

A CULINARY HISTORY OF THE PORTUGUESE EURASIANS: THE  
ORIGINS OF LUSO-ASIAN CUISINE IN THE SIXTEENTH AND  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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## *ABSTRACT*

The Portuguese Eurasians are a cultural group who trace their ancestry to the fifteenth and sixteenth century Portuguese voyages of exploration that inaugurated the era of European colonization in Asia. The Portuguese established a maritime route to the Far East and built an empire based on spice trade with Europe and inter-Asia trade in a variety of commodities. Portuguese merchants and adventurers travelled throughout the region, married indigenous women and gave rise to Luso-Asian communities in most of the region's trading centres, while peripatetic Portuguese missionaries established Christian communities and introduced Iberian social values to many areas in the Far East. The Luso-Asian creole societies that developed as a result of these encounters were ethnically diverse but ideologically unified by a tenacious allegiance to Catholicism and a common Portuguese cultural heritage.

This study explores the culinary heritage of the Portuguese Eurasians and the historical development of their distinctive, hybridized cuisine, which blends the culinary traditions of Southern Europe with those of indigenous Asia. It establishes the origins of Luso-Asian cuisine in the gastronomy of Early Modern Portugal and examines how Portuguese colonial policy and social formation influenced the development of a

creolized cuisine. Key ingredients and foodways that signify Iberian cultural influence are identified and documentary evidence for their transition to Asia is examined. The evolution of Luso-Asian cuisine is traced, from the challenges of food security in the early Portuguese settlements to the emergence of elite colonial societies with an elaborate dining culture. The study argues that the adaptability of the Portuguese and their openness to inter-cultural exchange distinguished them from other European colonists and encouraged the adoption of indigenous culinary elements. At the same time, the desire to retain a Portuguese identity and commitment to the Catholic faith promoted the survival of Iberian cultural traits.

This study is the first academic enquiry into the gastronomy of the Portuguese empire and makes an original contribution to the fields of Portuguese history, food history, and colonial studies. More significantly, it begins the work of documenting the foodways of a marginal community whose cultural heritage is rapidly dissipating.

## *THESIS DECLARATION*

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Janet Boileau

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