

Gastronomy And Culture In Firavitoba, Boyacá: Research On The Importance Of Amasijos In The Preservation Of Cultural Identity

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Abstract

The cultural identity of a community is rooted in its traditions, including folklore, arts, and religious and culinary traditions, among others. However, as time goes by, and due to the emergence of new cultural models, these have been re-signified. Particularly modern life proposes new ways of eating, which increases the likelihood of the disappearance of culinary knowledge such as the craft of the "amasijos". From this perspective, the purpose of this study was to interpret the perceptions of those who know this knowledge in the municipality of Firavitoba, Boyacá - Colombia, and based on this, to formulate guidelines to strengthen their cultural identity, to guarantee the transfer of this knowledge to future generations. This is a qualitative study, oriented from the descriptive method and framed in the ethnographic design, in which the cultural identity seen from the culinary tradition of the amasijos is taken as the unit of analysis. The research shows that the subjects, the unit of study, state that this knowledge has diminished due to different factors, which leads to the establishment of strategies that contribute to strengthening their cultural identity. For this reason, it is concluded that it is necessary to safeguard the inherited legacy so that it does not fade away and run the risk of disappearing with time.

Keywords: Dumplings, Cultural identity, culinary heritage.

Introduction

The evolution of communities, peoples and nations is linked to their cultural identity, which, as noted by Reynosa (2007), integrates the historical cultural heritage, which in turn is a changing process, as it is bequeathed from generation to generation to share traditions, beliefs, folklore and various manifestations associated with culture. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen cultural identity in such a way as to guarantee the transfer of historical cultural knowledge. According to Molano (2007), in modernism, there is the uncertainty that it may

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disappear due to the adoption of new emerging cultural manifestations, especially when heritage and cultural identity are not static elements, but entities subject to change.

Querol (2010) argues that cultural heritage as a representation of the past, present and future must be protected to preserve cultural identity since it is part of the customs and remembrances of the human being. In addition, the XXI century society, influenced by social and technological changes, limits the continuity that should be given to the transmission of this legacy. Authors such as Marín (2010), Ruiz et al. (2011), and Vilches (2018), outline that some cultural assets such as dances, celebrations and gastronomic traditions have been affected by modern currents since the lack of knowledge of society has limited their transmission to new generations.

Due to the various situations that are detrimental to the cultural heritage, and particularly the knowledge inherent to the culinary tradition of the inhabitants of Firavitoba, Boyacá, this study arises, aiming to strengthen the cultural identity from the recognition of the craft of amasijos as part of the intangible cultural heritage of this community. According to Raboso (2017), one of the first sources for preserving heritage and rooting cultural identity is knowledge since something that is not known can hardly be protected.

The situations referred to by the authors are not far from the reality faced by those who know the culinary knowledge inherent to the amasijos in the municipality of Firavitoba Boyacá since this cultural legacy has been at risk of disappearing due to social changes such as the inclusion of cutting-edge technologies and techniques, the affectation of the regulations in the food sector through laws that regulate processes, and procedures that obey the uses and traditions of the communities around their traditional cuisines. Likewise, the current trends in the consumption of low-fat and low-carbohydrate foods, the disappearance of the "sabedores" (Knowers, kind of wise men, or experts in this labor), the continuous climatic changes that affect the use of soil and water, and the difficulty in obtaining the necessary inputs for this culinary work are situations that cause high vulnerability in the continuity of the trades related to the elaboration of Amasijos in Firavitoba and therefore in the affectation of the cultural identity of this community.

Gastronomy and Cultural Identity

Throughout history, the food of each culture has been considered a symbolic system that represents its customs, in this sense, Tramontin and Gonçalves (2010) refer that culinary traditions can be considered as a factor directly linked to the cultural identity of communities, which leads people to feel rooted to the gastronomic manifestations of their place of origin. Likewise, food tradition is a factor that promotes tourism, since the variety of culinary representations generates an exchange of knowledge and know-how through which people's idiosyncrasies are strengthened.

According to Quan and Wang (2004), the fact of tasting food from a region allows the people who are part of it or foreigners to have a cultural experience that makes possible the recognition of the gastronomic manifestations derived from the cultural tradition and inherited legacy. In this sense, authors such as Cuenca (2001) and Avila and Barrado (2005) argue that culinary traditions bring with them a patrimonial heritage that allows the strengthening of cultural identity.

As Mak et al. (2012) express, it is important to take advantage of this knowledge as a source of knowledge to strengthen cultural identity, especially when in the modern world the different manifestations and emerging cultural forms have overshadowed the gastronomic authenticity of communities.

Castellón and Fontecha (2017) indicate that the use of one or another food in gastronomic preparations allows the appropriation of knowledge related to cultural identity so that gastronomy and cultural identity form a binomial through which the past, present and future of a community or population group can be recognized.

The position of the researchers allows to reflect on the importance of preserving culinary traditions as a transmitting agent of the inherited cultural heritage, therefore, this study seeks to interpret the feelings of the inhabitants of the municipality of Firavitoba, Boyacá, for the culinary traditions that shape the art of kneading as a symbolic factor of their cultural identity.

The Amasijos in Colombia: a heritage in risk of disappearing

The knowledge inherent to the culinary tradition oriented to the preparation of food with flours of different cereals, better known as "amasijos", is an ancestral legacy that has been disseminated over time. However, Velasco (2012) refers that industrialization and cultural changes have put this heritage at risk, given that technification has led to the near extinction of those who know this craft in an artisanal way, and that the migration of young people to urban centers closes the continuity of this heritage legacy, the lack of transfer of knowledge and above all the interpretation that these traditions have in the cultural identity has put the culinary art of "amasijos" on the verge of disappearance.

For Führer and Carrasco (2013), and Hurtado (2017), the art of amasijos associated with the cultural identity of some communities has undergone representative changes in the last decade, due to factors that affect this culinary work. Among them, global climate change has considerably affected cereal crops, sometimes leading to the total loss of farmers, a situation that in turn limits the development of amasijos, since the inputs for their preparation may be scarce. As a result, the sabedores (experts) of this craft and their descendants have lost interest in giving continuity to this traditional culture.

On the other hand, Estrada (2011) and Hurtado (2017), outline that globalization is the factor that has had the greatest impact on the loss of cultural identity related to the art of amasijos, since the media promote a diet in which carbohydrates are excluded, cereals such as wheat and barley that are elements used for the elaboration of amasijos. In this sense, the predominance of a fitness food preferred by young people in the global society has also had an impact on the loss of interest in the culinary art of the amasijos.

From this perspective, researchers agree that the cultural identity, of which amasijos are a part, has been affected by the new cultural forms that have emerged in the industrialized society. For this reason, it is necessary to implement actions aimed at strengthening the knowledge of those who know and, above all, guaranteeing the transmission of this patrimonial legacy to new generations.

Materials and Methods

For Hammersley and Atkinson (1994), this paradigm is oriented to interpreting phenomena or realities of a community or specific people in a holistic way, based on their qualities. Likewise, the descriptive method is integrated to detail facts arising in the research process. Regarding the design, the research is approached from ethnography, to specify aspects inherent to the

culture of the culinary art of the amasijos, because as Ellis and Bochner (2000) refer that this method allows studying the way of life of a social group or community from its beliefs, traditions, motivations and values. Consequently, through the methods integrated in the research process, it was sought to interpret the art of the amasijos, from the opinions, suggestions and arguments of the informants.

Study unit

For this research, the study unit was integrated by 6 experts in the Amasijos trade and a historian, who through their discourse made possible the interpretation of the study categories. It should be emphasized that the experts involved in the research are natives of the municipality of Firavitoba, Boyacá - Colombia, and that most of their lives have been dedicated to the culinary art of the Amasijos. Table 1 shows aspects related to these experts.

Table 1 Subjects linked to the study.

Study unit	Characteristics	Time in the dough-making (Amasijos) trade
Sabedor 1	Age: 60 years old, owner of a bakery in Tintal, his family economy revolves around the culinary art of baking.	19 years
Sabedor 2	Age: 83 years old, owner of the business Parador el Manzano.	70 years
Sabedor 3	Age: 52 years old, develops the art of kneading at home.	40 years
Sabedor 4	Age: 60 years old, works as an independent laborer, making dough for religious festivities.	50 years
Sabedor 5	Age: 68 years old, she works as a dentist, although she has professional training as a dentist, she prefers to dedicate herself to the culinary art referred to, she preferred to dedicate herself to the culinary art referred to.	52 years
Sabedor 6	Age: 40 years old, she is trained as a food engineer, which is why she oriented this profession to the art of kneading.	27 years
Historian	Age: 70 years, has been dedicated to transmitting the cultural traditions of the municipality of Firavitoba Boyacá through various publications, as historian, scribe and speaker of the municipality is linked to the association of poets and writers of the provinces of Tundama and Sugamuxi.	

Note: The table summarizes some of the characteristics of the study's sample subjects.

In general terms, most of the experts, despite their advanced age (Figure 1), continue to develop the art of the amasijos, since the new generations have not appropriated this knowledge, which in turn is leading to the extinction of these representations of the cultural identity and idiosyncrasy of the inhabitants of the municipality of Firavitoba.

Figure 1. Culinary art Sabedores (experts) of the culinary art of the amasijos linked to the studio.



Note: The figure shows that most of the savants (sabedores) are of advanced age, which in one way or another endangers the cultural traditions related to the art of amasijos.

Study Categories

Since the study is oriented from the qualitative paradigm and the ethnographic design, categories are formulated that allow understanding the reality of the impact that the art of amasijos has had on the cultural identity of the Firavitobenses, Table 2 details the operationalization of these categories.

Table 2 Operationalization of study categories

Category	Subcategory	Indicators	Technique and Instrument Data Collections
Knowledge related to the firavitobenses culinary traditions	Recognition of traditional kneadings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Techniques for the elaboration of amasijos. - Identification of raw materials used - Integration of equipment And handcrafted utensils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview (structured questionnaire) - Participant observation (systematic recording infield diaries)
Cultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of the culinary traditions associated with Firavitoban amasijos. - Risks affecting culinary cultural identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of the culinary representation in the cultural roots of the Firavitobense community. - Cultural and climatic changes - Changes in the diet and lifestyles of the new generations. - Regulations governing the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview (structured questionnaire) - Participant observation (systematic recording infield diaries) - Focus group (structured questionnaire)

activity of
traditional cuisines
in Colombia.

Note: The table presents the study categories through which the feelings of the sampled subjects are interpreted with respect to the knowledge related to the culinary tradition of the amasijos and the cultural identity of the Firavitobenses.

The study categories proposed are aimed at interpreting the discourse of the informants for the recognition of the culinary art of amasijos and the impact they have on the cultural identity of the Firavitobenses.

Stages of the research process

The research was carried out in four stages, which in turn are related to the specific objectives that guide the research process.

First stage - Analysis

This stage of the study is aimed at characterizing the role of the "sabedores" in the transmission of the culinary art of amasijos, the knowledge they possess and how these gastronomic traditions become part of their cultural identity.

Second stage - Action Plan

Based on the results of the analysis stage, this stage is oriented to establish possible actions to strengthen the cultural identity of the Firavitobenses through the appreciation and dissemination of the culinary art of the amasijos.

Third stage – Observation

This phase of the study seeks to interpret the impact of the action plan on the perpetuation and continuity of the culinary traditions associated with amasijos in the Firavitobense community.

Fourth stage – Reflection

In the final stage of the study, based on the development of the action plan and the development of the other stages of the research process, the aim is to reflect on the impact of the strategies implemented to strengthen the cultural identity of the community linked to the study.

Results The results of the study emerge from the fulfillment of the proposed objectives and the development of the stages of the methodological design, as well as the analysis of the study categories.

Diagnostic or analysis stage Specifically, in this stage the study inquired about the knowledge related to the Firavitobenses culinary traditions inherent to the art of amasijos and what they represent in the cultural identity of this community. From the analysis of the opinions, arguments and discourse of the informants, it was found that the majority of those who know the culinary art of amasijos has dedicated a large part of their lives to this work, using raw materials derived from their environment and easy accessibility, techniques inherited from a cultural legacy and equipment that are not high technology, but derived from a traditional knowledge proper to their culture, such as the use of wood ovens, grinding stones, water mills, among others.

This demonstrates the interest of those who know about the conservation of this culinary tradition, however, the cultural changes that have emerged from the global society, as

well as the natural transformations of the environment, are determined to limit the continuity of such a valuable legacy. From the informants' point of view, industrialization has become the worst enemy of their cultural legacy, because while they use their traditional techniques to develop an average production of dough, other businesses dedicated to the bakery activity, by integrating industrialized equipment and utensils, can have larger productions.

On the other hand, natural factors sometimes do not favor the *sabedores* of the culinary art of *amasijos*, since some crops such as wheat, corn, and barley, among others, do not succeed, leading them to look for these inputs in the market, a situation that affects the culinary tradition they have developed, since industrialized inputs incorporate processed or refined elements that alter the traditional preparations, and the costs of these raw materials are high, which does not allow all the *sabedores* to have access to them. Some appreciations of the informants are as follows:

Sabedor 3: The truth is that at my age, the time I have dedicated to the art of *amasijos* has led me to feel a deep love for this work, but sometimes I feel that I cannot continue with this cultural tradition because the truth is that the people who are dedicated to this art do not have any support...

Sabedor 6: Industrialization and globalization do not favor us, those of us who know the culinary art of *amasijos* in Firavitoba tend to disappear, because the conditions to continue our work are not favorable...

Sabedor 4: The new food regulations request that we change the traditional utensils used in the preparation of the *amasijos*, in my opinion, I consider that this transgresses the cultural traditions when trying to resignify the work we have done for many decades...

From the analysis of the category of knowledge related to Firavitoba's culinary traditions inherent to the *amasijos*, the knowledgeable people linked to the study indicate that their work in the municipality of Firavitoba is in danger of disappearing, due to situations resulting from globalization and climatic changes in the territory. The acquisition of raw materials for the production of *amasijos* is becoming more and more complex, and the use of modern technologies by other producers has minimized or overshadowed the work of the savants, which in turn has impacted their cultural identity, as some have left these culinary traditions to one side.

The representation of *amasijos* in the cultural identity of the inhabitants of the municipality of Firavitoba was also investigated. Based on the references of the "*sabedores*" it is interpreted that their work over time has lost importance in their community, this is due to cultural factors, including the change in diet that has occurred in recent decades, as in today's society the taste for gluten-free foods, refined sugars and fats prevails, which in turn has had a significant impact on the work of the "*amasijos*", the "*sabedores*" have had to reduce their production, given that sometimes they are unable to market it.

On the other hand, the acquisition of inputs for the elaboration of the various types of *amasijos* is complex, since climatic changes do not favor the harvest of cereals such as wheat and corn, which means that *sabedores* have to resort to the purchase of processed flours at higher costs that do not guarantee a significant profit margin. In addition to these conditions, the regulations governing the activity of traditional kitchens in Colombia are not flexible, as they require adaptations that demand costs for the *sabedores* and they cannot respond to these demands, preferring to give up their work.

Because of these situations, based on the opinions of the sample subjects, it can be established that the culinary traditions associated with the production of amasijos are threatened and at risk of disappearing, some arguments are as follows:

Historian: Social changes and food preferences have led many sabedores to stop the work to which they dedicated most of their lives; the few that remain have survived because of their deep-rooted love for the culinary art of amasijos...

Sabedor 5: In my humble business, the officials of the mayor's office forced me to make adaptations, one of them was to place false plastic walls, cover the adobe oven with steel, and change the floor and the roof, my income only allowed me to cover the oven door, given these demands I am thinking of closing my bakery...

Sabedor 1: The people of the municipality are already tired of consuming the products that we, the "sabedores de amasijos", now people prefer processed products...

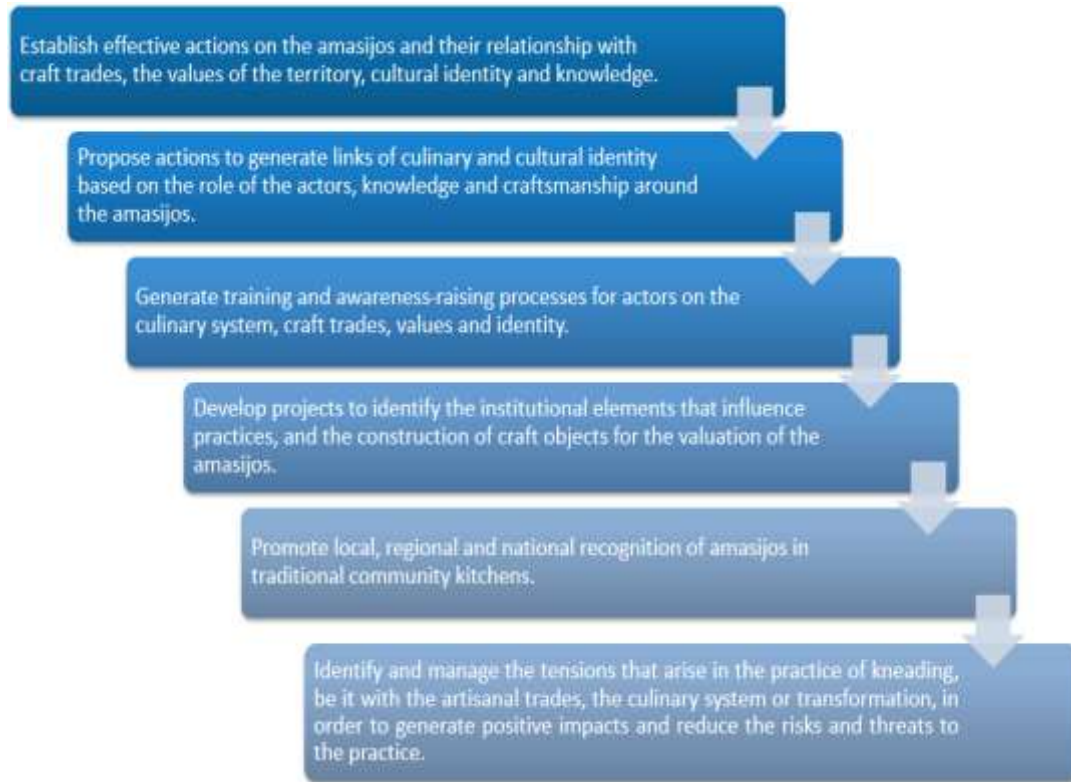
Sabedor 2: Cereal crops have diminished significantly, so we have to travel to nearby municipalities to look for flour and other elements to make our dough...

Consequently, from the analysis of the discourse of the sabedores, it is recognized that the art of kneading in the municipality of Firavitoba, Boyacá has lost representation in the culinary traditions. The community itself does not support this cultural legacy, a situation that in one way or another affects the rootedness and idiosyncrasy of the people of Firavitoba. If the situations that have put this heritage at risk this heritage will simply be remembered as something of the past with time.

Planning stage

Based on the emerging results of the diagnosis, this stage of the research process sought to contribute to strengthening the cultural identity of the Firavitobense community through the recognition and importance of amasijos as part of its culinary heritage. In this sense, a proposal was designed for the creation of a sectorial table of traditional cuisines, which had the purpose of assuming a natural space of agreement with the local community (wise men), the companies related to the sale and commercialization of amasijos, the local authorities and the academia, these actors were linked to advocate for the preservation and promotion of the traditional cuisines-amasijos in the province Sugamuxi, Boyacá, Colombia. Figure 2 shows the objectives of the sectorial roundtable.

Figure 2. Objectives of the sectorial table traditional kitchens - amasijos.



Note: The table details the objectives of the sectorial round table, which seek to promote the culinary art of the amasijos.

To fulfill the purposes of the sectorial roundtable, it was also necessary to implement other aspects, including the following:

Structure of the Sectorial Table

- Two consultative bodies were linked to the sectorial table of traditional cuisines – amasijos.
- Mesa General Council: This is the highest body of the Sectorial Table and is made up of those who have signed the Agreement of Wills.
- Executive Council: Elected at the annual meeting of the Sectorial Table and is made up of the president, delegates and planning secretary.

Justification Creation of the Sectorial Table

The Sugamuxi province's sectorial round table on traditional and traditional foods sought to:

- Have the presence of leaders-representatives of each type of stakeholder with principles of commitment to solve problems around the amasijos in collaboration.
- Generate a space to identify individual and shared interests, concerns and values around the amasijos.
- Allow actors to cross-organizational, sectorial and/or jurisdictional boundaries that previously separated them (hygiene conditions, infrastructure improvements, utensil changes, training, among others) and commit to a shared path in favor of the manifestation associated with this culinary art.

- Present process protocols and forms of organization to manage interactions of the actors over time.
- Strengthen revitalization processes for the benefit of the living heritage associated with the manifestations of traditional kitchens-amasijos in Firavitoba.

Duties of the Sectorial Table Members

- Propose management mechanisms for the work of the Sector Roundtable.
- Approval of actions in favor of traditional kitchens-amasijos.
- To provide information that allows the elaboration of work plans. Guarantee the participation of a representative to the general councils of the sectoral committee.
- To provide suitable human talent in the conformation of the technical teams for the elaboration and verification of actions in favor of the traditional kitchens-amasijos.

With the design of the sectoral roundtable, specifically sought to strengthen the rootedness of the traditions inherent to the culinary art of amasijos to safeguard this heritage and thus strengthen the idiosyncrasy of the Firavitobense community.

Stage - Observation

Once the sectoral roundtable was implemented, through the technique of participant observation, it was observed that there was an influx of inhabitants of the municipality, as well as visitors, who enjoyed the gastronomy of the amasijos made by the "sabedores". Likewise, it was observed that the demand for the products was wide, which is why a greater quantity of products should have been generated, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Implementation of a sectorial table - traditional kitchens in the municipality of



Firavitoba, Boyacá.

Note: The development of the sectoral roundtable contributed to the dissemination of the culinary art of amasijos in the municipality and helped its inhabitants to strengthen their cultural roots.

The implementation of the sectoral roundtable not only allowed the people of Firavitoba to consolidate the culinary traditions of the art of amasijos, but it also made it possible that in one way or another the sabedores could earn income for their work. It should be emphasized that the strategy to disseminate this culinary legacy was effective because, since its implementation,

the sabedores have reported that their businesses had more demand for their products, but more than marketing them, they have regained recognition for their culinary work.

Stage - Reflection/Discussion

Based on the development of the research process, it can be established that the cultural identity of the Firavitobense community for the art of kneading has been altered due to factors derived from modern society, including industrialization, lack of access to inputs by culinary experts, and food traditions that promote food free of gluten, fat and sugars. This has had a direct impact on the cultural rootedness of the sabedores, leading them to abandon the trade that has been their livelihood for several generations.

From this perspective, as Raboso (2017) notes, to care for and conserve the tangible and intangible assets that constitute the cultural heritage of a community and that in turn constitute part of its cultural identity, it is necessary to disseminate knowledge to generate awareness of care and protection. Particularly the culinary art of the amasijos, if it is not recognized by the inhabitants of the Firavitobense community themselves, it will be difficult for them to value and protect it.

Therefore, it is necessary to implement strategies aimed at the conservation of these traditions, and especially to motivate the new generations to give continuity to the work of the "sabedores". From the position of Gil (2018), historical heritage knowledge is generally oriented to the theorization of culture, but not to the understanding and interpretation of the meaning that it has and represents for the community, therefore, it is not simply a matter of the community recognizing the art of the amasijos, but rather, understanding what this tradition means and represents for its idiosyncrasy. For this reason, it is necessary to promote actions that allow citizens to participate in the care, and conservation and why not say dissemination of the culinary traditions that are part of the historical and cultural heritage of the Firavitobense community.

Conclusions

The referred conclusions derive from the fulfillment of the study objectives and allow interpreting the cultural identity of the Firavitobense community from the culinary tradition of the amasijos.

Regarding the first objective, it is concluded that as time goes by, the knowledgeable people dedicated to the culinary traditions of the amasijos, have seen their work at risk due to the socio-cultural changes that have emerged in the last decades, a situation that when prevailing can directly affect the cultural identity of the Firavitobense community.

In the opinion of the experts involved in the study, one of the factors that have the greatest impact on the work of the amasijos is the ideological change of nutrition that is presented to the new generations, since the media advertise a diet that contributes to body aesthetics, promoting the non-consumption of foods containing carbohydrates, fats and sugars, which coincidentally are part of the inputs necessary for the production of amasijos. On the other hand, industrialization, with the use of state-of-the-art technology, has allowed the work of bakers to be done in less time, a situation that undermines the work of connoisseurs, since they cannot compete with advanced tools, given that their culinary work is carried out with artisanal techniques and knowledge.

About the second objective, it is concluded that the implementation of strategies aimed at the recognition and dissemination of the culinary art of the *amasijos* in the municipality of Firavitoba Boyacá may be the right path to preserve this cultural legacy.

Specifically, the creation of the sectoral roundtable aimed at disseminating the culinary art of the *amasijos* connoisseurs allowed the community to appropriate the knowledge inherent to these traditions, thus strengthening their cultural identity and rooting their sense of belonging in their community. Therefore, based on the positive results emerging from this cultural dissemination strategy, it can be concluded that it is necessary to continue implementing actions that contribute to strengthening the culinary traditions in the municipality so that this knowledge can be transmitted to new generations to ensure its continuity.

Finally, for the third objective, it is concluded that the strengthening of cultural identity should be based on the recognition of the cultural traditions that are part of a community, and more than that, the ability to the community, and more than that, the capacity of interpretation and meaning that the inhabitants can give to strengthen their idiosyncrasy.

From the analysis and interpretation of the appreciations and arguments of the informants, it is clear that the lack of knowledge of the culinary art of the *amasijos* in the municipality of Firavitoba Boyacá by the inhabitants has led to the loss of this cultural tradition as time goes by, it is not enough that the community recognizes the *sabedores*, but that they value their work and recognize the meaning that this has in their cultural identity. Therefore, the study allows establishing the need to promote actions that contribute to strengthening the cultural roots from the appropriation of the diverse traditions and cultural representations of the community, for the specific case to give the value that deserves the art of the *amasijos* in the municipality of Firavitoba and to recognize it as a representative element of its identity.

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