Pat Duffy, Simone Akgulian, Lucianna Kiffer

Podcast Script

**Track [HOST INTRO]:** When you hear the word “Brazil,” what comes to mind?

Tropical beaches? Carnaval? Probably sexy sun-tanned women and chiseled soccer stars — and maybe the Amazon rainforest. Truth is, though, that there’s more to Brazil than a tropical paradise — really, geographically more. Have you ever heard “Brazil” and thought “cowboys” or “farmers?” In the country’s Interior region and in the state of Minas Gerais, there thrives a radically different culture from those in Rio’s beaches and São Paolo’s sprawling cityscape—and these different cultures are the economic drive for this rapidly-developing country. Join Lulu Kiffer, Simone Akgulian and Pat Duffy on an exploration of the culture, stereotypes and economy of the lesser know, but extremely important parts of the Brazilian nation.

*Opening Music:* A stereotypical samba song to begin a transition from what is known about Brazil to what is unknown

**Act: Simone:** I had this idea that it was very casual and very lazy and — you know — where everyone just eats fruit all time — like a paradise

**Track:** That’s Simone Akgulian. In high school she spent ten months on a study abroad in the state of Goiás—located in the middle of the country, far west of Rio and São Paolo. Her experience wasn’t what a typical American would expect from a Brazilian vacation.

**Act: Simone:** I remember one of the first weeks, they brought home a live chicken. I didn’t understand they were gonna slaughter it, I didn’t know why it was there, and then I see the feathers in the trash can after lunch and I realize I had eaten chicken. At first, it’s so shocking because it’s this culture that you didn’t even realize still existed. I don’t think
that exists in the United States anymore, or at least not quite to the extent that it did in Brazil.

Track: On Brazilian farms like the one where Simone stayed, this sort of country lifestyle lives on. They raise, cultivate and eat their own food—and the food that will go on to feed all of Brazil. A far cry from the city-slicking lifestyle of Brazil’s cities.

Act Simone: I had never felt more isolated or alone in my entire life.

Track: Now don’t get the wrong idea. Not all of Brazil besides Rio and São Paulo is farmland. East of Goiás and the Interior where Simone stayed lies the state of Minas Gerais, whose capital is the city of Belo Horizonte, the third largest in Brazil after Rio and São Paulo. Despite being a large city, Maria do Carmo, a native of Belo Horizonte, says there are important differences between the spirit of Belo Horizonte and those of Rio and São Paulo. She says the spirit is inscribed in the landscape.

Act: Maria do Carmo: What makes Belo Horizonte be more like the interior is the mountains, because its surrounded by mountains. Rio is on the coast so everything is open, so the spirit of people from Rio is more open, it correlates. And São Paulo is a metropolis, with a lot of cars, a lot of pollution, and a lot of things happening at the same time. And Belo Horizonte is all bordered with mountains so the people are more reserved, this also associates with the manner of the state

Track: According to Daisy Mandello, a native of a small town in Minas Gerais, the differences don’t stop in the spirit of the cities.

Act: Daisy People from Minas Gerais have the reputation of being suspicious. They don’t really like to talk to strangers, they talk but that’s just the stereotype. And another stereotype is that people from Minas Gerais arrive really early.
Track: If you’ve ever heard the phrase “Brazilian time,” you’ll know how shocking this punctuality seems. The stereotype in Rio and São Paolo is that everyone shows up an hour or so late to any appointment—even business meetings. Now speaking of business, Brazil also differs economically from region to region, according to Maria do Carmo.

Act Cai: The North part of Minas Gerais is poorer, coming close to the division with Bahia, it is hotter, and there is more cattle, it is very hot and poor, poorer than the Southern region of the state. Because the southern, is where there are plantations and good farms, and there is a lot of money there. There is less wealth than in São Paulo…. São Paulo has more wealth than Minas and Rio and it has more things happening culturally and it is bigger.

Track: Though São Paulo may have a more thriving nightlife and generate income from tourism and business, other regions of Brazil form the agricultural backbone without which the country would fail and the cities’ businesses would flounder.

Act: “The Central-West is the area where there is the most amount of cattle in Brazil, it is a wealthy area because of the cattle”

Track: In fact, Brazil is the second largest beef exporter in the world after the United States—and by a slim margin. You may never have considered that a country known for its tropical beaches could compete with the ranching culture of the Western and Midwestern United States, but it’s true — and there are even more similarities.

Act: Cai: they have a lot of rodeos, all over the central-west, so the music is that music of cowboys. They dress like cowboys, and they imitate the music of cowboys of the United States, you know country.

Track: That music is called Sertanejo, a genre born in Brazil’s backlands, or sertão, the
word that gives us the name sertanejo. A truly authentic genre to the Interior, Simone’s host mom Lenilda says it’s gaining popularity.

**Act: Lenilda** “The people love “sertanejo.” There’s that really ‘country’ kind of sertanejo, sertanejo caipiro as they say. Caipiro is more traditional, ya know? Just that nowadays there’s a different type called “university sertanejo.”. The fact that they have developed it into a new genre shows just how important sertanejo is.

**Track:** University Sertanejo is the top-selling type of music in Brazil, and you may have even heard one of its break out hits..

**Music:** a few seconds of “Ai se eu te pego” by Michel Teló.

**Track:** Together with livestock, farming forms the agricultural backbone of the Interior region of the country—and by extension, says Lenilda, all of Brazil.

**Act: Lenilda:** Why it’s important. For the food, right? Because if we don’t plant it, how will we eat it, someone’s got to plant. Someone’s got to tough it out. And another thing, here—I don’t know how it is in the U.S.—we have agricultural school, because if we didn’t have a school for it, how could we keep people farming, how could we guarantee food for everyone.

**Track:** And as Daisy Mandello says, they grow a lot.

**Act: Daisy:** Here in Paraiso, there are corn plantations, rice plantations, and vegetables, but the big production here is coffee. The coffee already leaves the Saints port packaged for exportation, it is very good coffee.

**Track:** When Simone moved to the Brazil interior, she was overwhelmed by just how over-reaching the agricultural lifestyle was in the region.

**Act:** “My host dad was an agronomer, which is like a farmer-engineer. I stayed with
three host families and of all those three host families every one of them had farms, some
of them had multiple farms. And I would spend a lot of time on the farm, sleeping on the
farm, I learned to drive a tractor.

**Track:** It is a way of life that has endured and one that will endure.

**Act:** Lenilda “…our region—is a region of agriculture and livestock. It’s very traditional.
People stay on the farm, you know? And they like it. All the same, my husband Severino
has big dreams to improve the farm we have over here.

**Track:** Maybe some day they’ll expand their farm, but for now the ambition to do so
motivates Lenilda and her family to continue their lifestyle—and although different from
the hustle and bustle Rio or São Paolo, although there are no beaches to relax at after a
hard day’s farming, although not many people outside Brazil are even aware of it, this
agricultural lifestyle makes the modern Brazil possible It feeds those parts of the country
that captivate foreigners’ imaginations. And hopefully soon, when people hear the world
“Brasil” they don’t think only of a tropical paradise, but of the Interior, and *all* the
unspoken parts of a truly diverse nation.

**Fade out with Music**