The art of Mexican cooking. Culinary agency and social dynamics in Milpa Alta, Mexico.


Abstract

Drawing on Alfred Cell's 'art nexus' theory, this dissertation considers cooking as a kind of artistic practice. The focus of this study is the culinary culture of barbacoa-makers in the community of Barrio San Mateo, Milpa Alta in Mexico City. Mexican cuisine is analysed at three levels - the social and culinary contexts of the production and consumption of barbacoa; the daily life of women and especially their domestic cooking tasks; and the dynamics of hospitality, as expressed in the cycle of fiestas. Barbacoa is pit-roast lamb, and the production of it is an important means of livelihood in San Mateo (along with the cultivation of nopales, and other agricultural activities). Barbacoa - which is served during fiestas, and also eaten in the market on Sundays and holidays - is produced by married couples whose social environment both creates and is created by the practices surrounding the preparation of the dish. The division of labour observed in making barbacoa is directly related to normative gender roles, i.e. those performed in the normal domestic context. Women are associated with cooking, which includes making salsas and other foods which require laborious culinary input. They appear to be restricted both by the expectations of men and by the demands of the kitchen. But male and female gender roles are shown, in this dissertation, to be complementary, and they are not in general characterized by the hierarchy of men over women. Examination of the fiesta cycle further reveals that the basis of social interaction is the conjugal unit, both at the level of families (through links of compadrazgo, co-parenthood), and at the level of the community (through the mayordomia, the 'cargo system'). Women may be viewed as culinary artists whose body of work is the corpus of Mexican cuisine. The source of their culinary mastery is located in the individual's hand or sazon de amor, a touch of love. The development of 'traditional' cuisine is therefore born of the domestic realm as a product of artistic innovation and technical skill, both in a culinary and a social sense. Counter to Goody's theory, this high cuisine is not the product of a hierarchical society, as such, but rather develops from the highly-valued work of women as wives, mothers, and family cooks.

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Mexico has a wide range of natural environments, but temperatures are generally mild year-round. The coastal plains and lower areas of southern Mexico are usually hot and humid. Mexico City, the country's capital, and other inland areas are at higher elevations and are generally drier. Annual rainfall may exceed 200 inches in the more tropical zones of the coastal areas, while parts of Baja California (a long, narrow peninsula located just south of California) receive very little precipitation. Desert-like conditions exist in the north. Although only about one-fifth of the country remains Learn More. Milpa Alta (Mexico). 5 works Search for books with subject Milpa Alta (Mexico). Search. Read. Publishing History. This is a chart to show the publishing history of editions of works about this subject. Along the X axis is time, and on the y axis is the count of editions published. Click here to skip the chart. Reset chart or continue zooming in. This graph charts editions published on this subject. Editions Published. Year of Publication. Related In Milpa Alta, south of Mexico City is located the main producing area of nopal Opuntia ficus-indica L. systematic sampling was performed to determine the existence of nematodes associated with the rhizosphere of crop. 11 genera of phytosanitary importance were identified, outstanding Cactodera cacti (Filipjev and Schuurnans-Stekhoven, 1941; Krall and Krall, 1978), main nematode of importance in the cultivation of nopal.