Yerba Mate in Argentina
A Cultural Reflection and Projection through a Popular Pastime
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A Little About Me

Hometown: Cedar Rapids, IA

Majors: Chemical Engineering Spanish

Study Abroad: Fall 2014 – Buenos Aires, Argentina

Graduation: May 2015!
Mate: The Initial Exposure

Mate is Everywhere!

- Morning
- Midday
- Afternoon
- Evening

- Parks
- Shops
- Offices
- Fairs
Outline

What is Culture?

History of Mate

Cultural Reflection

Social Classes: Gauchos to the Elite

Everyday Use

Health Benefits

High Beauty Standards

Cultural Projection

Conclusions
What defines culture?

“...a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by members of a particular society.”

–Linton, R. (1945)
What is yerba mate?

**Tree:**
*Ilex paraguariensis*  
- Holly family

**Plant Origin:**  
Eastern Paraguay

**Name Origin:**
- *yerba* = hierba  
  (Spanish for herb)
- *mate* = matí  
  (Quichua for drinking gourd)

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**History of Mate**

1. Cultivated Tree  
   [Link](http://www.rutadelayerbamate.org.ar/yerba-mate%C2%BFque-es-la-yerba-mate/)

2. Current Yerba Mate Occurrence  
   [Link](http://www.ushuaia.pl/yerba/where)
Journey to Argentina

Late 16th Century: Jesuit Missions

1580: Yerba common in Buenos Aires Province

1680: Buenos Aires consumed 1,000 metric tons annually

1800's: Paraguay loses yerba monopoly

2010: Argentina is world leader in production (280,000 metric tons/yr)

History of Mate

1. Yapeyú
2. La Cruz
3. Santo Tomé
4. San Borja
5. San Nicolás
6. San Luis
7. San Lorenzo
8. San Miguel
9. San Juan
10. Santo Angel
11. Apóstoles
12. Concepción
13. Santa María
14. San Javier
15. Martínez
16. San José
17. San Carlos
18. Candelaria
19. Santa Ana
20. Loreto
21. San Ignacio Mini
22. Corpus
23. Jesús
24. Trinidad
25. Itapua
26. San Cosme
27. Santiago
28. Santa Rosa
29. Santa María de Fe
30. San Ignacio Guazú

How is mate consumed?

Originally chewed by native Guaraní

Beverage:

Socially

Individually

Mate Circle in the Park: [http://topthisplace.com/yerba-mate.html](http://topthisplace.com/yerba-mate.html)

Mate in the Alturas: [http://www.taringa.net/posts/info/1309966/Megapost-El-mate-argentino-un-sentimiento.html](http://www.taringa.net/posts/info/1309966/Megapost-El-mate-argentino-un-sentimiento.html)
Is mate part of Argentine culture?

Where and how is mate represented in Argentine culture?
**Mate & Low Classes: José Hernández**

**El Gaucho Martín Fierro** (1872)

“The man who kept the store was a friend of the Chief; he gave us **mate** and tobacco in exchange for the ostrich‐feathers, even a glint of silver, if you'd brought him a hide.”

(Verse 115)

**La Vuelta de Martín Fierro** (1879)

“...and a friend of mine told me that out of pure rage and spite he killed his wife by beating her for serving his **mate** cold.”

(Verse 752)
Mate & High Classes: Jose Mármol

Amalia (1851)

“Doña María Josefa, wrapped in a large white merino shawl with a red border, was seated on a small bamboo sofa standing at the head of her bed, drinking a mate of milk which a young negro girl had just brought to her from an inner room.” (186)

José Mármol:
http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/jose_marmol/imagenes_jose_marmol/imagen/imagenes_jose_marmol_07_jose_marmol_retrato
Mate & High Classes:

- **Mate cocido**
  - Mate + Hot Coals + Sugar

- **Silver bombillas**
  - Intricate gourds
“I went down to the kitchen, heated the kettle, and when I got back with the tray of mate, I told Irene: “I had to shut the door to the passage. They’ve taken over the back part.””
Everyday Use of Mate: The Tango

Yira... Yira... (1927)
Music & Lyrics by Enrique Santos Discépolo

“...cuando no tengas ni fe, ni yerba de ayer secándose al sol...”

Carlos Gardel:
http://www.elblogalternativo.com/2010/03/03/yira-yira-un-tango-sobre-el-velo-que-cubre-el-mundo/
Mate Health Benefits

**Compound Effects**

- Anticarcinogenic
- Antidiabetic
- Antiobesity
- Antioxidant
- Antitumor
- Diuretic
- Stimulant
- Vasodialator

**Other Benefits**

- Suppresses Appetite (Slows Digestion)
- Increases Metabolism
- Thermogenic
- Less “Jittery” Energy
High Beauty Standards

AnyBody 6
• 50% of women would like to drop a dress size
• 65% have trouble finding fashionable clothes that fit

ALUBA* 7
• 1 in 25 Argentine youths suffer from bulimia/anorexia

“Physical beauty, judged by very narrow standards, is a key requirement of appropriate feminine appearance and plays a prominent role in Argentine culture.” 8 (65)

*Association Against Bulimia and Anorexia

Scale: http://eknow.us/healthy-weight-for-your-age/weight-scale/
Will mate become relevant outside of South America?

Cultural Projection

Targeting Health- and Environmentally-Conscious

Enticing Product Description

Social Media Capabilities

Source: http://guayaki.com/product/2516/Classic-Gold-Sparkling-Mate-%3Cbr%3E-%5BCase-of-12%5D.html
Will mate become relevant outside of South America?

Source: http://guayaki.com/product/2536/4-Shot-Sample-Pack.html

Conclusions

Yerba mate is learned and shared behavior, making it an integral part of Argentine culture.

Yerba mate is reflected in Argentine literature, tangos, and dietary promotions in order to portray its use across social classes, use in everyday life, and its relation to health and beauty.

While yerba mate has the potential to be projected to other parts of the world, significant marketing changes are required to appeal to different cultures.
Questions?

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Works Cited


