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Spanish Food *duelos y quebrantos* 'Sorrows and Breakings' in light of *hot dog*

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SPANISH FOOD *DUELOS Y QUEBRANTOS* ‘SORROWS
AND BREAKINGS’ IN LIGHT OF *HOT DOG*¹ (draft #2)

ORIGIN OF *DUELOS Y QUEBRANTOS* IS UNCLEAR;
PASSAGE FROM FORD 1906

The distinguished scholar of Spanish literature, J. Ford, presents the following observations on *duelos y quebrantos* in his 1906 work, p. 98:

‘**Duelos y quebrantos.** A puzzling expression. Ormsby in his translation (Fitzmaurice-Kelly ed., p. 19) gives this note:

“*Duelos y quebrantos*, the title of the Saturday dish, would be a puzzle even to the majority of Spanish readers, were it not for Pellicer’s explanation. [Pellicer was an eighteenth-century commentator on the *Don Quixote*.]² In the cattle-feeding districts of Spain the carcasses of animals that come to an untimely end were converted into salt meat, and the offal, scraps and parts unfit for that purpose were sold cheap under the name of *duelos y quebrantos* – ‘sorrows and losses,’ literally ‘breakings.’ On Saturday, which in Castile was kept as a fast-day in commemoration of the battle of Navas de Tolosa [won from the Moors by Alfonso VIII in 1212]³, the Castilians...held themselves justified in eating the head, neck, feet, kidneys, and all parts of the animal, in short, included in the term ‘*menudo*’; and ‘*duelos y quebrantos*’ apparently came under the same denomination, and served as a kind of fast-day fare for the poorer classes. Any tendering of such a phrase must necessarily be unsatisfactory, and in adopting ‘scraps’ I have...merely gone on the principle of choosing the least of evils.”

¹The solution suggested here was first presented in Cohen 1980, then in Cohen/Popik/Shulman (2004: 203-204). A few additions are made in the present draft.

²This bracketed comment about Pellicer is made by Ford, but the specific reference is not given.

³This bracketed comment in made by Ford.

‘But Pellicer’s conjecture remains only a conjecture. What particular appropriateness is there in the term *duelos y quebrantos* as applied to such food? Pellicer said:

“This food was called *duelos y quebrantos* with reference to the regret and sorrow which were caused, as is natural, in the owners by the diminution of their live stock [since he assumed that the dish was made from the flesh of animals that had met an accidental death], and the breaking of the bones.”

‘Cortejón, in his edition, vol. 1, p. 50, discusses the matter anew and finds Pellicer’s explanation far from certain. ...’

BUT THE SOLUTION IS OBVIOUS

In the 19th century there was a popular U.S. belief that dog meat could turn up in sausages, and in fact this sometimes did occur. It was scandalous and disgusting, but it did occur and led to the originally somewhat gross term ‘hot dog,’ popularized in the 1890s by college students. The practice also became a staple of popular U.S. humor, and abundant details on the whole subject are presented in Cohen/Popik/ Shulman 2004.

Now, with the thought of the unappetizing sausages made from dogs—particularly from those which died of natural causes—firmly in mind, the origin of *duelos y quebrantos* becomes quite clear: ‘sorrows and breakings’ refers to a whopping stomach ache. We deal not only with cattle which met an untimely death (perhaps occasionally through disease), but with the least edible parts of the animal. Perhaps a good meal could occasionally be had from such an animal, but it seems just as likely that a severe upset stomach would result.

APPENDIX:

WIKIPEDIA’S SUMMARY OF *DUELOS Y QUEBRANTOS*

Wikipedia contains a summary about *duelos y quebrantos*, including the continuing mystery about its naming. Here are excerpts:

‘Los **duelos y quebrantos** es un plato tradicional de la cocina manchega (España), cuyos ingredientes principales son huevo

revuelto, chorizo y tocino de cerdo entreverado, todo ello preparado en la sartén. Se trata de un plato de alto contenido calórico, conocido internacionalmente por aparecer referencias de él en el libro de Don Quijote de la Mancha de Miguel de Cervantes. Hoy en día es muy popular en los restaurantes de la región de Castilla-La Mancha, donde suele servirse en cazuela de barro.

‘Historia y denominación

Nada se sabe acerca del origen de este plato, y aunque existen diversas teorías acerca del contenido de la receta así como del origen del nombre, algunos autores dudan de que se refiera a la denominación de un alimento preparado ya que no existe referencia al mismo antes que Cervantes lo mencionara en su libro *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. La teoría menos apoyada acerca del origen menciona que algunos labradores, al sufrir la muerte repentina de un animal de labor, como las vacas, el burro, el caballo, aprovechaban su carne preparando un guiso con ella, y el nombre procede de los «Duelos y Quebrantos» que el labrador sufría durante su cocinado. Ya en el Diccionario de Autoridades de 1732 se hace mención al plato, dando apoyo a la idea del revuelto de huevo: «Llaman en la Mancha a tortilla de huevos y sesos».

Sobre la idea de «duelo y quebranto» algunos estudiosos sostienen que el nombre hace alusión al «quebranto» del ayuno impuesto sobre las carnes de cerdo tanto en las religiones judía (kosher) como islámica (halal) y su posterior «duelo» tras haber violado los preceptos del ayuno. En aquella época existía la expresión «cristiano viejo», sobre la que el lexicógrafo Covarrubias menciona que a comienzos del siglo XVII: «Todo cristiano viejo tiene siempre provisión de huevos y tocino». ...’

Se sabe que fue un plato de agasajo y que participó la viuda de Filipe IV, Mariana de Austria el domingo 26 de septiembre de 1669 en casa de unos labriegos de la La Roda que le dieron hospedaje. En la obra de Lope de Vega titulada Las bizzarrías de Belisa menciona:

Almorzábamos unos torreznos
con sus *duelos y quebrantos* (...)’

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- Ford, J. D. M. 1908. *Selections from Don Quixote*. Lexington, Massachusetts.
- Martinez Llopis, Manuel M. (1989). *Historia de la Gastronomía Española* (primera edición). Madrid: Alianza editorial. ----
Wikipedia's summary of *duelos y quebrantos* dismisses the etymology proposed by Martinez Llopis:
' La teoría menos apoyada acerca del origen menciona que algunos labradores, al sufrir la muerte repentina de un animal de labor, como las vacas, el burro, el caballo, aprovechaban su carne preparando un guiso con ella, y el nombre procede de los «Duelos y Quebrantos» que el labrador sufría durante su cocinado.'
- Translation: 'The theory with least support concerning the origin says that some farmhands, upon suffering the sudden death of a work animal, such as cows, a donkey, a horse, make use of its flesh by preparing a stew with it, and the name comes from the "Pains and Breakings" that the farmhand suffers during its cooking.'
- Rodríguez Marín, Francisco (1928). "*Duelos y Quebrantos*". Madrid. «Apéndice VII del Tomo último del Quijote».
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