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Regional Cuisine Of Mexico

By Kirsten Hawkins

Just south of the United States and bordering the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, Mexico is

quickly advancing both culturally and economically. The devaluation of the peso in 1994 threw the Mexican economy into a frenzy, lowering their per capita income to a mere quarter of that of the United States. Through repeated social and economic turmoil, the rich cultures of the original Yucatan civilizations has remained, though somewhat jaded after their emersion from under Spanish rule in the 19th century.

It isn't hard to research the rich history of Mexican cuisine. When the Spaniards first landed in Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) they carefully chronicled every aspect of life there in Mexico, especially the food and cooking techniques of the natives. During their observations, they noticed that the Mexicans had a lot of corn-based foods. This was due to the fact that maize was Mexico's chief crop at the time. A lot of these notes have carefully been preserved in the name of history—not that that is necessary. The Mexican culture has continued to live on through food, if through nothing else at all.

Be warned: Mexican food is not for the faint of stomach. Consisting of such rich, heavy foods as tortillas, chili peppers, and beans, many bodies cannot take the richness and spiciness of Mexican cuisine.

Mexican food is one cuisine that will always have a taste and savor (flavor) all its own. Present-day Mexican food is a mixture of original Mayan and Aztec cuisine combined with the influence of the culture of the Spanish conquistadores. While Tex-Mex and local "authentic" Mexican restaurants have become very skilled in mastering the style of Mexican cooking, there is no comparison between the Americanized "restaurant" version and the real thing. Mexican food is known for its wealth of spices and intense, deep flavoring.

Tortillas are the staple of Mexican cuisine. Tortillas are made by curing maize in lime water, kneading the mixture into a dough, and cooking the thin patties on a flat grill. The most common tortillas in the United States' version of Mexican food are made of corn, although this version of the corn tortilla is quite unlike the original, authentic version. Authentic corn tortillas are made by hand on a flat grill (called a comal). The corn is ground by hand, resulting in thick tasty tortillas that the grocery store

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versions pale in comparison to. Flour tortillas were implemented only after the Spaniards introduced wheat to the Mexican region.

Chiles are another staple in traditional Mexican cuisine, adding color and dimension to many traditional Mexican dishes. Bell peppers, tabasco peppers, and paprika peppers add the color and the flavor kick that Mexican food is so known for.

It is also important to take into consideration that Mexican cuisine varies in reference to the region it is coming from or being made in. Northern-style Mexican food normally consists of dishes with a lot of beef, while southern-style Mexican cuisine consists more of chicken and vegetables such as bell pepper, radishes, and broccoli, more than anything else. Veracruz is also another common style of Mexican food, coming from the coastal areas in Mexico. Veracruz cuisine, which was named after a state in Mexico and its largest city, consists of seafood such as fish and shrimp. More indigenous areas have even been known to incorporate spider monkey and iguana into their meals. Especially while in

Mexico, "Mexican Food" does not always imply tacos and burritos.

Authentic Mexican cuisine is not to be confused with the Americanized Tex-Mex or New Mexican food (versions of Mexican food in Texas and New Mexico).

Kirsten Hawkins is a food and nutrition expert specializing the Mexican, Chinese, and Italian food. Visit

<http://www.food-and-nutrition.com/>

for more information on cooking delicious and healthy meals.

French is Back: The New Cuisine is Trendy and French

By Dylan Miles

French food is back with a vengeance. French cuisine has evolved into a less pretentious version of its older self. The new French cuisine, or Nouvelle Cuisine, is more accessible and comes in many varieties, including bistro food, brasserie style and the ultimate in luxury food, haute cuisine.

French cuisine is fresh and creative, and a lot more simple than it was in the past. French cuisine is often experimental, but the of the food continues to skyrocket. Basically, the French have gone back to their regional roots and brought a modern version of traditional French cooking. Unlike the sophisticated plates of the past, French food now fits into the public's desire for "real food". But real food is not just about traditional mum's-cooking type of dishes. People want traditional foods and flavors with a distinct contemporary feel. People want the old packaged and presented in a new way. The new French cuisine is exactly this.

Frog's legs are still being served in abundance, but the new French cuisine is also influenced by what is going on outside of France. French food is now transformed by influences from the South American,

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Asian, Italian and American cuisines. Chefs creating the new French cuisine are incorporating ideas picked up from their travels around the world. These days chefs are knowledgeable of the characteristics of cuisines around the world and can use elements of various cultures in creating their own new cuisine.

The result? The new French cuisine is creative and classical. The new French cuisine is both traditional and contemporary.

Dylan Miles, journalist, and website builder, lives in Texas. He is the owner and co–editor of

<http://www.foodgarden.info>

on which you will find a longer, more detailed version of this article.



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