



Culinary Institute
of America

Mexican Cuisine

Day One: Introduction,
Puebla and Oaxaca



Learning Objectives

- Identify the ethnic groups and cultural influences that have shaped Mexican cuisine.
- List the key ingredients characteristic of Mexican cuisine.
- Identify unique Mexican kitchen tools and equipment.
- Understand the flavor principles of Mexican cuisine.
- Recognize popular Mexican dishes, focusing on Puebla and Oaxaca.
- Prepare a variety of Mexican dishes following standardized recipes.

Influences on Mexican Cuisine



Aztec and Mayan

- Diverse, plant-based diet
- Vegetables: corn (maize), beans, squash, tomatoes, sweet potato, chiles
- Fruits: manioc, avocados, agave
- Protein: fowl, dogs, insects
- Little cooking oil or fat

Spanish

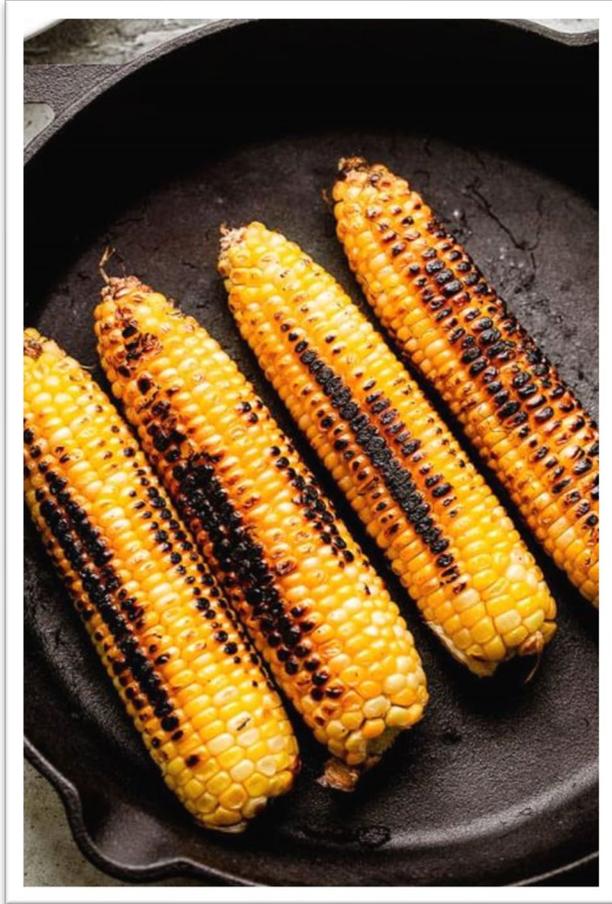
- Livestock: sheep, goats, pigs, cattle
- more meat, fat, rice

Flavor Profiles

- **Garlic, Onion, Lime**
- **Stewed and Fresh Tomatoes**
- **Herbs and Spices:** Mexican oregano, cumin, chile powder, chipotle, epazote, cilantro
- **Chiles:**
 - Indigenous to Mexico
 - Fresh or dried
 - Used for flavor, not just heat



Cooking Techniques



- **Roasting/ charring:** *comal* or open fire
- **Frying:** taquitos, flautas, chimichangas
- **Boiling/ simmering:** tender meat, vegetables in a *cazuela*

Kitchen Tools

- **Metate:** grinding stone for processing herbs, grains
- **Molcajete:** mortar + pestle
- **Comal:** smooth, flat griddle
- **Cazuela:** traditional clay pot



Vera Mexicana



Vel Mex



Mex Grocer



Ancient Cookware

Chile Peppers

- Over 200 varieties
- Varied heat, flavors
- **Fresh:** bright, crunchy
 - jalapeño, habaño, poblano
- **Dried:** slow burn, concentrated spice, means of preservation
 - chipotle, ancho, guajillo



Herbs, Seeds, Spices



- **Herbs:** cilantro, epazote, Hoja Santa, oregano, marjoram
- **Seeds:** pumpkin, sesame, annatto
- **Spices:** different mixes for every region - cinnamon, cloves, allspice, cumin, anise, black pepper

Salsa

- Predates Spanish colonial period
- Served as a condiment, dip, stirred into soups, stews, fillings
- Many varieties: cooked/ raw, blended/ chunky, fresh/ dried chiles
 - **Salsa verde:** green, tomatillo-based, with chiles, onion, garlic, cilantro
 - **Pico de gallo:** fresh, chunky, with tomato, onion, jalapeño, cilantro, lime
 - **Salsa taquera:** fresh tomato, chile de árbol, onion, garlic, salt



Corn (*maize*)



- Staple of the Americas
- Cultivated in southern Mexico 9,000 years ago
- Uses: ground corn (*masa harina*), corn oil, corn starch, corn syrup
- Used to make tortillas, tamales
- Less protein than wheat

Cactus Leaves (*Nopales*)

- Thick, meaty texture (“green steaks”)
- Cooking methods: roasted, sautéed, juiced, grilled
- Served whole, sliced on salads, or chopped for stir-fries
- **Flavor:** mild, grassy/ earthy, citrusy, reminds some of asparagus



Corn Fungus (*Huitlacoche*)



- “the truffle of Mexico”
- Complex, earthy flavor, slightly sweet
- Grows on corn kernels
- Sautéed, roasted
- Used as filling in tacos, tamales, quesadillas

Other Staples

- **Meat/ poultry:** fried pork skin (*chicharron*), chorizo
- **Cheese:** *oaxaceña*, *cotija*, *fresco*
- **Beans:** pinto, black, bayo, lima
- **Fruits:** avocado, papaya, mango, raisins
- **Vegetables:** squash, potato, sweet potato, tomatillo, pepper, jicama



Mole

- Traditional sauce and marinade, accompanies boiled meat, served with rice and tortillas
- Complex flavors: chiles, chocolate, spices, nuts
- Many stages of preparation: depth of flavor built in layers
- Different types in Puebla and Oaxaca



Tamales



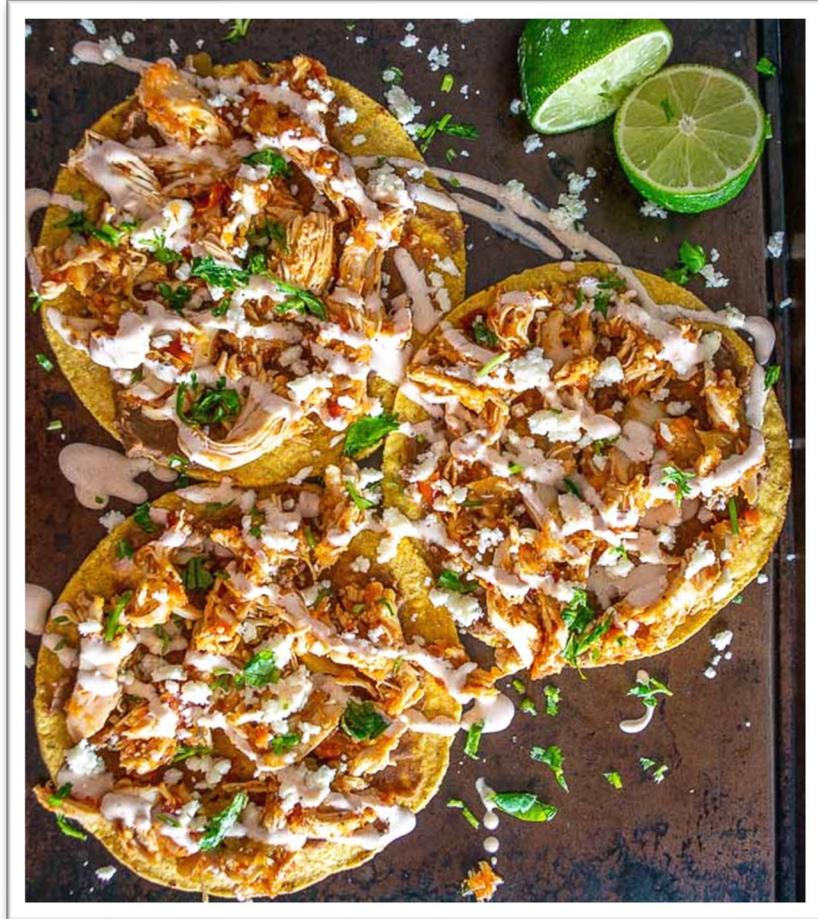
- **Tamales verdes:** zesty, tangy, *masa* (corn dough) infused with green salsa, steamed in corn husk
- **Chaya:** chaya leaves, vibrant green color, subtle, spinach flavor
- **Corundas:** intense flavor, dense, tender, salty, cooked until golden
- **Uchepos:** mildly sweet taste, served with tomato sauce, crema, and *queso fresco*

Stuffed Peppers (*Chiles Rellenos*)

- Roasted poblanos stuffed with cheese, rice, or other fillings
- Eggs are whipped to create airy batter
- Fried until golden and crispy
- Served over tomato sauce, or variation in walnut sauce (*Chiles en Nogadas*)



Popular Dishes



- ***Tinga and Picadillo:*** braised, shredded pork fillings
- ***Bocoles and Memelas:*** masa-based snacks
- ***Sopa de Tortilla:*** brothy tomato soup flavored with chiles and herbs, garnished with fried tortillas

Beverages

- **Pulque:** fermented sap of agave plant
- **Mezcal:** distilled agave spirit, smoky flavor
- **Agua fresca:** herbal tea
- **Horchata:** ground almond and rice drink flavored with cinnamon



Desserts

- **Arroz con leche:** rice pudding with cinnamon, vanilla, raisins, coconut
- **Flan:** baked egg custard
- **Mazamorra:** thick, rich pudding made with masa (corn dough), chocolate, and spices
- **Buñuelos:** crispy, sweet, disc-shaped pastries



Puebla

- In a broad valley between mountains and volcanoes
- Founded by the Spanish
- Important stop on trade route between Mexico City and Veracruz
- Considered the birthplace of national cuisine of Mexico.



Iconic Dishes of Puebla

- **Pipian Verde:** pumpkin seed mole
- **Tlacoyos:** boat-shaped masa snacks filled with black beans
- **Molotes:** similar to empanadas
- **Chalupas:** fried, soft-chewy masa rounds, topped with shredded meat, chopped onion and salsa





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Any Questions?