

Ram is King. Spanish Early Modern Recipes for the Sick and the Platitude of Decline

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Despite all the graces that lady cabbages possess during times of health, in these of contagion and plague one must run away from them (Miguel Martínez de Leyva, 1547).

The “D-Word”

Physics seems to have a great deal of importance for historiography. Some works are monuments to slow, sloping declines, while others focus on “flash events” that trigger waves of sudden deterioration. Some books refer to vertical “falls” which also echo history as a seasonal or cosmic cycle (“abend,” “otoño,” “zenith,” “dawn”);¹ others prefer organic undertones of “decay,” “corrosion,” “disintegration,” “spoliation,” and “corruption;” favor “cataclysms” as ending points of “failure;” “births” as genetic departures; or choose a two-stage approach like “resurrection,” or dualistic combinations of “rise and fall,” “decline and fall” or “waxing and waning.” Of all possibilities, “crisis” –not the most recurrent one and not the one I would choose in lieu of “decline”–, has shifted from its original use to make for a very attractive point of study. No longer a medical term to mark the course of a disease, it has become synonyms within the downward word family (“deterioration,” “degeneration,” “catastrophe,” “cataclysm”), enthraling Renaissance *literati* who, favoring the past, felt “reborn” through the ancient ruins of their counterparts, passing over their specula to the Romantic practitioner, and later to our contemporary Western historian and post-structuralist.²

The U.S.A. is popularly projected as “the land of the free,” Brazil as “the land of the future,” Japan as “the land of the rising Sun,” Norway as “the land of the midnight Sun,” while Italy and France are contenders for the title of “the land of love.” Spain, on the other hand, is the “land of rabbits,” where failure has been taking place for the last six hundred years without ever being sublimated. Within a time paradox, all Spanish eras –past, present, and future– have been in decline. If we are to glance at major contemporary historiography, Spain has been in constant crisis at best, when not inexistent as an entity. This polarization may be a historiographical trait departing from the very generation of Cervantes, already crying foul a number of years before the official crisis under Olivares’ ruling. A parallel series of voices who understood they were living in the best of times were never picked up by the Generation of 1898, with its keen fandom on cainism and dualism, but rather discarded as resoundingly

¹ A cosmic turn was chosen for the conventional east-west *translatio imperii* (formalized by Otto of Freising, ca. 1111-1158), while a series of advances and declines inspired in the work of Polybius was applied for art history and human knowledge (Giorgio Vasari, 1511-1568, following Aristotelian epistemology). Other forms of repetition occur as triad cycles (Giambattista Vico, 1668-1744), in sets of two (Friedrich Hegel, 1770-1831), or seasonally (Northrop Frye, 1912-1991).

² Edward Gibbon’s six-volume *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (1776-1789), and Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918-1923) are typical examples of macro-historical approaches to the idea. Johan Huizinga’s 1919, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* seems less abrupt, as it takes the concept of “crisis” to pinpoint birth, as did Montesquieu when considering the Roman empire as a twofold presence in his *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* (1734). However, it represents the last stage of decline from Jacob Burckhardt’s civilizing efforts in late nineteenth century, reflecting a new wave of decadence studies breathing from pre- and post-World Wars.

patriotic. The very Baroque pattern embraced (“from cradle to grave”) already marked the end before the beginning, with providentialism unaccounted for. The idea of a comeback, a reconquering or a wordly resurrection of sorts, so prevalent during the Middle Ages, was also absent from the debate, thus erasing one side of the curve to shape the constant descent witnessed by foreign diplomats and Spanish intellectuals from the seventeenth to the twenty first century.

When addressing the lack of correlation between politics and the economy during the early modernity, Carla Rahn Phillips pointed to this very tendency: “Why did Spain, having created a worldwide empire and achieved political hegemony in the sixteenth century, decline in the seventeenth century to second-rank status? (The equally important question of the rise of Spain, rooted in the Medieval centuries, has yet to be equally addressed)” (531). She is referring to a cluster of three *Past and Present* articles by John H. Elliott and Henry Kamen, and to the seminal *Crisis y decadencia de la España de los Austrias* by Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, all of whom bewildered at the general tendency of paths originating in a crisis without previous flourishing or subsequent restoration. They, too, had to cope with the paradox of an undateable decline that did not depart from success, staring at the phenomenon while attempting to explain its endurance through the writings of the *arbitristas* and a Black Legend planted in Spain, fueled by foreign authors and reinforced at home by professional demotivators like the proverbial Generation of 1898. While focusing on advance constitutes a less ambitious challenge with less interlocking pieces, it provides for better stylistic matter, as decadence lends itself to be piled up in sequences of terrible events, producing a domino effect that not only suits a viable explanation but conforms an attractive story within a very old format.³ At any rate, the history of imperial Spain has been consistently presented as anti-Horatian and disregarding of *sophrosyne*, within a curve of unsustainable decline whose shift has not been adequately addressed, focusing on failure through keywords such as “agony,” “depletion,” “loss,” “backwardness,” “misery,” and the aforementioned.

A larger issue lies within this approach: “decline” does not involve all aspects of this particular era. Economic, fiscal, and financial markers have taken issue on the subject, where periods of scarcity followed overabundance, all dependent on uncontrollable factors enhanced by geographic, technical, social and religious complexity previously unheard of. However, what many negatively label as volatile can also be taken as the construction of new, long-standing systems at the expense of stability.⁴ Had this not be the case, it would be unusual to label such a period as the Golden Ages when referring to sea and common law, human rights, the instauration of modernity in both the visual and written arts, epistemology, demography, and even bureaucracy and monetary theory,⁵ neither would it account for the hiring of intellect in the Iberian Peninsula, unless decay carries a certain non-aesthetic attraction to grant such tag.

Sickness and famine are generally taken as indicators of decline. A growing bibliography on poverty and welfare –the works issued by Juan Luis Vives, Domingo de Soto

³ Correspondingly, narrations on Hell and the Apocalypse tend to be more dramatic than those on Heaven and creation, providing a particular rhetoric also favored by subjects like European plagues and, lately, the origins of climate change. A few years ago, I came across such dislodgement when looking for certain data in early modern medical books, finding that most historians consistently placed this corpus in a sequence where sixteenth-century treatises were groundbreaking and seventeenth-century ones constituted absolute failure, befitting the “rise and fall” combination (2016, 14-15).

⁴ Most consider the U.S. bull market to be the longest (1982-1999), whereas in fact the sixteenth-century Spanish sheep-wool bonds and their insurance underwriting has been the lengthiest standing, spanning from the late Middle Ages and spiking in the eighteenth century before its final demise under the Industrial Revolution.

⁵ Henry Kamen famously prompted the revision of several common assertions like the demographic shrinking partly due to the expulsion of the *moriscos*, the damaging effects of the *mesta* on agriculture, and the lack of a steady decline in bullion imports (35-41).

or Juan de Robles in the first quarter of the sixteenth century come to mind—, has been construed as a doomed omen, instead of an intellectual exercise on freedom, will and personal responsibility where a new system of wealth circulation is needed, or as a sign of a flourishing society caring for a suffering population as byproduct of urban expansion in an explosive context characteristic of sudden growth.⁶ This time was different indeed, as Spain engaged in setting up the first exchange that would raise ripples across the globe. Accurate figures lacking, aesthetic deformations over one extreme as metonymic extractions of totality have taken over the entire narrative as reliable documents, with the representation of extremes overpowering the middle ground. Given such parameters, examining the role and presence of food in this scenario, both as a portrayable construct and a non-derivative product, provides clues on intermediate stances. An advantageous subject, edibles lead themselves to aestheticization but also remain as close to matter as possible. The first position –construction– is highly developed in sophisticated written works of fiction (both as cornucopias and scarcity scenes) and visual artifacts like still lifes (*bodegones*), all driven by underlying narratives. The second –consumption– displays itself as data in cookbooks, medical treatises and, tangentially, apothecary documents in the form of substances and instructions. Norman Bryson has pointed to the non-derivative nature of sustenance as a bottom line where there is not very much room for cultural construction, opposed to Jean Baudrillard’s metarepresentation of consumption that weaves itself into a system of signs:

the culture of the table is an authentically self-determining level of material life, one which may be dramatically inflected from other spheres but cannot be derived from those [...] the separation is justified by a rule of non-derivability: the culture of the table is inflected –massively so– by the codes of signification which surround it, but its forms answer to material needs which subtend signification and exist to one side of signification (13-14).

One might argue that the latter group –a set of ingredients and instructions– is as representative as the former, and it may be so to a certain degree, as it is tailored for particular segments of the population, marketed, and aestheticized. However, recipes depend on the existence and supply of food, and they are updated according to physical needs, driven by life cycles and the availability of ingredients, often unfolding within the private sphere. The difference between representative and non-derivative is made clear in the highly theatrical recipes by Martino da Como, acknowledging that in order to cook a turkey, dress it in its own feathers to make it look alive, and have it spit fire through the beak one must first stab it in the head with a stiletto (Cruz Cruz, 134).⁷

The very nature of food tends to tilt from one extreme to the other, either as one of the defining constructs of culture that separates mankind from other species, or as a relentless biological presence in the form of hunger and sickness, life and death, dependent on the weather and other inescapable “acts of God.” Reviewing both highly constructed artifices and less representational, instructive works and their interactions exposes the myth of Spain under constant famine beginning in 1550, a concept that has subjugated critical studies to the everlasting platitude of decline.

⁶ To this point, Pedro Fraile argues that poverty figures are consistent across Europe around the time of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (312-315), but the perception might be stronger than the actual numbers. Disabled, those fallen on hard times and people who made a career out of indigence were perceived very differently by adjacent social classes. Proposed solutions reflected distinct philosophical positions that would be addressed through the foundation of charitable institutions.

⁷ This edition includes both Como’s *Libro de arte culinaria* (ca. 1450-1460) and Ruberto da Nola’s *Libro de guisados* (1520). Martínez Montañó referred to these sorts of theatrical attempts as “fantastic dishes”.

Never a Pear was so problematic

Still life was never deemed a minor genre in Spain. From the earlier works of Blas de Prado, considered its forefather, it was enthusiastically theorized by Francisco Pacheco who, without any reservation, expanded on its possibilities, noting that even major painters as his son-in-law Diego Velázquez devoted their artistry to it.⁸ Far from the goal of accurate scientific representations, still lifes provided painters with a space to show dexterity in representing objects, textures, lighting, and composition while exercising meaning. At any rate, it was never undignified to produce such works but rather an opportunity to shape modernity through the endowment of significance to what remained an ostentatious commodity in Northern Europe.⁹

Barry Wind has traced the genre's theorization and development, from Vicente Carducho to Antonio Palomino; from being embedded in larger works to its emancipation;¹⁰ from its perception as lowbrow and *iucundus* to becoming a vehicle to boast particular skills; and from emulating its Flemish commercial origins to achieving its own identity through symbolism. As a category, it would seem limited to decorating dining halls and taverns, but its complexity surpasses other types of imagery, maybe due to the very lack of content pointed out by Alan Chong (215), translating into a myriad of possibilities beyond the ornamental such as the choice of elements and their placement, the relative position of nature and artifice underlying the philosophy within art, and the meaning of time itself.

In its early modern context, still lifes establish a dialogue with and through time where rhapsography sets food scraps as a faster variation of decay, placed side by side with the failed megalographic status of stone ruins. The genre poses a particular challenge, as it subjects artists to perishable items and other changing conditions. Sebastián de Covarrubias' definition pointed to particular foods suitable for longer preservation in the dark, cooler environment of pantries and cellars underneath houses and taverns (99^v),¹¹ but still lifes depict fish and melons as often as cured meat and pears, as constant reminders of moving cycles in seasons, harvests, preservation and consumption, while calling attention to *carpe diem* and its cautionary tale (eat it while it is fresh) and one paradoxical *memento mori* where dead nature (“naturaleza muerta”) stands as a hiatus previous or subsequent to forming part of any specific body. Also paradoxical is the fact that painters take snapshots of organisms –whose movement is imperceptible by the naked eye and only noticeable diachronically–, to fabricate an image that decomposes slower than the object painted but faster than the very idea it depicts.

Painting artifacts like pots and jars helped ease the artist into the major challenge of copying from dead or alive nature, one where time imposed its constraints,¹² resulting in objects whose contemplation prompted more admiration than the originating point, a bothersome

⁸ “On the painting of animals, and birds, and fish, and still lifes, and of the ingenious invention of portraits from nature” (Pacheco, 427).

⁹ Among the most prominent painters are Antonio de Pereda, Juan van der Hamen, Mateo Cerezo, Diego Velázquez, Francisco Barranco, Alonso Vázquez, Bartolomé Pérez de la Dehesa, Juan de Espinosa, Francisco Zurbarán, Blas de Ledesma, Alonso de Escobar, Antonio Mohedano, Tomás Yepes, Miguel de Pret, Francisco de Palacios, Alejandro de Loarte, Juan Sánchez Cotán, Antonio Ponce and Felipe Ramírez, not excluding the talent of Luis Eugenio Meléndez at the turn of the eighteenth century.

¹⁰ According to Haraszti-Takács, a bigger format was favored during the first quarter of the seventeenth century and no longer involved Biblical or other renowned historical scenes, but “peasants, shepherds, simple people having their meals or just talking at a table” (89), so the focus could be on the food as much as on inconsequential actions, even leveling humans with other elements within simplicity.

¹¹ The genre only finds its own definition in the 1770 edition of the *Diccionario*, as “a sort of edibles painting.” All translations are the author's except where otherwise noted.

¹² Such limitations, the change of seasons, light, breeze, duration, decay and eternity took center stage in *El sol del membrillo*, a documentary where Antonio López showed his particular string markings through the painting of a quince tree.

phenomenon for Blaise Pascal and decidedly reproachable for Plato, as it is removed several degrees from the Idea.¹³ As an exercise in scales, Philostratus' *Imagines* offered some clues on how to read them as anticipatory *mimesis*, but not as replacement for life (Bryson, 18-19). In this context, the Spanish *bodegón* embodies a very timely philosophy corresponding to the birth of modernity, something it had been deprived of in classical antiquity, when higher meaning was sought in higher genres, far from sensory immediacy (Calvo Serraller 2000, 18). In Western modern thought, whether someone copies directly from the nature, from an original artifact, or makes subsequent copies from copies of original artifacts, reproduction is but an act of layering where every stage constitutes an increasing dive into artificiality, as a copy from the natural is deemed not an imitation or a point of confusion, but a creation that can and does replace nature, consequently erasing artificiality from the artifice, accomplishing the ultimate non-natural gesture.¹⁴

Much of the genre's significance relies on the quantity and choice of objects depicted. Scholars have debated to what extent portrayals serve as reliable documents of daily life and living conditions. For example, Ángel Aterido has concluded that the majority of food represented in still lifes was only at the reach of the wealthiest, whereas the more popular diet was based on legumes, vegetables and bread. According to Aterido, meat was eaten sparingly due to cost, and "the sophistication of depicted objects and the refinement of pastries was at the reach of very few in Madrid" (57-73). Referring to a kitchen still life attributed to Mateo Cerezo (1637), he deems it a disproportionate gesture of wealth, both in the variety and quantity of meats displayed, as he interprets it as a portrayal of a rich man's house signaling "alimentary ostentation." Peter Cherry, on his part, has argued that still lifes carry little documental value, as the objects depicted seldom have reference in real pantries (251), whereas Joan R. Triadó understands market scenes like the anonymous *Bodegonero* from ca. 1630, Juan Esteban de Úbeda's *Market Scene*, or the many meat depictions by Alejandro de Loarte as consumer advertisements (44), though their placement within the urban space remains to be explained.¹⁵

The problem lies in the genre's very condition. On the one hand, it naively depicts a snapshot of someone's pantry, a market, or a charming scene of daily life. On the other, we know it to be one of the most complex constructions of the Spanish early modernity. Painted still lifes, abundant and austere, seem to directly correspond with written cornucopias and scarcity passages, the gargantuan and poverty extremes commonly associated with picaresque books reflecting the dual nature of the non-essential, the surplus, and the unneeded. The scrap relates to minutiae and abundance, as leftovers are as much a byproduct of accumulation as fragments treasured by the miser. In this context, a literal understanding is unreliable, for when a painter represents dingy pots and cheap vegetables he does so not because poverty was so rampant that he lacked access to better elements or because he was painting for modest homes, but in search of codes beyond the economy. For example, the fruits, vegetables and small birds often painted by Sánchez Cotán were cheaper than other ingredients, but perishability or price

¹³ Pascal exposed the futility of painting as means to reproduce reality: "What vanity painting is, which attracts admiration by resembling things whose originals we do not admire!" (74th *pensée*, 16).

¹⁴ A number of works attest to this metarepresentational attitude: from sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's poem to her portrait ("Este, que ves, engaño colorido"), to Giuseppe Arcimboldo's food arrangements, and the many intricate crafts with shells, corals, rocks, bones and other hard materials employed to manufacture artifice, simulate nature with natural objects, and fake natural objects with artificial ones. Wax figures and plastic plants would unavoidably follow suit.

¹⁵ According to Juan J. Luna, the vantage point of some paintings suggests their placement above doors, hanging in corridors or dining halls (24), but so far no metrics support this hypothesis. Also, their formats do not seem to follow any adaptation to particular spaces. If we must believe Sancho Panza, these paintings never actually hung from taverns, which instead displayed action scenes: "–I bet –Sancho said– that in no time there will be no tavern, inn, dining hall or barber shop without the history of our endeavors" (*Quijote* II, LXXI).

seem to have played no role in his choice, which simply followed the diet of his religious order.¹⁶

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo has long been a main source for documenting a seemingly realistic discourse on poverty, affixing a set of images to the word “decline” in Spain. It is seldom presumed that he may not be painting daily life but the exception, just like a rich man’s pantry is exceptional too; that he may not be documenting a widespread situation through such a highly constructed genre as still life; and that *costumbrismo* did not exist in Spain well until the nineteenth century, so his secular paintings are not portrayals of miserable town life. Murillo’s depictions of children eating fruit are as abundant in food as standalone *bodegones* that have not been identified as signs of decline. The chubby dogs portrayed shamelessly demand their share, not having to work for sustenance as breed dogs did. Subjects, human and otherwise, are merrily enjoying food, not dwelling in misery. In Julián Gállego’s words, “current advertising of food has not invented anything better than the obvious satisfaction of these lads eating grapes and melon” (202). Nonetheless, instead of using the same symbolic criteria applied to other highly constructed artifacts, Murillo’s paintings have been read as plain documents to prove that a miserable Spain contrasts with the abundance overflowing the rest of Europe, almost retrofitting dickensian living conditions. If humble food in still lifes does not correspond to scarcity because representation relies in choice and not in access, Murillo’s children may very well not epitomize hardknock daily life but rather the exception within urban life and an unpredictable financial environment. At any rate, proper context regarding their production is lacking, as the commissioning from Northern merchants has not been proven. Moreover, when these images are placed side by side with those of the overly opulent, the same documental interpretations should in principle fulfill the same correlation, one documenting poverty (negative) and the other documenting abundance (positive), but instead the scarce consistently speaks for material decline and the copious for moral decline.

Both the quantity and social status of food have left their imprint in works of art in the form of extensive written cornucopias and extraordinary poetic images on shortage and emptiness. The limited space within a canvas demands a more strict selection where painters ought to exercise their criteria for quantity and food status, establishing a social class of sorts while keeping long-standing cultural markers. Given titles are not always indicative of content, as the nomenclature found in inventories can be quite elusive and inconsistent. Joan R. Triadó has documented a myriad of names taken from seventeenth-century estate appraisals, yielding vague results such as “kitchen views,” “food painting,” or unspecific descriptions (“some partridges and a turkey”). Other lists only add ambiguity, pointing to abundance (“a variety of fruits,” “banquets”), a wide category (“bouquet holders,” “festoons,” “garlands”), direct a particular interpretation (“vanitas,” “hieroglyphics”), or distinguish sizes at best (“fruit platter” vs. “small fruit platter” or “small still life”) (21-37). The selection criteria within each painting can be as ample as the variety of still lifes themselves, making for a very versatile genre. Composition plays a crucial role, as some *bodegones* are concealed in plain sight in seemingly unrelated scenes, while some are part of large-format canvases supplementing the main theme, or take center stage, relegating the action to the background. In still lifes *sensu stricto*, there is often one dominant object that gives the piece its title, shaping a genre with a high degree of personification and an acute sense of hierarchy and class, where some items outshine others conspicuously hiding in the shadows or remaining on the sidelines. Some still lifes depict sweets and delicatessen; others, vegetables, meats, birds or fish; a few are market scenes

¹⁶ Carthusians and Carmelites abstained from eating meat, a particular subject in Zurbarán’s *San Hugo en el refectorio de los cartujos* (ca. 1630-1635). Similarly, ugly vegetables and pieces of fruit stung by birds only began to recur at the turn of the eighteenth century in Luis Egidio Meléndez’s works.

(“bodegones de mercado”)¹⁷ that may or may not include the sellers and customers, and others are set up in a pantry or kitchen space (“bodegones de cocina”) gathering culinary artifacts and ingredients that could be combined into different recipes.¹⁸

Most of the ingredients represented are raw, and most are dead but fresh. Their uncooked and uncultured nature can be perceived as either monastic or uncivilized, but overly altered food may be seen as equally unnatural and frivolous. Products that grow abundantly and without effort, ready to be consumed, gifted and traded as commodities, recall the myth of a Golden Age when there was no need for man’s labor because everything was provided for. On the other end of the spectrum, cornucopias join *voluptas*, *cupiditas*, *superbia*, *luxuria*, *vanagloria*, and other forms of excess in their condemnation. Morally, cycles of Lent and Carnival are co-dependent: austerity and greed, generosity and prodigality, are set apart by a very thin line. They recall, akin to scraps after a banquet, the dual nature of religious cycles of abstinence and excess, as well as seasonal overproduction and fallow. Scarcity and abundance go hand in hand, pointing to both extremes. The paradox lies in the promotion by Catholic providentialism of an overly abundant nature created by God to supply mankind, while Counter Reformation presses on a contained attitude borderlining precariousness, a well-known stance echoed in portraits as much as in still lifes. This moral intervention joins similar Protestant efforts, not for the purpose of documenting nature or food production, but to reflect an agenda that fills artwork with symbolic devices manifested in a decreasing number of objects and their ad hoc organization.¹⁹

Osmosis

Non-derivative manifestations of food can be as sophisticated as still lifes, pointing to bodily nourishment as much as to the moral and social aspects of health. Their assumption, however, is less representative than instructive. A number of writings record availability, dietary preferences and prescriptions, criticism and warnings. The most homogeneous corpus on nourishment is to be found in cookbooks, courtesan books, and specific medical treatises. Apothecary and cosmetics books, more focused on chemical components, offer some complementary information, as do ancillary passages in fictional works and testimonies from various sources.

When editing Domingo Hernández de Maceras’ *Libro del arte de cocina*, M.^a de los Ángeles Pérez Samper isolated four types of cookbooks, namely, conventual, courtesan, confectionery, and homemaker’s (17). Each has its own idiosyncrasies, taking into account specific religious practices, social class, and economic conditions. Most religious cookbooks were manuscript, and most were kept in convents and reflect known uses such as meat abstinence.²⁰ Preserves and confectionery books were used as gifts for benefactors or sold for profit, while courtesan books were kept in-house, echoing their master’s preferences and a

¹⁷ Hervás Crespo has traced their origins to the Italian peninsula and Northern Europe in connection with profusely documented ridiculous, comic and vulgar subjects.

¹⁸ For the tremendous market spice trade is said to be, only a few scraps of paper, some clovers or ceramic salt jars are found in still lifes. Peter Cherry has suggested that Juan Sánchez Cotán’s raw *Bodegón de frutas y verduras* could easily be cooked into a specific recipe (257), indeed a trait in many paintings where certain ingredients are often paired (fish and oranges is a common combination). Indeed, the protagonist of Sánchez Cotán’s most prominent works –the large *cardo* (*cynara cardunculus*, a large, affordable Castilian winter vegetable) depicted as his signature item– could be cooked in many ways.

¹⁹ Juan Sánchez Cotán’s (1560-1627) *Bodegón con membrillo, repollo, melón y pepino* (ca. 1600) is deemed to be the first example of a Spanish trait where humble ingredients are arranged under a mathematical ratio to show the iconic power of scarcity according to Calvo Serraller (1999, 36).

²⁰ A typical courtesan book, Ruberto da Nola’s *Libro de guisados* includes one hundred and sixty meat recipes and sixty four fish dishes, to comply with Lent cycles.

series of impressively sumptuous recipes, further increasing as the estate moved to new assignments. All kinds of variations were exchanged and collected among friends, acquaintances, and noble houses, put into writing by several hands throughout different eras, recording customs and fashion, and treasuring exclusive and secret remedies only available to the owner of the book, or formulated for or by a specific person.²¹ Some manuscripts offer plant and chemical formulas for specific ailments like migraines, toothaches, burns or madness, and beauty advice. This corpus, however, does not deal specifically with edibles, as it leans on chemicals, plant infusions, and topical administration of liquors and other components.²²

Food has a distinctive osmotic quality that translates into many combinations not associated with standard cookbooks. Most of the foundational texts are comprised of overlapping sections ranging from availability of regional food to spices, the effect of ingredients on the body and their humoral classification, household economy, and other practical matters.²³ Lluís Cifuentes i Comamala has pointed to specific Medieval texts that follow outlandish patterns that combine the specific needs of their owners, mixing commerce ethics with medical matter; medicine, astrology, gastronomy, and a mass calendar; or pedagogical, hygienic, hunting, cosmetic, and culinary texts, including the specific dietary requirements of a particular courtesan order (145). Another common interaction is found among cosmetic and gynecological material under the word “recipe,” but it generally does not include entire sections on edibles.²⁴ While many of the classic texts were reissued and commented during the sixteenth century, there is a clear tendency to a larger degree of specialization within the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas, redistributing the information in *regimina sanitatis* for the wealthy and the poor,²⁵ for distinct religious orders, sailors, soldiers, and pilgrims.²⁶ Some of the books emphasize the social and moral status of nourishment while others stress the importance of keeping a specific order for the dishes served and eating according to the time of day or season as part of regulated sequences; they focus on the aesthetic effect of dishes, food affordability, or the importance of keeping remedies at hand as part of a well-stocked pantry. The association between “bodega” and “bodegón” goes beyond

²¹ Aside from the “chinchona,” under its own pharmacological history, the best-known case is that of pink honey (“miel rosada”), originally made by Juana de Robles y San Quintín, Countess of Aramayona.

²² One such book is assembled under the title *Livro de receitas de pivetes*, showing different pens and recorded recipes for prominent court members across different times and places, sometimes from specific physicians. Similar arrangements can be seen in the *Recetas y memorias para guisados*, the *Livro de cozinha da Infanta D. Maria de Portugal*, or the *Manual de mujeres en el qual se contienen muchas y diversas receitas*.

²³ Cruz Cruz points to this evasive genre as steadily copied in the Iberian Peninsula since the fall of the Visigoths until the fourteenth century, after which a specific Christian gastronomy was further developed. Among foundational titles are Anthimus’ *De Observatione Ciborum* (VIth c.), Hippocrates’ *De Victus Ratione* and its reworking into the *Diaeta Theodori* (IXth c.), Rhazès’ *Liber de Medicina ad Almansorem* (Xth c.), Haly Abbas’ *Liber Pantegni* (XIth c.), Ibn Butlan’s *Tacuinum sanitatis* (XIth c.), Arnaldo de Vilanova’s *Regimen sanitatis* and Magninus Mediolanensis’ *Regimen sanitatis* (XIVth c.).

²⁴ The anonymous *Recetas experimentadas para diversas cosas* exemplifies this genre. As some apothecary books, it emphasizes the easiness, effectiveness and affordability of its recipes regardless of circulation and sales. Such books show, aside from blank pages and food spatter, different hands, exchanges and interests ranging from stain lifters to hair bleach, scenting hand gloves, hemorrhoids, perfumes, and jams.

²⁵ Poverty had been steadily theorized since the times of Pope John XXI, whose *Thesaurus pauperum* saw a number of reeditions, as studied by Rodríguez Cacho (1349-1351). Incidentally, its recipes coincide verbatim with the ones for wealthy estates, so there is no actual modification of ingredients or food grade in these books as often assumed, but rather the opportunity for common people to access the menus and cures without the need for a doctor.

²⁶ A few examples include courtesan books for wealthy estates like Savonarola de Ferrara’s, closely followed by King Charles I chief Dr. Lobera de Ávila, who devised a diet for pilgrims (XCI^v) and sailors (XCV^v); Bernardino de Laredo wrote for mendicant orders; and Giovanni Battista Rossetti’s for times of war. Specific diets for convicts would not be formalized until the eighteenth century as studied by Torremocha Hernández (211-217).

etymology, as made explicit in Dr. del Rosal's dictionary from 1611.²⁷ Francisco de Quevedo's allusion to "tavern pills" is eloquent to the sharing of both spaces in popular culture, stating the relation between health and nutrition by way of apothecaries and taprooms: "Damned money, the one spent in the apothecary instead of on dining" (2, 466, *Musas* 6, *romance* 59).

Dr. Bernardino de Laredo stipulated that his book was necessary for apothecaries as much as for doctors, pointing to the fact that certain ingredients were common to different guilds, thus overlapping in competences, prescription, taxation and regulations. The *Novísima recopilación* alerted to the family ties between these professions in 1537, as recipes would be kept in-house as an oligarchy of sorts between physicians and pharmacists, problematic because physicians might be inclined to prescribe chemical components instead of a healthy diet.²⁸ Even closer was the relation – in this case litigious – between apothecaries, confectioners and wax dealers, as they shared ligatures and sugar as their main components,²⁹ to the point that the guild of waxers and confectionaries of Tudela requested to be segregated from doctors and pharmacists in the sixteenth century as, according to Fernando Serrano Larráyoz, confectionaries were associated with the sick as much as with the wealthy, hence their competing nature (206). Not surprisingly, Miguel de Baeza's book on the art of confectionery stated that sugar was used to make preserves, medical confections, and syrups for both the healthy and the sick, disregarding any overlapping (García and del Prado, 25). Other titles show the commonalities between pharmacists and confectioners as united in one guild, generating seventeenth-century books of "drugs and confections" that devote approximately half of the pages to each discipline (Pérez Samper, 46).

Protonotary and Treasurer Juan Vallés' *Regalo de la vida humana* speaks volumes for the osmotic nature of scientific and culinary practice assumed under the word "recipe." It comprises formulations for perfumes (I), confections and gastronomy (IV-VI), ointments, balms and oils, including those *insolati* made from snails and bricks (III), often resorting to medical and surgical works like Pietro d'Abano's or Giovanni da Vigo's for preparations. *Regalo* appeals to the old alchemic powers of transformation allowing to liquify stones and turn light into powder using apothecary instrumental and number of other specific tools and containers. Among the many kitchen utensils assembled from different cookbooks by Cruz Cruz, one can identify versatile artifacts for gastronomy, apothecary and alchemy, medicine, surgery, *algebra*, nursing, bloodletting, dentistry, and other related practices: baskets, beakers, bell jars, boards, bowls, cake molds, carvers, casseroles, chops, chopsticks, cloths, coverts, cups, curders, drainers, flat pieces, fountains, glasses, grills, grindstones, jars, jugs, ladles, lancers, mortars, ovens, palettes, pastry bags, phials, pitchers, pots, roasters, saucepans, spoons, stakes, sticks, stills, salt shakers, screws, sieves, tables, and tongs.³⁰ Tools include hardware found in apothecaries, used to transform and store in the best tradition of Arnaldo de Vilanova, specifying how to correctly infuse, powder, mince, cook and toast, emphasizing that copper

²⁷ "Bodega and bodegón, from apotheca, which is generally speaking where wine and beverages are kept; after *botica*" (101).

²⁸ "Because we have been informed that in these our kingdoms there are many doctors, who have children or sons-in-law who are pharmacists, pharmacists who have children who are doctors, and that from prescribing in each other's practices some problems arise" (*Novísima* III, 69). Dr. Porcell warned of overprescription on the part of some of his colleagues: "I say this because there are some doctors who at every headache and nausea do nothing but bleed, syrup and purge, and order a thousand prescriptions, etc., and should rarely be believed" (67^r).

²⁹ The main elements, either to contain medicines or to disguise their taste were sugar, wax, honey, roses, rhubarb, *cassia fistula*, prunes, figs, quinces, tamarinds, violets, and cumin (González de Fauve, 119), but only sugar and wax presented a conflict.

³⁰ "aguzaderas, alambiques, albañares, asadores, barquillas, barreños, cántaros, cazos, cazones, cazuelas, cedazos, coperteras, copas, cuajaderas, cubiletes, cucharas, cucharones, cuencos, escudillas, estameñas, fuentes, haravillos, hornos, jaropas, lanceras, mangas, mesas, moldes, morteros, ollas, paletas, palillos, palos, paños, parrillas, piezas llanas, redomas, saleros, tableros, tajaderos, tajos, tamiz, tarteras, tazas, tenazas, tinajas, tornillos, trincheros, vasos" (Cruz Cruz, 83).

pots should be avoided in favor of marble, glass, glazed clay, iron or tin, good for multiple distillations. Medical and surgery books share these equivalencies, recommending such devices as broth extractors for the sick. Dr. Juan Tomás Porcell, a renowned dissectionist, prescribed the use of a double glass vase to distill the quintessence of meat (42^r), while Baccalaureate Juan de Vidós y Miró illustrated this method where two glass containers were kept above the fire for four hours, yielding a product by which patients saw their radical humor strengthened, and moribunds were nourished (449).

Health can be preserved and restored through nutrition and medication administered by different means. Substances in the form of pills, drops, tablets, lozenges, syrups, potions, preserves, *trochiscus*, coctions, oils, ointments, salves, balms, plasters, syringes and pipes (*clyster*), powders, *electuariums*, and poisons are common in apothecary books, but also found in cookbooks and physicians' treatises to transform and manipulate elements. As consumption is not restricted to eating, the authors stress the importance of all senses. Beyond the pleasuring and healing properties of aromatic herbs in gastronomy, olfactory methods are recommended by doctors like Blas Martínez Nieto to kill abscesses through foul odors and to heal by smelling enjoyable substances (18^r and 27^v). As part of a long-standing discussion around sustenance, Dr. Juan de Soto is one of the few who stood by scent as a beneficial, deeming the smell of hot bread and other "nutritional odors" (liquor for men; flowers for women) to be an effective posology equivalent to eating, thus justifying the use of healing aromatic herbs in stock ("melezinas de caldo"), warning about the repercussion of malodorous food (78-83). This debate carried over to the healthful effects of aromatic smoke,³¹ that Dr. Porcell used to construct an artificial disinfecting room by assembling all scents of nature and the elements of a still life, as if the accumulation of odors and the visual cornucopia were in themselves healing:

The patient's room will be entirely framed, the floor and all walls, with apples, pears, quinces, oranges, lemons, limes, ciders, green reeds, vine shoots, *alfavega*, healthy grass, thyme, buds of *salces*, of apples, of quince trees, of pear trees, frasno, laurel, green rosemary, murta, lavender, orange flowers, lemon flowers, lime flowers, cider flowers, roses, violas, rosehip; it will all be renewed every two days, and the floor daily [...] They will make small fires in summer once in the morning and once in the afternoon; larger fires in winter, several times a day and at night, with scented woods [...] like juniper, cedar, plantain and especially ash, savin, green rosemary, lavender, cypress, bay leaf, thyme; throwing in it oranges, lemons, ciders, apples; and if wealthy, a little bit of *aloe ligno* and a few sandalwoods and other fragrant things (38^v-39^v).

Dr. Porcell is simultaneously calling on the visual and olfactory, a practice where gazing at the object to be consumed –be that medicine, a dish or a representation–, or smelling its vapors is part of the healing experience as much as an enjoyment of the spectacular. Many culinary recipes rely on color, especially white and golden ("green meat," "white *manjar*," "white blood sausage," "white omelette," "golden soup," "golden eggs"), as did water infused with different properties according to each coloring flower ("luminous water," "pink water") (Laredo, CXII). As for apothecaries, they relied heavily on the prospect of selling attractive products, marketing pink sugar as more healing than regular beet's, and selling "golden pills" following an old pharmaceutical and culinary tradition that used gold's properties by boiling it to make stock for the sick or covering the meat of roasted wild game with gold leaves.³² Eloquent to the fact,

³¹ It also concerned the breaking of ecclesiastic fasting through smell, as pointed out by del Río Parra (2008, 108-109).

³² Literally, "dorando la carne" (Laredo, CXCIX). Golden pills ("píldoras áureas") took their color from saffron gave way to the expression "dorar la píldora," as in making situations look more attractive than they are.

Chief Barber Alonso Muñoz forbade the sale of pharmaceutical recipes under false labels prone to confusion between active principles and commercial, attractive names (179).

Ingesting through touch is a method often found in medical books as full culinary recipes that are administered topically instead of being eaten. Antonio de Viana prescribed chicken soup, eggs and bread, but indicated they should be made into a plaster to go over bubos, under the assumption that the patient was unable to eat (206). Cutaneous applications were thought healing in the case of convicts' amputations, as extensively prescribed by Dr. Dionisio Daza Chacón. His method involved inserting the handless wrist into a live hen to stop the bleeding, followed by the application of medicated beaten eggs (213). The same procedure was described by Drs. López de León (21^v) and Fragoso (570), adding incense and aloe to the dressing. As expected in a spagyric treatise, Juan de Vidós y Miró's also included a number of plasters, some of which read like recipes for edibles, as they include meat stock (to be replaced with water in the case of poor people), fat, snails (shells included), eggs, herbs, flour and vegetables (456-460).

A common habit in oral societies is the use of texts as clocks to complete certain tasks coinciding with their duration. Culinary timing is often associated with prayers, ranging from the approximately five minutes of a standard *Miserere*, to the shorter, ca. two minutes of the *Apostles Creed*, the thirty-second *Our Father*, or the twenty five-second *Hail Mary*, measuring shorter cooking periods in soft-boiled eggs.³³ Similarly, weights and dosages often correspond to common objects, as dishes like the "escudilla" take their name from the container. Among ounces, quarts, pounds and drachmas, one can find fists ("puños"), hands ("manojos"), scruples (meaning not only moral feelings but small rough pebbles) and wheat as the standard reference for "grain," barley having its own expression in "danics," "siliques" and "carmes." Cookbooks and medical treatises, free from the economic transactions and accuracy of a regulated apothecary, often refer to measurements in terms of "an egg," "a pea," or "a hazelnut" of something, or simply to the price of the object, covering just the right amount needed ("eight coins of sugar") (da Nola, 49).

As we can see, of all interaction points between medicine, pharmacy and gastronomy, the most fluid one is terminology, not only because of the ingredients, techniques and utensils shared between the three disciplines, but due to its creative manipulation for specific purposes, be those mnemonic, persuasive or otherwise. To be taken into account is the fact that all information relies on descriptions and instructions, as illustrations are scarce, if ever existent, so common shared verbs (to grind, simmer, boil, roast, infuse, distill, confection, thicken, preserve, sauté) only stand for some basic processes where metonymy finds a perfect environment to thrive in a standalone poetic universe where eggs are cradled ("huevos mecidos"). Nathalie Peyrebonne has pointed to the fact that cookbooks make extensive use of names to induce the senses (494), hence the power of attraction of a dish, as in medical posology, ought to begin in its heading. With the aid of yet another art, war, we find out that food can be paved and armed ("empedar," "armar;" to layer and stuff), and can sound similar to beaten drumsticks ("atabales"). Religion is present in the form of wafer rolls resembling begging fingers ("suplicaciones"), and in countless ingredients with biblical names like "grains of Paradise" ("granos del paraíso"), while falconry lends its terminology to small bites ("sainetes"). Confectioners master their skills so accurately that refining has to be told apart into different grades and prices ("fino, entrefino, liso, y labrado"); their sponge cakes are

Incidentally, "dorado" and "estofado" ("stewed") are terms shared with basic wood sculptural techniques ("imaginería"), a massive industry within the religious market.

³³ A classic, now extinct example is that of women washing clothes to old Hispanic ballads ("romances viejos"). In a longer version of the same mechanism, the reroofing of the royal shrine in Mali coincides with the singing of the Sundiata epic poem. Intradiegetically, readers of Medieval *exempla* will be familiar with how texts slow down or kill time so that someone's life is saved.

sponged (“bizcocho bizcochado”), their honey is honied (“miel melada”), and their fritters, frittered (“buñuelos abunuelados”).³⁴

Cooks as Healers. Doctors as Cooks

Food and drug dispensaries –*boticas* and *bodegas*–, carried similar substances to be sold as edibles or medicines, while cookbooks referred to the healing properties of food as often as physicians iterated this idea. The three areas connected by this notion did not escape Bartolomé Joly, when travelling across Spain in 1603 and pointed to the fact that the spice craze he witnessed was backed up by medicine for its digestive qualities (García Mercadal II, 52). Not surprisingly, almost every major recipe and confectionery book included a few dishes for the sick, if not an entire section,³⁵ catering to the *regimen sanitatis* recommended among Galen’s proverbial “six non-natural things” popularized throughout the Renaissance. So did Bartolomeo Scappi, Pope Pius V’s cook, who somewhat deceptively reserved the sixth and last book of his *Opera* to “food for the convalescent,” presenting techniques that include broth infusion and meat mincing, and ingredients like melon seeds, barley, and almonds commonly found in recipes for the sick.³⁶

Spanish books like Diego Granado Maldonado’s *Libro del arte de cocina* are heavily dependent on Italian works, when not outright translations, and also include hen’s broth, minced flesh and ice among the recipes for the ill and convalescent (343-359).³⁷ Francisco Martínez Montaña, Granado Maldonado’s culinary adversary, did not compile a section for the sick, but scattered a few standard methods detailing the extraction technique with a glass device similar to the one depicted by Dr. Juan de Vidós y Miró (fig. 1). Typical are minced meat (“pisto”), bird pie, and “substance for the ill,” accounting for the patient’s chewing and deglutition abilities, together with a warning against high sodium and the recommendation to consult with the doctor on the healing ingredients for each person regarding elements such as gold, pumpkin, black chickpeas, tortoises or pumpkin seeds (Martínez Montaña, 240^v-241^r). Ruberto da Nola’s cookbook also includes minced food, sauces and soups for the ill. Its eleven recipes are heavily based on protein from farm birds killed the previous night for their flesh to be tender. Also typical is the distillation technique, bones and fat included, yielding a broth “so cordial and singular that it would revive a dead man” (302). Da Nola pays special attention to the bite size and processing degree, recommending a straw sieve for broth, and silver plates for thicker products, but the ingredients mentioned are a staple in most recipes for the ill included in cookbooks, among them sugar, cinnamon, cloves, almonds, pumpkin or melon seeds, rose or oat water, eggs, and cherries. Overall, the main idea of food as healing permeates and accounts for specific chapters devoted to the sick, some claiming to follow the advice of doctors.

In a celebrated passage of the *Quijote*, Sancho becomes governor of his “ínsula” and is assigned a physician who works on his diet through trial and error, as he concedes carefully wordsmithing his choices.³⁸ According to the physician, fruit is too moist and “manjar” too hot

³⁴ Jams are excluded from recipes for the sick in cookbooks, hence the relation between “mermelada” and the French “Marie est malade” seems just a word play.

³⁵ Domenico Romoli, after studying under Scappi, went beyond and devoted the eighth book of his works to other aspects of health including exercise.

³⁶ In fact, Scappi’s two hundred and eighteen recipes barely address illness or convalescence.

³⁷ His recommendation is directly tied to the heated debates over the trend of consuming ice and very cold drinks prompted by the Court’s locations near the Lozoya Valley as supplier of snow, connected to Madrid by a series of snow wells.

³⁸ “I am a doctor of physic, sir, and my duty, for which I receive a salary, is to attend to the governor’s health, whereof I am more careful than my own, studying his complexion night and day, and probing to guess a cure

and spicy, which would trigger drinking too much water and risk killing Sancho's vital "radical humor." Stringing double entendres around Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*, the doctor also advises against rabbit, beef, and "olla podrida,"³⁹ as it presented a mixture of ingredients equivalent to complex medicines, to be avoided in favor of the "simples." Finally, the doctor recommends eating one hundred cylindrical wafers ("suplicaciones"), and thin layers of quince, a digestive dessert suited to ease the large meal Sancho was never allowed to have. Real physicians insisted on the fact that health ought to be continuously preserved. Miguel Sabuco, for instance, took a typical Renaissance stance based on *aurea mediocritas*, considering factors like food, drink, air, exercise, sleep, and the imagination in a comprehensive manner. Along the lines of deeming diet as a sign of a balanced lifestyle, he advocated for fewer ingredients, as excessive combinations would break the body's harmony and affect both the stomach and the brain. Doctor Miguel Martínez de Leyva's *Remedios* holds a comprehensive scope similar to Dr. Miguel Sabuco's,⁴⁰ insisting on shaping meat pies like a small "chimney" so that ingredients cooked throughout, recommending a moderate, desiccative diet including some local fruit but prescribing against excessive variety, legumes, fat, old animals, fungi, cheese and other food frequently mentioned in medical books against the plague (89^r-90^r and 93^r-100^v).

It was commonly established in medical books that custom was a driving force in dietary habits. According to Dr. Andrés de León, it was so powerful as to allow Galen to expose a king's illegitimate child when his prescribed diet failed, compelling the queen to concede that the prince was the son of a shepherd, healing once he was fed coarser foods (81^{r-v}). The lists of recommended and discouraged items pertain to their characteristics, their social status and that of the person, and had been generally established since the thirteenth century in books like the *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum* (Temkin, 182), though far from a fixed criterion, as every body dictates its own habits and diet, resulting in very flexible choices and the need of a physician to advise on the best course for safeguarding health. Overall, the classic schema systematizes what would seem random dietary recommendations within medical books that, for instance, often mention artichokes and eggplants as harmful. Out of the nine temperaments, four are simple (hot, humid, cold, dry), four combined (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic) and one temperate. Sanguine (blood) equals hot and humid; choleric (yellow bile), hot and dry; phlegmatic, cold and humid; and melancholic (black bile), cold and dry. This perfect chart would later be gradated, and accounts for moisture, temperature and color, playing a role not only in human disposition, but on the composition of every food item, ruling how diet ought to be for the general population and the preservation of natural health, also taking into account bodily composition as age dependent. Dr. Tomás Murillo y Velarde stated that brain function (memory and cleverness) could be improved by consuming its excess of humidity, but that a cold brain caused dementia, especially in the elderly, who were often prevented from signing deeds, contracts and wills (98^{r-v}).⁴¹

When referring to the preservation of health, Dr. Juan Calvo pointed out that the temperament of older people was cold and dry, but also that different body parts had distinct properties that could be altered by eating nutrients with dissimilar traits and exercising as

when he is ill; and my main duty is to attend his lunches and dinners, and let him eat what I feel is good for him, and forbid what I imagine to be damaging" (II, XLVII).

³⁹ This stew made with discarded parts and entrails is associated with hospital food and often mentioned in picaresque books due to its mysterious ingredients.

⁴⁰ Borderlining self-cannibalism, Antonio de Viana points to a kind of pus ("materia loable") as nourishment for veins and arteries, referring to its beneficial "cooking state" (37-39), while Núñez de Coria remarked that human flesh and one's own blood ought to be consumed by some to fight certain ailments (32^v). As it happened with scent, the discussion of whether ingesting one's own blood broke ecclesiastical fasting was relevant to theologians.

⁴¹ Occasionally, patients had their own take on the correlation between diet and symptoms of sickness, as recounted by Dr. Sánchez de Oropesa of someone who diagnosed himself according to the food he dreamed about (99).

needed, and that nutrients themselves should be cooked counterbalancing their own nature to boost their healing properties (13). Dr. Lobera de Ávila stated that dry meats ought to be boiled, whereas humid ones were better suited for grilling or pies (XLI^r), while Miguel Sabuco recommended avoiding phlegmatic items in general (blood, brains, scale less fish, animal skin, dairy products, and fat), and animals that triggered melancholia, partially based on their color (black meat birds, black fish, blood sausage, black olives, eggplants, and turnips) (71). According to Dr. Murillo y Velarde, collards were known to cause black bile, as were lentils, brine fish and meat, so melancholics should eat hot and humid food including parsley, chickpeas, saffron and fennel, and dine borage cooked in stock cooked from almond, pumpkin and melon seeds, while hypochondriacs should not eat almonds, and epileptics ought to abstain from parsley (106^v). From these testimonies it may seem that the properties for each food were randomly assigned (vinegar and oat are cold and dry; salt, hot and dry; sugar and meat, hot and moist; while other vegetables similar to lettuce are cold and humid when lettuce is cold and dry), but the fact of the matter is that every single one of them, including several levels of species below, are classified under the same principles.⁴² It is also very common for components to shift from apothecary recipes to cooking ingredients, and vice versa: for example, *vaccinium meridionale* berries (“agraz”) were used in medicinal syrups and later incorporated as conventional edibles; similarly, opioids like henbane (“beleño”), poppies (“adormideras”) and mandragore, classified as cold and dry, are present in many medical recipes but also recur in cookbooks.

In a world so neatly ordered within a grid, the introduction of new food proved challenging, to say the least. The medical aspect of gastronomy is highly non-derivative, not as dependent on fashion or palatability as on supply.⁴³ Medical treatises show a conscious effort to enhance and adapt their content to available ingredients and to new varieties in a very particular way, especially when new continents are found. For instance, the classic temperament system is carried over in Andrés Laguna’s adaptation of Pedanius Dioscorides and serves as the basis for Francisco Hernández de Toledo’s monumental task of accommodating American fauna and flora within the system, completing a long diachronic trip from the ancient Middle East to the New World, not without difficulty.⁴⁴ Under the weight of the archive, thousands of years of medical literature restated that one ought to eat what one’s land grows, keeping diet indigenous to both the individual’s location and social class, also considering age and particular customs. So, for all the studies generated around the marvelous secrets and novelties of the Indies by Nicolás Monardes, Juan de Cárdenas and many other writers who promised remedies short of miraculous, there is hardly any mention in cookbooks, still lifes, and medical treatises. As opposed to herbs, more prevalent in Peninsular apothecaries, one will be hard-pressed to find recipes incorporating chocolate for invigoration, cane sugar, or New World turkeys, as American items in cookbooks are only found in some courtesan banquet descriptions keen on novelty. Instead, medical treatises have a tendency to promote local food, so much so that Dr. Francisco Núñez de Coria was shocked at the idea of

⁴² By the early eighteenth century, a nutrition protocol had already been formalized as substance, quantity, quality, order, time, hour, preparation, custom, personal taste, age, and season. According to Robledo, diversity ought to be avoided, as different food took different times to cook inside the body, and temperate sustenance was given to healthy individuals to keep their predominant qualities, while intemperate nourishment was prescribed to specifically desiccate or refrigerate (18-19).

⁴³ Of course taste is crucial to all recipes, medical and otherwise, which must be appetizing. Dr. Porcell understood that patients who could not tolerate medicine would abandon the prescription: “because some get tired after just two days, and they do not stop taking it because they do not want to, or due to lack of knowledge of the benefit from drinking it, but because they get tired of the taste, and also because they like to switch medicines” (61^r).

⁴⁴ Hernández de Toledo found none other than corn right in the middle of classification as the epitome of godly temperance, as it was neither hot nor cold, neither dry nor humid, neither thick and sticky nor thin and subtle (133^{r-v}).

circumnavigating the Earth to appease gluttony when an ample variety of crops, sauces and confections produced nearby was not only plentiful but healthier: “It is strange within human nature to go to the Indies and navigate the strait called Magellan’s just to quench the rage of appetite and gluttony” (7^v).

Spanish doctors tend to reject expensive and exotic food, favoring homegrown ingredients instead. They are also prone to keeping recipes simple, as the mixture of many items altered the humoral balance between different nutrients. Within those parameters, however, there is a standing trait in the emphasis on particular varieties over others. Either for their sourcing in very specific regions due to being more spectacular, these species were mentioned as better looking, better tasting, thus healthier and more healing. The concept is not unknown to artists: Julián Gállego has noticed that painters did not oversize elements but purposely choose larger, rounder, prettier varieties of fruits and vegetables for their *bodegones*, citing “zamboas” (bigger than regular quinces), ciders (more eye-catching than lemons), and “javies” (a fuller kind of grapes) (201). Unsurprisingly, Mateo Alemán drafted a list of the best regional varieties to signify the most desired options: bergamot pears from Aranjuez, plums from Genoa, melons from Granada, ciders from Seville, oranges and grapefruits from Plasencia, lemons from Murcia, cucumbers from Valencia, “tallos de las Islas” (Terceiras), eggplants from Toledo, “orejones” from Aragón (glazed apricot and peach meat), potatoes from Málaga, Castilian “zamboa” (a variety of peach), “camuesa” apples, carrots, pumpkin, and many preserves (I, 439). This ideal catalog traced a culinary map of prominent local varieties known to physicians to sustain good health and treat specific diseases. Dr. Lobera de Ávila favored very large pears for the sick, and recommended fresh egg yolk and avoiding fruit with the exception of San Miguel prunes (LXIX^r and LXIII^v). When Dr. Porcell recommended the usual array of cold foods against the plague, he prescribed a varied diet reaching for very specific specimens known under regional names (38^v-41^r), while Dr. Rossell stated that all fish should be avoided except for some local varieties.⁴⁵ To treat kidney stones, Dr. Francisco Díaz mentioned a few beneficial indigenous foods like “luina,” a fish only caught in Cuenca, “marine spider” from Andalusia (“araña marina”), two varieties of pear (“eneldo” and “Nájera”), “black monk” or “sanmiguelena” prunes, and water from Leganitos (Madrid) and La Canaleja (Ávila) (59^r-67^v). Unsurprisingly, the specificity does not end here.

Ram is King

Dr. Alexo de Abreu’s treaty included two chapters on sustenance and drink for hypochondriacs. In them, he recommended chicks, chickens, castrated birds, male doves, and castrated young ram cooked with lettuce, borage, sorrel, purslane and wormwood, eaten twice a day dipped in either vinegar, sour grape juice, pomegranate juice or orange juice. He advised against water and flying birds, and all four-footed species except said ram. Some *clarete* wine was recommended, as was boiled drinking water enhanced with cinnamon, anise or orange blossom (123^r-24^v). Dr. Jerónimo Gil prescribed a similar diet against diphtheria: ram or chicken cooked in sorrel, lettuce, borage, pumpkin or farro, as well as roasted almond juice with sugar and one egg (61-62). Dr. Melchor de Villena chronicled the ordinances given in Valencia after a plague outbreak, most of them corresponding to what is routinely prescribed in medical treatises. The only meat to be sold was castrated ram, everyone would be allowed to eat meat on abstinence days and the sale of turnips, sprouts, eggplants, artichokes, fava

⁴⁵ The diet against the bubonic plague is similar to the one to fight *morbo gallic*, using desiccating principles in cold and dry food. Dr. Soto explained that bird meat was best for diphtheria (“garrotillo”) because such animals breathe very little and are dry, thus resemble a person’s substance and can restore it (73). Rossell also recommended avoiding humid fruits including grapes, figs, melons, cucumbers, grenadines, pumpkins, apricots and peaches, allowing for some sweet confections (59^v-64^{r-v}).

beans, and peppers would be banned, with lettuce, chicory and escarole remaining as the only available greens. To treat kidney stones, Dr. Francisco Díaz recommended leafy greens, oats boiled in ram or bird stock, hen, and chicken or castrated chicken with shredded bread. Due to its “thickness” bull meat was to be avoided, as were cow, ox, pig, goat, sheep, deer, ass, horse, goose, mallard, hare, old rabbit, cranes, bustards and milanos. Also to be averted were meat pies, lagoon birds, dried cuts and animal parts including the spleen, liver, heart, and extremities, preferring younger specimens, easier to transmute into substance. Fish was advised against except for smaller species like trout, “bermejuelas” (*achondrostoma arcasii*) and bass. Lastly, dairy products and most fruits, nuts, and spices were left out of the diet, though legumes (also referred to as “hortalizas”) were allowed (80^v-81^r). For *morbo gallic*, Juan Calvo endorsed American quinine, *lignum vitae* (“palo santo”), sarsaparilla and mercury, tailoring each patient’s ailment with different nutrients including toasted almonds or hazelnuts, raisins and cake (“pan bizcochado”). The convalescent should also eat roasted ram for lunch and eggs for dinner, roasted hen, veal or hen cooked with parsley and chickpeas (552-554). Dr. Andrés de León’s treatise on syphilis also recommended the meat of manually castrated yearling ram as the best course of combat (52-53). Hens, especially black, were said to be beneficial and, contrary to popular belief (“an old hen does not yield stock”), old birds were deemed very substantial for the ill when freshly killed. They ought to be roasted inside a ram’s caul fat (“redaño”), larded, or distilled resembling any other apothecary quintessence.

These are examples of diets assembled by physicians for different conditions, namely, hypochondria, diphtheria, black plague, kidney stones, and syphilis. They all comply with humoral principles and other general requirements such as favoring young specimens over old, and discouraging the consumption of water birds and lower status vegetables. More importantly, they all have one ingredient in common: Ram. Classified as hot and humid, it is an unexpected choice given the fact that Galen considered it low grade meat, the consensus is that castrated ram (“carnero”) is the best option for the sick, as reflected in one of Dr. Juan Sorapán’s forty-seven proverbs (“Of all meats, ram, of all fish, grouper”) and other popular sayings.⁴⁶ Lobera de Ávila (XL^{r-v}), Tomás Porcell (94^v), and every other Spanish doctor sided with Averroes –who had promoted ram higher in the protein scale, right below domestic poultry–, deeming its meat beneficial while understanding that Galen never had the chance to taste Spanish produce. The same explanation is found in Dr. Franco’s treatise: in Pergamon ram used to be mediocre but Spanish meat is excellent, as are other fish and fruits of superior quality he himself had the chance to taste locally (XLV^r).

The presence of ram is recurrent in countless texts outside the medical corpus; the celebrated second sentence of the inaugural *Quijote* refers to “A pot with some more beef than ram”, the reference generally explained because cow was more affordable. The price of different kinds of meat, albeit mandated, was determined by supply and demand, so it would seem counterintuitive for ram to be more expensive than cow, given the long-standing sheep surplus in Castile. Wool from female sheep was highly sought-after by exporters for being considered finer, cleaner and heavier, as stated by Luis de Molina when discussing the price and grade in dealing with futures, bonds and insurance rates. It would not be justifiable to have abundant wool from female sheep without an oversupply of meat from rams, especially considering the low number of males needed to sustain a balanced herd, which Gabriel Alonso de Herrera estimated in a 1/100 ratio (CLXV^r). Even when discarding sick and old specimens whose use was specifically discouraged by doctors, ram heads surpass cow production, not accounting for a higher market price. Its consistent promotion as the healthiest and best of

⁴⁶ “Carnero” is commonly translated as “mutton.” I have chosen “ram” to signify an “uncastrated male sheep” due to its closer connection with “Aries,” “ares,” and “agnus” in Spanish early modern dictionaries like Covarrubias’ and del Rosal’s, also including the obvious association with “carne” as a sacrificial offering to Mars (English, “ramme;” “carnero castrado” is more narrowly translated as “weather”).

meats across the board explains ram's higher overall estimation, even in a constant surplus environment. Running a simple comparison shows that medical recipes for the overly wealthy, the rich and the poor only differed in the chemical compounds added to the recommended meat, as confirmed by Porcell (42^{r-v}), and such meat would by default be ram as specified in Dr. Vidós y Miró's depiction of the double vase to extract its quintessence through *balneum Mariae* (fig. 1), so its promotion through medical books was an outlet for overproduction.⁴⁷ As a pricier meat, it is also linked to tax revenue. Madrid ordinances from 1585 prevented those in charge of pantries ("despenseros") from selling leftovers, much less for profit (*Pregón* 64). It is important to consider that ram purchases were not small home expenditures but recurring costs from large organizations including hospitals, convents, monasteries, brotherhoods, schools, colleges and orphanages.⁴⁸ Carolyn Nadeau includes the social aspects of this meat and gathers prices of different animals to conclude that it was affordable for the median salary (52-60), concurrent with Bartolomé Bennassar's case-study on Valladolid, where between 45,600 and 26,162 rams were slaughtered yearly between 1565 and 1596 (730-739). The large numbers speak of sizeable municipal and other organizational purchases from certified suppliers ("obligados") to make first necessity foodstuffs and items like bread, meat, salt and candles available for large population segments, aside from the fact that certain groups had priority to buy the best pieces, in turn driving up the price of certain cuts of beef and ram.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Founder of monetary theory Luis de Molina mentioned ram meat's medical purpose, expanding on trade conditions of first grade wool specifically produced by female sheep: "Sal quippe multum confert, ut carnes arietinae meliores sint, quod superfluas arietum humiditates consumit, eosque à morbis praeservat" (264).

⁴⁸ Martz estimates between fourteen and six point two ounces of meat consumed daily per patient at the Tavera Hospital in Toledo between 1557 and 1629. Fed patients ranged between eighteen and thirty two in uneventful years (185 and 175).

⁴⁹ Jodi Campbell offers the most extensive analysis of meat butchering and its circulation both in Atlantic and Peninsular Spain (34-47).

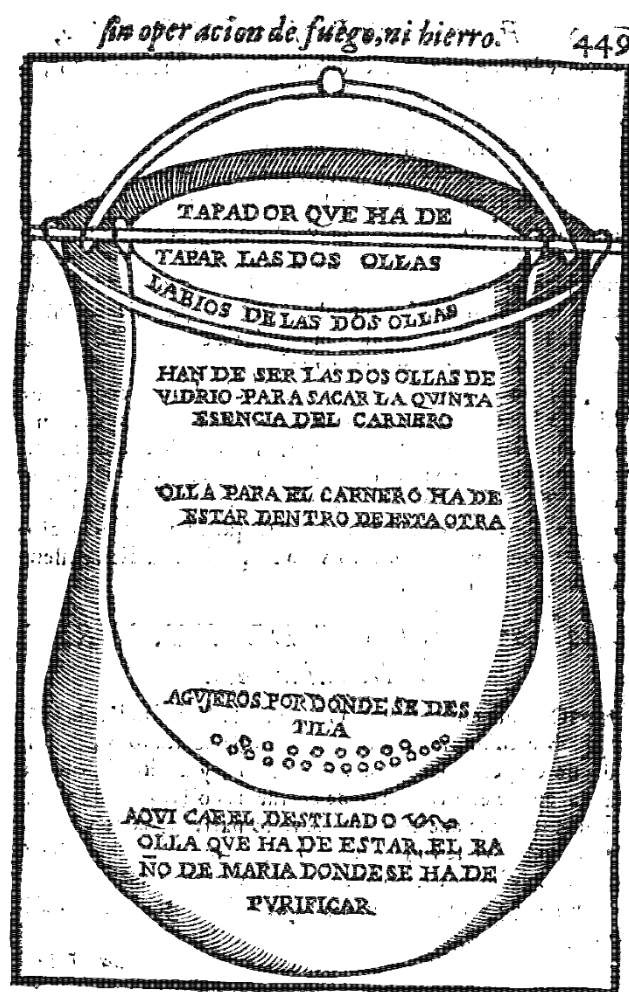


Figure 1. Ram quintessence glass pots. Juan de Vidós y Miró. *Primera parte de medicina y cirugía racional y espagírica*, 1691 [1674], 449

Quantity aside, doctors stated a preference for the right side of the ram as proner to health maintenance, as recommended by Alonso de Chirino, Lobera de Ávila and Francisco Franco. Chirino was King Juan II of Castile's physician and General Examiner, entailing that his criteria trickled to all levels of standard care, including textbooks: "The best meats are ram and kid, the calves and male calves, and males better than females, and young ones better than the old, the right side better than the left" (V^v). While he did not argue his reasons and just understated that the right flank was healthier, Lobera did disclose a preference for the front limbs due to being closer to body heat (XLIII^v), but it was Franco who drew several analogies to sustain the claim that the right side was drier and more irrigated, thus easily digestible and better tasting:

the gentlemen who have the possibility and means to do so ought to eat from the right side before the left, I mean that if one were to eat a ram's leg, or its back, or a kid's quarter, always eat the right before the left [...] because the said parts have less humidities and fewer superfluties, and the meat of the right side is more digested and perfected, and for this cause it yields a better flavor [...] because the best blood always goes to the right side, and of better luster, and more elaborate [...] Moreover, princes and lords, who take such care that the water they drink comes from one source and not another, and whether its spring is to the east or west, and that the wine they drink is

from Saint Martín de Valdeiglesias or Madrigal, why not be mindful that the parts or sorts of the cattle or birds they eat are from the right side? (XLIII^{r-v}).

The insistence is not surprising, as culturally the right side of the body has been favored in countless ways throughout Western thought, from alchemic and reproductive processes to representations of *lactatio* (St. Bernard's distinctly comes to mind). As for digestion, because the liver was thought to be responsible for providing heat to the stomach to carry out digestion, the meat closer to this organ had less superfluous content. This particular idea has no correspondence in cookbooks, which do not specify the side of any particular animal but different parts suiting specific recipes. On their stance, painters did not depict the convalescent profusely, and the representation of miraculous healing or the care of holy figures contained items like fruit, water cups or olive branches, tending to be symbolic rather than nourishing.⁵⁰ These are not the only paintings lacking a correlation with food as described by cooks and doctors: almonds, one of the most common cooking elements, are seldom portrayed in favor of recurrent chestnuts and walnuts; eggs are omnipresent in confectionery books but rarely included in still lifes; and widely mentioned condiments are scarce and limited to the occasional clover, salt shaker, or undefined paper scrap containing spices that painters use to stamp their signature.

While raw meat might not be the most appetizing item to be depicted, it became a long standing subgenre favored by the likes of Rembrandt, Goya and Monet. Kitchen and market still lifes were well cultivated during the Spanish Golden Age, and although in some cases current whereabouts are unknown, there are some twelve documented examples by Alejandro de Loarte, Alonso de Escobar, Francisco Barrera, Juan Esteban de Úbeda or de Medina, and two anonymous Spanish works.⁵¹ Out of the thirteen pieces of meat represented, ten of them correspond to the right side of animals, be them pigs, rams, cows or lambs, always depicting the inner part, not the skin. This high count (77%) is not anecdotal, proving that the painters' choice of best specimens was not limited to fruits and vegetables and extended to meat, accounting for doctors' recommendations rather than visual appeal, showing a clear consistency between health-promoting recipes and still lifes.

Dealing with excess is a recurrent topic in non-derivative Spanish early modern documents related to food. A clear concern is reflected in the role of fat among different authors, patients included. Some recognized the beneficial properties of animal grease which, as meat, is hot and humid. Under sympathetic principles each species, including wild bears and lions, served a different purpose and could be applied in poultices "to make flesh grow and fill the vacuum in scars" (Vidós y Miró, 344-345), but even if recipes for the sick stress the importance of substantial nourishment, when it came to preservation of health, greasy and copious meals were to be avoided. Intellectual Luis Zapata commented on the detrimental

⁵⁰ Francisco de Zurbarán, *La curación milagrosa del beato Reginaldo de Orleans* (ca. 1629); *La educación de la Virgen* (1633); *Virgen de la leche* (1658). Francisco Pacheco, *San Sebastián atendido por Santa Irene* (1616, Alcalá de Guadaíra, destroyed during the Civil War).

⁵¹ Excluded from this count are butcher's shop paintings by foreign contemporaries like Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beuckelaer, Annibale Carracci, Cristoforo Munari, Bartolomeo Passarotti and Frans Snyder. The pieces considered are six works by Alejandro de Loarte, who specialized in raw meat, *Still Life with Meat and Tavern Scene*, *Still Life with Kitchen Scene*, *Bodegón con perdices rojas, conejo y pierna de carnero* (attrib.), *Bodegón de caza y frutas* (ca. 1625, Colección Várez-Fisa), *Bodegón de cocina con carnes, aves y pescado* (ca. 1700-1725). Alejandro de Loarte or Alonso de Escobar, *Still Life with Meat*. Alonso de Escobar, *Bodegón* (ca. 1602-1616, Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Alonso de Escobar (attrib.), *Still Life with Side of Beef* (Davis Museum, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA). Francisco Barrera, *Bodegón con carnes, frutas y verduras (el mes de abril)* (ca. 1640-1650). Juan Esteban de Úbeda or de Medina, *Escena de mercado* (1606, Museo de Bellas Artes, Granada, CE0126). Anonymous, *Still Life Inside a Kitchen* (XVIIth c., Spanish School). Anonymous, *Bodegón con pícaro de cocina* (XVIIth c. 1st q., Madrid, Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, inv. 26383).

effects of bodily fat, himself having suffered it, as it was not only unhealthy and anti aesthetic but arose derision, preventing individuals from daily activities like walking, kings from ruling well, noblemen from mounting a horse without a crane, and wise men from releasing ideas. To avoid excessive adipose deposits that freeze during the winter and lead to a shorter life span and a spiritless body, Zapata recommended his own diet, comprised of one single meal, abstaining from wine and stew, and bandaging one's legs to thin them, also remarking how convicts gained weight while in prison, not from joy but due to inactivity (XI, 65). Archdeacon Bernardino Gómez Miedes stated that eating too much hen and chicken promoted gout, and since gluttony and disorderly eating could not be counteracted by the stomach alone, the rich and powerful ought to contain themselves (39-40). Physicians were equally aware of the problem: Dr. Alonso Colmenero remarked that chocolate made one obese no matter how it was prepared (Prologue); Dr. Porcell warned against fat for the preservation of health, advising abstinence from animal entrails, feet and brains (95^v); and Dr. Franco insisted on systematically degreasing freshly killed meat by boiling or grilling it to preserve health through nutrition (XLIII).

These warnings and recommendations are not exclusive of wealthy estates and rich individuals with physicians at their service, for once because head doctors like Chirino were in charge of authoring standard textbooks and ordinances imposed on the general population. Moreover, when looking at household, conventual, and other recipe books, the availability and variety within the food supply is undisputed. Paremiology as a cultural marker for widespread perception also points to abundance as a challenge: Dr. Sorapán's forty-seven proverbs serve as a memory aid and offer some clues on the general relation between gastronomy and medicine. In agreement with medical and cooking books, a number of sayings state that one must abstain from overeating and mixing many foods, echoing nutritional recommendations for the ill and reflecting a plentiful and varied food supply chain in a number of maxims that still stand nowadays. On the other side of the spectrum, the insistence on voluntary abstinence also speaks for excess of food in cycles mandated not by scarcity but by belief, moral government, seasons, bodily nature and custom or a combination of such. Superimposed nutritional codes like religious fasting were recommended in some religious orders to access a higher level of knowledge, but physicians' reasons lie not so much on moral government as on the simple effects of scarce nutrition, as advised by the school of Avicena. Dr. Alonso López de Corella compiled a number of cases involving extreme fasting, ranging from eleven to one hundred and thirty six days, feasible not only for the godly, but due to having very thick, hence long-lasting humor (XXI^v-XXII^f). Dr. Carlos Antonio Puertas exemplified the link between simple nutrition and virtue with the case of Saint Francis of Borgia, who was able to lose weight and loop his belt by eating just one food (64 and 77). Ruling over the body translated into an austere diet with fewer ingredients, as ultimately consumption involved eating the dead. Dr. Lobera de Ávila, too, cautioned against copious meals that would alter the humoral balance, but also understood that going hungry or thirsty was a thing of the past (VI^v), and Dr. Rossell advocated to keep fasting on Fridays and Lent even throughout plague outbreaks, as this practice was beneficial regardless of the circumstances (64^v). When physicians across the board recurrently advised the general population for moderation, it becomes apparent that food supply was abundant and uninterrupted. Leaner individuals were considered healthier and fasting was not forced by scarcity or superimposed cultural codes but through standard medical advice. For doctors, cornucopia took a less than joyful meaning altogether because stational binges were considered harmful, as observed by a scandalized Rossell when annotating the verb "repapilarse," which entailed stuffing oneself from Christmas to Carnival only to suffer the physical consequences throughout the Spring (68^f).

Jane de Vries has argued that historians are unsure of whether the field of crisis studies is very much alive or has become a failed enterprise sandwiched in a century that still lacks its

own narrative. Even if only a matter of periodization, it is still paradoxical to refer to the “Golden Age” while solely focusing on certain traits to conform a particular line of poverty discourse, especially when food supply is stable and considering that price history attends to longer cycles, as “the amplitude of livestock-related prices (meat and dairy products) was more muted” (de Vries, 157). Outside of any geographic market exchange, food was grown and priced for internal consumption, ram being a byproduct of wool production for export. Corresponding to a standalone ascending or declining curve, nutrition constructs are ideal for disconnection and edge-pulling: religious cycles combine fasting periods with overfeeding phases that excuse gluttony, still lives depict abundance and symbolic scarcity, and fiction works indulge on separate portrayals of misery and gastronomic refinement. A different side of nourishment, non-derivative works state otherwise: the agricultural calendar may alternate times of uncertainty, harvest and shortage, but preserves beat the time imposed by seasons so food may be had through hallow and closed hunting seasons. Items are watchfully withdrawn from markets in times of infection and replenished afterwards. A constant surplus of ram meat is dealt with through purchases for the population at large and therapeutic promotion. The great divide we have been steered to see –an opulent, almost concupiscent binging minority throwing scraps to a mass of paupers– was never a blueprint. As reflected in recipes for the sick, processing instruments were sophisticated, food availability was never questioned, and many nutritional aspects were considered, variety and excess included. This might be the missing side of the curve, if there was ever one curve at all.

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