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The Roll Cake and the Bridal Cake of Pernambuco: A Reflection on the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Development of the Local Economy

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Abstract: Tradition and modernity are central categories in the composition of this article, whose objective is to reflect on the resignification of the roll cake and the “bridal” cake in the cultural context of Pernambuco. These cakes are products that drive the local economy. The roll cake consists of a plump dough, with thin layers, filled with guava jam. However, nowadays, its original form has been modified, not only in terms of filling, but also in the way it is presented. As for the bridal cake, its dough is dark, made with wine, plums, raisins, candied fruits, other ingredients and comes in different formats. Another aspect of transformation concerns the marketing process, although these cakes are part of the menus of important cafés and restaurants in the city or are sold at street markets, traffic lights, bodegas, etc., they are currently on sale in electronic commerce. To think about the relationship between changes and permanence in the way of making or the way of marketing these delicacies is to reflect on the resignification of their use in contemporary cultural relations and to highlight the intersection of tradition with modernity. When researching about roll cake and bridal cake in Pernambuco's economic activity, it is understood that these products, although undergoing some changes, continue to be present in the daily life of the people and express the tradition of popular knowledge transmitted from generation to generation and ensure the financial support of many poor families.

Key-words: Roll cake; Bridal Cake; Local Economy.

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

Introduction - the taste for sweets

*Local dishes, linked to local products,
Obviously, they've been around forever...
Massimo Montanari*

Over time, food has become an element of cultural identification. Works such as: *The History of Food in Brazil* and the *History of Food* highlight ethnic identities through food preferences and habits and build a cartography of products and recipes that make it possible to diversify the predilections of different cultural groups around the world. Montanari observes that “among the various forms of identity suggested and communicated by eating habits, one that seems obvious to us today is that of territory: geographic eating (MONTANARI: 2013, p. 135)

The typical diet of a given territory is not characterized simply by the offer of products in a given region, but also by the symbolism attributed to the ways of making it, the moment each food should be served, the type of food for each: age group, religious rituals, festivities, etc. Food as an expression of culture constitutes a “food system not defined by “naturalness”, but as a result and representation of cultural processes that foresee the domestication, transformation and reinterpretation of nature”. (MONTANARI: 2013, p. 15).

Lévi-Strauss observes that “no real analysis allows us to learn the crossing point between facts of nature and facts of culture, but their mechanism of articulation” (LEVI-STRAUSS: 1982, p. 47), both are intertwined. Food that grows from the soil or of animal origin is in the plan of nature, it is universal, but the activities that involve production, hunting, mixing, cooking, food preferences, ways of making and assigning meaning, are inscribed in the plan of culture.

However, for the consumption of some foods or drinks, each cultural context evokes nature when prohibitions are established, whether by age or by gender. This dialogic relationship may be infinite, but it illustrates the connections established between the biological need for food and what characterizes food diversity, with its permissions, prohibitions, ways of making and serving.

In the dialogue between nature and culture, the preferences provided by the diversity of foods are typified, refining the taste that “is subtle, discovered as it awakens the pleasure that each thing can give us. It is subjective and singular and is responsible for the choice we make of smells and flavors.” (ARAÚJO; 2019 p. 12). “Smell and taste enhance the nature/culture relationship. Man tastes food, smells things around him and attributes meanings to them, unlike other species that eat quickly and sniff out the prey” (ARAÚJO: 2011, p. 142). These preferences are influenced by the intersection of food supply in a given region and the history of relationships between different peoples that mix their customs, knowledge and practices, and, over time, we learn the characteristics of Chinese, Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish, African, indigenous diets, etc.

In Brazil, as shown by Câmara Cascudo (2011), the roots of national food are sedimented in the mixture of knowledge and practices of indigenous, African and European cultures. In each Brazilian state it is possible to find one or several typical dishes that characterize the geographical eating habits, in which this mixture is evident. Beans with manioc flour, feijoada,

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

tapioca, buchada, pamonha, couscous, beiju, pirão, guava jam, cornmeal cake, among others, are some of these habits.

Both Gilberto Freyre and Câmara Cascudo consider sweets a characteristic of European cuisine. The sweet and the cake were spices brought by the Portuguese to the kitchens of Brazilian sugar mills. The sweet food that was traditionally sweetened with honey from bees, played a leading role in the colonial sugar industry at the time and is still present today.

The sugar from the cane fields is the main ingredient in sweets. Câmara Cascudo, in his book *História da Alimentação do Brasil*, considered that the sweet never became bitter. Certainly, this idea does not correspond to the harsh working conditions promoted by the sugar industry that from the 16th to the 19th century was responsible for the violence of black slavery in Brazil and later, for the precarious work in the sugarcane fields of the Brazilian Northeast. From the sugarcane plantation, through the production of sugar, through the kitchen of the colonial house until it reached the table of the mill owners or the white colonizer, the sweet that sweetened the recipes came from the bitter pains of male and female slaves.

Within the extreme specialization of slaves in the domestic service of the big houses, two, sometimes three individuals are always reserved for kitchen work (...). These were the great masters of Brazilian cuisine. Including confectionery (FREYRE: 2007, p. 193)

In addition to the tasks in the cane fields, the manufacture of sugar and domestic work, slaves were still used as sellers of “homemade delicacies and sold on the street on the heads of blacks, but for the benefit of the ladies” (FREYRE: 2007, p.194). Today this bitterness can be felt in the difficulties faced by sugarcane workers, as Ferreira Gullar (2000: p. 165) considers in his poem entitled: *The Sugar*:

The white sugar that will
sweeten my coffee
This morning in Ipanema
It wasn't produced by me
It didn't appear inside the
sugar bowl by a miracle.

I see it pure
And affable to the taste
Like a girl's kiss, water
On the skin, a flower
That dissolves in the mouth.
But this sugar
Was not made by me.

This sugar came from the
grocery store on the corner
and
neither did Oliveira, the
owner of the grocery store.
This sugar came
From a sugar mill in
Pernambuco
Or in the state of Rio
And it was neither made by
the mill's owner

This sugar was cane And it
came from the extensive
cane fields That are not
born by chance
In the lap of the valley.

In distant places,
where there is no hospital,
Nor school, men who
cannot read and die of
hunger
At age 27
They planted and harvested
the cane
That would turn into sugar.
In dark mills,
men of bitter life
and hard life
Produced this sugar
white and pure
With which I sweeten my
coffee this morning
In Ipanema.

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

The dialogue between bitter and sweet is part of the history and daily life of the Brazilian Northeast. In Pernambuco, sugarcane has been planted in the Zona da Mata region, “in the so-called sugarcane zone, for almost 5 centuries. The cultivated area is about 12 thousand km², it is located close to the Atlantic Ocean, has rich soils for agriculture, where there are no threats of drought and the rivers are perennial” (GASPAR 2019).

From the expanse of land occupied by the planting of sugarcane, the taste for very sweet sweets spreads, present in the eating habits of most people from Pernambuco, whether in the simple act of sweetening a coffee, or in the amount of sugar used in recipes. This very sweet candy dates back many years, as Freyre notes, since the establishment of sugar production in the 16th century.

The kitchen of Pernambuco's mansions can be said to have been born under the cashew trees and developed in the shade of coconut trees, with the cane field always on its side providing it with abundant sugar; and close to sea water, river water, lagoon water, mangrove swamp, vegetable garden, forest – almost within reach of the cook's hand (...) guava, pineapple, cinnamon, breadfruit, sapodilla, tamarind (...) “a series of characteristically Brazilian sweets were established here – perhaps too sweet for European taste, (...) but not for Brazilians, especially those from the Northeast, who are born feeling the smell and almost the taste of sugar in the air. (FREYRE: 2007, p. 80 and 82)

In the kitchen of Brazilian sugar mills, many recipes were adapted through combinations of “traditionally Portuguese ways of making sweets and preserves with the fruits of the land” (FREYRE: 2007, p. 70). The sponge cake, the “bacia” cake and the sweet rice of Portuguese origin, were added to the confectioned chestnut and to the sweets of: pineapple, jackfruit, apricot, pumpkin, orange, cashew, mango, mangaba, banana, araçá and other sweets such as: cocada, melon preserve, banana, corn manué, ‘beijos’, ‘quero mais’ pudding, ‘sonhos’, ‘suspiros’, ‘manjá do céu à pernambucana’, ‘queijadinha de Iaiá’, ‘baba de mulher’, ‘tucinho do céu’, ‘tapioca jelly’, guava and goiabada, etc., the latter, is a type of sweet that replaced Portuguese marmalade, in the colonial period, due to the lack of quince in Brazilian cuisine. In addition to these sweets, there are also recipes for cakes: pé-de-moleque, beata, divindade, sogra, manioc, corn, amor, macaxeira, São João, goma, batata, ouro e prata, festa, sem nome, fruta-pão, coconut cake from Sinhá Dona, Brazilian, ‘rolo’ from Pernambuco, among others.

The cake is a delicacy present in Portuguese social life (CASCUDO 2011), it has its origin in Ancient Egypt, in a type of bread sweetened with date and raisin syrup. In Greece and Rome, especially in the Renaissance period, the cake was perfected, receiving the technique of fermentation. Its innumerable types appear in different celebrations such as: birthdays, weddings, graduations, etc., in addition to being part of breakfast, snacks, as an accompaniment to teas. An old custom that is still present in the homes of Pernambuco is to offer coffee with a piece of cake to visitors who come to see a sick person or a newborn or for any other reason.

It is understandable that this pastry-making and pastry-making tradition in Portugal was immediately and deeply replanted in Brazil, making use of local elements, joining resources brought from Europe, wheat flour, eggs, spices. Since the first century of colonization, Portuguese sweets were acclimatized and thriving in all centers and settlements. (CASCUDO: 2011, p. 307)

Although its main ingredients are wheat, egg, butter and milk, its dough can be made in different ways, combining different spices, with or without fermentation. In Brazilian sweets

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

there are cakes that are made from a mixture of local ingredients and those brought by the Portuguese, English and Africans, among other peoples.

In Pernambuco cuisine, currently, the roll cake and the bridal cake stand out as products that heat up the economy when sold, not only in restaurants, cafés, supermarkets, bakeries, street vendors, but also consumed at festivities or served in the dessert of everyday meals. They are products sold in tourist places as souvenirs, becoming delicacies of the local gastronomy, contributing to the economic development of the State of Pernambuco.

Roll Cake and the Bridal Cake of Pernambuco – delicacies that boost the local economy

In Pernambuco cuisine, some cakes, in addition to the amount of sugar used in the recipes, are sweeter due to their fillings and toppings, as is the case of the Pernambuco roll cake, whose filling is guava jam.

The recipe for this cake, according to historical records, is a transformation of the Colchão de Noiva cake, a recipe from the Algarve region, which consists of a type of sponge cake stuffed with almonds. As in colonial Brazilian cuisine there was no such spice, the Colchão de Noiva cake was adapted to local ingredients, receiving the filling of guava jam, in addition to being served in the form of a roll, giving rise to the roll cake from Pernambuco. Although it has a plump shape, it is not a swiss roll.

The roulade has no fat, it is a well-aerated sponge cake dough. On the other hand, roll cake has a creamy structure, due to the fat". As for the ingredients, therefore, the main difference is the absence of fat in the roll and the presence of butter or margarine in the roll cake. On the other hand, swiss roll takes more eggs and also yeast, supplies that work the dough to make it high and soft (ALVES, 2020, s/p)

The preparation of the roll cake consists of mixing the ingredients: sugar, butter, eggs, wheat flour and filling with guava jam or guava cream. To be considered a roll cake it is important to have very thin layers.

Figure 1. Traditional Roll cake



Photo: Sandra Simone

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

In contemporary times, roll cake is no longer a delicacy present only in the kitchens and tables of Pernambuco homes, it has also become a product that boosts the local economy and is part of the menus of important cafés, restaurants and *delicatessens*. It is also sold at traffic lights on busy streets, in street markets, bodegas and in tourist places, such as the Recife airport.

The price of a package, with approximately 400 grs., varies between R\$ 5.00 to R\$ 40.00. A generous slice, in a renowned café in Recife, can cost R\$ 25.00. Another form of marketing is the offer of courses, whose content consists of teaching the technique of preparing the roll cake. Classes last between 8 and 12 hours and cost between R\$ 200.00 to R\$ 450.00.

The roll cake market is vast. This product can be purchased at traffic lights on some streets in Recife, or at commercial houses along the main access roads to the countryside of the state. Generally, in these places, the sale takes place by self-employed people, whose family income depends on this informal work, however, there are individuals who survive from the production and sale of roll cake in the formal market, working in several factories installed in the municipalities of Pernambuco or managing their own business. Another type of activity is the creation of brands and sales through e-commerce. Today there are numerous sales sites, with delivery to several Brazilian states.

It is important to point out that the use of the roll cake recipe has, over time, been re-signified, if on the one hand it preserves the sponge cake, on the other it diversifies the flavor of this dough. Some confectioners add essences and colorings, and also exchange the traditional guava jam for fillings of gourmet brigadeiro, doce de leite, churros, lemon, corn, paçoca, prestígio, milk, Nutella, coffee and romeo and juliet. Another change is the format that is also presented in the form of naked cakes with thin sheets.

Figure 2. Chocolate Roll cake



Photo: Sandra Simone

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

Figures 3 and 4. Naked Roll cake



Photo: Sandra Simone

Figure 5. Roll cake Pie



Photo: Sandra Simone

Figure 6. Roll cake Toast



Photo: Sandra Simone

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

The diversity of recipes based on the traditional roll cake and its popularization over time was a fundamental element for the approval of State Law n° 13.436 of April 24, 2008, whose objective was to attribute to this delicacy the title of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the State of Pernambuco, becoming part of the identity of Pernambuco cuisine.

This cultural identity is also attributed to the Pernambuco bridal cake, a recipe that, according to researcher Cristianne Barros, is an adaptation of the British fruit cake, served at royal family weddings:

It is believed that this cake came from an adaptation of the cake of British origin, with the colonization of the British in Pernambuco. It was a recipe for white cake with candied fruit and wine that was adapted in the manorial kitchens of the great sugar mills, where it was common to add native ingredients to family recipes. In this way, British fruits were replaced by local fruits, the cherry was replaced by plum and raisins, candied fruits were added. Port wine, which was expensive, was also replaced by muscatel wine (Interview with researcher Cristianne Barros to Portal G1-Pernambuco, on 05/25/2005).

In addition to plums, raisins, candied fruit and Muscat wine, the recipe also includes: wheat, butter, sugar, eggs, powdered chocolate, salt, yeast, nutmeg. Its presentation can be: traditional covered with icing or fondant; naked or in small round or square portions that are usually sold as souvenirs in places with large circulation of tourists.

Figure 7. Bridal Cake – wedding with icing
Confectioner – D. Iêda Oliveira



Photo: Sandra Simone

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

Figure 8. Bridal Cake for Christmas dinner with fondant frosting
Confectioner – Sandra Simone



Photo: Sandra Simone

Figure 9. Bridal Cake – Naked
Confectioner – Sandra Simone

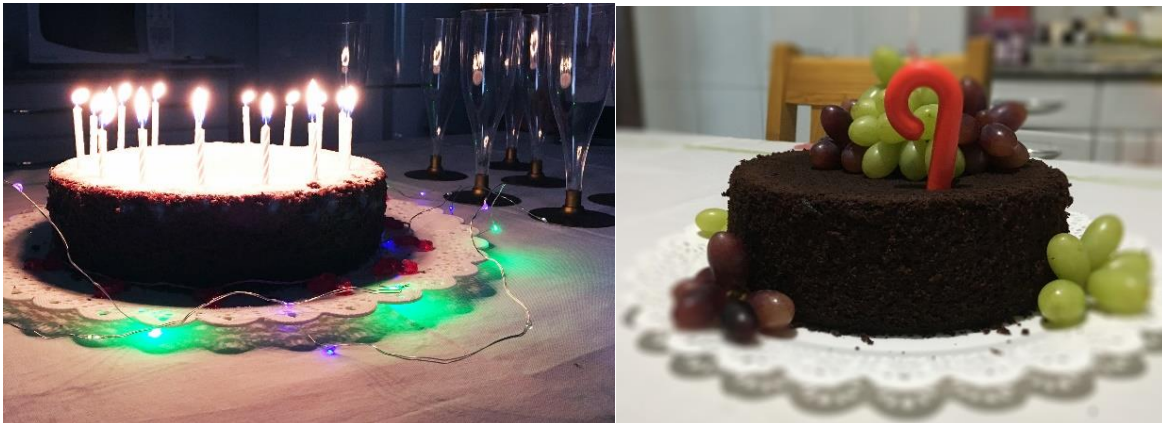


Photo: Sandra Simone

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

Figure 10. Bridal Cake – Package



Photo: Sandra Simone

On different occasions and parties, the bridal cake comes in different formats, but retains its flavor. Its commercialization takes place both in the formal market (patisseries, cafés, *buffets*, e-commerce) and in the informal market, becoming a source of income for many families. The average price of these cakes varies between R\$ 100.00 to R\$ 1.000.00, and this value can be higher or lower, depending on the weight. The price of small portions sold in packages varies between R\$ 20.00 to R\$ 50.00.

A curious fact found during the research on this delicacy concerns its recipe being used within the limits of the State of Pernambuco, a fact that characterizes it as a geographically cultural product, belonging to Pernambuco cuisine. This belonging and identity was pointed out in a vast investigation undertaken by the researcher Cristianne Barros and through which the indication, by the Legislative Assembly of the State (ALEPE), of the Pernambuco bridal cake to obtain the Intangible Heritage Registry of Pernambuco, was carried out. This indication is being analyzed by the state bodies responsible for Cultural Heritage, according to state law nº 16.426/2018.

Turning the roll cake and the bridal cake into intangible cultural heritage is a way of safeguarding traditional knowledge and practices, while at the same time enabling the understanding of the resignification of the ways of producing, as stated by the anthropologist Georges Balandier, when considering that tradition “acts as a carrier of dynamism that allows it to adapt, giving it the ability to deal with the event and explore some of the alternative potentialities” (BALANDIER: 1997, p. 38).

Popular knowledge transmitted from generation to generation is a means of expressing the encounter between the new and the old, in a *continuum movement* of changes, adaptations and permanence, which in contemporary times builds a system of world interpretation, identity construction and resignifications. In this way, the diversity of roll cake and bridal cake formats are ways forged by the dynamics of the market to establish new marketing possibilities, contributing to the development of the local economy and financial support for many poor families.

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

Conclusion

The cultural diversity of the State of Pernambuco provides a wealth of popular knowledge, many of which today are part of the Brazilian intangible heritage and represents the memory and history of the traditions of Pernambuco culture throughout the country, also arriving in foreign lands.

According to IPHAN^{II}, there are 11 intangible cultural assets of Pernambuco registered as national cultural heritage. The FUNDARPE^{III} presents a list of 14 assets recognized as state intangible and the roll cake, the title of which was granted by law. To this number, there are still 14 goods waiting for registration, among which, is the Pernambuco bridal cake.

The definition of a nation's heritage reminds us of the idea of a cultural good that represents the identity of a people, needing its preservation and safeguard to perpetuate its existence for future generations, making visible actions of the past expressed in their material form (through buildings, works of art, etc.) and immaterial (knowledge, forms of expressions, celebrations and places). The intangible heritage in Brazil came to be recognized from the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988, bringing in the Arts. 215 and 216 the following essays:

Art. 215. The State will guarantee the full exercise of cultural rights and access to the sources of national culture and will support and encourage the valorization and dissemination of cultural manifestations. § 1 - The State will protect the manifestations of popular cultures, indigenous and Afro-Brazilian, and those of other groups participating in the national civilizing process. 2. The law shall provide for the setting of commemorative dates of high meaning for the different national ethnic segments (...).

Art. 216. The Assets of material and immaterial, taken individually or together, bear concerning identity, and action, to the memory of the different formator groups of Brazilian society, which include: forms of expression; ways of creating, doing, and living; scientific, artistic and technological creations; the works, objects, documents, buildings and other spaces intended for artistic-cultural manifestations. (CF 1988, p. 134)

Before the 1988 Constitution, the Brazilian cultural heritage consisted only of tangible objects and covered inheritances left by white European settlers, which is considered the rich culture of Africans and Original Peoples. Therefore, the importance of Articles 215 and 216, whose content not only recognizes intangible assets but also legitimizes the importance of the presence of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous cultures as national heritage, identity, and memory of the Brazilian people.

The researcher Joaquim Falcão (1982), highlights the importance of the content addressed in the Constitution of 1988, because in addition to broadening the understanding of the meaning of Brazilian cultural heritage, it also drives the idea of heritage preservation, as a public policy that articulates a reasoned set of decisions, projects programs, resources, institutions. This set involves public management and civil society, which with different responsibilities, but intersect, and is committed to the preservation and safeguarding of property.

As a public policy, cultural heritage also becomes an instrument for local and national development. About immaterial goods, they are responsible for generating direct and indirect jobs and entrepreneurial actions. In Pernambuco, for example, activities involving intangible heritage generate income: in tourism, in the manufacture of props and clothing and typical foods of the time in the festive cycles (carnival, June); in the places of sales of handicrafts with this

THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

ARAÚJO, S. S. M.

is the case of the Fairs and the House of Culture; the groups of Maracatu and Seahorse that hire artisans and seamstresses to make the costumes, as well as in the promotion of parties and movement of commerce in the purchase of supplies, etc.

There are multiple ways that the intangible heritage of Pernambuco contributes to the local development and also to the recognition of cultural identity, as is the case of geographic eating, addressed in this article, in which the roll cake and the Pernambuco bridal cake are referenced products, memory, history and also of entrepreneurial actions involving the manufacturing and marketing processes, reaching various spaces such as restaurants, cafes, free fairs, sale at traffic lights, airports, parties, and e-commerce, generating income and ensuring the livelihood of countless families, whether in direct or indirect jobs.

Every day this product gains new markets, especially on websites with sales and shipping to the vast majority of Brazilian capitals. The Internet marketing guarantees a promising future for these cakes not only as merchandise, but also as a product that preserves the cultural identity and local history.

Notes

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^{II} IPHAN – National Institute of Artistic Historical Heritage is the institution responsible for the records and listings of Brazilian cultural heritage. For more information go to: <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/>.

^{III} FUNDARPE - Foundation of the Historical and Artistic Heritage of Pernambuco, is an institution, at the local level, responsible for the registration and listing of the patrimony of the State of Pernambuco.

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THE ROLL CAKE AND THE BRIDAL CAKE OF PERNAMBUCO: A REFLECTION ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

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