

# On the Absence and Presence of Meat at the Dining Tables of Working-Class Barcelona Families from the Post-War Years to Today

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## ABSTRACT

*The war-time meat eating and dietary habits of Barcelona's working population, and of surrounding areas, are contrasted with later times when meat and other foods became readily available. Recent years have shown a decrease in meat consumption, possibly under the influence of health trends, food crises or ecological and vegetarian ideology. The survey takes into consideration socio-economic class and rural/urban origins among other factors.*

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## THE SHORTAGE OF MEAT IN THE EARLY POSTWAR YEARS

I remember how hungry we were as children, when my father was imprisoned. In the home the nuns made the broth with a hen bone and four leaves. My sister and I used to bury the bones in the playground together with orange peel and the crusts of stale bread. They were like a treasure to us. When we were hungry,

well, we were always hungry, we would dig them up, shake the soil from them and eat them. (59 years old woman, assistant analyst)<sup>1</sup>

The childhood of this informant, which was spent in an orphanage for the children of parents reduced to poverty by the civil war or, as in her case, for the children of imprisoned militiamen, is unimaginable today, some fifty years later, for children from the same city, Barcelona. At that time meat had disappeared even from dishes like *escudella* (a thick soup made of meat and vegetables) and stew, which usually contained small pieces of meat to give some substance to the stock. Bones, and especially marrow, were the only miserly reminders that edible animals existed, animals whose meat was all the more sought after, if that was possible, because it was so scarce, and which got lost somewhere in the kitchen of the religious institution. Naturally, meat did not reach the most unfortunate members of society like orphans or war widows of the lower classes. Institutionalized charities at that time had to feed a great many mouths and their dishes had to do without scarce or prohibitively expensive foods.

The autocratic period of the Franco regime lasted until the beginning of the 1950's. It coincided with the most difficult times for postwar Spain. Franco's economic policy, based on self-sufficiency and state intervention in all economic processes (foreign trade, production, product distribution, market prices) (Riquer and Culla, 1989: 124-126) caused the levels of production and consumption to drop sharply and the purchasing power and living standard of the population of Barcelona to decline. The overexploitation of Barcelona salary earners caused a major drop in demands for all types of products, especially consumer goods, as working class and middle class families had to spend most of their income in food. The distribution of family budgets in Catalonia before this period provides an idea of the difficult situation most of the population had to go through. The increase in the cost of living in the city of Barcelona during the decade immediately following the civil war was 548%. The increase in the cost of food was 700%. Table 1 shows the difficulties many families had to obtain food. Sometimes, as in 1947, total income (1329) was less than food expenditure (1475).

TABLE 1  
Changes in the worker's purchasing power in Catalonia

	Year		
	1936	1947	1950
Rent	50	75	100
Food	200	1475	1316
Clothes	40	200	289
Miscellaneous	64	412	326
Total/month	355	2162	2032
<b>Income</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>1329</b>	<b>1595</b>
Difference	72	-833	-436

SOURCE: Sabadell Chamber of Commerce, from Riquer and Culla (1989: 124)

The post-war period was long and basic foods like bread, flour, meat, oil, sugar, rice, potatoes and pulses were rationed. Meat was the item most often scarce or unavailable. The rationing policy determined a specific type of consumption. Rations were standardized and differed according to age, sex and social class: women were given only 80% of the ration while children under 14 were given 60%. In 1939 this daily ration consisted of the following products:

TABLE 2  
Daily rations in 1939

Food	Grams	Food	Grams
Bread	400	Sugar	30
Potatoes	250	Meat	125
Pulses	100	Fatty pork	25
Oil	50	Salted cod	75
Coffee	10	Fresh fish	200

SOURCE: Albuquerque 1981, from Alonso and Conde, 1994

One thing is to establish official minimum levels of consumption, and another one to be able to acquire these foods on a daily basis. Besides the restrictions imposed by rationing there was the problem of these foods *going astray* and not reaching the market place. This forced the population to turn to black marketers and pay as much as ten times the official price. As an example of the difference between the official rations and the actual possibility of consuming these foods, even as late as 1950, the average Spanish family ate only 39% as much meat, 57% as much wheat, half as many pulses, less than half as much sugar and a third as many eggs as in 1935. The following quotation illustrates the restrictions on people's diets and the misery people suffered at the time:

Those were years of poverty and famine. We ate porridge, capelans (small fish), boiled rice, brown bread. Every day. I wouldn't eat them now, not for anything in the world. Oh, no, I don't miss them. Do you know what it's like to eat the same thing every day, never knowing whether you'll have anything to eat the next? We were very hungry. Do you know what it's like to go hungry? (61 years old salesman)

My parents worked and I started working very young, but with what we took home we couldn't make ends meet. We had little to eat, and many basic necessities like oil, sugar and flour were very expensive. While the black marketers got rich, at home we didn't know where the next meal was coming from. Or rather, we knew we were going to eat the same thing as the day before – garlic soup, sometimes a *guardia civil* (salted fish). We were workers and we were poor so we went hungry, but there were some who didn't. Money has always been the solution to everything. (61 years old salesman)

With the exception of the wealthier classes, most of the population found it difficult to obtain food on a regular basis even if they worked extremely hard. The next informant describes the pitiful situation perfectly. His post-war meals were almost vegetarian because his family were poor and working class. The money all the family was earning was not enough to buy even the most basic articles. His memories of eating meat are non-existent since his diet was devoid of products rich in animal protein. At best he remembers eating some sort of fish because, of the long list of officially established rations, the most often consumed animal protein came

from salted fish, especially herring and cod rather than from meat such as poultry, pork, veal or lamb. In the most critical years not even milk or eggs could be guaranteed, and milk was often adulterated. Our informants remember bread rolls made with corn flour and a little wheat and porridge as though they were symbols of poverty. “Lots of potatoes and sweet potatoes and a bit of brown bread and very little meat, fatty pork if anything, or nothing at all”, is the abiding memory of the food of the post-war period for this 70 year old woman. Clear in her memory are the most horrendous shortages and, of course, the *coupons*:

When my children were young and they refused to eat I always said they should live through a war so that they would know what it meant to be hungry. They didn't take any notice, of course. If they didn't want to eat, they didn't, and the plate was left there on the table until I or my husband finished it off. I sincerely believe that they wouldn't have had all that nonsense about “I don't like this” or “I don't like that” if, like us, they had lived through the war. I like everything and I eat everything. We really had it bad. You obtained food by presenting coupons for everything, bread, lentils, everything. The women went to the market very early, before the stalls opened, to wait in the queue. You would find people at five in the morning waiting for the doors to open two or three hours later. People charged in like animals, rushing to get their meat before it ran out. It was the first thing sold out. (70 years old woman, retired)

Many people describe this time as *the years of famine*. Those with the worst memories of this period are the ones who spent it in large cities with few resources. The difference between then and now is not only the lack of variety in the diet but the absence of certain foodstuffs, particularly the *tall*.<sup>2</sup> Although the working classes in pre-war Barcelona were not blessed with a diet rich in meat, many dishes nevertheless included it in some form or other. We must therefore understand the non-consumption or minimal consumption of meat during the war and post-war period as a logical and inevitable consequence of economic and political restrictions, rather than the emergence of a latent vegetarianism. There was in fact an enforced vegetarianism born out of food shortage and restricted access to animal resources, such as happened in several other cultural contexts (Farb and Armelagos, 1985: 46-47).

The nobler cuts of meat only appeared on the tables of the wealthier families. For the poorer members of society offal, head and tail became one of the few meat sources that actually increased during this time of need. I use the word “increased” because they were already present in Catalan cookery books of earlier periods (Montalbán, 1979). A great deal of imagination went into preparing these dishes, but at the end of the post-war period their consumption decreased once more, even among the poorer.<sup>3</sup> Dishes with offal such as Catalan-style tripe, *capipota* (stew made from cow, sheep or pig trotters and head) tongue stew, kidneys in sherry, liver and onions, brain fritters, etc. were part of the cuisine in post-war urban kitchens and, for some time later, a number of these dietary sources, including blood, liver, gelatin, lungs, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, tripe, tongue, trotters and head, were even recommended for children because of their supposed restorative powers.

Sometimes I manage to persuade her [his wife] to make *capipota* like my mother used to make it, but she doesn't really want to. She doesn't like it. It reminds her of the post-war period. She says “as if there were nothing else...” (60 years old man, retired).

The pediatrician told me to give him liver once a week. And cow's heart or sheep's brains. To alternate, not to give him offal every day, but once a week. No way would he eat it. I tried making it in all kinds of ways – with garlic and parsley, with onions, on the griddle, in fritters. He had a special sense of smell. No sooner had I put it on his plate than he turned his nose up at it. I must say I'm not very keen on it myself. (63 years old housewife)

State intervention led to a black market, speculation and string-pulling (Viñas, 1982: 101-102; Fusi, 1983: 12). The people of Barcelona looked around for all kinds of resources to cover minimum subsistence levels in many different ways. These included joining political parties or trade unions to obtain food or other goods in exchange for doing little jobs. Or bribing civil servants or pro-Franco people to obtain more ration books. One informant remembers how her parents, through members of their family in exile in contact with eastern European countries, were sent products like horse meat and *turrones* (nougat-like sweet). People's social

networks were very important: neighbours, relatives and acquaintances were often the main sources of information and supply. Many city dwellers moved out to rural areas around Barcelona in search of food. This process would shortly be reversed by the economic growth of industrial Barcelona and the increasing level of urbanization.

During and after the war my father would take his suitcase on Saturdays and go and see the many friends he had in the villages around Barcelona. He'd come back with eggs, rabbit, tomatoes and potatoes. My granny, who was a shop assistant, used to get milk and, in a highly original way, yoghurt. At the time, yoghurt was sold on rations. The shop assistants would make a lot of noise with the spoon as if the container was almost empty, but they always left a little bit at the bottom. At midday all the containers were emptied and the yogurt was shared out between them. Also, as shop assistants were always given a liter of *xiri* (skimmed milk), half of this was taken home and half was exchanged at the baker's for a loaf of bread. And a cousin of mine, who drove an army truck, went around collecting sacks of almonds in their shells and he used to give them to us. We kept them in a box under his bed and after dinner we shared out the almonds, ten per person. Anyone who had a bad one could exchange it. In this way we were able to eat a dessert and all. (70 years old woman, retired)

Such a desire for meat, as had caused a number of social rebellions throughout European history (Harris, 1989: 17-47), was not felt with the same intensity by every inhabitant of Barcelona. Interviewees from rural areas who spent the early post-war years in the country or who owned a plot of land suitable for cultivation or those who from time to time were given food by their relatives have less painful memories, although shortages and monotony in particular were a daily problem:

I remember that the only consolation we had at first, after arriving here and seeing that there wasn't exactly an abundance of food, was when oil, a few chickens or vegetables arrived from the meadow. As oil lasted longer, we were able to exchange it for other products like bread, a bit of meat or eggs (70 years old housewife).

My father had a little plot of land near *la Modelo* [a prison in Barcelona]. At that time there were no blocks of flats there, just land. I picked lettuces, tomatoes, onions, cabbages and potatoes. But there wasn't much chicken, beef or fish. We had eggs, they were easier to find. People kept chickens on their balconies. My

mother always used to tell us that in the war the rabbit they put in the rice dishes wasn't rabbit at all but cat. I don't know if it was true but she could never bear to look at them because they reminded her of wartime. (60 years old man, retired)

Routine in daily eating habits was normal even before the war for the urban and rural working classes. Our informants describe their pre-war meals as: lunch, except on festive days, almost invariably of one course, stew made with vegetables, legumes, potatoes and a *tall*, either pork or cod, while dinner was basically soup, vegetables, fish, eggs or a bit of cheese. Dinner was often just a salted fish, tuna or anchovy sandwich (at that time anchovies were very cheap) or cold meats, which were often also eaten at breakfast. Dishes for festive occasions were rounds of beef or fricassees, rice dishes made with rabbit, chicken, fish and cod with ratatouille, cannelloni, stuffed chicken, rabbit with snails, macaroni or meatballs. These were always an optimal resource because they used the little, poor quality meat that was available together with breadcrumbs and eggs, if there were any. These dishes started to regain their place at meal tables as the food supply became more regular and the population obtained more resources. However, ingredients, combinations and food etiquette were to undergo significant changes.

Some people, especially women, were relieved of rampant famine when they went to work in domestic service in the houses of the Barcelona bourgeoisie which, during the new regime, acted pragmatically by making money from its industrial activities:

Don't think that in my first household they had everything to eat. The war had only just ended and there was nothing to be found anywhere. But they never went hungry, really hungry, and neither did I. But sometimes we ate the same thing day after day and any leftovers were either saved or given to us servants. On numerous occasions I took out a bit of bread or rice and took it home to my family. The second family I worked for was different. They were richer. I started as a cook, well, not exactly, but as a kitchen assistant because I hardly knew how to prepare anything except what I knew from my village, because at eight years old I started to work, looking after children. The little I did know didn't help much either. This household ate different dishes: vegetables like artichokes, a lot of veal. I don't think I'd ever tasted them before. (58 years old woman, domestic assistant)

The upper classes, feeling the pinch of economic hardship and state intervention, used all the means of exchange at their disposal, which included buying and selling coupons, forging ration books to acquire the scarcest goods on the market or outside the market (meat, coffee, oil, bread, butter, coal, petrol, medicine), which made speculation and the black market more profitable. Those who were in possession of the most exchangeable objects or who were more able to acquire favours or better information, or were in a better position to pull strings, as was the case of the bourgeois families, found it less difficult to acquire the scarcest consumer goods such as meat, fresh fish, milk and fresh fruit. The middle classes of Barcelona (members of the liberal professions, small traders, employees) also endured a difficult economic and employment situation that was marked by the insecurity of the times:

Even my father's brother-in-law who had plenty [meaning money] as he owned a business [textile shop], and fortunately it had always been more or less successful, had a terrible time. My father went to see him to ask for some food and that didn't work either. More than once he came back with nothing. But my father persisted, or rather my mother did because my father felt ashamed to ask for charity even of his sister. They had a less terrible time than we did, shall we say? They knew influential people and managed to get hold of food or medicine (65 years old man, cabinet maker)

Under-nourishment, terrible living conditions and hard work were the main causes of the sharp decrease in the physical defenses of working people. This made them more vulnerable to illnesses, particularly infectious diseases like tuberculosis, scabies, trachoma, typhoid or meningitis.<sup>4</sup> Families used raw eggs whenever they were available, horses' blood or cod liver oil as food supplements. These are still remembered with disgust by the generation of children born during and just after the war:

They were afraid I'd get tuberculosis or something. There was little to eat and I didn't eat very much. I was quite thin. They made me eat raw eggs and the horses' blood on sale at the chemist's. You made a hole in the shell and sucked it out. They said it was very nutritious. Or a few spoonfuls of cod liver oil as a supplement and off you went. It was horrible but castor oil was even worse. You

took that for constipation. That really was bad. Do you know what the Falangists did if they caught you in the streets and you told them you weren't one of them? They shaved your head and made you drink castor oil, because it was a laxative. (60 years old man, retired)

The diet of many people in Barcelona showed nutritional shortages at the lower levels of society mainly due to an insufficient intake of calories and nutrients.<sup>5</sup> In less than thirty years, however, the diet of the same population was to reveal forms of malnutrition mainly due to the over-consumption of calories and certain nutrients,<sup>6</sup> including meat and associated saturated fats, as the pattern of consumption (while still modelling itself on the so-called *Mediterranean diet*), gradually began to approach the *Anglo-Saxon model*, in which the caloric content is primarily obtained from meat, eggs, dairy products, and sugar (Malassis and Padilla, 1980, in Hercberg *et al.*, 1988). One overweight informant tells us sarcastically:

Fat, me, as a child? You must be joking! I was very thin, as most young girls were, too thin in fact. At home we had just enough money for our food. Now that I can afford to eat, my doctor forbids it. I've got high blood pressure, I'm obese, I've got problems with my feet, and bad circulation. So it's boiled or grilled vegetables for me. Not much red meat and better for me not even to set eyes on lamb. As much chicken as I want, just a little pasta. But I can't have any of the things I do like. (56 years old housewife)

Generally speaking, the population of Barcelona<sup>7</sup> followed certain trends in food consumption that were similar to those of other market economies<sup>8</sup> and, coinciding with these changes in diet, there was an increase in the incidence of a number of pathologies, including obesity, cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, tooth decay and certain types of cancer. In the literature these are described as illnesses of a *society of abundance*. These negative trends must be reversed by increasing the consumption of fibre and complex carbohydrates, and restricting the consumption of foods rich in animal fats. Meat today is not only the first choice food of the Barcelonese as in other industrialized countries, it is also consumed over the recommended amounts. How could this happen in such a short time?

This reversal of the consumption model can be explained as a psychological response to negative memories of deprivation, and from a materialistic point of view as the logical response to prolonged and extreme shortages of protein. Even if both explanations are correct they would only partly explain current preferences, especially considering that the greatest consumers of meat today are young people between 11 and 35 who did not live through the post-war period. This change should be understood, within the context of a wider change that has affected all the industrialised countries, as the result of a collection of different factors linked to the emergence of a *new food order* in which many structural elements of the system have changed.

#### THE NORMALISATION OF MEAT CONSUMPTION AT THE MEAL TABLES OF THE WORKING CLASSES

At the end of the early post-war period, as the autocratic regime started to open to the outside world and develop plans affecting the economic, labour and social structure of the country, the Barcelonese gradually regained access to essential foods; there was a modest recovery in the health standards of the poorer classes, and pre-war culinary traditions began to make a comeback. However, the new social and economic conditions were to produce substantial changes to the previous dietary model.

Although many authors believe that food culture changes very slowly,<sup>9</sup> and this is true in relation to concrete matters like the persistence of certain central foodstuffs and the way people prepare and think about food, very few aspects of human nutrition can escape the logic of change, substitution or adoption (Fishler, 1990). In Barcelona many things have affected food culture.<sup>10</sup> We have seen the partial recovery of pre-war culinary traditions and the partial and/or absolute abandonment of the products and dishes that characterized *the culture of want* (cornflour, porridge, salted fish, legumes, cod, brown bread, offal). In the last few years, however, the influence of medical, nutritional and even gastronomic discourse, has reintroduced them into the diet as healthy and tasty foods, and not only in the poorer kitchens. Among others it is the case of cod and whole wheat bread:

You couldn't find white bread, made from flour, or if you did, only very occasionally. And now it's become fashionable, would you believe it? Before, you wouldn't look twice at it because it reminded you of hunger and poverty. The whole wheat bread of today from the baker's is easier to chew, it comes straight from the oven and contains lots of different kinds of cereals. (59 years old woman, assistant analyst)

The most radical change in the diet of working class families is now the importance of the daily presence of meat at the dining table. In Barcelona many factors, *perturbations* or *events* according to Thouvenot (1979) and Fischler (1990), have accelerated consumer trends for certain foods and the way they are eaten. The cuisine has been transformed at a frantic pace, dictated by the demands of large-scale economic cycles and the diverse messages sent out regarding nutrition, health and the body. Rapid urbanization and industrialization,<sup>11</sup> changes in economic structure, transformations of the labour market, increased life standards, more women working outside the home, changes in family structure, migration, new value given to time, have produced specific changes in urban food culture. While the Barcelonese's diet has diversified it has also become more homogeneous and international – some would say “Americanised”. Technology has simplified home cooking. Larders are filled both with convenience foods of varying quality that save time and effort, and prestige foods boasting *appellations contrôlées*.

The following table shows in relation to Spain that a diet based on cereals, legumes, olive oil, potatoes, fruit, seasonal vegetables, eggs and milk has now become a diet in which the consumption of potatoes and legumes has decreased, that of meat has almost doubled and that of dairy products has increased considerably. The amounts in 1997 and 2003 are, in relation to the amount spent on meat consumption, 26.6 and 24 respectively:

TABLE 3  
Changes in consumption of food products

	% Spent On Domestic Consumption											
	1958	1964	1968	1975	1981	1987	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	2003
Bread, pasta, cereals	18.5	15.5	12.7	7.9	10.8	7.5	7.5	8.1	7.7	8.6	9.1	8.0
Potatoes, vegetables	13.1	12.0	11.9	9.9	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.7	10
Fruit	5.3	5.7	6.3	7.1	8.6	9.8	10.3	10.2	8.8	8.8	8.8	11
Meat	<b>17.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Fish	<b>8.3</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>14</b>
Eggs	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Milk/cheese	<b>8.7</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Oils/fats	8.5	9.3	7.6	6.7	4.8	4.8	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.9	2.5
Sugar/sweets	4.2	4.9	4.4	3.7	5.6	5.6	6.2	6.4	6.1	5.9	5.6	5.3

SOURCE: M.A.P.A. 2000, 2004

TABLE 4  
Changes in the domestic consumption of meat

Year	g/person/day
1965	77
1987	157
1995	143
1995/1965	856

SOURCE: M.A.P.A. (1996), *La alimentación en España 1995*.

If the increase in the consumption of meat is an indicator of industrialization,<sup>12</sup> this happened in Barcelona within two decades,<sup>13</sup> because the latest amounts suggest a new trend: the end of increasing meat consumption or its stagnation.<sup>14</sup> The numbers indicate a shift in this respect for recent years:

TABLE 5

Domestic Structure Expenditure On Meat (%)				
1995	1997	1998	1999	2003
25.5	26.6	25.4	24.3	24.1

SOURCE: M.A.P.A. 2000, 2001 and 2004

TABLE 6

	Domestic Consumption Of Meat				
	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000
Million/Kgs	2,037	2,188	2,113	2,087	2,122
Kgs/capita	52.2	55.4	53.4	52.3	53.1

SOURCE: M.A.P.A. 2000, 2001 and 2004

In spite of this initial decline, very fluctuating still, the figures for Spain as a whole are eloquent enough: in less than thirty years the consumption of meat increased by more than 80%. In a relatively short time, the diet of the working classes of Barcelona completely shifted and socioeconomic status was no longer a determinant factor in the consumption of meat. Data provided by MAPA for 2000 indicate that in metropolitan areas and Catalonia – Barcelona is both – between 54.08 and 56.30 kilos of meat were bought per capita, which is above the national average of 53.1. At the same time, and according to the same source, working classes consume more meat per capita (59.69) than higher classes (49.19). Another question is the type of meat consumed by the different classes and it should also be taken into account that the data refers to home consumption. What matters here is that meat consumption increased as living standards increased, this being parallel to economic and industrial growth.<sup>15</sup> This is also suggested by the evolution of family budgets. At the end of the post-war period most of the family income was spent on food, in stark contrast with subsequent trends. At the end of the 1950's, more than 50% of the household income was spent on food but it was considerably different from the previous decade. Thirty years later, the food budget of Spanish families represented 26% of their income. In 1991, the Barcelonese spent 213,808 pesetas on

food (plus drink and cigarettes), representing 27% of their budget, and today it has fallen to 17%. For Catalonia, it indicates a continuous decrease: in 2003, the domestic expense in food and drink was of 20.1%, getting closer to that of other European countries. (M.A.P.A., 1996; I.N.E., 1991/2003)

Within one decade after the war, the town of Barcelona attracted the rural population with its opportunities for employment, salaries and consumerism.<sup>16</sup> Strangely, the image of Barcelona's cuisine described by some of our informants when they arrived in the city, shows two dimensions. While the poorer people of the town were seen by the immigrants as *eaters of all sorts of vegetables*, the elite were perceived as meat eaters. Despite the fact that most of these interlocutors noticed the large amounts of vegetables that the people of modest condition in Barcelona ate, the difference between this and their own place of origin was not so great. They also ate dishes with little meat: *gazpacho* (cold soup made of peppers), *gachas* (a porridge-type mixture made of breadcrumbs), *purrusaldas* (a stew made of leeks, potatoes and cod), *cocidos* (chickpea stews), *potajes* (vegetable stews), *salmorejo* (a *gazpacho*-type soup), *migas* (fried breadcrumbs) and many more. In fact, an analysis of the Barcelona working classes at the end of the 1950's shows that their diet is not so very different from the diet of the immigrant population of the 60's and 70's (Riquer and Culla, 1989).

In this period the dishes that began to appear on the tables of the working classes in Barcelona were a flexible response to the various happenings in the city, which were to lead the popular and normal consumption of meat. Usual dishes before the Civil War – *escudellas*, stewed pulses, sauté vegetables, omelettes, cod with potatoes or ratatouille, roast rabbit or chicken, cannelloni – gradually came back into use but they were reinterpreted, modified and extended, not only because of the greater availability of foodstuffs in general, but, among other things, because of the development of tourism, restaurants, and new dietary and aesthetic norms. Foods that were typically eaten at festivals and demanded a greater variety of meat, gradually began to appear on daily menus of the more modest families. People nowadays still cook differently on working and feast days. Daily food is simpler and quicker to prepare. The many meat dishes include: meatballs with potatoes or vegetables, veal and lamb stews with cuttlefish; rice with rabbit and chicken, fish and shellfish, cod

and cauliflower; soups of pasta, fish, onion and egg, garlic, thyme and meatballs; pasta dishes such as cannelloni, macaroni and spaghetti served with meat or fish and vegetables, casseroled noodles with pork chops, and noodles cooked in a fish stock; vegetables served up boiled or with white cream sauce (broad beans, broccoli, cauliflower, chard, spinach, artichokes, courgettes, leeks); pulses and *escudelles barrejades* (lentil stews, chickpea salads, haricot bean, chickpea and broad bean stews, beef or pork stew, fried green beans or bean omelette); croquettes prepared from meat used to make stock, seafood or fish casserole, rabbit with ratatouille or snails, fricassee, round of beef, sausage with beans, cod with tomato, *esqueixada* (raw cod with olives, tomato and onion), pork, chicken, veal or fish in batter, cakes made from dried fruit and nuts, chicken and veal hamburgers, soused sardines, salted anchovies and anchovies in vinegar, chops, bread with tomato and cold meats, chips, pig trotters, milk, fried eggs, fresh fruit, cream, yoghurt, dried fruit and nuts, cheese and cakes.

These are the foodstuffs and dishes which are most often mentioned and common to all the meals of the Barcelonese. Dishes including salads and cold meats, and boiled, charcoal grilled and fried foods are usually eaten on weekdays in the evening, while roasts and more complex casseroles are reserved for holidays and, in particular, for Sunday lunch, although some tend now to eat out on Sundays or resort to buying take-away dishes. The pressure caused by work or school timetables and other activities, and the greater value placed on leisure time, have led people to prefer quickly prepared grilled or fried meat dishes rather than casseroles and stews, which are more time consuming and require greater effort.

There are differences in the type of meat the different income groups buy. Despite the fact that most of our informants considered that, luckily, they could now buy anything they like, there is clearly a purchasing power limit that determines their tastes for certain articles. It can be said that there is a socially vertical heterogeneity of consumption for numerous products. This is the case for cold meats, meat, fruit, fish and wine. These articles can be found in most households, but their price and typology vary considerably according to the household income. Thus, lamb, goat, veal – particularly such cuts as the fillet or sirloin – duck, capon and Iberian cold meats are less frequent in low income households, which tend

to consume large quantities of chicken and turkey, pork (sausages, black pudding, loin, chops, cold meats), rabbit and veal.

Yesterday we had *jabugo* ham. Strangely enough, my mother-in-law bought it because she knows we like it and seeing that it was a celebration..., but it's not normal. We usually have it only because *we* buy it. They always buy the cheap stuff. (28 years old woman, accountant)

When the price of lamb suddenly goes up like that, I don't buy it. Why should I pay twice the price if next week it's going to come back down again? I make the most of it when it's cheap, buy more and freeze it. (68 years old housewife)

Alongside this heterogeneous phenomenon of *socially vertical consumption*, we have observed that homogenization of meat consumption was *socially horizontal* in nature, caused by the decrease of local varieties in favour of the standardization of agricultural and livestock production (poultry, pork, bovine) and also caused by the massive influx of tourists from other industrialized nations, leading to the development of restaurants based on international, Spanish, regional, local or ethnic cuisines. Food consumption took on international traits by incorporating new dishes that were supposedly characteristic of other cultures and by the apogee of this trend in an internationalist style of catering, in response to the influx of tourists and new leisure time which allowed the Barcelonese to go more often to restaurants and bars to enjoy their daily or holiday meals.

Establishing an international cuisine means adopting dishes and ingredients mainly from French and Italian cuisines, first introduced via restaurants and later incorporated into domestic kitchens. Examples of dishes consumed both at home and outside are: *osso buco*, meat and vegetables cooked with milk-based creams and butter, cheeses or mustard, Mexican fajitas, pizzas, stuffed pasta, steak tartare, nuggets, meat in batter or breadcrumbs, or pâtés.

The popularization of meat consumption has been progressive and consistent until up to the 1990's. It has reached the point where today the children of the generation whose childhood was deprived of meat believe that a meal is normal only if it contains animal products. In nutritional terms, young individuals (between 14 and 30) consume large quantities of protein,

mainly of animal origin, carbohydrates and simple sugars, animal fats and vegetable fats (margarine and oil). Vegetables, fruit and fish are missing in many cases. The same type of consumption is recorded for some adults.

In terms of consumption we may describe the 14-30 years as a product of the period when meat supply and the ability to acquire food increased. When adolescents are able to choose what they want to eat they usually follow their own personal tastes rather than nutritional criteria.

What do I know about whether it's good or bad for the health? Well, yes, I do know, but I'm not bothered. I just eat what I like, that's all there is to it, whether it contains fats or it's made of plastic. I like beans in a stock or with sausages or chips. I like beef that's finely minced and fried, and the chicken with almonds that my mum makes and pork in breadcrumbs. Fish, well... Fruit? I like bananas and, in the summer, melon. I don't think I like any vegetables, well except salads, but only lettuce and tomatoes. (16 year old woman, student)

This is why the inventories of domestic groups with young people show products indicating a socially horizontal homogenization of tastes. Some examples are: industrial pastry, sweets, pizzas, cheese and ham toasties, soft drinks, sauces, sliced bread, dairy products and particularly much meat (veal, chicken, pork, cold meats). For lower class youths, especially boys, meat is essential: it is almost always mentioned as a preference and there are few who prefer vegetarian foods. The disgust sometimes mentioned by some girls refers in some cases to ideological questions.<sup>17</sup> Contrasting opinions of meat are offered by a father and a son from the same domestic group. The former, of rural origin, claims:

You can live easily on what's produced in the fields. You don't need meat to survive. (57 years old man, viticulturist).

The son, on the other hand, believes that meat is essential:

Meat is of primary importance. I'd eat one steak a day, or two, or three. I enjoy it. Yes, sometimes I eat three steaks until I'm full. (27 years old man, teacher)

The consumption of meat and its derivatives has been encouraged by decreasing prices, new social pressures, the influence of restaurants and the tastes of the younger generation. It is to some extent an answer to health related problems and body image. It might seem a paradox, but many of the numerous types of diet followed at some point by some of our interlocutors, following suggestions from doctors, beauticians or medical literature and adapted to the individual needs in response to pathologies and weight problems are still based, though not exclusively, on animal protein. There appears to be a certain gap between medical advice promoting pre-war popular cuisine as the most suitable model of consumption, and the prescription of any diet.<sup>18</sup>

Such preferences have been fostered by a number of things such as mass production, lower prices, greater purchasing power of the working classes and the influence of restaurants, special diets and school dinners. These last are extremely important because, together with home cooking, they directly shape the food culture of the youngest members of society. If we analyze the contents of monthly menus of state schools in Barcelona we see that most of their dishes are meat-based. We have taken two examples at random for menus planned in February 2000.<sup>19</sup> The first example is a menu for children from one to three years old and the second for children between three and twelve. In the first case, of the menus from 25 days, 14 main courses consisted of chicken, veal or pork, while the others consisted of fish and eggs. In the second case, the proportion is even higher: of the menus from 20 days, 15 contained some item of meat as the main ingredient of the second course. Moreover, some first courses included small amounts of protein (boiled ham, omelette, fried egg, cheese, minced beef, spicy sausage or black pudding).

These plans have been checked by the health department of the Catalan government, so one can deduce an obvious desire to promote the consumption of meat-based foods and animal protein in general. This fact apparently contradicts the recommendations published by the nutrition program (Jiménez *et al.*). Although for over two decades the medical and/or moral discourses of industrialized societies has recommended a balanced, prudent diet of quality, in which the consumption of animal protein and fat is reduced, the conditions of the market, urban lifestyle, the trend of

preferences and the persistence of certain types of medical instruction, still favour for the moment the normalization of meat in every type of kitchen, even the more modest ones, where more often than not meat has been conspicuous for its absence rather than for its abundance.

## NOTES

1. This article is based on the contributions of twenty interlocutors chosen from a group that had previously taken part in two research projects on the changes or otherwise in the dietary culture of the people of Barcelona (Gracia, 1998 and 1999). They were chosen on the basis of their socioeconomic position, age, geo-cultural origins and the quality of the data they provided in the in-depth interviews and the stories they told. The historical contextualisation of the period follows the comprehensive study by Riquer and Culla entitled *El Franquisme i la transició democràtica* (1939-1988) in *Història de Catalunya* by Pierre Vilar, vol. VII, Edicions 62, Barcelona.
2. In Catalan, the term *tall* is used for a piece of meat, fish, cheese, etc. that is cut in one whole piece or for a large piece of meat or fish in a meal or in a stew, as opposed to the vegetables or sauce.
3. In fact the consumption of animal offal has continued to fall in Spain in the last few years (M.A.P.A.: 142):

Purchases For Home And Outside Consumption (Million kilograms)						
	1991/90	1992/91	1993/92	1994/ 93	1995/94	1995/90
Offal	101,2	95,7	81,1	86,8	85,8	58,5

4. For example, in 1944 more than half the deaths by infectious disease in Barcelona were due to tuberculosis (Riquer and Culla, 1989: 126).
5. In 1941, beginning of the post-war period, the consumption of food in Spain was considerably lower than the nutritional levels generally recommended (44.6% for albumin, 61.5% for fat, 66.2% carbohydrates and 66% calories) (Herrero, 1988, in Alonso and Conde, 1994).
6. The industrialized countries also report health problems due to shortages. Although the risk of nutritional deficiency is very rare it is significant for some vitamins (retinol, vitamin C, tocopherol) or minerals (magnesium, zinc). The prevalence of iron-deficiency anemia is 2.2% (*Enquesta Nutricional de Catalunya*, 1992-1993).
7. There are no available statistical studies referring exclusively to changes in Barcelona. We therefore refer to larger areas, *i.e.* Catalonia or Spain. In 2002-2003, 40.2% of calorie and nutrient consumption in Catalonia came from fats, 19.2% from proteins and 38.3% from hydrocarbons. As in other industrialized countries, the percentage from proteins and sweets is high for all the population, while calorie consumption is considered suitable for all age groups except the young, among whom consumption tends to be excessive (*Avaluació de l'Estat Nutricional de la*

- població catalana 2002-2003*, Barcelona 2004).
8. Malassis (1975: 75-76) says that there are basically four laws: a) when a consumer's income increases, energy consumption expressed in final calories tends to reach a limit, while consumption expressed in initial calories continues to increase. This increase is due to the substitution of calories from vegetables for calories from animal products. b) when a consumer's income increases, expenditure on food in real terms increases in relation to consumption per capita and to the actual price of caloric food. c) the relative value of expenditure on food decreases in relation to the set of other consumer expenditures (Engel's law). d) the structure of nutritional consumption (relative importance of the different food groups) and product category (agricultural and agribusiness) changes.
  9. See Febvre (1938), Malassis (1975), Flandrin (1989), Schneider (1988) or Lambert (1997), quoted in Gracia (1998: 28-48).
  10. The changes recorded in the food culture of Barcelona take place on different levels. These range from changes in food production and transformation to its supply, storage and preservation, its preparation, distribution and consumption; to changes in the way food knowledge is transmitted and learned; and the changes in the roles and attitudes of suppliers and consumers. For changes or otherwise in the food culture of Barcelona between the 1960's and 1990's, see Gracia (1998).
  11. In 1960 the percentage of urban population increased from 56% arriving to 66% in 1970, whereas, in the same year, Barcelona went from 67,4% to 71,8%. At that moment, this urban area registered a much higher economic expansion than the Spanish average. The evolution of the working population between 1960 and 1990 indicates a continuous increase of secondary and tertiary sectors and a significant loss of the primary level:

Working Population of Catalunya in 2000	
Agriculture	2.6%
Industry	26.6 %
Costruction	9.2%
Services	57.9%

SOURCE: Anuari Estadístic de Catalunya/01

12. Thouvenot (1979) points out that the effects of industrialization in the northeast of France at the end of the 19th century coincides with the increased production and sale of meat, and the discreet beginning of popular consumption of beef among the inhabitants of the region.
13. Although Catalonia had already been through its first industrial revolution in the previous century, the process of industrialization was interrupted between 1935 and 1950. The principal push towards modernization took place between 1960 and 1974, to such an extent that in the 1980's the problem of the backwardness or modernity of Spanish industry gradually turned into the problem of the backwardness or modernity of European industry (Nadal, Carreras & Sudrià 1989:289).

14. This trend has been mentioned before by Fiddes (1991: 225) in relation to the British “the upward trend reached a peak in the early twentieth century, after which no major further increase occurred. Wartime fluctuations obscure clear trends, but there are signs that overall demand, far from increasing, has actually begun to decline”.
15. This greater diversity in the foods available and those most available coincides with the renovation of the rudimentary structures that Catalan food and agriculture companies, encouraged by their international recognition, the creation of accessible technology and the extension of distribution networks, carried out during this period (Riquer and Culla, 1989). The introduction of technological equipment and increased food productivity were favoured by the 1st Economic and Social Development Plan through the capitalist and Europeanizing surge of the early 1960’s. This was updated two decades later when Spain entered the Economic Community.
16. This century, most immigration has been concentrated in the 1920’s and 30’s and 1950’s and 60’s with a timid flurry at the end of the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s. The city became home to people from Murcia, Valencia, Aragon, Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile and Galicia as well as Catalan immigrants from out of Barcelona. More recently, people have arrived from the Maghreb, Africa, the sub-Sahara, Asia (Philippines, Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese) and Latin America (Nello, 1998).
17. Vegetarian diet is related (but not only) to some movements such as environmentalism and “okupas”, among which some people put forward the ethical and environmental ethical aspects as reasons to eat less meat or not to eat it at all. These movements most often concern young people of lower or middle class. However, there have been vegetarians in our society since the seventies, and it coincides with the great increase in meat consumption among lower classes. On the other hand, the successive crisis such as “mad cow”, porcine plague and foot and mouth disease do not seem to have much influenced meat consumption. Indeed today there is less consumption of veal and red meats, which have been compensated by other types of meat and fish.
18. For example, the nutritional advice established and given for prevention of cardiovascular disease in specialized centres allow a considerable number of animal products: turkey, chicken, rabbit, fish, tinned tuna, smoked salmon, dairy products, egg white) and, once or twice a week, veal, beef, pork, raw cured ham, game, salted cod, shell fish or tinned sardines. There are recommendations which do not question the presence of meat in the menus, just of the fats contained by some of them.
19. These menus were in fact modified in 2000-2001 as far as beef was concerned. With the “mad cow” crisis, it was stricken out of school menus in most of the public schools of Catalonia, and substituted with fish or other meat sources. Today, the presence of veal and beef has become normal again.

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