

Mamacita: Recipes Celebrating Life as a Mexican Immigrant in America

Andrea Pons

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Immigrant Andrea Pons's vibrant cookbook *Mamacita* gathers the dishes that helped her to maintain a strong sense of culture while she was away from her first home.

Noting that Mexican life “revolves around the next meal,” Pons's cookbook includes dishes to fill the whole day, stretching from long mornings into late night snacks. It includes Mexican cuisine staples alongside fresh modern plates. Both are garnished with fascinating stories about their cultural and family roots.

Pons discusses the Aztec origins of guacamole, the regal roots of pozole, the way that aguachile is “a road map to the history of Mexican culture,” and the patriotic but anachronistic origin story of stuffed peppers in walnut sauce with pomegranate seeds—a visual evocation of Mexico's current flag. There are no taco recipes herein—“if you want to eat a taco like a Mexican immigrant, you don't need a recipe,” Pons winks.

Elsewhere, family tales—of hikes through Mexico's hills; of how chicken bouillon powder tastes like home; of warm family feasts replete with chilled delicacies in dry months; and of gossiping while rolling tamales—exemplify Pons's maxim that “there is no better feeling than showing you love someone by making them a meal.” The crave-worthy dishes that she walks her audience through include papaya with mint; prickly pear and yogurt, spiced up with Tajin; and cold cucumber soup with mint and dill, for those hot summer months. There are corn cakes that pair equally well with savory pork accouterments and morning coffee, and desserts including melon with white wine and bananas in cream.

“Cooking these dishes was an act of self-love,” Pons says, in a place where she was told she could never fit in. Her story, paired with her accessible recipes for cultural favorites and future classics, makes *Mamacita* a welcoming introduction to home cooking Mexican cuisine.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September / October 2022)

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