

## The mates of the MAP

A heritage that worships the most Creole of the customs

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### National Mate Day

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November 30th is the National Mate Day in Argentina. It was chosen to celebrate the birth date of Andrés Guacurarí and Artigas who was the first indigenous Argentine governor of the province of Misiones who promoted the production and distribution of yerba mate. Known as Andresito, he was a Guaraní<sup>1</sup>. He was the only indigenous governor throughout Argentine history. Andrés

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<sup>1</sup> A member of a South American people of Paraguay and adjacent regions

Guacurarí y Artigas was born in São Tomé on November 30, 1778 and died in Rio de Janeiro in 1821. He administrated Misiones Province between 1811 and 1821. He protected Guarani people encouraged and strengthened the feeling of rebellion in the town to which he belonged. He served heroic services to the federal cause following José Gervasio de Artigas. In 1816 Andresito defeated the Portuguese in Apostles and San Carlos, thus halting the Portuguese-Brazilian invasion of Misiones and Corrientes.

Carlos G. Daws Creole collection

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Most of mates and utensils to drink it that nowadays are part of the heritage of the José Hernández Folk Art Museum were donated by the Gauchesco Family Museum of Carlos G. Daws (1870-1947) to the Municipality of Buenos Aires in 1949. Carlos had gathered in his house - museum at 3071 Valentín Gómez St.(Buenos Aires city) about 400 mates, 280 of which were of silver, some with decorative details in gold, the rest of pumpkin, bone, pottery and china. Apart from his great collection of mates, he counted with traditional equipment of gauchos and their horses such as of *aperos*<sup>2</sup>.

Carlos proudly displayed his collection of silver mates, but he always told everyone that when he drank mate he always chose a simple gourd.

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<sup>2</sup> (Latin America) harness, saddle

## Mates in the Gauchesco Family Museum

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Carlos Daws and his wife Ernesta Mezzadra displayed very tightly their collection of silverware in numerous showcases: mates with their straws, arranged according to time and region, the *yerberas*<sup>3</sup> and sugar bowls, harrows, spurs, whips, knives, brakes, *straps*, *safety fasteners*, etc. The shelves of the cabinets were full of several objects: hundreds of glasses from *pulperias*<sup>4</sup>, bottles of gin, a collection of blunderbusses, more than a hundred *boleadoras*<sup>5</sup>, iron kettles and boilers that gauchos carried on to drink mate.

## Guaraní gourd

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According to some chronicles of the Conquest of America, the gourd, of the *Lagenaria Vulgaris*, a climbing plant, was the first container in which mate was drunken. Guaraní people called it "caiguá" and in it, they drank the infusion obtained from the yerba (*Ilex paraguariensis*) using the teeth as a filter. They believed that the yerba, which they called "caa", was a gift from the God Tupá that allowed them to obtain the necessary energy to cope better with the long trips through the jungle. In 18th century mate went to Peru, and the gourd is called with a Quechua<sup>6</sup> term "mati" from which it derived "mate", which is the one that prevails in the Rio de la Plata. Despite the great variety of containers with which mate is

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<sup>3</sup> vessel where the supply of yerba for daily use is kept

<sup>4</sup> drinking shop

<sup>5</sup> balls of wood or stone as a weapon

<sup>6</sup> the language spoken by the Incas

drunken, many mate drinkers, nowadays, prefer the gourd rather than another.

#### MATE

Gourd with handle, the orifice is covered with chiselled silver  
Buenos Aires. 19th Century.

#### MATE

Gourd. Base of aluminium and ribbons. Buenos Aires. 20th Century.  
MAP Collection.

#### MATE

Gourd with silver and gold initials. MAP Collection.

#### MATE

Gourd with gold ferrule. National coat of arms of South America  
countries are carved

Paraguayan mate

Globular, luxury but never simple

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It is a gourd whose globular shape was achieved by tying the fruit with straps when it was still in the plant (*Lagenaria siceraria*). They have gold or silver ferrule on the embouchure and a cap of the same metal on the tip of the handle, called tail. The most luxurious ones have gold or silver ribbons in the groove left by the strap. This

mate comes from Paraguay and from there, it went to the Argentine northwest and it was used between the 18th and 19th centuries.

### A brief history

The plant used to make yerba mate, *Ilex paraguariensis*, is native to the subtropical and temperate regions of South America, Argentina, Bolivia, southern Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay. It is believed that this plant was already consumed by Guarani people, but the Spaniards were the first who recorded their collection and consumption in a particular place: the Guayrá located in what today is the eastern region of Paraguay. The city of Asunción was the first center from where yerba was exported to more than 70 cities in South America. In 1610 the Inquisition of Lima banned this "clear suggestion of the devil", and natives were punished with 100 lashings. Spaniards, for its part, should pay 100 pesos of fine in case of consuming or commercializing yerba.

In the "History of the province of Paraguay belonged to Jesus Mission" in 1673, the priest Nicolás del Techo subscribes: "The yerba has many virtues, both returns the dream and the same time it keeps drinkers awake; stimulates and promotes digestion, gives forces, infuses joy and cures several diseases. "

Twenty years later, yerba became legal again and it would be used by the Jesuits who learned to cultivate it and thus, it came to be the economic base of its territorial expansion, developing a quasi-monopoly of the marketing of yerba mate.

Picture of the jesuit Florian Paucke (1719-1780) about honey harvest in the Mission.

### Boilers and kettles

They can be made of iron, copper or silver. But be careful because water should not boil for mate

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In 18th century when Spaniards founded the city of Asunción (Paraguay), they quickly adopted the custom of the Guarani people to drink mate, however, they introduced some significant changes in the utensils to drink the infusion. Part of the gourd was covered with silver and the natural straw was replaced by other of metal. The pottery bowl used for Guarani people to heat the water was replaced by metal containers.

Thus, the copper boiler appeared, it came from Cataluña (Spain). They were imported and had great demand, since they were perfect to *cebar*<sup>7</sup> mate. In 1879 when José Hernández hired Carlos Clérice (1863 – 1908) to illustrate the epic poem "*La vuelta de Martín Fierro*" told him how to represent the boiler and the way that the gaucho carried it. The drawing of Hernández is exactly the same as the boiler belonged to Carlos G. Daws collection and that nowadays is part of MAP collection.

Copper boilers also came from Belgium and they were originally used to heat chocolate. Gaucho adopted it because of its shape, they were more suitable to carry on the horse.

Boiler. Copper. Buenos Aires. 19th century. MAP Collection

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<sup>7</sup> pouring hot water only near the straw

When mate is adopted by well-to-do families of the city, it is dressed in silver and the kettle that was firstly of iron or copper was turned into a luxury object designed by master silversmiths. The evolutionary line between the primitive boiler and the current kettle progressively passed from straight to conical; a little chain was added to the cover. Peruvian stovepipe is the most curious artifact, it had a container in the base to which embers were added to keep the water warm. It was the precursor of the thermos we use today.

According to Jesuit sources, Guarani drank mate with warm water. Spaniards and creole used water hotter as nowadays. The water should not be warm or boiled: to drink a good mate, the temperature of water should be between 70 to 80 ° C. In Chile the kettle is called teapot, in Uruguay boiler. Throughout the years mates and silver kettles have turned into ornaments among bourgeoisie families. But in the countryside, boilers and kettles made of copper and cast iron kept on until the 20th century, such as those that are part of the Creole collection of this museum.

Mate of *guampa* or horn: the unbreakable mate

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With cattle, deer and goat horns the gaucho made knives, stirrups, combs, cutlery and containers to drink mate.

From very remote times, worldwide, bones, hooves and antlers of animals were hollowed out by craftsmen to satisfy practical demands because of their abundance and natural condition - solid

and light. In Argentina these kind of pieces were used to make mates, stirrups, spoons, knives handles, buttons, ashtrays, riding ropes, etc. The bone of the horns was used because of its hardness and brightness provided by a layer of keratin that covers it. In order to cultivate the land, paddles of cow or mare were used to supply the hoe and the plow, even though they were worn out faster than iron, they could be replaced as many times as necessary.

### *Chifles, chambaos and mates*

*The chifle* was the container made of horn, antler, *guampa* or large blade of bovine that dry and clean was used in the campaign to contain liquids, mainly water or cane, to quench gaucho's thirst in rural jobs or during travel.

The *chifle* was essential for travelling long distances, while the rider took it among the tool, the walker used it hanging from the neck or shoulder as long weapons are carried.

Peru was the main importer of yerba mate in the 19th century. Ricardo Palma, the Peruvian traditionalist, says that in the city of Huamanga, in the colonial times "meetings started at 7.00 pm, friends were received with mate of Paraguay herbs, replacing the coffee of our grandparents". Peruvian traditions. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1983, volume 4, page 321). A custom that has gradually been lost and nowadays very few people drink mate in Perú.

It had a wooden or silver lid to close it. Some were luxurious pieces in which the horn had complex engravings or pyrographed

inscriptions, with silver hoops and endings, which were used to hold the leather strips with which it was attached to the native saddle. San Martín<sup>8</sup> (liberator of South American countries) whose white chifles from Chile and Peru campaigns are exhibited in the National Historical Museum of Buenos Aires, controlled that they were always full of water when he throughout the crossing of the Andes.

The chambao, younger brother of the chifle, was used as a glass for which the horn was cut in half keeping a base. It could have a handle or a support to be used on a table. As a traveling utensil, maybe it had a ring on one side to hold him on the native saddle. The gaucho from Rio de la Plata used the leather and bone of the cattle to replace industrial objects which were difficult to find in the countryside. With the horns of cattle, deer and goats he made knives, stirrups, combs, cutlery and containers to drink mate.

The mate of herdsmen

The term *guampa*<sup>9</sup> was used in rural areas of Argentina, Paraguay, Chile and Uruguay, the origin of the word is Quechua and means horn. Carlos RaulRisso says "It can be said that in the cities in colonial times and later on, the use of gourd both the simplest ones and those ornamented with silver prevailed. As well as, silver, chinaware and wood mates can be used; while in rural areas, gourd and horn predominated.

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<sup>8</sup>Liberator of South American countries

<sup>9</sup> Mate made of horn

Mate of guampa is the twin brother of the chambao. The luxury ones have rings, mouthpieces and silver base. In Paraguay the mate of *guampa* is the *tereré*, its national drink, instead of hot water it is drunk with cold water, almost frozen and aromatic herbs are added to the yerba. The simplest pieces have well-polished bone and often have chiseled motifs made with a knife.

The mate of *guampa* or horn is also known as the mate of the herdsmen, since its lifetime is longer than those of gourd.

Gauchos also used the bones of animal legs, using its *caracú* (bone marrow) - food rich in proteins - to make the container to drink mate. The cow hoe mate is seen today in regional craft stores. Would it have also been invented in the countryside? It would not be weird since there, all was scarce, except for gaucho's imagination, who managed with everything they had at hand.

Argentina is the main world producer of yerba mate. It is grown only in Misiones and northeast of Corrientes due to the weather and the red soil. According to the data registered, it was exported to Siria (22,563 tons) and to Chile (4038 tons). Other main markets that received this product were: Lebanon, 800 tons, France, 455 tons and Spain, 438 tons.

In addition, in 2017 the Senasa<sup>10</sup> registered shipments of yerba mate from Argentina to the United States, Germany, Israel, Turkey and Canada.

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<sup>10</sup> Sanitary organism in Argentina