
Journey into the heart of Viche, an iconic dish from Manabí, Ecuador

Viaje al interior del Viche, un plato icónico de Manabí, Ecuador

Viagem ao interior do Viche, um prato icônico de Manabí, Equador

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Abstract

Manabí's cuisine is the synthesis of its biodiversity and the evolution of its culture, narrated through its history. In this context, *viche* is one of its most representative culinary expressions. The objective of this study was to characterize *viche* by identifying the most particular features that represent the identity of its inhabitants. This was primarily a qualitative and, to a lesser extent, a quantitative study, exploratory, descriptive, comparative, and historical. Techniques such as direct observation, interviews, life stories, and word frequency analysis using ATLAS.ti software were applied. Among the main results was a list of the main and complementary ingredients of *viche*, the type of cuisine it belongs to, the origin of the ingredients, and cultural changes and continuities. It is concluded that this dish is very ancient, composed of ingredients available in the semi-arid and humid tropical climates of this province, making it one of the most emblematic dishes due to its uses, components, and symbolism.

KEYWORDS: regional cuisines; Manabí viche; traditional culinary knowledge; biodiversity and gastronomy; intangible heritage of Ecuador.

Resumen

La cocina manabita es la síntesis de la biodiversidad presente en su territorio y de la evolución de su cultura, narrada por su historia. En ese contexto, el viche es una de sus manifestaciones culinarias más representativas. El objetivo de este estudio fue caracterizar al viche identificando los rasgos más particulares que representan a la identidad de sus habitantes. Fue una investigación cualitativa y en menor medida cuantitativa, de tipo exploratoria, descriptiva, comparativa e histórica, aplicando técnicas como la observación directa, entrevistas, historias de vida y análisis de frecuencia de palabras mediante el software ATLAS.ti. Entre los principales resultados se obtuvo un listado de los ingredientes principales y complementarios del viche, tipo de cocina al que pertenece, origen de los ingredientes y cambios y permanencias culturales. Se concluye, en que este plato es muy antiguo compuesto por ingredientes disponibles en climas semiáridos y tropicales húmedos característicos de esta provincia, constituyéndose en una de las preparaciones culinarias más emblemáticas, debido a sus usos, componentes y simbolismos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: cocinas regionales; viche de Manabí; saberes culinarios tradicionales; biodiversidad y gastronomía; Patrimonio Inmaterial del Ecuador.

Resumo

A culinária de Manabí é a síntese de sua biodiversidade e a evolução de sua cultura, narrada através de sua história. Nesse contexto, o viche é uma das suas expressões culinárias mais representativas. O objetivo deste estudo foi caracterizar o viche, identificando as características mais particulares que representam a identidade de seus habitantes. Este foi um estudo principalmente qualitativo e, em menor grau, quantitativo, exploratório, descritivo, comparativo e histórico. Técnicas como observação direta, entrevistas, histórias de vida e análise de frequência de palavras utilizando o software ATLAS.ti foram aplicadas. Entre os principais resultados, destaca-se uma lista dos principais ingredientes e complementos do viche, o tipo de culinária a que pertence, a origem dos ingredientes e as mudanças e continuidades culturais. Conclui-se que este prato é muito antigo, composto por ingredientes disponíveis nos climas semiárido e tropical úmido desta província, tornando-se um dos pratos mais emblemáticos devido aos seus usos, componentes e simbolismo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: culinárias regionais; viche de Manabí; saberes culinários tradicionais; biodiversidade e gastronomia; Patrimônio Imaterial do Equador.

1. Introduction

Regional cuisines embody the very essence of daily life among different human groups over time. They reflect the development and application of skills and various techniques as survival methods, adapted and inherited through generations. Moreover, these cuisines are often an amalgamation of different sources due to population displacement and the exchange of knowledge and resources (Ángel-Bravo, 2021).

This could explain why, in response to new needs and the availability of new tools, knowledge, and ingredients, these cuisines have been constantly evolving. The elements that are involved in the creation of dishes can be both endemic and introduced (Montanari, 2006), combining ancestral and more recent techniques to embrace a new tradition. This shift may seem contradictory to those passionate about recognizing their local cuisines.

According to Garzón Osorio & Cardozo Vásquez (2024) traditional cuisines are the result of a series of factors related to cultural identity traits, representing the intangible cultural heritage of a specific territory passed down from generation to generation. According to these authors, they share similarities while also displaying differences with other communities, and are influenced by environmental characteristics, customs, social relationships, and ways of life.

In this context, it is essential to highlight that scientific studies on regional cuisines are virtually nonexistent in many areas, leading to assumptions that lack veracity. In Ecuador, culinary studies are insufficient, particularly given the country's cultural diversity and biodiversity (Duarte-Casar & Rojas-le-fort, 2024). Most studies focus on the Andean region, with little or no scientific research in other regions such as the Coast, The Amazon, and The Galápagos. Nonetheless, this has not hindered the exploitation of gastronomic richness as a strategy for local development in cities like Portoviejo, the capital of the Manabí province on the Ecuadorian coast. As Rodríguez *et al.* (2022) have asserted, these types of endogenous resources with

distinctive characteristics help to generate new tourism activities for the development of regions.

Currently, Portoviejo is recognized as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy since 2019 (UNESCO, 2019), following a series of actions developed within the city as economic reactivation strategies, including gastronomic festivals, culinary competitions (culinary cups) between traditional cooks, the strengthening of local markets, among other activities. This was in response to the severe earthquake on April 16, 2016, which had its epicenter in the provinces of Manabí and Esmeraldas, devastating important cities like Portoviejo and causing numerous deaths and injuries (Cartay *et al.*, 2021).

The earthquake triggered an economic and social crisis that led the local authorities to design and implement measures like those mentioned earlier, which allowed the residents to demonstrate their resilience in the face of such crises. One of the primary means of survival was the establishment of popular food outlets as a major source of income to help families sustain themselves while other long-term strategies were developed, taking advantage of the province's culinary treasures.

It is worth noting that many dishes that could be considered traditional have already been mentioned in various recipe books by renowned historians and chefs. However, after recent events, these recipes began to gain popularity both within and beyond the city and the province. *Viche* leads this culinary corpus, and as evidence, it is necessary to mention that this dish from Manabí, among other traditional dishes from the province, is listed among the manifestations of Intangible Cultural Heritage registered by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage [Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (INPC), 2018].

Additionally, *viche* has also been selected by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism (Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador, MINTUR, 2018) to represent the province's gastronomic offerings through the publication of a nationally distributed brochure titled 'Gastronomic Map'.

Moreover, Acosta *et al.* (2005) have shown that, in a study conducted to identify the dishes

with which the Manabí population felt most identified, *viche* ranked among the top five dishes preferred by respondents from different municipalities. Other publications by Regalado (2019), a well-known historian of Manabí cuisine, describe it as the emblematic dish of Manabí, and this coincides with Ordóñez Piedra (2023), who, in his study on peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*), confirms this ingredient is indispensable for many traditional dishes of Portoviejo, including *Viche*.

The most recent significant event highlighting this dish occurred on May 26th, 2024, in Portoviejo, when the Guinness World Record for the largest *viche* ever cooked was achieved (Buzetta Ricaurte, 2025), fulfilling a series of conditions and requirements to achieve this milestone, thereby raising the dish's profile beyond provincial borders. Moreover, the province of Manabí was recognized as a World Gastronomic Region by the Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Art and Tourism (IGCAT).

This effort is carried out as a strategy to promote the cuisine of Portoviejo and Manabí and as a method of preserving the current designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. However, it is important to note that gastronomic festivals continue to be held annually in various rural parishes in Portoviejo, as well as cooking competitions, shows, and other culinary activities involving higher education institutions, traditional cooks, local governments, cultural managers, the community, among others. This allows families to generate subsistence alternatives through gastronomy, as happens in other regions such as Spain during times of crisis (Gómez Patiño *et al.*, 2016).

Despite the significance of this culinary preparation, which is so representative of the Manabí territory, only one study has been conducted by Zambrano Llor (2023), dedicated to the meticulous study of this dish, defining its characteristics and various elements. This research reaffirmed that *viche* is the quintessential traditional dish in Manabí, presenting an opportunity to implement local development strategies, such as gastronomic tourism. However, it also emphasizes that,

without relevant research, this cultural resource could face long-term negative impacts.

Based on its characteristics, *viche* can be categorized as a potage because it consists of cooked vegetables and legumes. However, there are technical differences between definitions. In Manabí, people may also consider it a soup (dark) or a stew.

The significance of this dish lies in its ingredients, utensils, origin, methods, and techniques, which will be mentioned during the course of this work. Additionally, its relevance is due to the symbolic value it holds for Manabí families, as it is prepared and consumed on special and commemorative occasions, not to mention its high nutritional value when compared to other traditional preparations.

This work focuses on identifying each of the components of *viche*, its relevance, origin, evolution, and role in the preparation of this dish. This allows for better interpretations of the sense of belonging among the inhabitants of the communities and their relationship with their daily life, beliefs, customs, religion, and history. It also aims to encourage further research into Manabí cuisine; more knowledge and theory could provide various possibilities and tools for local development that can be generated through the appreciation of this type of cultural resource through gastronomic tourism (Melgar Ramírez, 2013), supported by scientific data that substantiates the discourses behind each of them.

2. Methodology

As already mentioned, this study was conducted in Manabí, a province located in the center of the Ecuadorian coast (FIGURE 1), which has an area of 19,516.6 km², making it the fourth largest continental province in Ecuador (Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Provincial de Manabí, 2024). It has around 1,592,840 inhabitants (Secretaría Nacional de Planificación, 2023), which makes it the third largest province in the country in demographic terms.

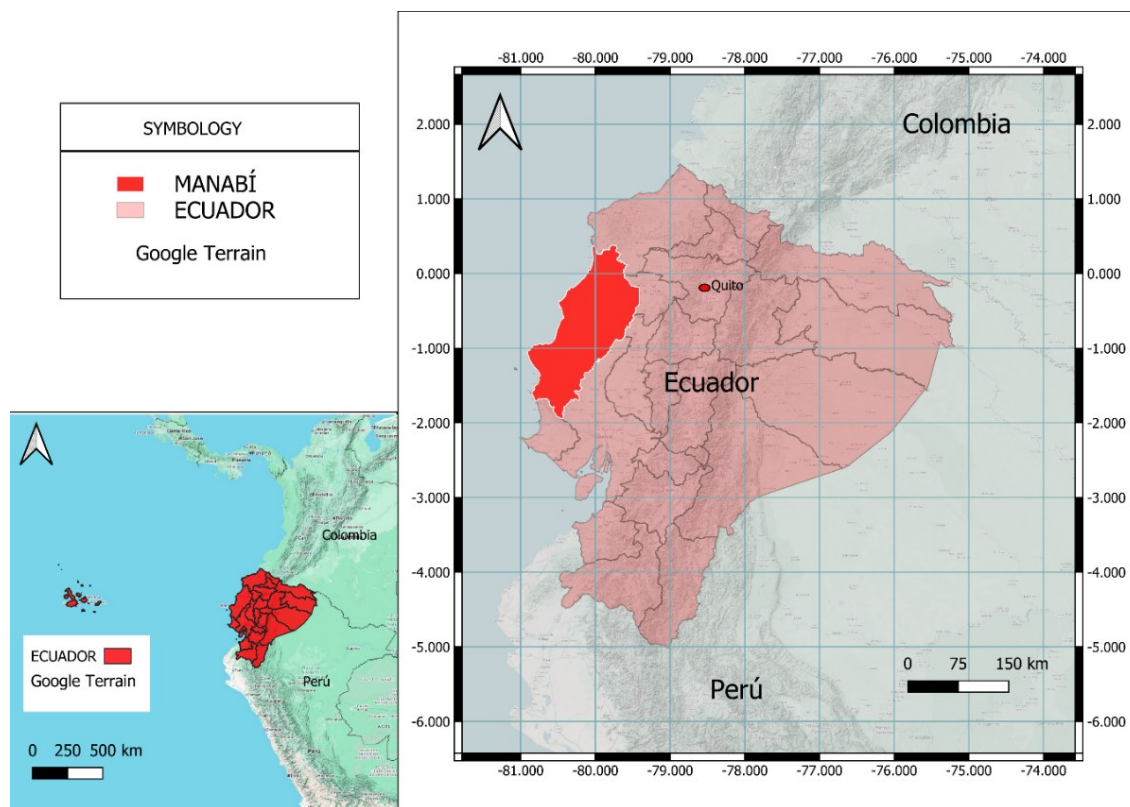


FIGURE 1. Location of Manabí.

Note: Red shading is observed for Ecuador in Latin America and for Manabí within Ecuador. Authors own work

Within this province, the study focused on the cantons of Portoviejo and Tosagua. The selection of these was based on two factors: in the case of Portoviejo, because it is currently recognized by UNESCO as a Creative City of Gastronomy (UNESCO, 2019), and in the case of Tosagua, due to its large peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*) production, which is one of the most present and important ingredients in the culinary corpus of Manabí cuisine (Ordóñez Piedra, 2023).

The research applied an inductive method, by studying a particular dish, the 'viche'. It also used a deductive method by placing this dish within a provincial culinary corpus. Furthermore, it is a qualitative study because it allowed for a significant focus on the interpretation of culinary cultural expressions and the social phenomena that develop around them, enabling direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of the natural behavior of the actors in

their own environment (Schenkel and Pérez 2019).

This type of research allowed for the study of *viche* within the context in which it is prepared, including components such as the definition and uses of the dish, essential and complementary ingredients, the origin and provenance of its elements, among other additional factors.

The investigation was of various types: exploratory, as it was the first time this dish was researched in detail; descriptive, as it allowed for a detailed description of the fundamental characteristics of *viche*, its ingredients, changes, and associated manifestations; comparative, as it facilitated the contrast between documentary information and primary data; and historical, due to the investigation of its possible origins, changes, and continuities over time. Additionally, documentary research techniques were applied as a complement to data collection.

The study process began with the technique of direct observation in the two aforementioned cantons. For this purpose, food courts and several points of sale of local products in municipal markets, traditional food restaurants in rural parishes, and homes of housewives aged between 30 and 90 years were visited. In these same settings, through non-probabilistic sampling, 13 semi-structured interviews and 4 life stories were conducted with certain traditional cooks. The selection of interviewees was based on their certification by local governments and UNESCO, as well as having a considerable number of years in preparing traditional dishes, either for sale or for their families, and for the workers on their farms. The interviews were semi-structured, based on a question guide that included: the origin of the cooks, their training and experience in the trade, and their learning processes.

With the data obtained from primary sources, a list of ingredients for *viche* was compiled, allowing for comparison, classification, and contrast with the information recorded in the INPC file. It was also possible to document other characteristic features of this dish, which helped to recognize the level of cultural importance and symbolic representation that the preparation holds for its inhabitants. Additionally, based on the textual information obtained from the interviews, the ATLAS.ti software was used for word frequency analysis, identifying those most present in the memories of the cooks.

Finally, to understand the symbolic significance of *viche* in the cultural context of Manabí, a bibliographic search was conducted on the types of cuisine based on their history, customs, consumption, and uses, among other factors. This also led to the study of the continental origin of its main ingredients to understand the cultural context that this dish currently represents.

3. Results

The *viche* is a dish that can be classified as a potage or traditional soup in the Manabí province. It is important to refer to the definitions established by the Real Academia Española (RAE,

2024). In its first definition, 'potage' is described as "a broth or other cooked dish", and in the second, as a culinary preparation consisting of legumes, vegetables, and assorted ingredients, typically consumed during periods of dietary restriction. However, according to the RAE (2024), regarding the meaning of 'soup', it first describes this term as a liquid-based preparation containing one or more solid ingredients cooked within it, such as noodles, vegetables, or fish. It also defines it as a culinary preparation consisting of slices of bread soaked in a nutrient-rich liquid.

Based on the previous description, it is crucial to address other aspects related to the historical context and the linguistic origin of these terms. Palla (2016) notes that, as historians say, the word has a French origin, from the same word 'potage' in that language, meaning 'stew' or 'soup', which is associated with the discovery of ceramics. This is because, with the advent of ceramic cooking vessels, ancestors prepared dishes by mixing game and foraged ingredients in 'earthenware pots'. Furthermore, Palla (2016) also mentions that the word 'soup' originates from the Germanic term 'Suppa', WHICH means 'to soak', linking it to historical traits. Initially, soups were made with slices of soaked bread, but over time, other ingredients such as rice and pasta were incorporated.

Similarly, Camarero (2006) defines 'potage' as a somewhat brothy stew made from dried legumes, along with some fresh vegetables and meat products, which can be replaced by salted cod during Lent. In contrast, the defining component for soups would be the broth, but with greater variety due to its diverse vegetable and animal components. It is generally accompanied by bread, rice, pasta, or vegetables (Cartay & Dávila, 2023).

Given these definitions and considering the characteristics of *viche*, it can primarily be associated with potages due to its composition (FIGURE 2), as well as its methods, techniques, tools, utensils, and consumption patterns. These aspects will be elaborated upon and explored in the description of this article.



FIGURE 2. Photo of a *viche*

Note: The figure shows the presentation of *viche* as a full dish within its cultural context, highlighting some of the ingredients and utensils required for its preparation. Adapted from Intriaño (2024)

3.1 Ingredients of *Viche*

There are numerous aspects concerning the origins of the ingredients that constitute *viche*, which have been passed down through generations primarily via oral transmission, especially from mothers to daughters. This transmission also encompasses the methods, techniques, tools, and utensils employed in the preparation of this dish.

To determine the ingredients involved in the preparation of *viche*, this study considered life

histories and interviews conducted with 17 matrons (midwives) and traditional cooks. During their accounts, these individuals identified products they deemed essential for the preparation of the dish. In conjunction with this information, the data from the INPC (National Institute of Cultural Heritage) publication was also utilized. The results are presented in TABLE 1, categorized into three groups: vegetables and nuts, proteins, and seasonings.

TABLE 1. Composition of the ingredients of *viche*

N°	Ingredients	Number of Cooks and Midwives																	INPC File	No. of Matches
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
VEGETABLES																				
1	Peanut (<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>)																			18
2	Plantain Balls with Peanut (Plantain)																			18

Continued Table 1

	<i>solandri</i>) (Sea species)																		
41	Mestiza Fish (<i>Hybrid Tilapia-Oreochromis spp.</i>) (River species)																		1
42	Spoon Fish (<i>Gobiesox fluviatilis</i>) (River species)																		1
43	Pacific Fat Sleeper (vieja fish) (<i>Dormitator latifrons</i>) (River species)																		1
44	Catfish (<i>Rhamdia quelen</i>) (River species)																		1
45	Tilapia Fish (<i>Oreochromis niloticus</i> , <i>Oreochromis mossambicus</i>) (River species)																		1
46	River Prawn (<i>Macrobrachium americanum</i>)																		1
47	Squid (<i>Euthida</i>) (Sea species)																		1
FATS, SPICES, AND WATER																			
48	Salt (Sodium chloride) (NaCl)																		18
49	Water (Dihydrogen monoxide) (H ₂ O)																		18
50	Annatto (<i>Bixa orellana</i>) (Annatto oil)																		13
51	Garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)																		13
52	Black Pepper (<i>Piper nigrum</i>)																		6
53	Cumin (<i>Cuminum cyminum</i>)																		5
54	Oregano (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)																		4
55	Pork Lard (Pork) (<i>Sus scrofa domesticus</i>)																		2
56	Cinnamon (<i>Cinnamomum verum</i>)																		1
57	Chili pepper (<i>Capsicum sp</i>)																		1

Note: The ingredients have been ordered in descending order according to the number of matches they have

Legend:

	Ingredient mentioned by the cook on the corresponding list
	Ingredient not mentioned by the cook on the corresponding list
	Ingredient included in the INPC technical sheet

Based on the results obtained, and considering the frequency with which the opinions of both matrons, traditional cooks, and those recorded in the INPC (National Institute of Cultural Heritage) records coincide, it was verified that certain

ingredients are used more frequently than others in the preparation of this dish. Consequently, some ingredients are more prominently remembered by the participants in this study. The following is presented (TABLES 2, 3, 4):

TABLE 2. Matches in vegetables and nuts for the viche

Highly matching ingredients:	
Peanuts (<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>), plantain balls with peanut (Plantain) (<i>Musa acuminata</i> x <i>balbisiana</i> ABB), sweet potato (<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>), cassava (<i>Manihot esculenta</i>)	18 matches each (unanimous opinion)
Pumpkin or squash (<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>), long beans (<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> sp), ripe plantain (Banana) (<i>Musa acuminata</i> x <i>balbisiana</i> ABB o AAB), and corn (<i>Zea mays</i>)	16 matches each
Moderately matching ingredients:	
Achogcha (<i>Cyclanthera pedata</i>), green beans (<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>)	12 matches each
Bell pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i>)	11 matches
Broad Beans (<i>Vicia faba</i>), Red onion (<i>Allium cepa</i>)	10 matches
Ingredients with fewer matches:	
Cabbage (<i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>Capitata</i>)	7 matches
Cilantro (<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>)	6 matches
Rarely used ingredients:	
Carrot (<i>Daucus carota</i>), tomatillo (<i>Physalis philadelphica</i>)	4 matches each
Cucumber (<i>Cucumis sativus</i>)	3 matches each
Potato (<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>), chillangua (<i>Eryngium foetidum</i>), white Onion (<i>Allium cepa</i>)	2 matches each
Tomato (<i>Solanum lycopersicum</i>), green onion (<i>Allium fistulosum</i>)	1 matches each

TABLE 3. Matches in proteins

Highly matching proteins:	
"Albacore tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i> , <i>T. alalunga</i>) (from the sea)"	18 matches (unanimous opinion)
"Shrimp (<i>Penaeus spp</i>) (from the sea)"	11 matches
Moderately matching proteins:	
"Crab (<i>Callinectes arcuatus</i> and <i>Ucides occidentalis</i>) (from the sea)"	8 matches

Continued Table 3

"Red crab (<i>Dilocarcinus spp.</i>) (freshwater, known as guariche), river shrimp or freshwater shrimp (<i>Macrobrachium americanum</i>) (known as cacaño)"	5 matches each
"Chicken (<i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>)"	4 matches
"Chame fish (<i>Dormitator latifrons</i>) (from the river), Mahi-Mahi (Dorado Fish) (<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>) (Sea species)"	3 matches each
Proteins with fewer matches:	
Sailfish (<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i>) (from the sea), river crab (<i>Trichodactylus spp.</i>) (known as jaiba), black tiger shrimp (<i>Penaeus monodon</i>) (sea species), mackerel fish (<i>Scomberomorus sierra</i>) (sea species), beef tripe (Bovine) (<i>Bos taurus</i>)	2 matches each
Proteins with low frequency:	
Snook fish (<i>Centropomus viridis</i>) (sea species), croaker fish (<i>Cilus gilberti</i>) (sea species), frigate tuna (bonito fish) (<i>Auxis thazard</i>) (sea species), wahoo fish (<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>) (sea species), mestiza fish (<i>Hybrid Tilapia-Oreochromis spp.</i>) (river species), spoon fish (<i>Gobiesox fluviatilis</i>) (from the river), Pacific fat sleeper (vieja fish) (<i>Dormitator latifrons</i>) (river species), catfish (<i>Rhamdia quelen</i>) (river species), tilapia fish (<i>Oreochromis niloticus</i> , <i>Oreochromis mossambicus</i>) (river species), river prawn (<i>Macrobrachium americanum</i>), squid (<i>Euthida</i>) (sea species)	1 match each

TABLE 4. Matches in condiments

Highly matching condiments:	
Salt (Sodium chloride) (NaCl)	18 matches (unanimous opinion)
Annatto (<i>Bixa orellana</i>) (Annatto oil), garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)	13 matches each
Moderately matching condiments:	
Black pepper (<i>Piper nigrum</i>)	6 matches
Cumin (<i>Cuminum cyminum</i>)	5 matches
Oregano (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)	4 matches
Condiments with fewer matches:	
Pork lard (Pork) (<i>Sus scrofa domesticus</i>)	2 matches
Cinnamon (<i>Cinnamomum verum</i>), chili pepper (<i>Capsicum sp</i>)	1 match each

Traditional recipes have the potential to evolve and adapt to new needs and demands. However, it is crucial to preserve those essential traits or characteristics that allow individuals to connect with a society, region, community, and, consequently, with their history (Pazos Carrillo, 2010; Del Moral, 2020). In this regard, traditional cuisine focuses on fundamental or primary ingredients, as well as certain techniques, tools, and knowledge that are vital for preserving collective identity.

In this study, it was determined that the primary vegetables and nuts used in the

preparation of *viche* include peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*), plantain balls (*Musa acuminata* × *balbisiana* ABB), sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), squash (*Cucurbita maxima*), long beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* sp), ripe plantain (*Musa acuminata* × *balbisiana* ABB o AAB), and corn (*Zea mays*); these are the most frequently mentioned. Secondary products in this category include achogcha (*Cyclanthera pedata*), green beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), bell pepper (*Capsicum annuum*), and broad bean (*Vicia faba*). Regarding proteins, the predominant one is albacore tuna (*Thunnus albacares*, *T. alalunga*),

This confirms the narrative of the matrons and cooks, who asserted that most ingredients come from locally available resources, from the *chacra* (small farm) or home gardens. This gives rise to various interpretations regarding the dish's origin, based on the obtained information and the production, biological, and cultivation characteristics of the ingredients used. One possibility is that, over time, due to the difficulty of transporting certain products and their preservation issues, people living in mountainous areas had access to most vegetables and peanuts but not to marine fish species. Consequently, they fished for other types of freshwater fish and crustaceans, such as *guariche* and river shrimp. Conversely, those living near the sea who did not have access to mountain-harvested products but had saltwater species began to create their own version of the dish, using seafood and vegetables from their home gardens.

It is likely that, since ancient times, *viche* has become popular through the exchange of products via barter and the transfer of knowledge between *cholos* (indigenous) and *montubios* (a mestizo ethnic group from the coast). This complicates the precise identification of its origin post-colonization in the province but it allows it to be recognized as a distinctly coastal dish originating from Manabí, considering the mountain species from a subtropical climate, mangroves, and the sea.

This description necessitates studying the origins of these products before the arrival of the Spaniards, which could aid in understanding the connection of *viche* with definitions associated with ancestral, traditional, typical, festive, patrimonial, and commemorative aspects. However, it is crucial to analyze these concepts first.

According to Utrera Velázquez & Jiménez Jerez (2021: 419), ancestral cuisine is linked to the culture of 'ancestors' in a specific territory, providing insight into food origins related to "*production, cooking, consumption, and preservation*". Stinson (1982), Goodman & Armelagos (1989), Cordain (2002), and Ungar (2004) state that from a temporal perspective, this cuisine refers to the diet and techniques used

by early humans and hominids (ancestors of early humans) who lived in certain regions and engaged in hunting, gathering, and early agricultural activities long before the development of civilizations. These authors also note that ingredients are natural and wild or as close to their natural state as possible, available in the environment, and preparation methods are rudimentary, utilizing techniques such as smoking, drying, and fermentation for food preservation.

Traditional cuisine, on the other hand, carries different connotations. Pazos Carrillo (2010: 28-29) proposes three fundamental characteristics of traditional cuisine: "*a) It is food with remote antecedents; b) it is tied to a specific territory or region, from which most of its products originate; and c) it consists of diverse preparations that have been passed down from generation to generation, mainly from mothers to daughters*".

Davidson (1999), Lewis (2006), Counihan & Van Esterik (2012) describe traditional cuisine as culinary practices transmitted from generation to generation as cultural heritage, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of a particular locality, revealing identity and customs with historical significance and evolutionary traits. They also mention that traditional cuisines may or may not use natural and/or processed ingredients but retain some ancient or ancestral culinary traits, such as spices, cooking methods, and certain representative and commemorative dishes for special events, rituals, and celebrations. This type of cuisine is often noted for its difficulty in easily adapting to new demands, conditions, and technological advancements but can achieve adaptation as long as it maintains a connection to its cultural legacy.

Regarding typical cuisine, Inga Aguagallo *et al.* (2022) define it temporally as culinary practices and preparations that represent the local identity of various social groups but are more frequently made today due to their adaptability to contemporary tastes, through the use of traditional ingredients and methods. It is commonly present in festive meals, daily dishes (homes and restaurants), and recipes that showcase the history, geographical origin, and

traditions of a locality (Timothy, 2015). Typical cuisine is also frequently seen in events and celebrations as part of the cultural experience of communities, promoting economic activities such as tourism (Santos Lobo, 2008; Llerena Oñate *et al.*, 2023). Thus, typical cuisine is more popular, represented in highly consumed dishes, and appreciated for both traditional and contemporary traits.

Among other types of cuisine to address in this analysis is patrimonial cuisine, which is gaining global recognition. Besides representing culinary characteristics that reflect the identity and history of peoples, its designation is attributed to official certification or recognition granted by a governmental or non-governmental body as a result of actions initiated by various social agents (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018). These include actors from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors, and the community, all aimed at identifying unique and irreplaceable traits of regional cuisines to enhance their value through patrimonial designation. For instance, in Peru, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023) has included its cuisine in the Intangible Cultural Heritage list as part of economic and social development strategies (Matta, 2011), though such designations can also be granted within a national territory by the competent body.

One of the main objectives of granting a patrimonial status to a cultural process, in this case culinary, is to protect them from changes brought about by globalization, which is erasing traditions and causing the loss of local identity characteristics. This includes drastic changes in cuisines due to the homogenization of diets, prompting strategies like the patrimonialization of cultural expressions worldwide (Contreras, 2019). However, other objectives beyond safeguarding aim to improve the quality of life for bearers through development alternatives to stimulate local economies, also enhancing the value of these resources through protection, recognition, and the creation of new socio-economic growth opportunities for regions (Matta, 2011).

Considering the different characteristics of the cuisines discussed in this study, it is necessary to review other typologies, such as festive and commemorative cuisines, as they are often related to rituals, events, beliefs, religion, customs, economy, and other significant occurrences.

The RAE (2024) defines festive as associated with or pertaining to a celebration or festival and setting aside an officially recognized period for rest due to the observance of a significant festival, rather than a regular working day, respectively.

In this context, it is necessary to analyze festive cuisine from the perspective of some researchers. Katz (2019) relates this type of cuisine to dishes prepared for festivals, and although there is a wide variety, three main types stand out: civil festivals, such as patriotic holidays, Mother's or Father's Day, and educational institution celebrations; life cycle festivals, such as birthdays, completion of a biblical mandate, wakes, etc.; and religious festivals, including Catholic celebrations and traditional pre-Hispanic festivals, such as the Day of the Dead, which also coincides with 'the end of the rains and the maize harvest', as well as Christmas celebrations. This author considers that festive cuisine may or may not be part of strictly religious rituals, as many of these preparations are also made for traditional festivities unrelated to religion, as previously described. However, its greatest representation is seen with purely spiritual factors.

Alvear *et al.* (2022) explain how indigenous and current communities in the Andean region of Ecuador have performed festive rituals as a sign of gratitude for natural and cultural resources essential for their continued existence. These rituals have become cultural manifestations expressed in traditional festivals, where cuisine is a symbol showcasing harvested products from the environment, and culinary practices to transform them into finished dishes represent identity and belonging that strengthen family and community ties.

Finally, to interpret commemorative cuisine, it is necessary to understand that commemoration

refers to the act of to honor or commemorating something or someone solemnly, typically through a formal ceremony or the erection of a monument (RAE, 2024). Ruíz Pascua (2015) describes this type of cuisine as the act of preserving collective memory and as a form of social resistance against identity loss through culinary practices, which may occur both naturally and forcibly. Salete Nery (2023) states that one way to commemorate a people's cuisine is through the creation of family recipe books, materializing social and collective memory to preserve and transmit it to future generations.

Today, there are many ways to commemorate food, some through the celebration of important dates and/or events within the territory as well as

outside it. For instance, individuals who have relocated to new national and international environments often strive to remember their culture by recreating traditional dishes and practicing culinary methods and techniques, generating a sense of nostalgia and maintaining a connection to their places of origin (Ruíz Pascua, 2015).

Based on this comprehensive set of interpretations regarding different types of cuisine, TABLE 5 presents the origin of *viche* ingredients, aiming to identify their role as a culinary cultural manifestation within the province of Manabí. The FIGURE 4 represents the percentage of the origin of *viche* ingredients by continent

TABLE 5. Origin of *viche* ingredients

Ingredient	Scientific Name	Continent	Specific Area	Stage of Introduction in the Americas
Albacore fish (from the sea)	<i>Thunnus albacares</i> , <i>T. alalunga</i>	America	Tropical and subtropical oceans (Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian)	-
Peanut	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>	America	South America (tropical zones)	-
Plantain	<i>Musa × paradisiaca</i>	Asia	Southeast Asia (New Guinea, Pacific Islands, and parts of northeastern Australia)	16th Century (around 1516)
Cassava	<i>Manihot esculenta</i>	America	South America (tropical zones)	-
Sweet Potato	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	America	Central America and South America (tropical and subtropical zones)	-
Corn (on the cob)	<i>Zea mays</i>	America	Central America and South America (Andean zone)	-
Pumpkin or squash	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>	America	Central America and South America (tropical Andean zones)	-
Long Bean	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> sp	America	Tropical areas of Asia Mesoamerica and South America	1400 BC
Achogcha	<i>Cyclanthera pedata</i>	America	South America (Andean zone)	-
Broad beans	<i>Vicia faba</i>	Europe, Africa, and Asia	Mediterranean and Southeast Asia	Early 16th Century (brought by colonizers)
Green beans	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	America	Central America and South America	-
Bell Pepper	<i>Capsicum annuum</i>	America	Central America and South America (tropical and subtropical zones)	-
Cilantro (coriander)	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Europe, Africa, and Asia	Mediterranean region and Southwest Asia	Early 16th Century (brought by colonizers)
Red Onion	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Asia	Central Asia (areas now including Iran, Pakistan, and adjacent regions)	Early 15th Century (around 1493)
Garlic	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Asia	Central Asia (areas now including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan,	Early 16th Century

Continued Table 5

			Kyrgyzstan, and parts of northeastern Iran and Afghanistan)	
Annatto (Annatto Oil)	<i>Bixa orellana</i>	America	Central America and South America (tropical zones)	-
Salt	<i>Sodium chloride</i>	Universal	Around the planet in various forms	-
Chili Pepper	<i>Capsicum sp</i>	America	Southern Mexico, Central America, and South America (mainly tropical zones of Ecuador)	-
Oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Europe, Africa, and Asia	Mediterranean region	Early 16th Century
Water	<i>H₂O (chemical formula)</i>	Universal	Around the planet in different states	-

Note: elaborated from Cartay *et al.* (2023); Zambrano Loor (2023)

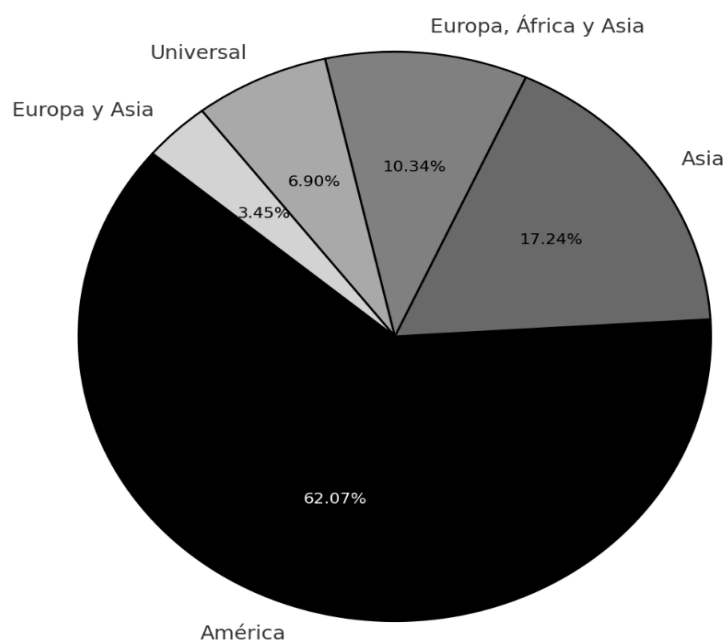


FIGURE 4. The percentage of the origin of viche ingredients by continent

The results of this analysis demonstrate that the majority of the ingredients (62,07%) used in the preparation of *viche* considered in this study originate from the Americas. However, it is also evident that there is a significant contribution from ingredients sourced from other continents. This allows for several interpretations regarding the type of cuisine represented by *viche*, taking into account the previously reviewed definitions.

According to Pazos Carrillo (2010), the interpretation of dishes, comparison of recipes,

and the origin of ingredients are not the only aspects that constitute the characteristics of culinary cultural manifestations. Other factors such as techniques, artifacts, and utensils, as well as changes and continuities, also play a role.

Regarding the culinary techniques currently applied on the American continent, Pazos Carrillo (2010) includes refrying and salting preservation as techniques introduced over time, while direct fire cooking is identified as a technique developed as part of the civilizational process

across various continents. Among these, refrying (mentioned in the INPC fiche) is a critical process in the preparation of *viche* to impart consistency and color, while salting preservation, which is no longer regularly practiced, was used to season and maintain various types of meat, including albacore tuna—a preservation method widely used before the advent of refrigeration.

Among the utensils used by traditional cooks from Manabí in the preparation of various culinary dishes, including *viche*, is the wood-fired oven, which is utilized across several continents including the Americas (Lagunes *et al.*, 2021). Other commonly used items include spoons, plates, and containers made from materials such as *Crescentia cujete* (known as the calabash tree), clay, and iron. It is important to highlight that the use of clay vessels was common in the domestic spaces of pre-Hispanic cultures (Long, 2008).

Furthermore, it is essential to specify that the most common accompaniments for *viche* include cooked rice, roasted plantains, and halved green lime, with lime juice as the beverage. This makes the dish more substantial and capable of satisfying hunger, which is why it is typically served as a single meal during lunchtime. Historically, it was also commonly accompanied by pumpkin or squash, sweet potato, hominy, rice, or plantains coladas; or, alternatively, hot chocolate, regardless of the surrounding temperatures.

This illustrates that the *viche* we know today is the result of the exchange of tangible and intangible resources between different social groups over time, making this preparation one of the most significant traditional dishes of Manabí due to its transgenerational heritage. The oldest reference to the dish among participants in the study is approximately 150 years old, suggesting it was already considered traditional at that time. Additionally, there is a record by the Italian Jesuit chronicler Mario Cicala, who described the preparation of *viche* in 1767 in Jipijapa, a municipality in the southern part of Manabí province. This serves to attest to the existence of this dish in the mid-18th century (Cicala, 1994/1771).

Moreover, it is a typical dish because it is currently frequently found on the menu of various restaurants as a tourist strategy; it is patrimonial because it is included among the cultural manifestations of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ecuador as recorded in INPC fiches; it is festive because of its significant representation for the province, being featured in local and gastronomic festival offerings, as well as in religious celebrations such as Holy Week, where it is the select dish of Manabí for fulfilling the ritual of fasting and abstinence, given that *viche* is predominantly made with fish or seafood.

Because it is part of a religious ritual and is composed of various vegetables, this dish, despite its coastal origins, shares similarities with the *fanescas*, an emblematic dish from the Sierra region with high cultural and religious value. *Fanescas* features a wide variety of vegetable and animal ingredients representing Ecuador's agricultural diversity and is primarily consumed during Holy Week.

Finally, *viche* is also a commemorative dish because, as a heritage from ancient generations, it serves to bring family members together and host visitors to recall loved ones, childhood moments, places of origin (a common practice among immigrants), relive happy times, and other aspects, thus awakening culinary memory and preserving collective memory.

Each of these meanings allows this dish to be recognized as emblematic, as described by Regalado (2019) and the participants in this study. Additionally, it has high nutritional value due to the variety of ingredients used in its preparation, which has nourished various generations alongside other culinary preparations that form part of the province's culinary corpus. Consequently, these subsistence elements adopted over time by the people of Manabí have enabled them to maintain culinary cultural manifestations that are integral to their identity.

According to Alvarado Toala *et al.* (2021), *viche* highlights macronutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, with significant contributions from micronutrients including potassium, phosphorus, and sodium. Although it is a high-

calorie dish, its caloric content falls within the range of daily dietary consumption.

The ingredients used in *viche*, which are also utilized in other culinary preparations from Manabí, have provided crucial nutritional support for the development and growth of various generations. These generations, in turn, have inherited, transmitted, and adapted culinary knowledge, integrating it as distinctive traits of cultural identity and enriching Manabí's gastronomy.

4. Conclusions

In the menus of traditional Latin American cuisines, soup occupies a prominent place. In fact, this type of preparation usually serves as a unique dish, such as *mondongo*, *fanesca*, *viche*, *ceviche*, among others.

Viche is a soup that can be considered dark and not so light, and can be classified as a stew, i.e. a soup made from a stew.

The synthesis of the most important ingredients of the Manabí food pantry can also be considered, composed of more than 57

ingredients, differentiating the species and taking into consideration the seasonings separately.

This dish represents two landscapes, the semi-arid typical of the Atlantic coast and the one that is typical of humid tropical forests, close to the mountain range, that is to say, it has characteristics from the chola and montubio cultures.

The *viche* is the oldest soup, disputing with the *encebollado*, since it was elaborated 150 years ago, according to the information coming from the traditional cooks, but there are written records that presume of its existence in the middle of the XVIII century.

Likewise, it is a democratic soup, accessible to all social classes. Its ingredients are available in the territory and are economically accessible to the majority of the population of Manabí. This also allows to give it several symbolic uses in events and important occasions, making it a festive and commemorative dish, as well as traditional, typical and patrimonial.

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