

Truly Texas Mexican

Guided worksheet to accompany the documentary film

Group Discussion

In small groups of three to four people, discuss these moments in the film. Then, take turns answering each question that follows.

Molcajete as Metaphor

"This molcajete is the metaphor for our food and for our community. If you take the molcajete...you're going to put ingredients in there. You're going to mash them... You crush them, you paste them, you harmonize them and you have beauty out of differences." --Adán Medrano

- What are some recetas from your upbringing that speak to this description of Texas Mexican food?

Food as Convivencia

Chef Rosalía Vargas speaks about the spiritual and communal aspects of food preparation.

- What is a meal that you've made in community of others? Why is this "convivencia" – preparing food in community with others – such an important cultural practice? What are some of the challenges of cooking in convivencia with others?

Cuisine & Culture: A New Encounter

The documentary captures the stories of Texasans from the Texas-Mexico borderlands and the nature of human relationships in non-violent ways through food.

- How can we engage in new cultural encounters moving forward that humanize each other and are rooted in social justice?

Mujeres as Creators of Food-based Communities

Chef Adán Medrano centers the voices and experiences of ethnic Mexican women, including the Chili Queens – the original chefs of Texas Mexican food in San Antonio – who were independent entrepreneurs and culinary artists known for their famous chili.

- Who are some of the mujer entrepreneurs in your family or community? How do these women contribute to food-based communities?



Food as Memory

Maria Jilma Sanchez, chef and owner of Maria's Restaurant in McAllen Texas says, "I bring them memories. That's why [people] like eating here. Es comida casera."

- What are some foods that take you back to a childhood memory? What do you associate your food memory with?

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Food as Economic Livelihood

Doña Letty is known for her homemade reposteria and mole recipes, which she prepares and packages from her home to sell. “En la comida, siempre se va a ganar.” Her story points to the ways in which women draw from their ancestral culinary memory to create their own unique recipes to sustain their families economically.

- What are the many ways in which Mexicana and Texana chefs contribute to our communities? Why is it important to recognize their labor and creative vision?

Reclaiming Indigenous Culinary Knowledge

Christine Ortega takes us through the process of making cabeza de pozo—a tradition that ended with her grandparents' generation. In order to “regain the knowledge,” she reached out to elders for advice on how to prepare this recipe in the ancient traditional way and practiced through trial and error until she got it right.

- What are some recipes that have been lost over the generations in your family? What are some steps that you can take to reclaim these recipes? Why is it important for you to reclaim these recipes and ancestral food preparation practices?

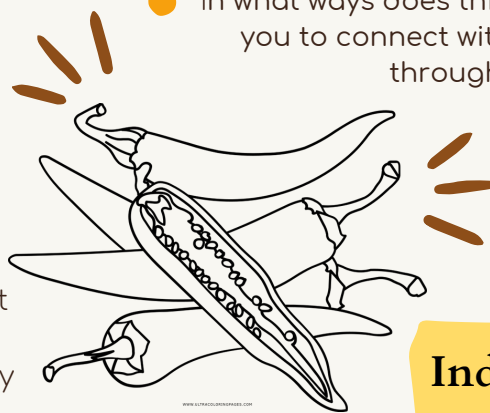
Important Questions

- What do you think Adán Medrano means when he says, “They wanted the Mexican food without the Mexicans”?
- In what ways can we connect to our foods through place and region? How might a border wall affect those connections?

Reclaiming Indigeneity

In the documentary, archaeologist Dr. Alston Thoms takes us back to 10,000 year-history of the present-day South Texas-Northeast Mexico region. “Knowing that you belong here. The foods here... your body is sustained on the same foods that the ancestors were thousands of years ago” (nopalitos, tunas, onions, fruits, pecans, squash, and beans to name a few of the foods native to this region)—foods that are shared among Mexican and Central American immigrants and original inhabitants.

- In what ways does this documentary invite you to connect with your indigeneity through food?



Indigenous Foods

Homero Vera takes Adán Medrano on a tour of his ranch in Duval County and shows him some of the native foods that grow on the land like nopales, tunas, mesquite, and chapote (Texas persimmon). “There’s so much that [the desert] produces that they don’t realize.”

- What are some of the plant foods that grow where you live? What are some of the ways that you prepare these foods?
- How can you draw from your family's rich living culinary knowledge to create a table where everyone is welcomed and treated with dignity and respect?