

Roberto Interview

Sierra: So can you say your full name please?

Roberto: My full name is Jose Roberto da Silva Nascimento

Sierra: And where in Brazil are you from?

Roberto: I'm from Fortaleza.

Sierra: Awesome. And what is the typical food like where you're from?

Roberto: Well, uh, as entire Brazil (sic) the typical food is rice, beans and like a steak, or any kind of meat. That's what people usually have for dinner and lunch. But, when you go out, usually you don't have the same kind of food that you have at home, you know, when you go out, usually we have like barbeque or... we also have pizza, but it's more usual people to go out to have barbeque. And, as I'm from Fortaleza, and it's a city by the coast, people usually go out to have fish or crabs, people love crabs.

Sierra: Awesome. Are there any typical dishes?

Roberto: Well, I have to say one called munguzá, it's like a soup with corn and beans and some kinds of meat, and feijoada, which is kind of the national dish in Brazil. And also one dish called baião, which is a mixture of rice and beans, and they are cooked together... and yeah, and we also use cheese with that, baião is usually prepared with cheese, and a lot of others, like, um, seasoning.

Sierra: Awesome, that sounds delicious. And what role does food play in your culture?

Roberto: Well, every time there is a gathering of people, there has to be food. So, whenever I meet my friends, we meet to eat, when you go out, you go out to eat. And even when you go out to things that are not actually related to eating, for example "Oh, let's go to the cinema," people don't usually eat at the movies because it's so expensive there, but afterwards, we always get together to go to eat something— to go someplace to have something to eat, like a sandwich, or it can be a more elaborate dish, such as... I don't know, like, some kind of— baião with steak, people love going out to have dinner, that, or fried chicken, which is- people always like, people always have baião with steak or baião with fried chicken. And also, there is a thing in Brazil called "Rodizio," which is like you pay only a certain amount of money, like \$20, and you can eat all you want, like- and it's usually really, really good food. There's rodizio for meat, for pizza, for Japanese food, it's really good.

Sierra: When I lived in Brazil, I ate that a lot.

Roberto: Oh yeah, I love rodizio.

Sierra: What about festivals? Are there any cultural festivals that celebrate either, like, food, or folklore, or anything like that?

Roberto: Well, as Fortaleza is the capital, and most of the capitals- like, folklore... yeah, it's just as pronounced (sic) as in the rest of the country, like, during June, we have a party called "Party of June,"

“Festa Junina,” and in this party we celebrate a kind of food, like it’s usually based in corn. We have something called pamonha-

Sierra: I love pamonha!

Roberto: Uh, what else, uh... cooked corn, fried corn, and there is some kind of sweets in there, and people usually dress up because, in the old times, people used to dress up and they’d dance a certain kind of dance called “quadrilha,” that it’s like, boys and girls dancing in a, like, going around... it’s hard to describe, ‘cause it’s like, you have to see it-

Sierra: I know, I danced in it!

Roberto: And, during this time, we have this specific food, pamonha and munguzá and- oh my god, what else- usually food that is based in corn.

Sierra: Awesome.

Roberto: Yeah, there are different ones, for example, uh, in the cities by the coast, usually, pretty much every restaurant has one day where it’s “okay, this day is dedicated for crabs,” “caranguejada,” and people go there, and there is live music, usually samba or pagode, there is like, uh, crabs, like, it’s usually on a Thursday because of the moon and stuff. And then you have, like, every week restaurants do this.

Sierra: That’s awesome. I wish I lived by the coast more.

Roberto: Oh yeah, it’s really cool, I love caranguejada.

Sierra: How does the food differ from where you live in Brazil and New Orleans? Because I know, like, the food of Salvador is kind of similar-

Roberto: Hm, yeah-

Sierra: -to that of New Orleans, so how does that differ?

Roberto: Well, uh, everyone tells me that the food in New Orleans is also very spicy and there’s a lot of like, seasonings in the food, which for me is kind of similar to what we have in Brazil. Like, uh, I’m from the Northeast, from Talea de Salvador, and in those places we use a lot of seasoning. And especially Salvador where the food is very spicy... carajéis, you can have it really, really spicy. And, for me, it’s kind of similar, but, like, they don’t have the... they kind of have the same style, but it’s not the same dishes. For example, here, I love gumbo-

Sierra: -but it’s not feijoada!

Roberto: -but we don’t have anything similar to gumbo. When I have gumbo, I remember feijoada, but it’s two things completely- it’s kind of “oh, when I eat an apple, I remember oranges, because they’re both fruits,” but they’re completely different.

Sierra: I completely agree.

Roberto: But yeah, they're kind of similar, but so different at the same time, you know?

Sierra: Mhm. Um, is food more important to the culture in Brazil or to the culture of New Orleans?

Roberto: Well, something that I noticed, and I don't know if this is particularly true to New Orleans, but, for example, when I'm together with my friends in Brazil, I never remember talking about food. Like "oh that place has such nice food!" and that was it, you know, the conversation wouldn't much, like, go around the food. And when I go out with my friends here in America, they all keep talking about food like, the conversation's just about food, I'm like "oh that's so interesting." We never talk about, like... food. It's one of the topics, but it's not like the *main* topic of the conversation, you know? But, it's like, even though people don't talk so much about food, it's that thing: whenever you go out, you have food, you go out to eat with your friends. And I think that's like, it's happens here too.

Sierra: Awesome, and what is your favorite food in Brazil?

Roberto: Well, I really love barbeque. If you ask any Brazilian they're going to say "oh, barbeque." But, I really love baião with fried chicken. And also, like, usually we have, we don't have barbeque by itself, we usually have barbeque with baião, that's my favorite dish. Barbeque with steak, or with, uh, maminha- I don't know if you guys have this kind of- it's a kind of meat, I don't know if you guys have it here. But yeah, baião with barbeque, it's my favorite dish ever.

Sierra: And, what about food in New Orleans? What is your favorite food or how have you adapted to the food here?

Roberto: Well, I love gumbo, it's really good. And, like seafood. The seafood here, it's really, really good and- it tastes so fresh. And... yeah, the seafood here. I like... I really like seafood here, I grew up in Fortaleza so I'm used to having, like, shrimp and uh, crabs and here they also have that. And, the seasoning, it's different, but it's like an interesting difference, it's not like a bad difference, it's like "oh, this works," you know, when you have it-

Sierra: Right.

Roberto: -it's really good.

Sierra: Awesome, and do you ever miss the food in Brazil?

Roberto: Oh, all the time, when I first got here, like, after six months, I used to go on the internet and google images and google it and just keep looking like "oh my god... rice and beans, oh." Yeah I miss sometimes.

Sierra: How long have you been here?

Roberto: Uh, I got here on August, last year, so, what is that, seven months? Eight? But, my friend who has been here for one year and three months, she misses it desperately, like, "Roberto, I think about Brazilian food every day." You know, so yeah, we miss it-

Sierra: I miss Brazilian food!

Roberto: We miss our food.

Sierra: Awesome, well, do you have anything else?

Roberto: I don't know, I think, just thank you for the opportunity to contribute-

Sierra: Thank you!

Roberto: -to this project, and... yeah.

Sierra: Thank you!

Simone Interview

Sierra: Can you please state your entire name?

Simone: Simone Rose Equilean.

Sierra: And what did people call you in Brazil?

Simone: (with accent) Simone

Sierra: Awesome, and where are you from?

Simone: I'm originally from Chicago, Illinois.

Sierra: And can you describe your relationship with Brazil?

Simone: Um, so, when I was a junior in high school, I spent ten months studying abroad there, um, during my junior year. I lived in a small town called Mineiros in the state of Goias and I stayed with three different host families while I was there through rotary international. Um, I had very good relationships with my first two host families and I still keep in contact with them. Is there anything else you'd like to know about that?

Sierra: Nope, just that! And can you describe the food from there?

Simone: There's a lot of Brazilian food that I loved. Where I lived in Brazil, was sort of the rural area, so we ate a lot of very, very locally grown food. Many of the people I knew were farmers and so a lot of the food that we got was, like, literally fresh off the farm, like some of it we would kill, and then eat it, like I would see it alive and then later be eating it, which is a little... you know, um, a little disturbing, at first. But, um, it was all very fresh. We ate a lot of traditional Brazilian food but then a lot of things that are known as like caipiro, which means, um, sort of like hillbilly or rural, like redneck... it's sort of a slang term. But, um, so we would eat like a type of chicken called chicken caipiro, which is just like um, slightly different from other Brazilian dishes in that they use food from the farm, which is typically... you know, the chickens are typically, um, smaller and bonier than, like, the chickens that we're familiar with. Um,

so, I don't know... I ate lots of fruit, lots of goiaba, um, jabuticaba- are you familiar with jabuticaba- should I describe jabuticaba?

Sierra: Yes!

Simone: It looks like um... jabuticaba is different because it's like the opposite of what I would say the fruit we're familiar with is. So in that, it doesn't grow on the branches of the trees, but it grows on the bark of the tree, so it's like a, it looks sort of like a really, really dark, round grape. Um, and it's got this sort of tangy, and you pick it right off the tree bark, but it doesn't grow on the branches like apples, it grows directly on the tree bark so it looks like the tree is just covered in these purple, um, purple, like, little grapes, all over it. So you can pick it right off the tree, and it's this like creamy, white fruit on the inside that's kinda tangy and sweet. It's a very interesting- I'd never had it before and I haven't seen it anywhere except, um, in Goias. And then I ate a lot of, uh, caju, which is cashew fruit, which I could not stand the smell of, I think it's disgusting. I ate a lot of fruit while I was in Brazil, it was my favorite food. I ate, um, a lot of acerola cherries, which are like sort of small, sour... They're, they're, they're very much like cherries but, um, the flavor is slightly different and the shape is also different but they make delicious juice. Um, I can't- wait there's so much Brazilian food that I loved. I ate all day, every day. Um, so, it's really, it's really hard. My relationship with food in Brazil was a very good one.

Sierra: If you had to pick one Brazilian food to eat, right now, what would it be?

Simone: Well I'm a glutton for fruit, I do love fruit, so I would probably say that, but other than that, since I've already talked so much about that... um, I don't know. I would probably say, oddly enough, they make a Brazilian chicken stroganoff, where I lived, that- which is, you know, typically, you know, Eastern-European, German, food. But um, in Brazil they make it with, you know, like, fresh ingredients, cause it was all very local, um, chicken instead of beef- the stroganoff I'm familiar with has always been made with beef but, in Brazil, I've only had it with chicken. And they use, like a lot of condensed milks, like it's very creamy, very rich, but with a lot of corn and fresh vegetables and, like, grilled chicken. But I think the difference is with Brazilian food is that even when it's familiar, the things you make with are just so fresh, which makes all the difference in flavor.

Sierra: What role do you think the food played in Brazilian culture?

Simone: In Brazilian culture I think that it's, it's different in that, um, like the main meal of the day is obviously, it's lunch, it's not dinner. So, um, I think it, it relates to sort of the... working culture of Brazil in that, um, you know, if you don't take time out of the middle of the day, you know, come home from work, come home from school, that kind of thing to enjoy lunch, then it's kind of, it's very, it's very odd to not do that, so I would say that food is sort of this center of, um, sort of, it's the center of the day, so... hm that doesn't make any sense. It's sort of, like something that you take a break from, it's something that brings people together, um. And differently, I've found that dinner is sort of a dislocated thing, where everyone eats sort of when they feel like it, that it's a much more relaxed thing than sort of the formalized American dinners that we are-um, that I was familiar with. But I also found that, um, it's a great way, like I always had- when I was in Brazil, we would always have Sunday lunches with like my extended family. Um, So we would get together and all have a lot of- you know, make giant things of

rice, and most, like I can name- when I, since I was a rotary exchange student I would go to the rotary meetings once a week and I would also every Sunday go to dinners or go to lunches with my extended host family. So, just those two times a week alone, I would gather for these big meals. So, in that, I can say that food, I think for Brazilians, is a big part of, um, just sort of gathering together.

Sierra: Awesome, and how do you think that differs than the food culture of New Orleans?

Simone: I don't know, you know, I'm not... I think the food culture that I'm familiar with at Tulane is much different from what I would say the traditional food culture of New Orleans is. But, I think that the food culture of New Orleans is... hm, I think it's definitely a point of pride for New Orleanians, I think, you know, there's a lot of identity that's placed in food, um, which I don't, I don't, I mean might be, I don't think it is as much a part of Brazilian culture, where I think, like, of all the things they pick out to be proud of in Brazilian culture, I don't think food... My experience, at least, from the perspective that I'm looking at, I don't think it's as much a point of, like a point of pride, saying like no Brazilian food is the best food. I think in New Orleans they might say "New Orleanian food is great," with um, they're very proud of tobacco being made in New Orleans, like it's a point of pride for a lot of New Orleanians. And, I can't say, since I'm not originally from New Orleans, I can't say what place it would play in the home, or what role it would play in the context of a family, but I think that I am not really at a position to talk about that. I'm not being very articulate.

Sierra: No problem! That's awesome. And, do you think the food in Brazil played a part in traditional folklore or cultural festivals or anything?

Simone: Um, I think there were a couple of foods that I ate that were definitely part of cultural festivals, that were, you know, sort of, you know "cowboy" food, you know, foods from the serrado. I don't know about folklore as much- not to my experience, it didn't really play into parts about folklore. But sort of... there was definitely an identity, that was part of their regional identity, that was caught up in the food, um, and, like, in festivals- there are a lot of festivals that, like, specifically celebrated in the serrado, or the central, central western region that I spent time in. Specifically, there are lot of, like, apecuarias, which are like rodeos, and then uh, Festa do Junino, I believe it's called, or de Juninha, I can't remember. And those foods, like there's always piquio, which is this really, really weird little yellow fruit that's almost like... it kind of reminds me of, like, Menthol gum or cough drops... it's a really weird experience, eating it. Um, but that's very, very much part of the culture and like it's very identifying of those, those types of, um, like Central-Western tradition

Sierra: And do you think there are any similarities between the New Orleans food and food from where you lived?

Simone: Oh, absolutely. The spiciness factor is definitely one of them. There's a lot pride in sort of um... it's like a point of pride to be able to handle the spiciness of the food or like to like the spiciness of the food. Um, a lot of emphasis on hot sauces. I, like, know many people that made hot sauces and out here is the Tabasco factory, in Louisiana, that they're so proud of, they're so proud that Tabasco comes from Louisiana. Um, I'm trying to think. I think there's a lot of that sort of, um, African influence that's in food, cause like the, the North-Western food that I've had has been very deeply influenced by African culture.

And I think a lot of the food here has also been influenced by just a wide variety of cultures, including African. And I would say same with Brazilian you know, apart from African there are Caribbean cultures, and lots of different influences that go into making the North-Eastern food like the crab, or um, like shrimp dishes like um, babol de camarao. I see a lot of similarities between bobol de camarao and like crawfish etouffe. Or, you know, some of the other stew like dishes like gumbo, and other North-Eastern dishes.

Sierra: Awesome, well thank you!

Simone: No problem I hope that was enough.