in which they are.

Another interesting element that corroborates our point of view is the preparation of the “mega salada”.

Although the menu at Citizen Restaurant already includes salad, they consider it a “poor” salad, as according to the interviewee, they “increment” the preparation and this drawn the attention of the other co-workers who also started to share the “mega salada”.

According to Klotz (2015, for. 24):

[...] food assumes different expressions in each situation, historical moment or social group, and the same food and body practices can be more or less valued or carry specific *distinctions* according to the context considered.

The preparation of the “mega salada” is a clear representation of this assertion. Even though a salad option was already included on the restaurant's menu, they saw the need to prepare a salad considered by them as a “mega” preparation, thus being a way of differentiating their food from what is offered to users of the restaurant.

Through the symbolism of food production and consumption, society usually judges and is judged, thus materializing values about itself and others. When it comes to the dynamics between agents marked by social distinction, Bourdieu exemplifies procedures by which the wealthier classes try to distinguish themselves from the classes that are subordinate to them, making use of items such as clothing, personal items, food, etc. The search for differentiation in the accumulation of symbolic capital is related to the distinctions between classes, characterizing their individual and class *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2009; KLOTZ, 2015).

Conclusion

The discussion about these workers revolves around how a given social space intertwined by political and economic forces, biological needs, and symbolic systems determine the eating practices of a given social group. From this point of view, workspace is the space where they have meals more frequently, and therefore eating out predominates. Thus, the ways of eating are associated with the interdependence of relationships between people when they share food through the “community lunch” consuming the “pratão” and the “mega-salad”.

The “pratão” and the “mega salada” consist of the food choice that unifies these workers and symbolically capitalizes them, distinguishing them through the food

of the other users of the Citizen Restaurant. It is worth mentioning that everyday food also refers them to those who eat in this place, namely, less favored population groups that, in large part, are not able to supply their own food. The “pratão”, and not the “healthy” food at Citizen Restaurant, presents itself as something common and healthy and that helps to establish the identity of a group.

The work context also shows a close relationship with food modernity, contributing to the modification of the relationship between human beings and their food routine in this space. Thus, food memories and family experiences that structure or not our tastes, along with our values and social relationships, enter the dispute for the construction of the senses and meanings that this subject attribute to food, which is negatively affected in the daily life of work, especially when we think about the structure of food in terms of its identity aspects and subjectivities.

Finally, it seems promising to take a close look at existing discussions that can account for the phenomenon of changes in dietary patterns to transform adverse contexts that contribute to obesity. In this way, this work contributed to unravel the limits that individuals face to modify their personal food “choices” in the face of the power relations that prevail in a contemporary society marked by profound social transformations. If, on the one hand, what one chooses to eat is influenced by the affects that operate on the plane of subjectivities, on the other hand, the choice of what, when, how, and with whom one eats results from a process of internalization of social structures; and contests the idea of freedom of choice even when material resources are available in different environments.⁴

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Notes

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² In 2016, faced with a fiscal and economic crisis, the Citizen Restaurants were closed by the state government, due to the lack of resources for their maintenance since the previous year (SEASDH 2016). Subsequently, some of the Citizen Restaurants were reopened under Municipal management.

³ As proposed by Fischler (2010), we use the notion of *food modernity* to designate the impacts that food has been suffering from changes in contemporary society and include, for example, discussions about the degree of food stability-destructuring (WARDE, 1997) and the social differentiation as a generator of food norms (MÉNDEZ; BENITO, 2005). We use the term to describe a complex and often paradoxical social reality as presented by the author.

⁴ N.C. Nunes: data collection, analysis, and interpretation; writing and critical review of the article. F. B. Kraemer and S. D. Prado: conception and design of the research, analysis, and interpretation of data; article writing, critical review. M. N. Barcellos: data analysis and interpretation; article writing and critical review. All authors approved the final version for publication.

Resumo

Práticas alimentares de trabalhadores de um Restaurante Cidadão: fatores socioculturais e o ambiente de trabalho

O estudo objetivou analisar como o ambiente do trabalho de um grupo de trabalhadores de baixa renda configura as práticas alimentares no meio urbano. Foram realizadas dez entrevistas com trabalhadores de uma empresa de prestação de serviços de alimentação para um Restaurante Cidadão. O comer fora de casa prevaleceu e o espaço do trabalho se mostrou como o principal para a realização das refeições. Identificou-se uma desestruturação das práticas alimentares, referente ao horário para realizar a refeição, ao tipo de comida e à divisão do almoço em dois momentos. Aproximadamente uma vez por mês, alguns trabalhadores se cotizavam para comprar ingredientes e elaborar uma preparação por eles mesmos escolhida. Era através da “comida feita por eles e para eles” que se criava uma relação ou se fortalecia a relação já existente. A discussão girou em torno de como determinado espaço social, entrelaçado por forças político-econômicas, necessidades biológicas e sistemas simbólicos, contribui na estruturação das práticas alimentares de determinado grupo social. O trabalho no contexto em que está inserido mostrou uma estreita relação com a modernidade alimentar, contribuindo na modificação da relação entre os seres humanos e sua rotina alimentar.

► **Palavras-chave:** Hábitos alimentares. Programas e políticas de nutrição e alimentação. Serviços de alimentação. Ambiente de trabalho. Pesquisa qualitativa.

