



BEYOND THE PLATE

A BRAZILIAN COOK BOOK
WITH RECIPES AND ROOTS

GABRIELA SILVEIRA

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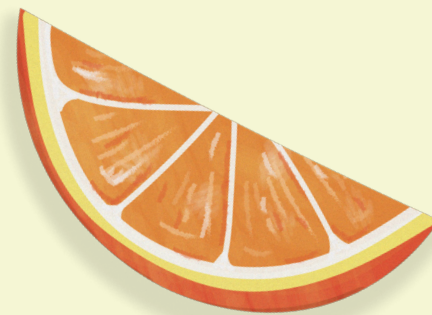
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Explaining the flavors of Brazil and the history that created them.

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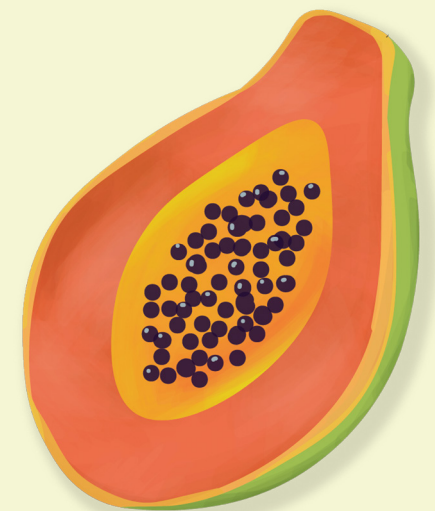
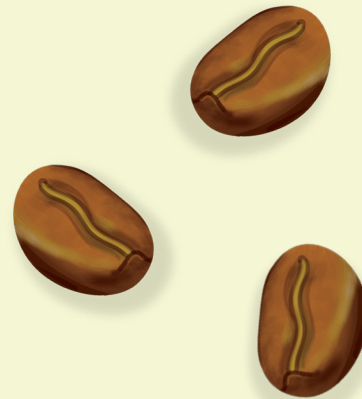
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INTRODUCTION

As a Brazilian–American, I've sometimes felt a little disconnected from my roots. But food has always been the bridge that brings me closer to my heritage. Growing up, my parents made Brazilian meals almost every night, filling our home with the flavors they grew up with. My dad especially loved to cook—he owned a breakfast spot when I was younger and worked many cooking jobs over the years. Within our family, he was known for his food, and watching him in the kitchen is how I learned to cook.

Creating this cookbook is my way of sharing that connection. I wanted others to experience the comfort, richness, and joy of Brazilian cuisine. At first, I only really knew the dishes from the region my parents are from—Minas Gerais, in the Southeast—because that's what I grew up eating. But as I got older, I realized there was so much more to Brazilian food than what I knew. Each region has its own history, its own ingredients, and its own flavors shaped



by Indigenous traditions, African influence, and waves of immigrant cultures.

This book is my journey to understand those stories. I wanted not only to share recipes, but also to explore how Brazil's diverse backgrounds shaped its cuisine. By learning about each region's history and the dishes that came from it, I feel more connected to my heritage—and I hope this cookbook helps others feel that connection too.

Brazilian cuisine is a fusion of Indigenous, African, and Portuguese food traditions, shaped by the country's diverse landscapes and regional cultures. At its core, it's defined by fresh ingredients like cassava, beans, rice, tropical fruits, and a wide variety of meats and seafood. Over centuries, each culture contributed something essential — Indigenous peoples introduced staples like cassava and native fruits; Africans brought new flavors, seasonings, and cooking techniques; and the Portuguese added wheat, dairy, sugar, and many of the stews and sweets that became classics.

The result is a cuisine that's rich, colorful, and incredibly diverse. Every region has its own identity: the Amazon uses rainforest ingredients; the Northeast is known for African-influenced dishes; the Southeast blends colonial and immigrant foodways; the South reflects European and gaucho traditions; and the Central-West highlights Indigenous and frontier flavors. Together, they form a cuisine that is bold, comforting, rooted in history, and deeply connected to the land and people of Brazil.



**"SACO VAZIO NÃO
PARA EM PÉ."**

"An empty bag won't stand" – A Portuguese saying used to teach children the importance of a good, filling meal.

NORTHERN BRAZIL

THE AMAZON





HISTORY OF NORTHERN BRAZIL

Northern Brazil's history and food are closely linked to its Indigenous heritage and Portuguese colonization. Long before Europeans arrived, Indigenous peoples grew and used local ingredients like cassava, açai, and tropical fruits. When the Portuguese came, they introduced new cooking methods and ingredients that blended with native traditions. This mix created dishes such as tacacá, pato no tucupi, and maniçoba, which use fish, cassava, and regional herbs. Today, Northern Brazilian cuisine still reflects its history, combining native ingredients and colonial influences into a rich, distinctive food culture.



Açaí

A deep-purple berry from the Amazon rainforest. Once eaten fresh or made into a thick pulp, it's now enjoyed across Brazil in smoothies, bowls, and desserts for its rich flavor and antioxidant boost.

AÇAÍ

AA-SAA-EE (SMOOTHIE BOWL)

INGREDIENTS

1-2 pack of frozen açai pulp

1 frozen banana

1 splash of coconut water/
Almond milk

5 teaspoon Xarope de Guaraná
(guarana syrup)/Agave/Cane
Sugar/Honey

1 handful granola

Powdered milk (Leitinho)

Condensed milk

DIRECTIONS

1. Place a frozen banana in your blender with your sweetener of choice, and a splash of liquid (I use almond milk)- blend together.
2. Break frozen packets of frozen Açai pulp and toss into blender.
3. Pour the mixture into a bowl

- and top with sliced fruit and a handful of granola.
4. Ready to eat in under 10 minutes! Enjoy. P.S. If you want to get really decadent (and don't need to count calories,) pour a little bit of condensed milk and powdered milk on top before serving!

RECIPE TIPS

- I use two fragments of açai pulp to create a really creamy, sorbet-like texture. If you choose to use one, I would make sure not to use too much liquid in the above step so it stays thick!



1 SERVING



1 MIN PREP



8 MIN COOK
TIME



Tacacá

A traditional Amazonian soup made with tucupi broth, jambu, and shrimp. It originated with Indigenous Tukano and Nheengatu peoples and is still sold today by street vendors across northern Brazil.

TACACÁ

TAH-KAH-KAH (SPICY SHRIMP AND MANIÖC BROTH SOUP)



1 SERVING

INGREDIENTS

2 cups tucupi (fermented manioc broth)

1 cup jambu leaves (or substitute with baby spinach + pinch of Szechuan pepper for effect)

1 cup cooked shrimp, cleaned

2–3 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon tapioca gum (goma de tapioca)

1–2 malagueta peppers (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat tucupi with garlic and malagueta until simmering. Then add salt.
2. Blanch jambu (or spinach substitute) until tender.
3. In a bowl, add cooked shrimp and jambu.
4. Stir tapioca gum into the hot tucupi until slightly thickened, then pour the hot broth over the shrimp and greens.
5. Serve immediately.



1 MIN PREP

RECIPE TIPS

- the tucupi cannot be consumed in its natural state, as it can be highly poisonous
- Traditional tacacá is served very hot in a gourd bowl (cuia).
- Don't boil jambu too long—its tingling effect fades.
- Tucupi is naturally acidic; add a pinch of salt or a splash of water to balance the flavor.



8 MIN COOK TIME

NORTH EAST BRAZIL

THE CULTURE AND COAST





HISTORY OF NORTHEAST BRAZIL

The Northeast of Brazil has a rich culinary history shaped by Indigenous peoples, African heritage, and Portuguese colonization. Indigenous groups contributed staples like manioc, tropical fruits, and native seafood. With the arrival of the Portuguese and the rise of sugar plantations, African peoples brought over during slavery introduced new ingredients and techniques, like dendê oil, coconut milk, and spicy seasonings, that became central to the region's cuisine. This blend created the Northeast's bold, vibrant food traditions, seen in dishes like moqueca baiana, acarajé, and vatapá, which reflect centuries of cultural exchange along Brazil's Atlantic coast.





Moqueca

A traditional Brazilian fish stew. Its roots come from Indigenous cooking techniques blended with African influences brought to Bahia. It's one of Brazil's most iconic coastal dishes.

MOQUECA

MO-KEH-KAH (SEAFOOD STEW)



4-6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 yellow onion
- 1 red and orange bell pepper
- 2 vine-ripened tomatoes
- 1/2 small bunch fresh cilantro
- 2 pounds skinless cod
- 2 tablespoons dendê oil (a.k.a. red palm oil)
- 1 can full-fat coconut milk
- 1 cup seafood stock

DIRECTIONS

1. Prep by mincing garlic, chopping onion, peppers, tomatoes, lime (zest/juice + wedges), and cilantro. Season the fish with salt.
2. Heat olive and dendê oil in a pot. Sauté garlic and onion 3 minutes, then add peppers (and cayenne) for 3 more.
3. Add tomatoes and cook until slightly reduced. Stir in lime zest/juice, salt, coconut milk, and seafood stock. Simmer 5 minutes. Add fish, submerge gently, cover, and cook about 5 minutes until just done. Stir in half the cilantro.

RECIPE TIPS

- When you cook moqueca, the traditional pot used is called a panelas de barro — a Brazilian clay pot made in Espírito Santo.
- Serve with white rice and top off with cilantro and lime wedges



20 MIN PREP



25 MIN COOK TIME



Acarajé

A famous Afro-Brazilian street food from Bahia. It comes from West African traditions brought by enslaved Yoruba people and remains an important dish of Candomblé culture.

ACARAJÉ

AH-KAH-RAH-JAY (BLACK-EYED PEA AND SHRIMP FRITTERS)



6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups black-eyed peas,
soaked

1 small onion

Salt and black pepper, to taste

1-2 tablespoons of flour

Dendê oil (palm oil) for frying

1 cup small shrimp

1 teaspoon chile powder

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook sliced onion in oil with salt and chile powder until soft and golden. Add shrimp and cook until pink; season and set aside.
2. Drain black-eyed peas and blend with onion, garlic, and chile until smooth, adding a little water if needed. Mix in flour until the batter can hold its shape. Form into 15 balls or ovals.
3. Heat palm oil (or vegetable oil) and fry fritters until browned.
4. Split the fritters and fill with the shrimp-onion mixture. Serve warm.



30 MIN PREP



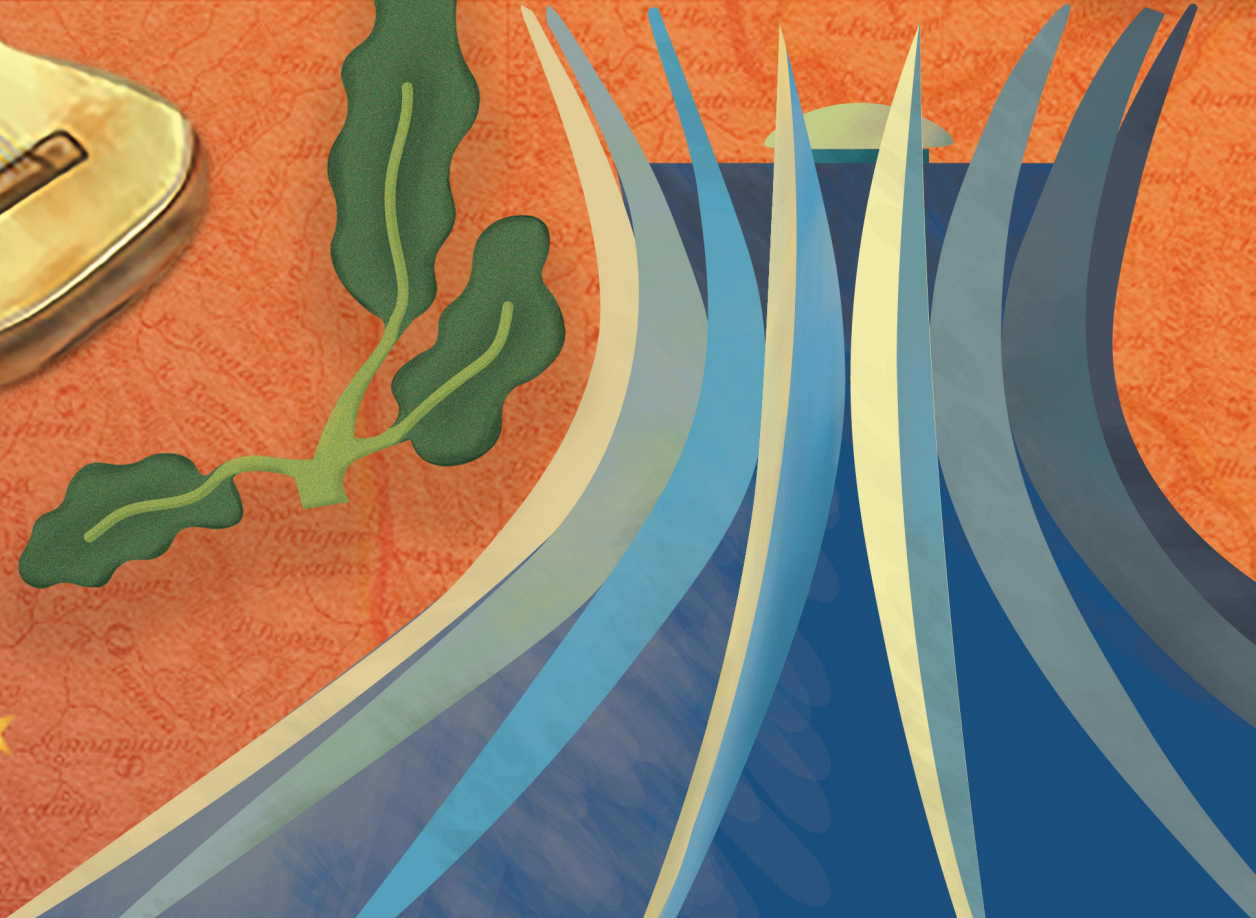
40 MIN COOK
TIME

RECIPE TIPS

- Batter should be airy, not runny whip it briefly before frying if it settles.
- Serve immediately for the best texture.

CENTRAL WEST BRAZIL

THE HEARTLAND





HISTORY OF CENTRAL WEST BRAZIL

The Central-West region of Brazil, home to Goiás, Mato Grosso, and the Pantanal, has a food culture shaped by Indigenous peoples, cattle ranching, and the region's vast rivers. Indigenous groups first used local ingredients like cassava, pequi, and freshwater fish, which remain essential today. When Portuguese settlers and later cattle ranchers arrived, they introduced new cooking methods and ingredients, blending with Indigenous traditions. This mix created the region's distinct cuisine, known for hearty rice dishes, pequi-flavored foods, and freshwater fish stews that reflect both the land and its long history of cultural blending.



Pintado ao Molho

A classic dish, especially the Pantanal region. It features pintado (a local freshwater catfish). It reflects the region's river-focused food culture and Indigenous influences.

PINTADO AO MOLHO

PEEN-TAH-DOH OW MOH-LYOO (PINTADO FISH IN RICH SAUCE)



4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs pintado (or other firm catfish), cut into pieces

1 onion, sliced

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 tomato, chopped

1 bell pepper, sliced

1 cup coconut milk

1–2 tbsp olive oil

Salt & pepper to taste

Fresh cilantro or parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the fish with salt and pepper.
2. Sauté onion, garlic, and bell pepper until soft.
3. Add tomato and cook until it breaks down.
4. Stir in coconut milk and bring to a gentle simmer.
5. Add the fish, cover, and cook until just tender.
6. Finish with fresh herbs.



15 MIN PREP



25 MIN COOK TIME

RECIPE TIPS

- Use firm freshwater fish so it holds together.
- Simmer gently—boiling can make the fish tough.
- Add herbs at the end to keep the flavor bright.
- Serve with rice or pirão (yuca flour cooked with broth).



Arroz com Pequi

Especially popular in Goiás and Minas Gerais. Made with the fragrant, earthy pequi fruit, it's a regional staple with Indigenous origins and is known for its bold aroma and unique flavor.

ARROZ COM PEQUI

AH-HOHS KOHM PEH-KEE (RICE WITH PEQUI)



4-6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1–2 cups fresh or preserved pequi

2 cups rice

1 onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 tbsp oil or butter

4 cups water or broth

Salt to taste

Fresh parsley or cilantro (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil and sauté onion and garlic.
2. Add pequi and cook briefly to release aroma.
3. Stir in rice and toast lightly.
4. Add water/broth and salt, then cook until rice is tender and infused with the pequi flavor.
5. Finish with herbs if desired.



10 MIN PREP

RECIPE TIPS

- Do not bite into pequi seeds — they have sharp inner spines.
- Use broth instead of water for richer flavor.
- Let the rice rest 5 minutes before fluffing to intensify the aroma.
- Pequi has a strong taste—use more or less depending on preference



25 MIN COOK TIME



HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST BRAZIL

Southeast Brazil, home to states like São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo, became one of the most developed regions in the country due to early colonial settlement and economic growth. During the 18th century, the discovery of gold and diamonds in Minas Gerais attracted Portuguese settlers and African slaves, shaping the region's culture and cuisine. Later, waves of European and Japanese immigrants arrived, especially in São Paulo, bringing new ingredients and cooking techniques. These influences blended with Indigenous and African traditions, creating a diverse food culture. Dishes like feijoada, pão de queijo, and virado à paulista reflect this mix of Portuguese stews, African flavors, and local ingredients such as beans, manioc, and cheese.



Pão de Queijo

A famous cheese bread from Minas Gerais, with a chewy, airy texture and lots of cheese. It originated from Indigenous cassava traditions combined with dairy brought by Portuguese settlers.

PÃO DE QUEIJO

POW-DU-KEH-ZO (CHEESE BREAD)



4-6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups tapioca starch

1 cup milk

1/4 cup oil or butter

1–1 1/2 cups grated cheese
(Minas, parmesan, or
mozzarella mix)

1 egg

1 tsp salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the milk, oil, and salt in a small saucepan until it reaches a gentle boil.
2. Pour the hot liquid over the tapioca starch in a large bowl and stir until the mixture comes together.
3. Allow to cool briefly, then add the eggs and grated cheese.
4. Knead the dough until smooth and uniform.
5. Shape the dough into small balls and arrange them on a lined baking sheet, leaving space between each.
6. Bake at 375°F for 22 minutes



10 MIN PREP



22 MIN COOK
TIME

RECIPE TIPS

- Dough should feel slightly sticky—add a little milk or starch to adjust.
- Using a mix of cheeses gives the best flavor.
- Bake immediately; dough doesn't hold well unbaked.
- Great to freeze after shaping—just bake from frozen.



Feijoada

Iconic black-bean stew, traditionally made with pork and slow-cooked to create a rich flavor. Its origins trace back to Portuguese stews and Afro-Brazilian cooking traditions.

FELJOADA

FAY-JOW-AA-DAH (BLACK BEAN & MEAT STEW)



6-8 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups dried black beans
(soaked overnight)

1 lb pork shoulder, cut into
chunks

6 oz bacon, chopped

1-2 smoked sausages (linguiça
or kielbasa), sliced

1 onion, diced

4 cloves garlic, mince

2 bay leaves

Water or broth

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook bacon in a large pot; add pork shoulder and brown.
2. Add sausage, onion, and garlic; sauté a few minutes.
3. Add soaked beans, bay leaves, and enough water/broth to cover.
4. Simmer 2-3 hours until beans are soft and stew is thick.
5. Season with salt + pepper, adjusting liquid if needed.



20 MIN PREP

RECIPE TIPS

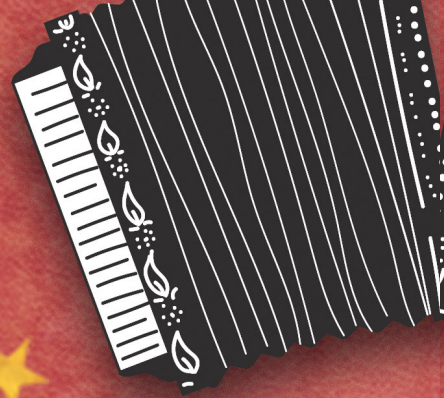
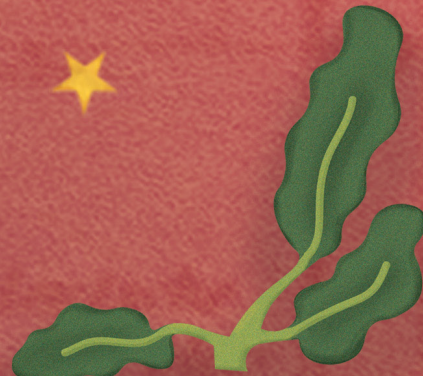
- Best to cook on dutch oven or large heavy pot
- Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.
- If it gets too thick, add a splash of water.
- Serve with rice, farofa, and orange slices for the classic Brazilian combo.



2-3 HRS. COOK
TIME

SOUTHERN BRAZIL

THE LAND OF THE GAÚCHOS





HISTORY OF SOUTHERN BRAZIL

The Southern region of Brazil was shaped by Indigenous peoples, Portuguese settlers, and large waves of European immigrants, especially Germans, Italians, and Poles, who arrived in the 19th century. These groups brought farming traditions, wheat-based foods, sausages, cheeses, and vineyard cultures that blended with local ingredients from the pampas and coast. The region's gaucho cattle-ranching heritage also influenced its cuisine, giving rise to dishes like churrasco and hearty stews. Together, these influences created a cuisine known for grilled meats, European-style breads and pastries, and comforting, rustic flavors rooted in both immigrant traditions and southern Brazil's rural landscape.



Churrasco

Brazil's traditional style of grilling, rooted in southern Brazilian gauchos. It's all about simple seasoning, open-fire cooking, and letting high-quality meat shine. Today, it's a staple of family gatherings.

CHURRASCO

CHU-HA-SKO (BRAZILIAN BARBEQUE)



4-6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2–3 lbs beef cuts (picanha, flank steak, or sirloin)

Coarse salt (sal grosso)

Optional: garlic, black pepper, chimichurri for serving

DIRECTIONS

1. Season meat generously with coarse salt (and optional garlic/pepper).
2. Heat grill on high.
3. Grill meat 5–8 minutes per side, depending on thickness and doneness.
4. Make sure to cook fat as well on the grill
5. Rest 5–10 minutes, then slice against the grain.



5 MIN PREP



5-8 MIN COOK TIME

RECIPE TIPS

- Don't over-season—traditional churrasco is mostly salt.
- Keep the grill hot for a good crust.
- Serve with farofa, vinaigrette salsa, or chimichurri.



Cuca

A traditional Brazilian cake inspired by German immigrants in southern Brazil. It's known for its soft, buttery base topped with a sweet, crumbly streusel. Often made with bananas or other fruits.

CUCA

KOO-KAH (SWEET GERMAN STYLE BREAD)



8-10 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour

1 cup sugar

2 eggs

1 cup milk

4 tbsp butter, melted

1 tbsp baking powder

1 tsp vanilla

Streusel Topping:

1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, 4 tbsp cold butter, 1 tsp cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix cake ingredients until smooth; pour into a greased pan. Add bananas on top (if using).
3. Mix streusel with fingers until crumbly; sprinkle over batter.
4. Bake 35–45 minutes, or until

golden and a toothpick comes out clean.



15 MIN PREP

RECIPE TIPS

- Don't overmix the cake—keep it light and fluffy.
- Add fruits like apples or guava for variation.
- Let cool slightly before slicing so the topping sets.



1 HR COOK TIME

"FEIJOADA WITHOUT FRIENDS IS
JUST BEANS IN A POT."

EXPLORE RECIPES FROM THE FIVE REGIONS OF BRAZIL AND DISCOVER
THE UNIQUE ORIGINS, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES
BEHIND EACH REGION. JOURNEY THROUGH THE FLAVORS THAT DEFINE
BRAZIL'S DIVERSE CULINARY LANDSCAPE.