

Maybe equivalent to the North American ranch, the estancia was the first productive unit in the River Plate. The same priests Jesuits created them in the XVIIIth century to be able to feed themselves and to finance their educational institutes without depending on any government.

In the Pampas, the first estancias devoted themselves fundamentally to cattle and were growing as they displaced the Indian increasingly far from the Christian cities. During the XIXth century, the rough ranchers pampeanos were turning into a luck of feudal powerful gentlemen opposite to the intellectual "porteños". More than one century ago, from the area today known as San Miguel del Monte, came to Buenos Aires a famous rancher and his gauchos, to restore the political order opposite to the reigning chaos: Don Juan Manuel de Rosas.

A pessimistic view states that cattle farming determined the slightly developed industrious character of many Argentines. Cows offered a revenue that did not demand too much effort or investment and the meat exported to the British empire fed the more fabulous fortunes that could be admired in the Buenos Aires palaces. Today, the historians have reappraised the role of the XIXth Century estancieros, stressing that they have transformed their units to high quality meat production, through a massive investment in refined cattle, modern layout and complex equipment, creating a specific technology for that. Newly at the end of the XIXth century a certain interest in agriculture appears. The cheap workforce (manpower) given by the European immigration allowed to sow and to harvest massively the land. Rapidly, Argentine was transformed in the granary of the world and fed Europe after being devastated by hunger and war. In Spain they still remember the ships of wheat sent by General Perón to the Generalissimo Franco. At present, with the genetics revolution and the increasing prices of the soybean, "green oil" for the ranchers, the estancia is turning into a gigantic food factory that reaches markets as infinite as the Chinese, the Indian or the European.

THE GAUCHO:

For many Argentines the gaucho is a myth, an ideal character more than real, an archetype. For others, the gaucho changed when the wired of lands and the civilization came and lost his freedom. The *Martin Fierro*, foundational book of the Argentines, reports the misfortunes of a rebellious gaucho. Some see the gaucho as the equivalent one to the American cow boy. Nevertheless, the cow boy was a real pioneer moved by money and progress, the gaucho did not need to work too much to survive in a land where were exceeding food and fields. Because of it he preferred staying poor but free from any boss. Many people assure that today there are no more gauchos in the Argentine pampas. But surely you will cross with more than one gaucho that instead of a horse, rides on a truck enjoying the freedom that the Argentine routes allow him and refusing to turn into one wage earner.

THE MATE:

The yerba mate is an original infusion of Paraguay which is part the basic diet of the Argentinean closely as important as meat. Besides the nutritional components that harmonize the digestion and maybe the nervous system, the rite of the mate has a social fundamental component: mate is meant to be shared with your family or with friends passing over one same container bulb hand in hand. Hollywood movies show gauchos each one with his own mate; such individualism provokes great fun in the Argentine spectator.

