

# Food, Food, and More Food

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Brazil is known as the Melting Pot of South America and is the fifth largest country on its continent. With so many different types of people and customs, the culture of Brazil is one that is heavily influenced by different types of cuisine. Depending on where you find yourself in Brazil, the type of cuisine differs between regions. For example, the Northern region is known for its fish and root vegetables, whereas the Southeast is known for its churrasco, or Brazilian barbecue.

In Rio de Janeiro, our first stop on the trip, there were all types of food places to choose from. One type of restaurant that most people found appealing was called a kilogram. This type of restaurant has a huge buffet with all types of food and also a separate section where you can choose from all different types of meat. The meat is on rotisseries, you just point to the one you want, and the server will cut you off a generously sized portion. Another popular eating place in Rio were little sandwich stands found on many different street corners. At these



stands, you have the option of standing there and eating or taking your food to-go. (The people that work at these stands also recognize the English word “to-go”, so it is not necessary to make motions for the word!). The food found here is quite cheap and ranges from any type of sandwich to ham and cheese croissants.

Another type of food that we discovered in Rio was a cut of beef called *picanha*. When you order this meal, a heaping cut of beef comes out in slices,

and is served in a skillet with a flame right underneath it so the beef can continue to cook. It is served quite rare, so you have the choice of how you want it to be cooked. Also served with this meal is white rice, French fries, manioc flour, and pico de gallo.

After leaving Rio, our next stop was Paraty and then Sao Paulo. In Sao Paulo we made two very valuable discoveries. The first one was that Brazilians enjoy putting eggs on all types of food. Whether it is a hamburger from room service, or a side of black beans, there is always an egg included without fail.

The second discovery we made in Sao Paulo was a true churrascaria. In Brazil, churrascarias are restaurants where troops of waiters surround your table with long skewers of all different cuts of meat. The key to understanding this type of restaurant is knowing that the waiters will not start coming to your table until you have gone up to the



salad bar, which consists of everything from egg salad to sushi. Another important thing to know is not to fill up on the salad bar. Pick-and-choose from the things that you want, but make sure to save room for the pounds of beef that you will be consuming. Another highlight to this type of restaurant is the dessert. When you have finished eating, the waiter will come around with a dessert cart that includes at least 10 different Brazilian sweets. We also went to a churrascaria at our last stop, Foz do Iguacu, where Dr. Kamela found himself lurking behind a meat skewer as seen in the picture.



When we visited the Amazon we found plentiful amounts of fruit, fish, and natural herbal remedies. The indigenous people of the Amazon really believe in using all of their resources and not wasting anything; this is one of the reasons they mainly eat fish because it is so accessible from the river. The fruit found in the Amazon is completely different and unique from fruits found in other places; not to mention that the bananas there were completely different from any banana found in the States or even found in other parts of Brazil.

In the Amazonian region, when people have an upset stomach, or even worse, a stomach virus, they believe strongly in drinking natural teas. I was able to taste the tea and although it is not very appealing, it certainly does the trick. Once again, this goes to show that the people of this region have faith in their natural resources because it is the only thing that they know.

After traveling to the different regions of the country, it was much more obvious just how much the food changes. The cuisine in every region was just as appealing as the one before, and we were never left hungry. Experiencing the food of another country is one of the easiest ways to immerse yourself into the culture, and with a country such as Brazil, it is one of the best ways to understand each region of the country.