

GASTRONOMY FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD



WORLD REGION OF GASTRONOMY
MANABÍ CANDIDATE 2026

Manabí. Gastronomy from the Middle of the World.

World Region of Gastronomy
Manabí, Ecuador – Candidate 2026

Promotion Committee for the Candidacy of Manabí, Ecuador as a World Gastronomic Region.

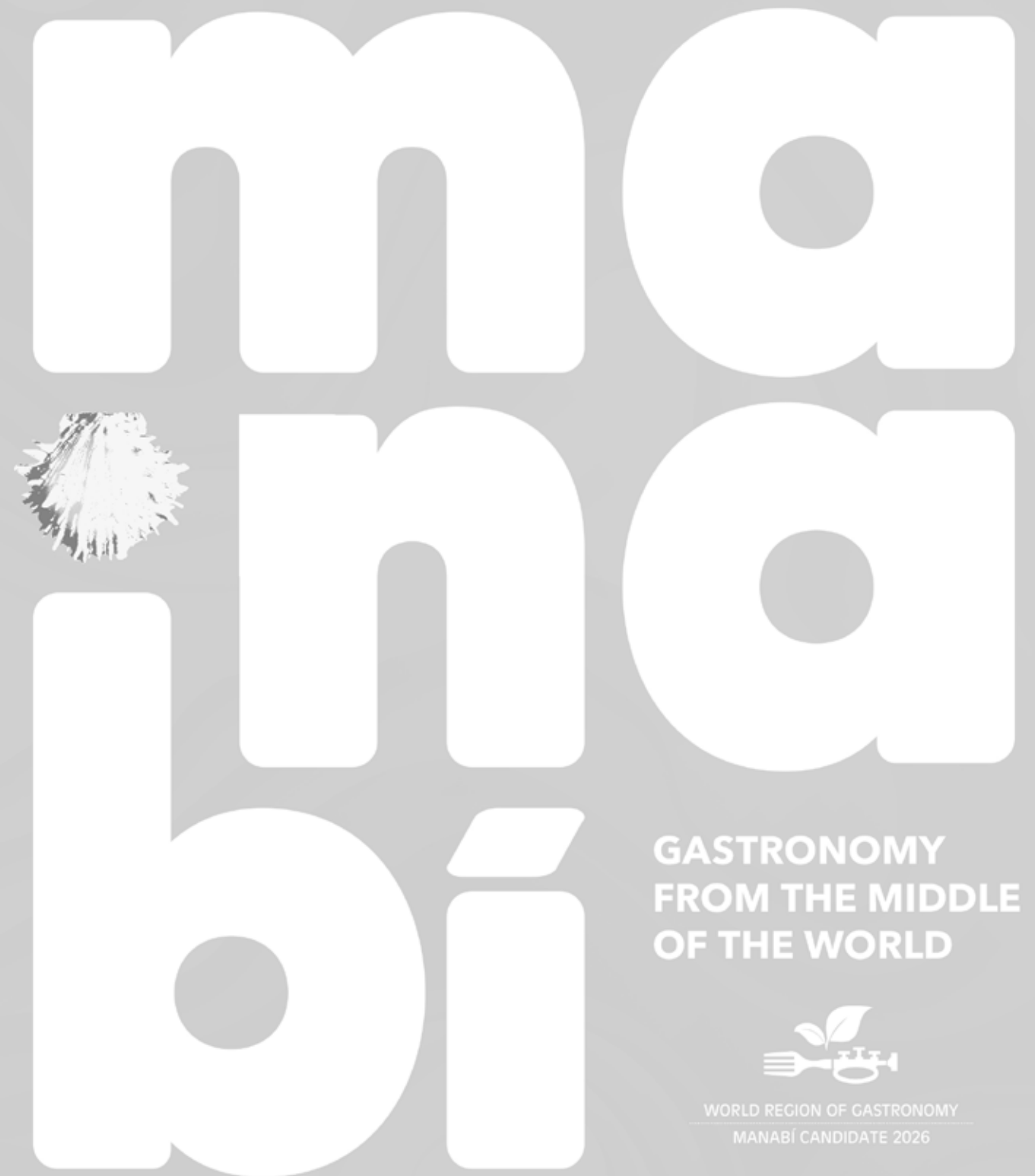
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FROM THE MIDDLE
OF THE WORLD



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MANABÍ CANDIDATE 2026

Letters from the Promotion Committee



LEONARDO ORLANDO ARTEAGA
Prefect
Government of Manabí

Through gastronomy, we immerse ourselves in a journey that takes us all over the world, evoking deep-rooted traditions, unique identities, exquisite flavors and the comforting warmth of stoves that transport us to childhood and ancestral customs where the aromas of the countryside, the city and the sea converge, with the stove lit from the first light of the morning. Manabí, without a doubt, has it all: the magic of the countryside, the vitality of the city and the richness of the sea. Manabí is colour and flavour, texture and aroma that traps in every bite, merging identity and innovation. The postulation and proposal contained in the book 'Manabí World Gastronomic Region' represents that dream of seeing our land on the world map of cuisine with territorial identity, showing that Manabí is as great as its people.



LUIS VILLACRESE
President
Chamber of Industry and
Production of Manabí

We, as Chamber of Industry and Production of Manabí, know that our gastronomy is one of the strengths of our region, considered the best of our country and one of the best food in the world. We are keeping our ancestral recipes from hundreds of years, using our own ingredients that our small farmers harvest by hand. In the last decades we have learnt to add value to our ingredients creating innovative food products that we are taking to other Ecuadorean provinces and countries to delight millions of consumers that already know that 'Manabí's food is the Best Gastronomy in the World'

For this reason, we support Manabí to be the 'World Gastronomy Region 2026'. We invite all of you to visit Manabí. We look forward to hosting you and seeing you enjoying our high quality gastronomy.



ORAZIO BELLETTINI CEDEÑO
Executive Director
FUEGOS Foundation

There are those who argue that we became human when we learned to cook. Sitting around the fire, we develop the ability to communicate and give birth to home, community, and identity. The proposition that the invention of cooking made culture possible is especially true in Manabí. For hundreds of years, the families of this land have gathered around the *horno manabita* (manabita oven) to prepare food and to pass on, from generation to generation, the traditions that have shaped our identity. The FUEGOS Foundation is pleased to be part of the Promotion Committee of Manabí's candidacy as World Region of Gastronomy 2026, convinced that this process will unite us to build together, around food, culture and art, a more prosperous, innovative, peaceful, inclusive, and resilient society.



MARCOS ZAMBRANO
Dean
Eloy Alfaro University of Manabí

The fusion of marine and terrestrial flavors is an almost ritual activity in the wood-fired oven, which brings families together in the slow kitchen, full of love, passion and kindness, inspires to develop from the academy the offer of majors, continuing education, and strategic alliances to recover, highlight and project the chola Montubia Cuisine of Manabí; which is associated with millenary values such as identity and hospitality that distinguishes us Manabitas from immemorial times.

This postulation is significant for such purposes, especially because of the associative methodology and its deep cultural and historical value, establishing a commitment to continue, dreaming, creating, cooking, well-being, and development.



Manabí

Geographical location, climate, regions, and ecology

The Province of Manabí is located in western Ecuador on the Pacific coast, crossed by the equator. With an area of 18,939 km², Manabí occupies 7% of Ecuadorian territory and 30% of its coastal provinces. Divided into 22 cantons, its current population is 1,592,840 inhabitants. Manabí's climate is quite balanced, with temperature fluctuating between 25 and 35 Celsius due to the presence of El Niño's warm current and Humboldt's cooler one. Valleys, savannahs, and mountains, with elevations no higher than 800 m above sea level, form the land, and river systems and the Pacific Ocean envelope its 350 km with ports, inlets, bays, estuaries, and innumerable beaches.

Manabí's important geographical features include beautiful bays (Cojimíes, Caráquez, Manta), incredible coves (San Lorenzo, San José), and breath-taking islands (Plata, Salango). Tremendous biological diversity is found in the province, characterized by the presence of varied ecosystems hosting multiple plant and animal species.

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SECTION ONE

The history of a millenary cuisine

1. Culinary

Tradition

Archaeological evidence reveals that the regions now called Manabí were 6,500 years old and were inhabited by peoples who used the first technology in America: pottery. They were the first to domesticate plants, thanks to an intensive agricultural activity in a topographic profile loaded with ecological and environmental zones of maritime influence.

In today's Cerro de Hojas Jaboncillo, one can witness vestiges of what was the Manteño culture's (600 CE a 1534 BCE) administrative settlement. Edifications were for the development of agriculture, including terraces, irrigation canals, and wells.

Manabí food, an intangible heritage of Ecuador, has been formed over thousands of years, which has allowed a systematization from archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and botanical studies of the heritage transmitted intergenerationally.

Chroniclers in the first century of Spanish colonization confirm that the basis of Manabí food has not changed in hundreds of years, made with foods that define its culinary identity: maize, groundnuts, cassava/'yuca', yellow squash, sweet potato, beans, tomatoes, peppers, avocado, cocoa, animal meats (both domesticated and wild): poultry, fish, seafood, and crustaceans.



2. Hotspot for Ancient Maritime and Terrestrial Exchange

The inhabitants between Atacames in northern Ecuador and the Gulf of Guayaquil to the south knew the sea currents and dominated the sea, allowing them to trace transoceanic routes and lead exchange processes with peoples located between what is modern day Mexico and Chile.

As shown in the map, cocoa, a product native of the Amazon region, was taken to Mexico by Manabita sailors from what is known now as Manabí around 1800 BCE. In Mesoamerica, it was transformed into chocolate and brought back in the XVII century to enrich our cuisine and the world's. A similar exchange took place with maize; it was brought by Manabí sailors from Mexico as teosintle with four rows of grains; it was in Manabí where it was domesticated to eight rows of kernels; it was taken to South and Mesoamerica, and then to rest of the world.

The spondylus is a bivalve mollusc found in Manabí. Studies show that the spondylus played a major role in different types of pre-Hispanic rituals, while being considered "the favourite food of the gods" and 'object of intense Andean traffic until Inca times'. It was the favourite dish of caciques and shamans, as evidenced by excavations in several sites in South America and Mesoamerica.

Even though it is not a gastronomic product, the world famous straw hat is an important part of Manabí identity. It was crafted originally in Manabí around 1650 for farmers to work in the fields, then taken to Peru, Colombia, and Panama in the XIX century, and now exists in most of the world.

Products and recipes from other regions and continent that enriched Manabí cuisine through this permanent process of transculturation, which gained strength since the first century of colonization. Between what was ours and what the migrants brought, not only beliefs and rites but also food practices were transformed. Thus an increase of new foods began, brought by the Spaniards and African peoples. "New" foods included bananas, rice, wheat, lentils, oils, citrus fruits, garlic, sugar cane, and the more recent use of grated coconut and its milk in preparations. There was also an undeniable contribution of meat and dairy products derived from cattle, pigs, and chickens. This combination of recipes and creativity can be considered the common centre of Ecuadorian and especially Manabí cuisine.



PEANUT

FROM ECUADOR
TO MEXICO



COCOA

FROM ECUADOR
TO MEXICO



SPONDYLUS

FROM ECUADOR
TO MEXICO



WORLD FAMOUS
STRAW HAT

FROM ECUADOR
TO COLOMBIA, PERÚ,
PANAMÁ AND
ALL THE WORLD



CORN

FROM MEXICO
TO ECUADOR



3. Spondylus: *symbol of Power*

The skill of fishermen, as well as the excellence of their rafts, was described by historical chroniclers. The rafts carried ornamental artefacts and sumptuary objects, such as the Spondylus prínceps, a huge conch with colourful mother of pearl. It was believed that this mollusc brought rain and was necessary for agricultural production.

The spondylus was a symbol of power, autonomy, and rituality of the peoples of the central and northern Andes, as well as a favourite element of the mythical ancestors, who needed it to preserve their strength and continue to animate the world of their descendants.

Spondylus ceviche, a delicacy required by the great caciques and shamans, became the first export product of our peoples.



PHOTO: Patricio Tamariz Dueñas

4. The iches

in Manabí

The groundnut, scientifically known as arachis, is known as the following in various languages: Tlalcacáhuatl (cacao of the earth) in Nahuatl; inchik sachá in Kichwa; groundnut in the Taino language; torali in Tsa'fiki; and 'iche' in the fishermen/Manabí language, which inhabitants of Manabí's coastal villages still use today.

Groundnuts have been present in the Manabí diet since pre-Columbian cultures existed, used specifically as an important ingredient in the seasoning and preparation of hundreds of dishes made with cassava, maize, plantain, yellow squash, sweet potato, seafood, fish, and meat. This tradition has been maintained for centuries, as even today, there is no traditional food where groundnuts are not part of its preparation.

Viche is the emblematic dish born from the fusion of sea and land products where groundnuts are the most important ingredient united with a huge variety of seafood and vegetables.



PHOTO: Ben Pippe

5. Techniques, *Knowledge, Utensils*

The revaluation of ancestral knowledge and practices and the maintenance of certain food patterns are what have given the people of Manabí a deep-rooted cultural identity. The millenary technique of maize and cassava/'yuca' processing has made it possible to use these raw materials in various ways, including main dishes, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and beverages. The cooking, baking, smoking, and drying times, due to the ancestral use of the Manabí oven, pots, casseroles and clay comales (that are perfectly adapted to the oven), create superb flavour. The use of certain utensils, mills, graters, grinders, and cloth to sift the maize dough for the preparation of chicha, is closely related to its historical past.

The combination of groundnuts with plantain and the use of the leaves in diverse musaceae-wrapped foods not only contribute to the foods' characteristic temperature but also releases the characteristic country flavour, so typical in the "tonga de gallina criolla" and in the immense plantain ball.

The use of the Manabí 'sofrito', chocked full of a myriad of fresh local herbs, provides the flavour so special and emblematic in the lives of peoples from Manabí and is palate-enticing to foreigners who have the chance to taste fabulous Manabí food.

6. The Manabí Oven:

Pivotal in the Agro-food Culture

The oldest traces of the Manabí clay oven have been found in excavations in San Isidro (Martínez, Walter 2010), in Atahualpa (Delgado 2011), in Japoto (Bouchard, 2006), and in Puerto López (Lunnis, R. 1992). The records allow us to affirm the millennia use of the Manabí oven.

The whole culinary tradition, which has been woven around the Manabí oven that has persisted through generations and centuries, is so central to identity and life in Manabí that the region has declared the Manabí

oven an intangible cultural heritage of Ecuador. The millenary Manabí clay oven has become one of the most representative elements of Manabí cuisine. The oven generates different aromas while cooking, due to the temperature that is achieved in the application of various culinary techniques such as cooking, roasting, toasting, and smoking. Roasted cassava/‘yuca’, sweet potato, and green plantain are fundamental in the daily diet; they are Manabí’s traditional bread.



7. Symbolic Character

of Manabí Food

Manabí food is closely linked to festivals, whether religious or cultural, that have been traditionally held and are deeply rooted in its inhabitants’ identities. Examples include patron saint days, wakes for the dead, and the festival of the rafters (October), organized both in Calceta and Santa Ana to remember the arrival of the fruits of the earth that were harvested in rural areas; pilgrimages for the Virgen de la Merced (September), the Virgen de Monserrate (November), as well as the feast

of Peter and Paul (July and August) are integral to the cultural heritage of Ecuador. The novenas of the child (December 15 to 24) and the chigualos (December 25 to February 2) combine religious rituals and love. In addition, there are festivals that have been generated around a product or a special food, to keep that particular culinary tradition alive, such as the succulent tiny crab called ‘guariche’, which could easily become extinct.

1. Fusion

of Montuvian and Chola Food

The links between food, territory, culture, history, and heritage are extraordinary associations that come from the past, materialize in the present, and will survive in the future.

Over time, Manabí recipes have managed to merge the fruits of the sea with the fruits of the earth, derived from the richness of ecosystems and climatic niches. The relationship established between cholos (fishermen) and montuvios (farmers and ranchers) is inexplicably mutual.

Manabí women, both montuvia and chola, are the backbone of the process of production, including the reproduction and the preparation of food, which has been demonstrated and preserved through many centuries, thanks to their zeal, care, and knowledge.



2. Traditional

Dishes

From the breadth of the province, myriads of preparations are emblematic. They extend beyond administrative borders. We have chosen to describe the three most important that are now gaining international fame: 1. Manabí ceviche 2. Viche, the queen of all soups/stews made from fish or seafood, local roots, and vegetables, which come together thanks to the use of a luscious groundnut cream 3. Salprietá (dark salt), which unites groundnuts with maize, local salt, herbs, and spices and was traditionally present on all tables, rather than modern, industrialized condiments. Of course, there are other unique preparations of tamales; freshly steamed maize cakes; plantain empanadas; immense plantain balls – chocked full of cheese, groundnut paste and/or chicharrón – maize chicha; ‘moros’ of rice with lentils or beans; a special, uniquely juicy duck risotto; and of course a hot sauce often made of different ‘heats’ using unique small chillies and often fermented with banana vinegar.

Each area of the province has its stellar dish: 'tonga' in the central northern zone; 'greñoso' in the southern zone; morcillas in the central zone; and lastly, a black clam tamal with coconut/groundnut cream in the northern zone.

3. The Manabí

Diet

The diet of the inhabitants of the ancient region of Campaces, Coaques, Pasaos, Caras and Paches was based on fish, which was consumed in various ways: raw with salt and chili (the first forms of what would later become ceviche); roasted, baked, 'pandado' (cooked, wrapped in a specific jungle leaf); 'encanutado' (put in a piece of cane/cañuto and standing on the wood oven); poultry and wild animals; dried maize ground into flour, fresh maize, roasted in embers; roasted groundnuts in

preparations with maize (salprieda in its first versions), cassava/'yuca', sweet potato, yellow squash and these in turn with fish or seafood or wild meats. Colonial presence enriched the cuisine and the Manabí table, as the different foods that crossed the Atlantic easily joined ours, producing this culinary transculturation. The Manabí diet currently maintains the consumption of certain products of pre-Hispanic heritage, enriched with trans-cultural products.



4. Food from the Sea and the Land

From the Sea

From the sea, which touches the land in the province of Manabí, come myriads of varieties of fish and seafood: albacore, bonito, billfish, cojinova, caras, grunts, burros, catfish, shrimp, prawns, crabs, clams, oysters, snails, black clams, and many more. As an example, there are at least 10 varieties of crabs - of different sizes and colours, different ones being available during different seasons. Fish and seafood of

the area provide the population and cooks with incredibly fresh, succulent ingredients and delightful treats for eaters. Certain molluscs, such as the black clam, cannot be collected in areas outside the ecological zone that comprises Manabí. The port of Manta, faithful to its ancestral heritage, is known as the 'tuna capital', operating the second largest tuna fleet in the world; the Manta Port Terminal receives and

stores excellent quality tuna: yellow fin. It has international accreditations that guarantee sustainable fishing. Tuna-based products are exported to Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom, among other countries. The fame of Ecuadorian shrimp has surpassed international borders, being the largest export product of the country, and the best quality shrimp comes from the aquaculture zone of Manabí.⁽¹⁾

(1) <https://www.primeshrimp.com/blogs/news/what-makes-ecuadorian-shrimp-so-good>





From the Land

Very likely the most emblematic food from terrestrial Manabí is the groundnut. Historical records corroborate the existence of more than 18 varieties in the Tosagua Valley, and even today, many varieties of groundnuts of different shapes, flavours, colours, and uses can be found in the Tosagua Valley. Manabí's culinary culture is famous for its use of ground, roasted groundnuts in superb savoury dishes, with Viche possibly being the most important and most high-acclaimed example. In this soup/stew can be found fish and seafood; however, it also hosts the most basic foods from the land: both green and ripe plantains, cassava/'yuca', yellow squash, fresh pulses, and fresh maize all melding together with the sumptuous texture achieved by thickening from roasted groundnut paste. If one has not had the opportunity to savour Viche in their lifetime, they have not lived.

Ground, roasted groundnuts are paired with green plantain in innovative tamales, as well as in 'corvi-

che', another emblematic preparation, crunchy and full of Manabí flavour. Groundnuts can also be paired with maize as in 'greñoso'. Perhaps most importantly, however, freshly ground, roasted groundnuts are the basis for the mother sauce of all Manabí cooking, 'gordo de maní', which unites groundnut paste, 'sofrito', colour and flavour from annatto seed, garlic, and certain herbs unknown outside the Pacific ecosystem. Another use of groundnuts is in salprieda (see page 9).

Manabí is also famous for a traditional cheese that is somewhat reminiscent of cow's feta. Manabí cheese is an ingredient for fillings in many traditional preparations: some based on cassava/'yuca', others on plantain, both green and ripe, and others made with local vegetables and fresh pulses. The dough of a unique and superb empanada is made from painstaking ground, pounded boiled green plantain filled with superb Manabí cheese.

Cacao began to be cultivated intensively for international export in Manabí around 1770. Currently, the province is the main producer of fine aroma beans in the world, with the Third Millennium Alliance (TMA) promoting the linking of producers and farmers who care for and protect the national native cacao trees with greater genetic purity. Chocolate made from Ecuadorian cacao is highly acclaimed in the world; a network of Manabí farmers provides the raw material to produce the most expensive chocolate bar in the world.

Traditionally, cacao beans are dried in the sun, then roasted and ground. The resulting paste is made into a ball that is then dried and stored to be consumed, most often as hot chocolate.

Specialty coffee varieties with unique flavour characteristics are produced from Arabica beans. Surprisingly in Manabí, coffee of the highest quality is obtained at a few metres above sea level.

5. Production

systems

Manabí's unique geography has allowed the development of productive and agricultural zones linked to large water projects: Poza Honda, La Esperanza, Paján Dam and industrial zones related to sea and estuary extraction activities.

Agricultural and livestock activity is concentrated in areas beyond the two large dams and in areas surrounded by plentiful rivers, including the Portoviejo, Carrizal, Chone, and Paján rivers.

Agricultural production is related to cacao, bananas, groundnuts, cassava/'yuca', maize, coffee, rice, along with an abundance of vegetables and fruits. Of course, the highlights are cacao and bananas, whose products are exported to many countries.

Fishing is the driving force behind productive activity due to the presence of industrial and artisanal boats. The activity of extraction and processing of seafood products contributes 7% to Ecuador's National GDP, and fishing ranks third in foreign exchange earnings for the country. Livestock production is concentrated in seven of the regions. A large percentage of its population is dedicated to the production of milk, cheese, curd, and yogurt.

The mangroves provide invertebrates, including crabs, shellfish, and guariches, all of which are used for the preparation of foods such as ceviche, viche, and tonga of an ancient freshwater fish, chame.



PHOTO: Manuel Avilés

SECTION TWO

*Transforming
crisis into an
opportunity
through
gastronomy*

PHOTO: Ben Pippe

Culinary Identity

as an Ingredient for Resilience

In April 2016, an earthquake hit Manabí. It was a tragedy that took more than 700 lives, cost 4 billion USD in damages, and forced thousands to migrate to other provinces and countries. People and organizations from Manabí started organizing to transform the tragedy into an opportunity to build more sustainable, resilient, and innovative communities. Since 2016, we have been facing a scenario of the weakening of this legacy, once full of knowledge, flavours, and good health, from the time when traditional Manabí cuisine and foods were so prevalent to modern times, when such a grand heritage could be lost from humanity. There is a need for food cooked in clay pots over firewood, using the ancestral recipe and the Manabí Oven. The aromatic flavours and incredible tastes that only this type of cooking creates need to be at the forefront.

The Cholo and Montuvio people have great resilience, and all people from Manabí desire a resurgent province, imagining it better than it was prior to the earthquake. Manabí food, that great asset of which everyone is proud, has the great power to convene, since it unites the countryside with the city, the product with the cook and the producer, and the landscape with the gastronomic proposal.





1. Milestones of Manabí Gastronomy

- The current initiatives seek to make Manabí's food and cultural heritage a catalyst for development, improving the quality of life and turning this territory into a world gastronomic destination. International cooperation has generated important processes that have supported Manabí's gastronomy.
- In 2016 Gastronomic Association of Manabí (ASOGASMA) was created, which recognized Manabí food as a great socio-cultural asset that could underpin the reconstruction of Manabí.
- The Declaration of the Manabí Food as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ecuador Expediente Cocina Patrimonial Manabita occurred on October 18, 2018.
- The National Institute of Cultural Heritage on April 18, 2023 declared the Manabí Oven as another Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ecuador item.
- The Ibercocinas Projects, two initiatives of cultural agro-food projects in Manabí, 'El Fogón y la era' and 'Somos Semilla', were initiated.
- On October 30, 2019, UNESCO declared Portoviejo (capital of Manabí) as a Creative City, integrating the Creative Cities Network in the gastronomic field and working on the public policy of management and Promotion of Agro-food Cultural Heritage. It is currently a member of the Ibero-American Agenda 2030 for gastronomic tourism.
- The Mancomunidad Pacífico Norte de Manabí (MANPANOR) was formed in December 2019, a joint governance system that allows access to joint development in all aspects of the agro-food system.
- In 2019, the Slow Food ALMA-Alimentos Manabitas Community was formed, winning the Slow Food & Negroni Week Fund with the project: 'Women Cultivating from Ancestral Montubian Roots for the Strengthening of Inclusive Urban Markets and Sustainable Diets in the Centre-North of Manabí-Ecuador'.
- On April 19, 2021, Iche Escuela de Cocina y Hospitalidad Manabita opened, the first specialized training school in gastronomy and Manabí culture.
- The Manabí Food Integrator movement and the subscription to the Manabí Food Manifesto were vital in the recognition of Manabí's culinary culture. Outcomes of the two initiatives include the revaluation of the cultural food heritage of Manabí, promotion of the sustainability of Manabí (landscapes, products, and dishes) through gastronomy and gastronomic entrepreneurship, and making Manabí known as a gastronomic destination through the academic structuring of its cuisine.
- In 2022, three organizations generated a Manabí Food Certificate with the aim of guaranteeing the quality, flavour, and tradition of Manabí cuisine.

2. The Woman's Face

on Manabí's Culinary Culture

The social architecture of Manabí identity has a great regent, who for thousands of years has been the generator of knowledge and innovation, and the achiever of diverse products with a mosaic of flavours that constitute Manabí Cuisine. Wisdom has been transferred generationally by a long oral tradition around the heat of the embers in that great space: the Manabí Oven.

The Manabí female figure has led everything related to the administration of the resources to the dynamics of the household. Her day begins in the dark, grating maize to form creole maize tortillas. Taking advantage of the fire, she starts cooking the pot of soup for lunch, as well as cooking the grains for a snack, making the cooked drink or 'coladita', or making some other sweet, but not before roasting some plantains to enjoy before the actual meal is ready. This wise woman, who masters the usage of this very complex artefact, imposes cultural joy, sustains food sovereignty, and plans the very life of the home, since she knows which techniques of preservation and cooking of food must be applied. With this knowledge, she designs the recipe book for the days and months to come.

Connected to the heat of the Manabita Oven are some of the most relevant figures of provincial gastronomy, who promote, articulate, and rescue the knowledge from the whispers of grandmothers.





Fanny Vergara is a farmer, cook, and researcher with a deep rootedness to her heritage of food and culture of Manabí. Fanny is a winner of the INPC and OMPI projects as well as the “Eloy Alfaro” distinction from the Manabí government.



Seleny Bermudez is the winner of the Ibercocinas 2021 Fund, she has been strengthening her gastronomic proposal in a rural space, with which she participated in the program ‘Rescatando Sabores’, resulting in a Top 10 placing.



Lupe Gutierrez was a native of Bahía de Caráquez, Manabí and heir to a great legacy and family recipe book of Bahía’s aristocratic cuisine. She has won gastronomic contests in other Ecuadorian provinces with the exquisite tastes of the Manabí region.



Libertad Regalado writes about Manabí cuisine from the anthropological, archaeological, historical, and cultural perspective in the first book on Manabí Millenarian Food. Her studies have earned her recognition in all academic and gastronomic spheres concerning the heritage and value of Manabí food.



Leydi Valencia, daughter of an artisanal fisherman, is a community leader, whose project unites artisanal fishing with Manabí food. Accolades include winning the national Diners Club Challenge 2020, as well as leading the winning project of the Line of Development 2023.



Nieves Zambrano, also known as Doña Nievita by her followers on social networks, is the creator of videos where she shows various preparations of rural Manabí. She shares the secrets of the Montuvian cuisine that crosses borders with the thousands of people who watch and share her videos.



Valentina Alvarez is the Gastronomic Coordinator and Head Chef at Iche Food and Hospitality School, working to achieve a constant connection between ancestral and practical learning in the school’s curriculum. She keeps our gastronomic proposal connected to the Manabí culinary identity, always putting the local product at the forefront.



Glinis Guadamud, a native of San Vicente, is a woman farmer and producer of special Manabí chillies. She has travelled to fairs and events, showcasing her nine products, including Habanero Pepperhas, sold in various cities in Ecuador. She is the current president of the Association of Women Producers of Arte Sal y Dulce (ASOPROARTDUL).



Gloria Chávez was born in Jama, promoter of traditional Manabi cuisine, who with her establishment Valentina Colibrí has managed to turn Rambuche into an obligatory gastronomic stop, her space honors the Montubia Manabi culture, winner of the 2023 Manabi flavor contest.



Cecilia Cedeño is a cook who has returned to Manabí where she utilizes local ingredients, creating a fusion that is shared at the centre of the Manabí house. She has been recently recognized as a Cocinera Montubia with regards to the ‘Muya Gourmet’ project.



Fernanda Buzeta leads a Cooking School based in the capital of Manabí and currently is the university dean promoting gastronomic scientific research the presentation of emblematic dishes such as viche to large audiences.



Marianela Orlando, born in Portoviejo, runs the Casa Manaba restaurant since 2015, a place where the flavors of Manabita’s products and artisan cuisine are exhibited. She was awarded at the Raíces 2021 fair with her dish “Colonche de Camarón”. It is said that her family, originally from Jipijapa, they are the creators of the emblematic Jipijapa ceviche.



1. Gastronomy Expands

Quality of Life

Food and the act of eating are a great social link, where great agreements are woven and transformed. To contribute to the Manabí gastronomy is to promote the recovery of the agri-food system and cultural heritage of the province, making it a sure bet for sustainable development.

Encouraging gastronomic tourism is one option to preserve and sustain recipes, while creating ways to access products of high culinary, cultural, experiential, rural, and community value.

The organizations that lead high impact changes in the territory are those that lead processes with a clear transversal axis: food. Most of these organizations have very aligned objectives, such as promoting the Manabí identity through the revaluation of the cultural and food heritage. Having the Manabí Diet, with local products and techniques, increases the value of the chain of products from the sea to the mountains.

These organizations motivate the development of Manabí cuisine and culture from an academic vision, with scientific rigor, recognizing the wise women and men as bearers, who perpetuate their legacy through the intergenerational documentation of knowledge.

Organizations Leading the Way

- **La Troja Manaba** - a collective that highlights and rescues the cultural and ethnographic expressions of the Montuvio people.
- **Slow food ALMA** - a community that promotes Manabí products and cultural reconnection with its geography.
- **Raíces y Sueños / San Isidro** - an organization that promotes rural entrepreneurship such as coffee and passion fruit, from an associative community perspective.
- **Fundación para los Emprendimientos Gastronómicos y las Oportunidades Sostenibles (FUEGOS)** - developer of projects based on Manabí food, such as the development of new sustainable productive processes with the inclusion of young people.
- **Gasán** - promoter of research and recognition of rural food heritage.

2. Gastronomic *Training*

Education is key to sustaining the processes of change and development; the current challenge is a teaching-learning environment that breaks traditional paradigms and places in its formative essence the connection of culture and ancestral knowledge. Learning which changes the urban-centric vision and looks at rurality as the scenario for developing dignified and sustainable life projects is crucial for the continuation of Manabí cooking.

Among the revolutionary educational models in the province is the Iche Food and Hospitality School, which trains people from the community, integrating the empowerment and inclusion of women, at-risk youth, and other traditionally underrepresented sectors.

Iche is the nucleus of the new look at Manabí cuisine, which encompasses research, innovation, education and action, consisting of a restaurant, a school of food and hospitality, an R+D+I Laboratory and an Incubator. In the midst of a privileged landscape, including a view of the Pacific Ocean, the school stands

with an architecture inspired by the Montuvia house. Fused with industrial design, the concept 'industrial peasant' was born, which affirms everything that Iche means for the territory: innovation with identity, while bringing modernity to the scene without uprooting the cultural values that define us as people from Manabí.

The restaurant has a gastronomic proposal that embraces Manabí food and applies techniques and processes for products, recipes, and flavours that say: 'This tastes like Manabí'.

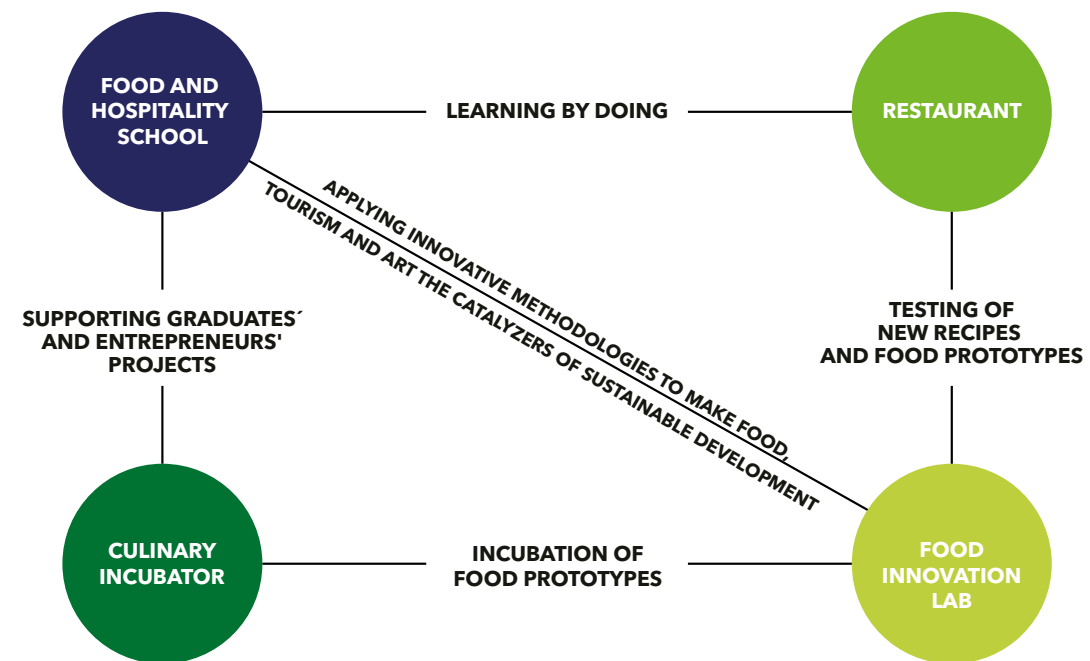
The students are beneficiaries of scholarships, which allow them to be trained by teachers who are leaders in their branch of knowledge. Students develop practical skills in the constant exercise of bringing knowledge to practice in all areas of the school and restaurant. In the heart of this location lies the Manabí Oven, the centrepiece of the gastronomic training, as well as the heart of the gastronomic proposal.



PHOTO: Ben Pippe

3. Innovation *with Identity*

Iche's laboratory encourages creativity and culinary differentiation with roots in the gastronomic heritage of the region. A team of chefs with extensive restaurant experience and traditional Ecuadorian and international cuisine, can achieve new results that are very different from ones that already exist in the market. An example of this could be the creation of products smoked in the Manabí stove, a symbol of Manabí's culinary identity.



4. Agro-ecology

The activation of important groups that seek to strengthen the agro-food heritage includes Mono Verde in Jama, which has formed a school of agro-ecology. Currently, there are three schools, the oldest being Rio Muchacho and the newest being the Agro-ecological Network of Manabí.



5. Culture

Manabí has great contributions to popular culture, oral tradition, music, and dance, including 'Los Mentaos de la manigua', 'Manchecaña', and Ballet Spondylus. Worthy artistic and cultural representatives include Raymundo Zambrano, Piloso Andrade, Carlos Quinto, and La Toquilla. Sculptor Ricardo Alcívar creates pieces with recycled materials from nature.



6. Regenerative *Tourism*

Several Manabí groups have understood that tourism activity is designed from real experiences, yet linked to rural life (landscapes, fishing, agriculture). Holding onto the legacy that makes us unique, we have implemented 'biocorridores', which are trails in protective forests cared for by local communities. We also have community kitchens and associative orchards, including the San Jacinto BioCorridor and the Latitud Iche Gastronomic Tourism Route.

Latitud Iche is the first gastronomic tourism route in northern Manabí, which aligns the aspects of gastronomy with producers and tourist structures, while having a baseline in the principles of Slow Food: good, clean and fair. Forty establishments were selected by the Slow Food International organization to create five experiences in northern Manabí, the centre of the tourism proposal. Experiences are based on the product and producer, allowing the rediscovering of the territory, enhanced with different training and experiential workshops.

SECTION THREE

Bicentennial of a millenary gastronomy: The 2024-2029 Plan

What Does This Candidacy *Mean for Manabí?*

Gastronomy in Manabí is much more than a productive sector and an economic activity. Manabí food is a pillar of identity, pride, and sense of belonging to the people of this province. Because of the depth of its roots and the capacity to unleash our creativity, we propose to make gastronomy the catalyst for the transformation of the tragedy left by the earthquake of 2016, into an opportunity to build new forms of social, economic, and productive organizations to help regenerate ecosystems and generate welfare for present and future generations.

Manabí's candidacy as a World Gastronomic Region is the result of the joint work of several organizations and sectors committed to transforming this recognition into energy that will allow us to build in Manabí, based on gastronomy, a more just, innovative, inclusive society, that is proud of its identity and connected to the world we all want.



PHOTO: Manuel Avilés

Principles *of the plan*

1. Linking Rural and Urban

Thirty seven per cent of the population of Manabí defines itself as Montuvio, which is the identity of rurality. Rural areas of Ecuador have lower levels of access to basic services and economic opportunities than urban areas, which are reasons for migration to the cities. Rural Manabí maintains community life, attachment to identity, and more implementation of sustainable agricultural practices associated with small and diverse production units. This plan focuses on enhancing the cultural and productive wealth of rural Manabí to transform it into a catalyst for the sustainable development of both urban and rural Manabí.

2. Regeneration to feed the planet

In Manabí, as in the rest of the world, a development model focused on regenerating the natural and cultural resources of a territory is necessary. Gastronomy has the potential to promote the establishment of a new paradigm that promotes the regeneration of the ecosystems where the ingredients are produced, as well as the recovery and revaluation of cultural practices to feed the planet following regenerative principles development of the territory.

3. Connecting global and local for a balanced tourism

Manabí has historically been a territory with strong exchange links with other regions of the continent and the world. The designation of Manabí as a World Gastronomic Region will be fundamental to strengthening local identity in a fluid dialogue with other cultures at a time when it is necessary to think globally while acting locally and promote a tourism based that enables mutual understanding among different cultures and benefits local people.

4. Innovation and job creation

This plan is based on the principle of innovation with identity that allows channeling the millenary knowledge about food production, art generation, and ecosystem conservation that Manabí possesses, towards the co-creation of new agro-food systems as well as artistic and cultural expressions that contribute to the wellbeing of people and the health of the planet.

5. Education for our future

The proposal is to make Manabí a great learning space following the principles of solidarity in which both equality and diversity are valued: 'We can all learn, and we can all teach.' Therefore, an emphasis will be placed on formal, non-formal/vocation-

al, and informal education processes, including responsible consumption campaigns to empower, especially, young people to lead the transition to regenerative food systems.

6. Collaborative

We live in times of transition and change in which no one has all the answers to the challenges we face. We propose to channel the convening power of food to invite all sectors, young and old, rural and urban, public and private, to make the trans-

formation of Manabí possible using gastronomy, tourism, art, and culture.

7. Culturally Relevant

The natural phenomena that have affected Manabí during the last decade forced migration, causing reduction of its social cohesion. Food is a pillar of the identity and pride of Manabí, so this plan seeks not only to take the province and its gastronomy to the world but also to strengthen its weakened social fabric.



PHOTO: Patricio Tamariz

1. Transition

to Regenerative Gastronomy

The growing awareness that the current development model is environmentally unsustainable makes it necessary to promote the transition towards a paradigm based on regeneration, where the extraction of natural resources is overcompensated with actions that allow a sustained increase in the stock of natural resources existing in a given territory. Gastronomy is a powerful way to move towards a regenerative development model by promoting regenerative agriculture and livestock farming, as well as responsible consumption.

Strengthening and promotion of community agro-ecology schools

Building on the work done by FOCAZNOM, Rio Muchacho and Fundación Raíces y Sueños, we will support the establishment of a network of agro-ecology schools to promote sustainable agricultural, livestock, and fishery production that will allow for a gastronomy based on clean and healthy ingredients.

Circular Gastronomy

The counties of Pedernales, Jama, San Vicente and Sucre, which make up the Manabí North Pacific Commonwealth (MANPANOR), along with the support of the U.S. Cooperation Agency, are implementing an initiative that will promote the separation of waste produced in the homes of the 200,000 people living on the northern coast of Manabí.

This initiative will establish a joint solid waste management system, including the establishment of a compost factory to promote agro-ecological production. In addition, in alliance with innovative laboratories, such as IcheLab and universities, work will be done on the generation of biodegradable packaging from food waste to reduce the use of plastics and move towards circular gastronomy.

Consumption of Local Products: Manaba come manaba (Manaba eats manaba) Campaign

With the leadership of the Provincial Government of Manabí, the Chamber of Industries of Manabí, the FUEGOS Foundation, and the universities working in Manabí, a campaign will be promoted to encourage inhabitants and companies based in Manabí to consume products from the province. The campaign will address children and young people to motivate their families to consume Manabí products, especially those related to food. Additionally, we will work with associations of productive sectors such as banana, livestock, and tuna farmers to incorporate regenerative practices in their production and transformation processes. Furthermore, there is potential for the development of recipe books that allow households and gastronomic establishments to develop a gastronomic proposal based on local and sustainable products.



2. Manabí as a Global Centre for Gastronomic Training

Manabí has the potential to become a national and international gastronomic training centre, attracting people passionate not only for its products and millenary culinary techniques but also for experiencing a process that seeks to advance towards the sustainable development of the territory based on the revaluation of local products, recipes and flavours.

Iche Technological Institute of Higher Education

One of the most emblematic projects of the province is the establishment of a training centre specializing in Manabí Cuisine. The Iche School of Food and Hospitality was established in 2021 with a vocational training centre that has benefited more than 100 young people in addition to gastronomic and tourism entrepreneurs in the search of traditional knowledge and the incorporation of haute cuisine techniques.

Given the impact that this gastronomic training project has had, it may be transformed into a Technological Institute of Higher Education that could offer a third level degree in its first three majors: a) Manabí Gastronomy; b) Regenerative Tourism and Hospitality; and, c) Innovation and Development of Food Products

The nascent Instituto Tecnológico Superior Iche seeks to become a glocal centre of gastronomic training focused on the revalorization of local gastronomic culture and the promotion of a dialogue between traditional and the scientific and technological knowledge. As part of the Iche Institute's training program, a study abroad program is being designed that will create the conditions for young people from all over the world to come to Manabí to learn about the diversity of its ecosystems and products, as well as the millenary cooking techniques fused with the highest culinary techniques.

Network of Manabí Gastronomy in Universities and Institutes

The network includes six higher education institutions that offer gastronomy degree programs: Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Escuela Superior Tecnológica de Manabí, Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Manabí, Universidad San Gregorio, and the emerging Instituto Tecnológico Superior Iche. This group wishes to establish a platform that will allow the exchange of students and joint research, teaching, and community outreach projects. Networking will allow for more effective management of alliances with foreign universities to carry out projects of shared interest.

Organization of the American Young Chef Award

Following in the footsteps of the European Young Chef Awards that has achieved success in promoting innovations on traditional cuisine and highlighting sustainable food cultures through the promotion of future chef ambassadors for local food products, Manabí offers to collaborate with the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism - IGCAT to design, implement and sustain an American Young Chef Award. The goal will be to imple-

ment its first edition in Manabí during 2026, the year when we hope to be World Region of Gastronomy and create the conditions to organize the award the following years in other countries of the continent. In doing so we will select and recognize emerging chefs from the Americas that are creating more sustainable and better quality of food experiences and support them in their quest to become ambassadors of their local food cultures and influencers for sustainable development.



3. Innovation

with an Open and Frugal Identity

The ecosystemic and cultural diversity of Manabí contrasts with the fact that value is only added to 3% of its products. This is due to the scarce existence of open innovation spaces where traditional knowledge is connected with scientific knowledge, and with a marked orientation to use frugal technologies that are accessible to the local population.

Network of Culinary Innovation Laboratories

Ichelab, a culinary innovation space aimed at adding value to the province's products, is located in the San Vicente county, in northern Manabí. Ichelab is also a facilitator of Colab Culinaria, a culinary innovation network established with the support of IDB Lab, made up of innovation spaces located in the highlands, the coast, and the Amazon region of Ecuador. Following the experience of Colab Culinaria, the goal now is to promote the creation of a network of culinary innovation laboratories with universities and study centres in Manabí, Ecuador, and the world. Following a methodology of open and frugal innovation, this culinary network will agree on lines of work around products and processes important to the economy and ecosystems of Manabí.



4. Manabí: Gastronomic Tourism Destination:

The Economy of Experiences

Just as we are moving from the economy of products to the economy of services, the world is moving towards the economy of experiences, where in addition to the product or service offered, a deep emotional connection is generated with the consumer.

Gastronomic Tourism Experiences

In recent years, several tourism routes related to the gastronomic experience have been developed in Manabí. An example of this is the creation of the Latitude Iche Gastronomic Tourism Route in the cantons that make up the North Pacific Community of Manabí – MANPANOR – which, with the support of Slow Food Travel, has built participatory experiences around iconic products of the area (cocoa, coffee, chilli, milk) that allow visitors to learn how the ingredients are produced, transform them with a local cook into recipes, and experience how they are transformed into artistic creations by the hands of local artisans.

There is also the Spondylus Route, a tourist, historical, and cultural tour along the Ecuadorian coast, which includes the entire coastal profile of Manabí. Apart from

being a route to enjoy the beaches and the gastronomy that Ecuador offers, it is a trip to learn about the pre-Columbian cultures that settled in these lands, which give us a glimpse of how the first inhabitants of the coasts of South America survived.

Additionally, we will work in close collaboration with Portoviejo's plans to promote agro-food sustainability as part of the 2030 Ibero-American Agenda for Gastronomic Tourism. The designation of Manabí as a world gastronomic region would enhance the processes that have been promoting gastronomic tourism in recent years.

The video Latitude Iche Route: A Journey Through the Flavors of Manabí was selected as the winner in the category World Gastronomic Region and awarded 2nd prize in all categories at the Food Film Menu 2023 held in Girona, España. Manabi will keep promoting the creation of other films that participate in the following Food Film Menu to share with the world our journey making food and culture the catalyzers of Manabí's sustainable development.

Creation of an Interactive Experiences

As a result of the collaboration with digital entrepreneurs, an interactive portal for foodie travelers will be created and translated into several languages, with experiences offered by Manabí organizations, including cooking classes, workshops on artisanal culinary products based on local ingredients, and spaces for the production of gastronomy-related handicrafts such as ceramics and wood.

In addition and starting with the Latitude Iche Gastronomic Route, Manabi will promote the creation of platforms for foodie travelers that includes best practices of usability and creativity to present the experiences promoted in Manabi. We will encourage these platforms to participate at the IGCAT's Top 10 Websites for Foodie Travelers to exchange best practices with similar initiatives being implemented in other regions of the world.



PHOTO: Ben Pippe

5. Strengthening

the National and International Promotion of the Identity and Culinary Culture of Manabí

The designation of Manabí as a World Gastronomic Region will provide the opportunity to strengthen and promote in and out of Ecuador the Manabí identity and culinary culture through the following programs:

Strengthening the Certificate of Authentic Manabí Food

With the participation of cooks and entrepreneurs, the characteristics that must be incorporated into the food of a gastronomic and tourist establishment to be considered Manabí Food were agreed upon among cooks and specialists in Manabita gastronomy. The development of the certificate of authentic Manabí food has allowed a very productive conversation about what is essential in terms of ingredients, use of products, and cooking techniques in Manabí food.

Work is beginning on the certification in tourist and gastronomic establishments in Manabí and Ecuador, accompanying them in the process of complying with the standards incorporated in the Seal of Authentic Manabí Food. As part of this plan, Manabí restaurants outside Ecuador will be encouraged to adopt the same techniques and the use of specific ingredients.

Incentives to Establish Manabí Restaurants in the World

In alliance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ecuadorian Embassies throughout the world, strategies to promote the establishment of Manabí restaurants globally will be established as part of the Bicentennial Plan of a Millenary Province. The plan will include training gastronomic entrepreneurs living abroad in the use of Manabí's iconic products and recipes. With the active role of the private sector, marketing systems for Manabí products abroad will be established, including the ingredients required for the preparation of the main dishes of the Manabí tradition.

International Week of Manabí Gastronomy

In recent years, during the month of Manabitis-mo (June), the Festival of the Ichcs has been held and has begun to include Manabí cooks living in other countries. As part of the overall plan, there would be an International Week of Manabí Gastronomy, Culture, and Art in the different cities of Ecuador and the world as a showcase to bring the Manabí culture to the world and promote tourism to Manabí.



Tourist and Gastronomy Fund

As a result of the collaboration between the public and private sectors, a fund will be created for the national and international promotion of Manabí as a gastronomic and tourism destination based on innovative, memorable experiences. The fund will be formed as a trust established by organizations from different sectors including the government of the province of Manabí, universities, business chambers, and civil society organizations focused on gastronomy, tourism, and culture.

This fund will contribute to the implementation of this plan and will be fed with contributions from the public sector institutions, international cooperation agencies, as well as the private sector. The fund will have a board of directors with representatives from various sectors and will incorporate the highest standards of transparency and accountability in the use of resources.



PHOTO: Patricio Tamariz Dueñas

6. Health

of the People and the Planet

Manabí has one of the highest rates of malnutrition and prevalence of diet-related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension in Ecuador. Unfortunately, Manabí also has some of the nation's highest rates of deforestation. Gastronomy has the potential to promote the consumption of local and sustainably produced products, which in turn generates incentives to implement the transition to more sustainable food systems. The following programs seek to contribute to this objective:

Diffusion of the Manabí Diet

The Manabí diet has historically been characterized by recipes that incorporate local, fresh and diverse products. Due to the advance of imported foods and industrialized ultra-processed foods, the knowledge base of the Manabí diet is being lost. In alliance with the newspaper with the largest circulation in Manabí (El Diario), a monthly publication will be made with traditional recipes from Manabí that will reach thousands of Manabí households, encouraging the rediscovery and application of the Manabí diet on a daily basis.

Transition to a Sustainable Agro-food System

On May 26, 2022, FAO and GPM signed a commitment for healthy and sustainable food that implies a public policy that supports the transition to a sustainable agro-food system. Additionally, the FUEGOS Foundation with the support of the NGO HIVOS is implementing an initiative that seeks to empower youth leadership to lead the transition to a sustainable food system in the cantons that make up the North Pacific Commonwealth of Manabí - MANPANOR. The results of this initiative are expected to be replicated throughout the province.

Promotion of Edible Forests

Manabí has one of the highest deforestation rates in Ecuador. As a province that lacks access to the snow-capped mountains of the Ecuadorian highlands, it must take special care of its watersheds. Edible forests are an excellent strategy to increase vegetation cover, care for water sources, and improve food security in the communities. The Boca Valdivia and Mono Verde projects located in the south and north of Manabí are living examples of the potential of edible forests. It is proposed, over the next few years, to expand the area of edible forests in Manabí as a strategy to promote the regeneration of ecosystems and contribute to food security.



PHOTO: Karen Toro

7. Making Manabí's Rural Areas *a Driving Force for Sustainable Development*

Manabí is one of the provinces with the largest rural population in Ecuador. Unfortunately, poverty is more intense in rural areas where there are fewer basic services, lower productivity, and less innovation than in urban areas. This reality has promoted the migration of rural youth to the cities, which has contributed to the growing abandonment of the countryside. One of the guiding principles of this plan is to promote the development of rural areas, thus contributing to the improvement of the quality of life, not only of the rural population but also of the entire territory. There are currently three programs planned to achieve this objective.

Bringing the Countryside to the City

Development processes tend to be urban-centric. They are usually conceived as an advance of urban dynamics towards the countryside, which are expressed in the aesthetics of public (public spaces) and private (housing) constructions. We consider the opposite is also necessary. For this reason, we will establish a project of urban gardens that will support the transition of cities into more rural-like environments.

Creative Economy in Rural Areas

The project will also work with schools of architecture and urban planning to ensure that public spaces in several Manabí cities, such as those connected to rivers, incorporate eco-systemic diversity criteria that will contribute to the sustainable development of the region in addition to the health of its citizens and the planet. The networks of universities and culinary innovation laboratories that will be strengthened as part of this plan will prioritize projects focused on products of the rural economy. The challenge will be to agree on shared lines of research, innovation and development that encourage the participation of young rural people as a strategy to strengthen the creative economy, attract investment and tourism to rural areas, which will in turn benefit urban areas as well and contribute to the sustainable development of the entire province.

Connecting the Countryside and the City

Business meetings will be organized between producers (farmers, livestock breeders) and gastronomic and tourism entrepreneurs to help reduce intermediaries, obtain a better price for the parties, and contribute to improving the quality of the products used in the gastronomic and food sector of Manabí.



PHOTO: Manuel Avíes

Marketing and Communication Strategy



As a result of the collaboration between the public and private sectors, a destination marketing organization with its Trust Fund will be created for the national and international promotion of Manabí as a gastronomic and tourism destination based on innovative, memorable experiences with provincial identity. This fund will be established by organizations from different sectors including the government of the province of Manabí, universities, business chambers, and civil society organizations focused on gastronomy, tourism and culture.

This fund will contribute to the implementation of a marketing and communication plan. This will include projects and actions that include brand strategy, content, promotional campaigns, advertising and public relations that will help position the gastronomic destination of Manabí.

This public/private Trust Fund will be conceived as a destination management organization which will receive contributions from the public sector, institutions, international cooperation agencies and the private sector. The fund will have a board of directors with representatives from various sectors and will incorporate the highest standards of transparency and accountability in the use of resources.

The Trust Fund will implement a marketing plan including the necessary studies, such as; market research,

statistical, trends, and socioeconomic and cultural research. This will help key stakeholders for better decision-making for the region.

The communicational concepts of the campaigns will be focused on the gastronomic attributes of Manabí. These will include specific marketing actions targeting the Food Industry, Press and Consumers. This will create the credibility and strengthening of Manabí's brand image/position in the marketplace.

The ancestral cuisine and cultural heritage of Manabí will be the highlights of all the activities designed in the marketing plan. With activities that include targeting the media, monthly international press trips will be organized. The itineraries focusing on the rural and oceanfront community's production base of foods will produce experiences for specific audiences. The idea is to screen and reach the top media that will benefit Manabí.

The audiovisual and digital media content produced will be in the languages of the country that will be premiered. The production of these elements based on Manabí's gastronomical offer will establish a distinctive culinary identity that highlights the province's signature dishes, secret recipes and unique cooking techniques.

The actions targeting the international food industry will include workshops to transmit the culinary excellence of quality products produced in Manabí. The workshops designed for marketing managers and food counter supervisors of supermarket chains all the way up to renowned chefs will surely start the Manabí food buzz.

Targeting new tour operators to sell and promote this region will include a series of workshops giving way to a travel agent specialization program.

We will negotiate a partnership with the airlines, obtaining their support and contribution with free airline tickets for the press as well as trip giveaways to the Manabí Gastronomy Travel Specialists.

In addition, a landing page will be created including a portfolio of beautiful natural and cultural products of the province. All traveler leads will be directed to local service providers including inbound tour operators, certified restaurants, lodging facilities, food processing and exporting businesses. This entity will create the space to gather key stakeholders (public and private) to discuss risks and problems, propose solutions that are strategically oriented, reach consensus and deliver the impacts of a true integrated marketing plan that will deliver a cohesive narrative for the benefit of all the work behind the culinary offer of Manabí.

Monitoring *and Sustainability*

To increase the transparency and accountability of the plan, a partnership will be established with an independent institution, either an auditing firm or an independent think tank, to create with local stakeholder intervention the program for sustainable tourism indicators for the gastronomic region of Manabí. These will measure the progress of the plan's objectives including the performance of its programs, projects and actions. The main strategies of the plan will also include successful data collection that will verify the use of resources, presenting an annual report to demonstrate compliance, challenges and lessons learned.

We will work with our team of professionals of the future public/private Trust Fund that is conceived as a Destination Management Organization (DMO) to create the first list of Sustainable Tourism Indicators for Gastronomic Destinations. This will be created initially as a list of basic indicators and with time it can evolve to add specific indicators for the different destinations in the region. This new list of indicators created in this region could be presented to the UNWTO and other institutions as a way to measure and create a sustainable food system that can measure specific parameters from green-house gases in agriculture to the quality of different sources of all the ingredients used in our ancestral cuisine.

In the plan we include best sustainable practices in tourism and gastronomic service and operations that eventually will lead to the development of certification and accreditation standards. We believe with monitoring, sustainability and regenerative projects all along the value chain, we will have created a pioneer set of criteria that meets global standards and that can be used all throughout the region. This permits high quality service not only by medium to large companies but also from the humblest of service suppliers that maintain customer service with care, cleanliness, hygiene and facilities in a perfect state of maintenance. Finally, it should be clear that the requirements for a community micro-business are simpler than those of a large-scale service provider nor are the requirements for hotels, restaurants or the sale of crafts the same.

Compliance over time will be measured with a checklist based on good practice and quality criteria, as well as a monitoring and evaluation program. The main entry mechanism, particularly for medium, small and micro businesses (being rural or urban), will be to successfully complete a training program approved by the Trust Fund. These capacity building sessions have the objectives, among others, of helping community food service microenterprises of this region to achieve the

necessary levels of quality and health for national and international visitors, while helping hotels and tour operators comply with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

Finally, the evaluation program is oriented towards the final assessment of the components of the Plan. The main objective will be the measurement

of the final results obtained in comparison with what was established as a baseline. Specific indicators in Food Service will be measured through surveys, aimed at specific population groups including locals and visitors to this region, that will eventually lead to the tracking of everyday good practices.

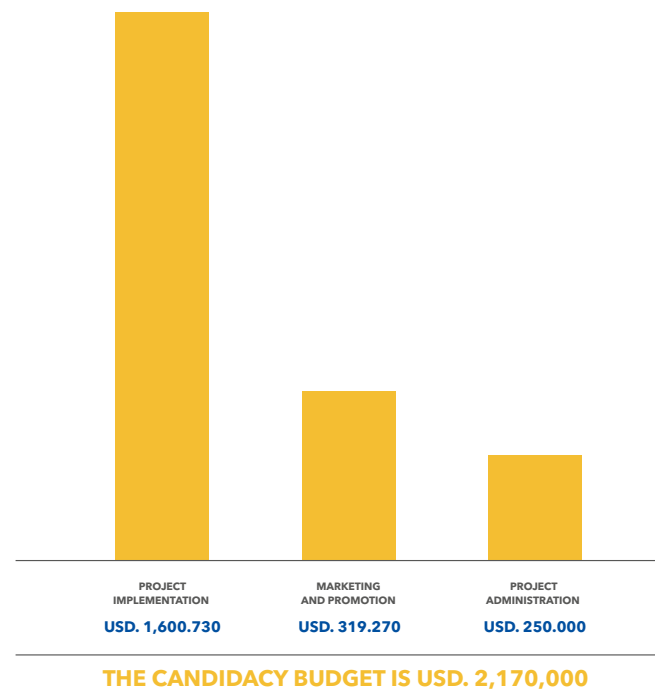


PHOTO: Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador

Budget

Each of the seven strategies of the Bicentennial Plan for a Millenary Gastronomy has a budget that will allow for its proper implementation. The resources will come from the management carried out by the institutions that make up the Promotion Committee for Manabí's candidacy as a World Gastronomic Region and will mobilize support from international co-operation, public institutions, the private sector, and individuals who will contribute to its implementation. Manabí's candidacy for World Region of Gastronomy 2026 includes the following strategic projects:

1. Circular Gastronomy
2. Consumption of Local Products: Manaba come manaba (Manaba eats manaba) Campaign
3. Iche Technological Institute of Higher Education
4. Network of Manabí Gastronomy in Universities and Institutes
5. Organization of the American Young Chef Award
6. Network of Culinary Innovation Laboratories
7. Gastronomic Tourism Experiences
8. Creation of Interactive Experiences
9. Strengthening the Certificate of Authentic Manabí Food
10. Incentives to Establish Manabí Restaurants in the World
11. International Week of Manabí Gastronomy
12. Tourist and gastronomy fund
13. Diffusion of the Manabí Diet
14. Transition to a Sustainable Agro-food System
15. Promotion of Edible Forests
16. Bringing the Countryside to the City
17. Creative Economy in Rural Areas
18. Connecting the Countryside and the City



Governance

The committee responsible for organizing the governance of the implementation of this plan is the Promotion Committee of the candidature de Manabí as World Region of Gastronomy (Promotion Committee for Manabí's Candidacy as a World Gastronomic Region). The Committee, made up of the Provincial Government of Manabí, the Chamber of Industry and Productivity of Manabí, the Eloy Alfaro LAIC University of Manabí, and the FUEGOS Foundation, will con-

vene members from different sectors to form different working groups responsible for carrying out the different strategies included in this plan. The implementation of this plan strengthens the nascent Manabí Food Integrating Movement that has begun to take its first steps including producers, entrepreneurs, and civil society, as well as public and private institutions that seek to make gastronomy, culture, art and tourism the catalysts for the development of Manabí.







WORLD REGION OF GASTRONOMY
MANABÍ CANDIDATE 2026



PROMOTION COMMITTEE



GOVERNMENT OF MANABÍ



FUEGOS FOUNDATION



CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY AND
PRODUCTION OF MANABÍ



ELOY ALFARO UNIVERSITY
OF MANABÍ

WITH THE SUPPORT OF