Eating Guinea Pigs in Illinois

Bryan Clemons
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Goals

• Experience Cuy Husbandry
• Adapt this Subsistence Strategy to fit the North American Domicile
• Put Guinea Pigs on the Table in Edwardsville IL
Methods

• Experiential
  – Field notes
  – Video,
  – Pictures

• Hermeneutic Reflection (Hodder 1991)

• Autoethnography (Wall 2006)
  – Rich in personal inferences
  – My understandings
Archaeological Record

• Exploitation of cuy’s wild ancestor 9000 years ago (Wing 1986)
  – Central Andean highlands middens
  – Charred remains, with cut Marks
• Fully domesticated 4500 years ago (Wing 1997)
  – Sacrificial offerings
    • Kotosh
    • Chavin de Huantar
• Domesticated 5000-7000 years ago? (Stahl 2003)
Domestication

• Wild ancestor: *(Cavia aperea)*
  – Anatomical Studies (Stahnke & Hendrichs 1988)
  – Molecular Analysis (Spotorno et al. 2006)

• Artificial Selection
  – Morphological
    • Neoteny
  – Behavioral
    • Reduction of aggressiveness
    • Less attentive
    • Increased reproduction
  – Breed in captivity
How Did They Get Here?

• A long trip twice across the Atlantic
  – Three Step Hypothesis
    • 1- Andes: original domestication
    • 2- Europeans: took a few home with them in the 1600’s
    • 3- Creole: meat production
  – 2 lineages of \( \textit{Cavia porcellus} \)
    • DNA (Spotorno et al.)
Ethnographic Studies

- Andean Peoples’
  - Traditionally
    - Hearth is home
    - Diet: scraps, and hay
    - Water
  - Modern
    - Farms
    - Cuyrias
Natural Habitat?

- My Kitchen Floor!
Adaptation

• North American Domicile
  – Basement
Sustainability

- Compostables
  - Not going to a landfill
- Protein Source
  - Not much on the bone
  - Low resource cost
Taboo?

• Pet-Keeping
  – Human Phenomena
    • From: suburbia North America
    • To: jungle dwelling tribes
      – Kalapalo tribe of Amazonia (Serpell 1989)

?Not So Much?
Food and Identity

- Poor Peoples Food
  - In The Andes
    - Cuy
  - North America
    - Squirrel, Raccoon

$$ eating poor can be expensive $$
Ethical Issues

• Cuy
  – Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
    • CITI (working with guinea pigs in a research setting)
  – Care
    • Diet: whole foods, no pellets
    • Housing

• People
  – Honesty
  – Provide finished product
Cuy de Cuba
Cuy Conclusion

• Raising them is easy
  – Low energy input, but low return
  – Environmentally Friendly
• For most North Americans it’s odd to eat “guinea pigs”
• Taboo? Less than anticipated
Bryon Daggett - chef extraordinaire
Talbert Eisenberg – my mentor and friend
Russell Sanders - for great advice
Greg Vogel - you’ve been GREAT!
Julie Holt - you inspire me
Cleo’s - family restaurant bar and grill
Shannon - for all the pens
Jojo - for everything
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