

LOCAL CUISINE AND GUSTATORY MEMORY
Perceptions of the Tirolerfest in Treze Tílias (Brazil)

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How can be explained the unique sensation that quickens the minds of many humans when they taste such dishes as traditional corn-flour cake, mashed potatoes with fried egg, stewed chicken with polenta, or feijoada, if not through gustatory memory? The gustatory memory stores smells and tastes in a specific compartment of the brain, and these can be activated by emotions such as missing or longing, making us remember the past when a specific dish is eaten. This article analyzes the concepts of gustatory memory and local cuisine through the perceptions of people interviewed at the Tirolerfest in Treze Tílias, SC, Brazil. Treze Tílias is a town in the South of Brazil that was founded by colonists from the Tyrol in Austria and the Tirolerfest is a festival celebrating this heritage. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 158 people, representing the organizers of the Tirolerfest, the visitors and residents of Treze Tílias from a range of different age groups. Their responses illustrated the way that eating typical traditional dishes strengthens their family roots, which are maintained from generation to generation, and how every time these dishes are eaten they trigger feelings and emotions (gustatory memory).

KEY WORDS: *local cuisine, gustatory memory, gastronomic festival, qualitative methodology, Tirolerfest.*