

ON THE MICROBIOLOGY OF *BROA DE AVINTES*, A PORTUGUESE TRADITIONAL SOURDOUGH BREAD

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Avintes, a small northern county in Portugal, is widely known for its sourdough bread (*BROA DE AVINTES*). Its production dates back to the time of king *D. Dinis* (13th century), who granted to Avintes the monopoly for producing the maize bread required by the whole population of Porto.

Despite its original geographical location, maize bread originated in several places, from the South of Douro river to the North of Corunha, is currently traded as *Broa de Avintes*. This situation can not be legally prevented before certification has occurred via definition of an *Appellation d'Origine Protégée* (DOP). In order to scientifically support this goal, several microbiological analyses of raw materials (*viz.* sourdough, and maize and rye flours), made available by traditional producers, were duly performed.

This study has shown that sourdough, as well as maize and rye flours, have a diverse and complex wild microflora. Furthermore, the quantitative ratios between the viable numbers of the several groups of microorganisms considered is unique, which can justify why *Broa de Avintes* is such an exquisite food specialty.