

CU 351 FOOD AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURE

IES Abroad Santiago

DESCRIPTION:

“There is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk.”

— M.F.K. Fischer, *The Gastronomical Me*

As culinary historian Massimo Montanari argues, everything related to food — from the choices made by hunter-gatherers to contemporary patterns of consumption — represents a cultural act. In this sense, Chilean and Latin American cuisine are not merely systems of nourishment, but expressions of history, identity, memory, territory, migration, and social transformation.

This interdisciplinary course combines food studies, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, environmental humanities, and contemporary history to explore food as a vehicle for cultural expression in Chile. Students will examine how Chile’s geography, indigenous traditions, colonial history, migration, globalization, and political transformations have shaped the country’s culinary identity.

Particular attention will be given to:

- Mapuche culinary traditions,
- Regional food identities,
- Chilean wine culture,
- Seafood and coastal economies,
- Food and social class,
- Food and nationalism,
- Sustainability and food sovereignty,
- Globalization and fast-food culture,
- And the emergence of contemporary Chilean gastronomy in the global culinary scene.

The course will also explore how Chilean cuisine reflects broader debates concerning cultural authenticity, memory, inequality, environmental sustainability, and national identity in contemporary Latin America.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

INSTRUCTOR: TBD

PREREQUISITES: None

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance and punctuality are mandatory for all IES Abroad classes, including course-related excursions. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. If a student misses more than 1.5 classes (for courses taught once a week) or 2.5 classes (for courses taught twice a week) in any course, the final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (for example, A- to B+) for every additional unexcused absence. Six absences in any course will result in a failing grade.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures: Mini lectures provide conceptual and historical frameworks for understanding food culture, identity, and gastronomy in Chile and Latin America.

Class Discussion: This course is discussion-based and requires active participation. Students are expected to complete readings and audiovisual materials prior to class.

Ethnographic Observation: Students will conduct field observations in markets, restaurants, public spaces, and community food environments.

Film Viewings: Documentaries and films will be analyzed as cultural texts related to food, memory, migration, identity, and globalization.

Course-Related Activities

Experiential learning activities may include:

- local markets,
- vineyards,
- seafood markets,
- Mapuche gastronomy workshops,
- food justice initiatives,
- and neighborhood food ethnographies.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation: 10%
- Food identity essay: 20% (2 parts)
- Midterm exam: 30%
- Final research assignment: Documentary production & oral defence: 40%

FOOD IDENTITY ESSAY

Part A — Food Journal: Students will maintain a seven-day food journal documenting:

- meals,
- social settings,
- emotional associations,
- consumption habits,
- cultural adaptation,
- and observations about food practices in Chile.

Students should reflect upon:

- differences between Chilean and home-country eating habits,
- social rituals around food,
- convenience vs. communal eating,

- local ingredients,
 - perceptions of Chilean cuisine,
 - and personal responses to unfamiliar foods.
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Part B — Analytical Essay: Students will write a critical essay examining how their food habits reflect:

- identity,
 - memory,
 - social class,
 - migration,
 - globalization,
 - and cultural adaptation.
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DOCUMENTARY PROJECT & ORAL DEFENCE

Students will produce a short documentary (3–5 minutes) addressing a central question such as:

“If we are what we eat, what does Chilean food reveal about Chilean society and identity?”

Possible themes may include:

- seafood culture,
- Mapuche food traditions,
- Central Valley agriculture,
- street food,
- migration and cuisine,
- wine culture,
- food inequality,
- or globalization.

Students will present and defend their documentary argument orally in class.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Students will critically analyze food as a cultural expression through four interconnected dimensions:

1. Food and identity
2. Food rituals and community formation
3. Food, power, and social structures
4. Food globalization, hybridity, and cultural exchange

Students should incorporate:

- ethnographic observation,
- scholarly sources,
- regional examples,
- and critical reflection on Chilean society.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Explain how food functions as a cultural expression;
- Analyze Chilean gastronomy through anthropological and sociological frameworks;
- Relate food to memory, identity, territory, and nationalism;
- Interpret the relationship between indigenous traditions and contemporary Chilean cuisine;
- Analyze globalization's effects on local food cultures;
- Compare regional Chilean culinary identities;
- Conduct basic ethnographic observation and cultural analysis;
- Demonstrate academic writing and critical thinking skills.

CONTENTS:

Session	Content	Required Reading
Session 1	Course Introduction: Food as Cultural Expression. -Food and culture -Anthropology of food -Course overview	• Perec, G. (2008). Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and Solid Foodstuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four. In <i>Species of space and other pieces</i> (pp.244-52). London: Penguin. (8 pages)

Session 2	Writing Ethnography: How does one conduct a Participant-Observation? Recommended watch: <i>People Like Us: Social Class in America</i> (PBS)	• Glasser, I. (2011). Field Study Methods. In <i>More than Bread: Ethnography of a Soup Kitchen</i> (pp.34-49). Tuscaloosa: University Of Alabama Press. (15 pages) • Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description. In <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> (p.3-30). New York: Basic Books. (27 pages)
Session 3	Chilean Identity, Food Symbolism & Rituals -Food as a marker of national identity -Food taboos, rituals, celebrations and symbolic meanings	• Alvear Montecino, Alejandra. (2023). Food and Heritage: Approaches from Food to the Construction of Chilean Identities. RIVAR: Revista Iberoamericana de Viticultura, Agroindustria y Ruralidad, 10(28), 101–120. Universidad de Santiago de Chile. https://doi.org/10.35588/rivar.v10i28.5443 (19 pages)
Session 4	Indigenous Food Systems and Food Sovereignty -Mapuche, Aymara and Rapa Nui food traditions - Indigenous knowledge and contemporary resistance Fieldtrip to Ruka Mapuche	• Montanari, M. (2006). The Pleasure and the Duty of Choice. In <i>Food is culture</i> (pp.59-83). New York: Columbia University Press. (24 pages) • Merino, M. E., & Pilleux, O. (2018). Food as a Cultural Practice among the Mapuche in Santiago de Chile. Language & Intercultural Communication, 18(4), 451–468. (17 pages)
Session 5	Everyday Food Culture in Chile -Bread culture -Tea culture and “La Once” -Everyday social practices around food Part A : Food Journal	• Alvear Montecino, Alejandra. (2023). Food and Heritage: Approaches from Food to the Construction of Chilean Identities. RIVAR: Revista Iberoamericana de Viticultura, Agroindustria y Ruralidad, 10(28), 101–120. Universidad de Santiago de Chile. https://doi.org/10.35588/rivar.v10i28.5443 (19 pages) • Correa Gómez, M. J., & Ramírez, V. (2025). A Reliable, Common and Bourgeois Beverage: Tea in Chilean Magazine Advertising (1902–1917). Aisthesis: Chilean Journal of Aesthetic Research, 77 (10 pages)

Session 6	Wine, Sociability and Cultural Heritage -Chilean wine culture -Food, alcohol and social rituals -Wine as national heritage Fieldtrip to Santa Rita Winery	Lacoste, P. (2005). <i>The Cultural Heritage of Chilean Wine: Historical Roots and Identity Construction</i>. <i>Universum</i>, 20(2), 44–68. (22 pages)
Session 7	Regional Foodways : Northern Chile and the Central Valley -Andean food traditions -Huaso culture -Agricultural landscapes and regional identities	Castro, V., & Hidalgo, J. (2003). <i>Andean Agriculture and Food Traditions in Northern Chile</i>. <i>Chungará: Chilean Journal of Anthropology</i>, 35(2), 181–197. (16 pages)
Session 8	Regional Foodways: Coastal Chile, Chiloé and Patagonia -Seafood economies -Island food cultures -Southern food traditions and environmental adaptation	- Montecino, S. (2011). <i>The Chilean Pot: Contributions to a Food Culture History</i> [Originally published as <i>La Olla Deleitosa: Cocinas Mestizas de Chile</i>]. Santiago: Catalonia. Selected chapters: <i>Ceviche</i> and <i>Curanto</i>. (25 pages) - Ther Ríos, F. (2011). <i>The Archipelago of Chiloé: Cultural Heritage, Food and Identity</i>. <i>Magallania</i>, 39(2), 23–36.
Session 9	Mid Term exam	
Session 10	Markets, Ferias and Street Food -Informal food economies -Urban food cultures	- Stillerman, J. (2006). <i>The Politics of Space and Culture in Santiago's Street Markets</i>. <i>Qualitative Sociology</i>, 29(4), 507–530. - Jordan, J. A. (2011). In Search of the Elusive Heirloom Tomato: Farms and Farmers's Markets, Fields and Fieldwork. In L. Coleman (Ed.), <i>Food: Ethnographic Encounters</i> (pp. 69–83). London: Berg.

	-Public spaces and social interaction Fieldtrip to Providencia Markets	
Session 11	Migration, Diversity and Chilean Cuisine -Immigration and culinary change -Hybrid food cultures -Food and multiculturalism Part B — Analytical Essay	• Stefoni, C. (2017). <i>Food, Migration and Identity: Peruvian Migration and Cultural Transformation in Santiago, Chile</i>. <i>Migraciones Internacionales</i>, 9(1), 161–188. • Tijoux, M. E. (2016). Racism and Migration in Chile: Experiences of Everyday Life. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria. (Food, Belonging and Cultural Practices chapter)
Session 12	Food, Class and the Political Economy of Food • Food inequality • Access and consumption • Food systems and economic structures	• Aguirre, P. (2017). <i>The Social Construction of Food Inequality in Latin America</i>. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ciccus. • Crovetto, M., & Uauy, R. (2014). <i>Changes in the Chilean Food System and Their Nutritional Consequences</i>. <i>Public Health Nutrition</i>, 17(1), 34–43.
Session 13	Food Nationalism, Globalization and Fast-Food Culture -Chilenidad and culinary nationalism -Global food chains - Cultural change and resistance	• Oxfam. (2022). <i>Fixing our Food: Debunking 10 Myths about the Global Food System and What Drives Hunger</i>. (35 pages) • Wilk, R. (2006). <i>Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists</i>. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
Session 14	Sustainability, Fisheries and Environmental Challenges -Environmental crisis	• Lindhom, C. (2013). You Eat What You Are: Cultivated Taste and the Pursuit of Authenticity in the Slow Food Movement. In <i>Culture of the Slow: Social Deceleration in an Accelerated World</i>. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. (31 pages) • Watson, J. L. (Ed.). (2006). <i>Golden Arches East:</i>

	-Marine resources and fisheries -Sustainable food systems	<i>McDonald's in East Asia</i> (2nd ed.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Session 15	Contemporary Chilean Gastronomy & Final Project Presentations -New Chilean cuisine -Global recognition of Chilean gastronomy -Final project presentations and discussion	Montecino, S. (2017). <i>Chile, una mesa para todos: Food, Identity and Contemporary Gastronomy</i>. Santiago: Catalonia.

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Indigenous and Sustainable Food Systems Visit
- Chilean Wine Culture and Food Pairing Workshop.
- Visit to a Contemporary Chilean Gastronomy Restaurant.
- Visit to a Traditional Market and Street Food District.

READINGS:

- Perec, G. (2008). Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and Solid Foodstuffs Ingested
- Glasser, I. (2011). Field Study Methods. In *More than Bread: Ethnography of a Soup Kitchen* (pp.34-49). Tuscaloosa: University Of Alabama Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* New York: Basic Books. by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four. In *Species of space and other pieces*.
- Alvear Montecino, Alejandra. (2023). Food and Heritage: Approaches from Food to the Construction of Chilean Identities. RIVAR: Revista Iberoamericana de Viticultura, Agroindustria y Ruralidad, 10(28), 101–120. Universidad de Santiago de Chile.
- Montanari, M. (2006). The Pleasure and the Duty of Choice. In *Food is culture* (pp.59-83). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Merino, M. E., & Pilleux, O. (2018). Food as a Cultural Practice among the Mapuche in Santiago de Chile. Language & Intercultural Communication.
- Alvear Montecino, Alejandra. (2023). Food and Heritage: Approaches from Food to the Construction of Chilean Identities. RIVAR: Revista Iberoamericana de Viticultura, Agroindustria y Ruralidad, 10(28), 101–120. Universidad de Santiago de Chile.
- Correa Gómez, M. J., & Ramírez, V. (2025). A Reliable, Common and Bourgeois Beverage: Tea in Chilean Magazine Advertising (1902–1917). Aisthesis: Chilean Journal of Aesthetic Research, 77
- Lacoste, P. (2005). *The Cultural Heritage of Chilean Wine: Historical Roots and Identity Construction*.

Universum, 20(2)

- Castro, V., & Hidalgo, J. (2003). *Andean Agriculture and Food Traditions in Northern Chile*. *Chungará: Chilean Journal of Anthropology*, 35(2)
- Montecino, S. (2011). *The Chilean Pot: Contributions to a Food Culture History* [Originally published as *La Olla Deleitosa: Cocinas Mestizas de Chile*]. Santiago: Catalonia. Selected chapters: *Ceviche* and *Curanto*.
- Ther Ríos, F. (2011). *The Archipelago of Chiloé: Cultural Heritage, Food and Identity*. *Magallania*, 39(2),
- Stillerman, J. (2006). *The Politics of Space and Culture in Santiago's Street Markets*. *Qualitative Sociology*, 29(4)
- Jordan, J. A. (2011). In Search of the Elusive Heirloom Tomato: Farms and Farmers's Markets, Fields and Fieldwork. In L. Coleman (Ed.), *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* (pp. 69–83). London: Berg.
- Stefoni, C. (2017). *Food, Migration and Identity: Peruvian Migration and Cultural Transformation in Santiago, Chile*. *Migraciones Internacionales*.
- Tijoux, M. E. (2016). Racism and Migration in Chile: Experiences of Everyday Life. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria. (Food, Belonging and Cultural Practices chapter)
- Aguirre, P. (2017). *The Social Construction of Food Inequality in Latin America*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ciccus.
- Crovetto, M., & Uauy, R. (2014). *Changes in the Chilean Food System and Their Nutritional Consequences*. *Public Health Nutrition*.
- Oxfam. (2022). *Fixing our Food: Debunking 10 Myths about the Global Food System and What Drives Hunger*. (35 pages)
- Wilk, R. (2006). *Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Lindhom, C. (2013). You Eat What You Are: Cultivated Taste and the Pursuit of Authenticity in the Slow Food
- Watson, J. L. (Ed.). (2006). *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (2nd ed.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Montecino, S. (2017). *Chile, una mesa para todos: Food, Identity and Contemporary Gastronomy*. Santiago: Catalonia.

RECOMMENDED FILMS:

- Alberdi, M. (Director). (2014). *Tea Time (La Once)*.
- Alzamora, T. (Director). (2024). *Denomination of Origin (Denominación de Origen)*.
- Arau, A. (Director). (1992). *Like Water for Chocolate*.
- Axel, G. (Director). (1987). *Babette's Feast*.
- Chester, J. (Director). (2018). *The Biggest Little Farm*.
- Gelb, D. (Director). (2011). *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*.
- Guerra, C. (Director). (2015). *Embrace of the Serpent*.
- Guzmán, P. (Director). (2015). *The Pearl Button*.
- Itami, J. (Director). (1985). *Tampopo*.
- Jorge, M. (Director). (2007). *Estômago: A Gastronomic Story*.
- Kenner, R. (Director). (2008). *Food, Inc.*
- Lee, A. (Director). (1994). *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*.
- Rawal, S. (Director). (2020). *Gather*.
- Scott, C., & Tucci, S. (Directors). (1996). *Big Night*.
- Sotomayor, D. (Director). (2012). *Thursday Till Sunday*.
- Wood, A. (Director). (2004). *Machuca*.