



The Mexican side of my family has a long and rich heritage in Southern California, once a part of Old Mexico.

My father's mother, my grandmother, was Elizabeth LeLong, the daughter of

Elizabeth Isabelle Machado and Barney LeLong.

Barney was of French and Mexican decent. His mother was a native Mexican-Californian, Juliana Ruiz, daughter of Mariano De La Encarnacion Ruiz & Maria Florentina Ybarra. His father was John Baptiste Bernable LeLong, born in California to Maria Josefa Alanis, also born in California in 1828, fathered by Martin LeLong born in France in 1814. Both French and Spanish were spoken in the LeLong home through the birth of my father, Joseph.

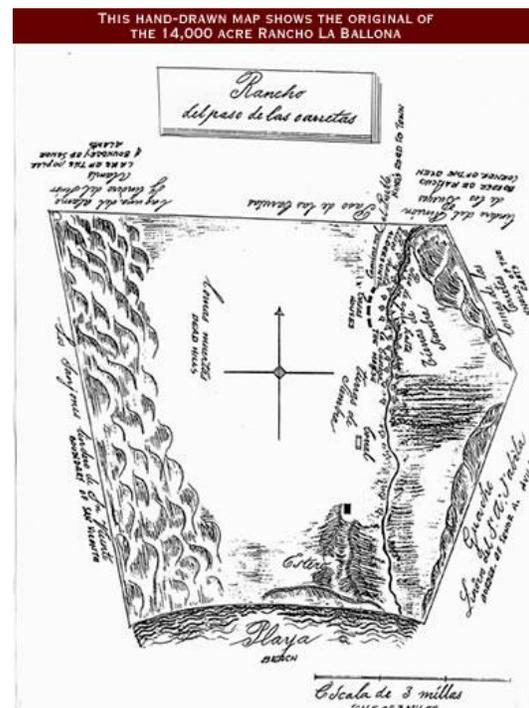
Here is what I know of my Machado Family, what brought them to Southern California, how they lived, and what they accomplished.

Spanish Explorers claimed California in the 1500s but it wasn't until 1769 that King Carlos III of Spain mandated colonization. Father Junipero Serra then began to establish missions, which functioned as the center of activities from San Diego upward, between 1769 and 1823. The Native Americans in this area traversed this valley in search of food. Because of their proximity to the San Gabriel Mission, (est.1771), they were called The Gabrielinos, although today we would call them The Chumash. The natives were moved out or assimilated as the

Spanish/Mexicans moved in. In some cases that natives were enslaved, in other cases, they intermarried with the settlers.

José Manuel Machado, a member of the Spanish military, and his wife, Maria De La Luz Valenzuela, traveled from Sinaloa, Mexico on the Rivera expedition of 1781, one year after their marriage on 28 February 1780 in El Real Del Los Alamos, Sonora, Mexico. Machado continued to serve as a soldier in different locations until he retired to the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1797. Jose Machado's death in 1810 forced his young sons to provide for the family's future.

Agustín and his brother Ygnacio Machado, sons of José Manuel and Maria, after unsuccessful attempts to acquire land near the pueblo, set out on a search for their own property on which to settle. The Spanish government granted Agustín and Ygnacio Machado, along with Felipe Talamantes and his son, Tomas, rights to all of the land Agustín could circumnavigate on horseback in a single day in 1819. Las Siete Partidas



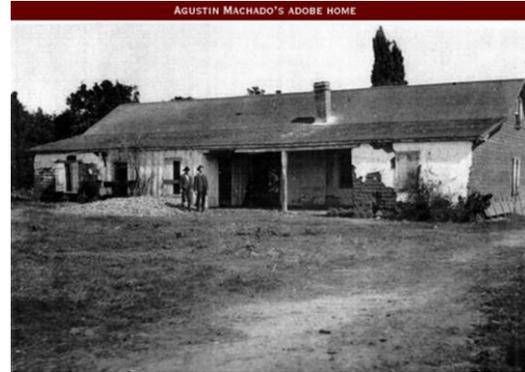
was the law in effect at the time which allowed this type of land grant.

Scouting the land for their needs, they decided to settle in the valley between the Santa Monica Mountains and the hills above what is now known as Playa del Rey. They named this valley La Ballona Paso de las Carretas, otherwise known as Rancho La Ballona.

The origin and meaning of "Ballona" remains uncertain. Prevalent theories suggest that it was a misspelling. One school thinks the intended name was Ballena, which means whale in Spanish, and that at the edge of Ballona, where the creek empties, one could watch the migration of the whales. Others differ, and hold the opinion that the Talamantes ancestors came from Bayona, Spain, so they named it for their early heritage.

In the 1820s, Agustín and Ygnacio Machado settled their claim. Rancho Ballona occupied an area of approximately 14,000 acres and included a tidelands area of about 2,000 acres within its boundaries. Ballona Creek which ran through the Rancho was the main source of fresh water which the Machados used for crop irrigation. The present-day Ballona Lagoon is virtually all that remains of the former tidelands, with filling and development or natural conditions transforming most of much larger lagoon area into dry land.

Eventually, Agustín Machado built an adobe house near the edge of Ballona Creek, on today's Overland Avenue. That first adobe washed away in floodwaters. The Machados rebuilt further away from the waterway. Because the creek often changed its course, it separated some of the partitioned Machado property, which had originally been only on one side of the creek.



The Machados were known for their vineyards and fine wines, and crops like celery as well as the cattle they grazed on Rancho La Ballona. Boys assisted in the branding of their herds, and in the very early times, often slept outside after they were about six years old. The brands, registered with the state, showed the ownership of the animals. Crops received irrigation water that was rationed by the Zanjero (Sanjero) or water overseer, from the Ballona Water District.

The days on a rancho started before dawn, with everyone dressed and assembled in the living room (sala) for prayers. According to an account written in 1878, breakfast (desayuno) was eaten while it was still dark, and it was determined, as all meals, by the wealth of the family, and their workday chores. Wealthier rancheros might begin the day with Spanish chocolate made with milk or water, and corn or flour tortillas with butter. Poorer people often had milk with cornmeal porridge (atole). Others would only have beans, while those who could only eat two meals a day often started with a solid meal of roast or stewed meat with chilies, onions, tomatoes and beans.

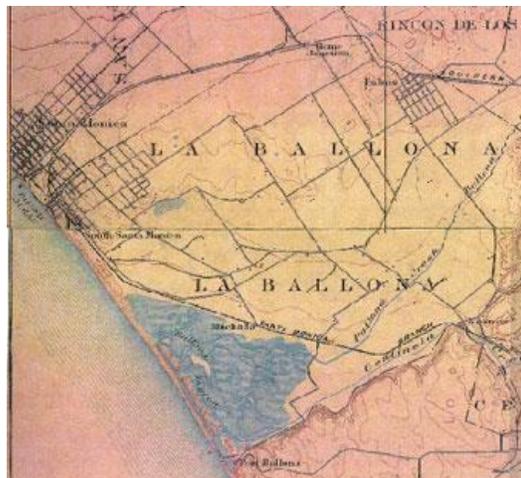
In the very early times, the Spanish settlers brought their foods, which meshed with the ways of the Indians, and yielded the Mexican flavor of food common to California. Plates and utensils were scarce in early times, so the settlers used tortillas to

scoop their food, or rolled meat or beans within (burritos).

Often the men were on horseback all day, except when they broke for meals and sleep. These men were the vaqueros, or cowboys. Boys assisted their fathers, while the girls helped the women in the kitchen, cooking on wood burning stoves. Girls also learned to be proficient in sewing. Their herb gardens near the house supplied the seasoning for cooking as well as for medicinal use.

Life continued uninterrupted for my ancestors until war broke out in the 1840's. The original Rancho La Ballona stretched from the Pacific Ocean to Ince Boulevard, and from Baldwin Hills to Pico Boulevard. The land comprising the Rancho Ballona became part of the United States following the war between the United States and Mexico, which was formally ended by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo the United States undertook to protect the property rights of Mexican landowners, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Art. VIII, 9 Stat. 929, at the same time settlers were moving into California in large numbers to exploit the mineral wealth and other resources of the new territory. Mexican grants encompassed well over 10 million acres in California and included some of the best land suitable for development.

To fulfill its obligations under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and to provide for an orderly settlement of Mexican land claims, Congress passed the Act of March 3, 1851, setting up a comprehensive claims settlement procedure. Under the terms of the Act, a Board of Land Commissioners was established with the power to decide the rights of "each and every person claiming lands in California by virtue of any right or



title derived from the Spanish or Mexican government"

In 1852, the Machados and the Talamantes petitioned the Board for confirmation of their title under the Act. Following a hearing, the petition was granted by the Board, App. 21, and affirmed by the United States District Court on appeal, [466 U.S. 198, 204] *id.*, at 22-23. Before a patent could issue, however, a survey of the property had to be approved by the Surveyor General of California. The survey for this purpose was completed in 1858, and although it was approved by the Surveyor General of California, it was rejected upon submission to the General Land Office of the Department of the Interior.

In the confirmation proceedings that followed, the proposed survey was re-advertised and interested parties informed of their right to participate in the proceedings. The property owners immediately north of the Rancho Ballona protested the proposed survey of the Rancho Ballona; the Machados and Talamantes, the original grantees, filed affidavits in support of their claim. As a result of these submissions, as well as a consideration of the surveyor's field notes and underlying Mexican documents, the General Land Office withdrew its objection to the proposed ocean boundary. The

Secretary of the Interior subsequently approved the survey and in 1873 a patent was issued confirming title in the Rancho Ballona to the original Mexican grantees.

The land lay at peace for decades following Mexican acquisition of California in 1822 and statehood in 1850, even through the long transition after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the settlement of title. But interest in the outskirts of growing Los Angeles caught up with the Rancho in the sudden expansion after the Civil War. Following the death of Agustín Machado in the 1870's his descendents began selling of parcels bit by bit. By the mid-1980's, my grandmother's house and one small parcel on Sepulveda Blvd. were all that were left of the once vast tract of 14,000 acres belonging to my ancestors.

Then, in 2002, eight members of the Machado family, fourth- and fifth-generation descendents of the brothers, signed papers transferring ownership to Calabasas developer Mark Webber, selling off the remaining large piece (12.8 acres) of the original 14,000-acre Rancho La Ballona. It's the last piece of property they owned together, to my knowledge. There was recognition that with each passing, there would be more splintering, and (the ownership) would be more difficult to reassemble for sale. Nearly 200 years of Machado's owning land in the West Los Angeles, Culver City, and Marina areas, came to an end.

There are still a few hundred descendents of the Machado brothers throughout Southern California, and the family has a reunion each October. Though family members generally keep a low profile, Cerra, Essex and my cousin Fred Machado are all on the board of the Centinela Adobe, the historical society

based out of the Westchester home built by Ygnacio Machado in 1834.

There are several books telling the tale of the settlement of Los Angeles. The one concerning the people I am directly descended from is:

The Machados and Rancho La Ballona: "Jose Agustin Antonio Machado" The Machados & Rancho La Ballona: The Story of the Land and Its Ranchero, José Agustín Antonio Machado with a Genealogy of the Machado Family. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1973.

To say that the Machado family was wealthy for that time is an understatement. They donated land to found LMU (Loyola Marymount University) a Catholic university, where my half-uncle Phillip went to school. My mother and her siblings even went to Machado elementary school, which opened in September 1913 and remained open until around 1960 when Venice High School bought the land and expanded. Machado Elementary was replaced by Walgrove Elementary, which was opened seven blocks away. The Machado Elementary School bell still resides on a monument outside of Venice High School's indoor pool on the corner of Walgrove and Zanga; one block south of Venice Blvd. and one block north of Washington.

Grandma Betty did not speak much of her heritage, I think it saddened her. Yet once, when speaking to my cousin Christine and I while frying some bananas in the kitchen I overheard her talk about the five meals that made up a true Mexican day. 'Nana' as we called her, said that most people did not eat this way anymore, but that her mother had taught her the proper way to eat. This recalled the old Rancho way of eating.

The first meal is desayuno, at which coffee or chocolate and a roll are served. Later comes a larger breakfast, really a sort of brunch. It is called almuerzo. Comida, the main meal of the day, is followed by the famous siesta. Merienda is teatime, or perhaps it should be called chocolate-time, because that is what is usually served, along with a pan dulce, or a sweet roll, or with a typically Mexican capricious little snack. Cena is supper, and it often features soup. At this final meal of the day, some dessert usually completes it. Most Mexicans that I grew up with did indeed have a sweet tooth, and enjoyed milk based postres (desserts) such as Flan or even American ice cream more than anything else.

Most of my knowledge of Mexican cuisine comes from my travel and my close association with wonderful Mexican people throughout my childhood. From a dear woman named Dolores that my cousins and I called 'Mommy Gomez' to the Martins and Menchacas next door and across the street, excellent cooking from 'south of the border' surrounded me. Arabella Martin and Dolores 'Lolita' Gomez were childhood playmates with whom my cousin Sheri and I spent many hours. Their mothers never let us go hungry and taught us the secret of making real tasty tortillas that make one never want to eat a store bought tortilla again.

Ceviche



- 1 pound small shrimp – raw
- 1 pound small scallops – raw
- 2 jalapeño peppers, deseeded and diced
- 4 small tomatoes, diced
- ½ cup red onion, diced
- ½ cup cilantro, chopped
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 1 cup lime juice

Put all ingredients in a large Ziploc bag and marinate until shrimp and scallops are cooked by the acidity of the lemon and lime juice. Serve chilled with tortilla chips or fried plantain chips.

Fiesta Chicken Salad

- 3 cups thinly sliced red leaf lettuce
- 3 cups thinly sliced napa cabbage
- 1 cup thinly sliced grilled chicken
- 2 each seeded chopped roma (plum) tomatoes
- 1/2 each thinly sliced red bell pepper
- 1/2 each thinly sliced yellow bell pepper
- 1/2 each thinly sliced avocado
- 1/3 cup crumbled tortilla chips
- 1/4 cup frozen & thawed corn kernels
- 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced onion
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese

Dressing Ingredients: (Lime Cilantro

Vinaigrette)

1/2 cup chopped shallots
 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
 1 tbs minced garlic
 1/2 cup vegetable oil

Salad:

Combine all ingredients in large bowl except cheese. Toss with "Lime Cilantro Vinaigrette" (another recipe in this database) to coat. Top with cheese.

Lime Cilantro Vinaigrette:

Combine first 4 ingredients in medium bowl. Gradually whisk in oil. Season with salt and pepper. (can be made a day ahead, cover and refrigerate, bring to room temperature before using.)

Chili Relleno Casserole

1 can whole green chilies
 1-1/2 cups grated skim Jack cheese
 1-1/2 cups grated skim cheddar cheese
 2 eggs, separated
 3/4 cups evaporated skim milk
 1-tablespoon flour
 1-teaspoon baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 1 can (7 ounces) green chili salsa

Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter an 8-inch square baking dish. Split whole chilies and remove seeds. Open flat and place half in baking dish. Cover with Jack cheese. Put rest of chilies on top of cheese and cover with cheddar. In a bowl beat egg whites until stiff. Set aside in another bowl combine yolks, milk, flour, baking powder, garlic salt, and pepper. Fold egg yolk mixture into beaten egg whites. Pour over chilies and cheese. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes.

Top with green chili salsa and bake another 10 minutes. Make 4 servings.

Cilantro & Lime Black Beans

Preparation & Cooking Time: 20 minutes
 8 servings

2 can black beans
 1 bunch fresh cilantro
 1 lime
 1 small red onion
 chili oil

Open cans and rise black beans clean of the internal can juice in a strainer under cold water. Set aside.

Dice red onion and place in a sauce pan with chili oil. Sauté lightly.

Add chopped fresh cilantro, the juice of one lime, and the black beans.

Cover and cook over a low heat for fifteen minutes until beans are warm and soft. Serve warm.

Enchiladas Rancheras

This is a great meal to use leftover chicken or turkey on. I tend to make it after Thanksgiving since I have lots of cooked turkey on hand. It also helps to disguise the turkey so the family isn't complaining "turkey again".

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
 Bake Time: 20 minutes
 Servings: 4 – 6 servings

2 cups chopped cooked chicken or turkey
 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
 1 package cream cheese
 1 jar (8 ounces) salsa, divided
 8 (6-inch) flour tortillas
 3/4 pound (12 ounces) cheese spread – like Velveeta

¼ cup milk

Stir chicken, bell pepper, cream cheese and ½ cup salsa in saucepan on low heat until cream cheese is melted.

Spoon 1/3 cup chicken mixture down center of each tortilla; roll up. Place, seam-side down, in lightly greased 12 x 8-inch baking dish.

Stir process cheese-spread and milk in sauce-pan on low heat until smooth. Pour sauce over tortillas; cover with foil.

Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Pour remaining salsa over tortillas.

Helpful Hints: If your flour tortillas are a little too stiff to roll up easily, wrap them in a damp paper towel and gently warm them in the microwave oven until they are soft and pliable.

Alison's Fabulous Flautas

Flautas is Spanish for flutes. Chicken flautas are traditionally served with rice and beans. You can also use beef or black beans as fillings for flautas.

12 corn tortillas
2 cups tomatillo sauce
Grated cheddar cheese
2 cups cooked, shredded chicken
Cooking oil for frying
Shredded lettuce
Sour cream
Guacamole

Combine the chicken with the tomatillo sauce, heat, and keep warm.

Heat a cast iron skillet or griddle to medium-hot. Lay a tortilla on the hot surface for a

few seconds, then turn and heat the other side. This will make the tortilla pliable enough to roll in a tight flute. (See Note, below.) The fresher the tortilla, the better.

Spread 1 heaping tablespoon of the chicken/tomatillo sauce mixture along one side of the tortilla, and roll the tortilla into a flute -- as tightly as possible without tearing the tortilla. Lay the tortilla flute flap down, and continue filling and rolling the rest of the tortillas.

Heat about an inch of cooking oil in the skillet. The oil should be hot enough to make a few drops of water sizzle when sprinkled into it, or 375°. Carefully lay the flautas, three at a time, in the hot oil, flap side down, and cook until they are golden and crisp. Drain and keep warm until all flautas are cooked.

Makes four servings of three flautas each. Garnish with sour cream. On the plate include lettuce, chilled, ripe tomato wedges, and a scoop of guacamole. As a side, serve Mexican Red Rice.

Note: The best flautas are made with homemade corn tortillas because you can press them thinner than those from the store, not to mention the fact that they taste so much better.

An alternative method for softening the tortillas is to dip each one into hot oil (use tongs) just until it becomes limp. Remove at once, drain, and repeat with the remaining tortillas. Don't forget to turn off the heat under the skillet while you fill the tortillas.

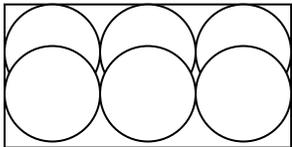
Lasaña

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Cooking Time: 20 minutes
Preheat oven to 375°

- 1 can black beans
- 1 can vegetarian refried beans
- 1 can Mexican spiced/stewed tomatoes
- 1 lb ground turkey
- 24 small white corn tortillas
- 1 can whole kernel corn
- 1 can diced green chilies
- 1 pouch taco seasoning (1 cup water)
- 2 medium jalapeno peppers w/o seeds
- 8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 8 ounces shredded pepper jack cheese

Toppings: guacamole, salsa, sour cream, diced green onions

Put ground turkey in a skillet with taco seasoning and 1 cup of water. Brown while assembling bottom portion of lasagna. In a blender or food processor, put jalapeno peppers and Mexican tomatoes, and blend just enough to chop up peppers and partially liquefy tomatoes. Pour the pepper and tomato mixture into the bottom of lasagna pan. Layer tortillas on top of mixture.



Cut the one or two tortillas in halves or quarters to fill in the wholes. You could use five or six whole tortillas per layer as well as two quartered tortillas per layer. Three layers of tortillas, with a maximum of 8 per layer, that 24 small corn tortillas.

Spread refried beans in a thick layer over the tortilla layer. Sprinkle shredded cheese blend over refried beans, reserving half the cheese for later. Cover with a layer of tortillas.

Back on the stovetop, add black beans, corn, and chilies to the browning turkey. Cook everything together about 3 minutes. Then, pour the entire contents of the skillet, including the pan juices on top of the tortilla

layer. Layer another set of tortillas over the meat. Spread your favorite salsa over the tortillas; sprinkle the rest of the cheese on top.

Place in the preheated oven and cook until cheese is melted and starting to golden. If using a glass dish, you will see the various layers bubbling through the side.

While lasagna is cooking, chop/dice green onions into tiny pieces. Make guacamole if you desire.

Serve hot and top with guacamole and sour cream.

Alison's Nachos Olé

- 1 ½ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 ½ cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups refried beans
- 6 dozen packaged corn tortilla chips
- 1 large tomato, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup pickled jalapeno peppers, thinly sliced
- 2 or 3 green onions, chopped

Preheat oven to 400. Combine cheese in a small bowl. Cook and stir beans in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot. Spread 1 teaspoon beans on each tortilla chip. Arrange chips in a single layer on 2 or 3 baking sheets. Sprinkle chips evenly with tomato and chilies. Sprinkle with cheese mixture.

Bake 5 to 8 minutes until cheese is bubbly and melted. Remove from oven and sprinkle with chopped green onions. Serve with sour cream and guacamole.

Quesadillas (varieties)

You've heard about Quesadillas. You have probably seen them in restaurants where they take a flour tortilla, sprinkle cheese and

perhaps ham in the middle and cook it somehow until the cheese melts. That may be fine for them but that is not how the real Mexican quesadillas are made.

Quesadillas in Mexico can be found outside movie theaters, stadiums, special events and many other places. Probably the most popular quesadilla is made with potato, with cheese and beans following in popularity. You can find all kinds of types of quesadillas, made with potatoes, cheese, chorizo, beans, green peppers (rajas) and other things.



In this recipe, I'll show you how to make real Mexican quesadillas (Mexicans not included) with potatoes, chorizo, beans and even cheese (Queso). The picture may not look pretty, but they are very good. This is the real thing – the real deal.

The basic idea is to make a mixture which serves as the shell for the quesadilla, fill it in with something you like and fry it. This recipe serves 2 hungry people.

Maseca (instant corn masa mix), Look for the key words MASA and CORN. In case you have trouble finding this at the supermarket.

- 2 large potatoes
- Chorizo (Mexican pork sausage)
- 16 ounce can of refried beans
- Cooking oil or lard
- Salt

Black pepper

Butter or margarine

Shredded Monterey Jack or Manchego cheese

Add any other ingredients that sound good to you. Peel the potatoes and cut them in small chunks. Boil the potatoes in water for 10 minutes or until cooked. Once the potatoes are ready, mash them and add pepper, salt and butter to taste. Keep potatoes warm at low heat.

Heat the beans, keep them warm at low heat.

Shred and cook the chorizo by itself in a frying pan, then keep at low heat.

In a large bowl, add 4 cups of the masa mix and add some warm water, mix with your hands until the masa is firm adding water as necessary. With your hands, make small balls of masa about 2 inches in diameter, each one of these will be a quesadilla

Set large frying pan in mid-high heat, once hot lower heat to medium. Add enough oil to cover the frying pan to 1 inch deep.

Make a round (tortilla like) shape with each of the masa mix balls, using a roller if necessary. Put chorizo, beans with chorizo, cheese or potatoes in the tortilla and seal the sides by pressing with your fingers.

Fry one side until brown, then flip, repeat for all others, cooking as many as you can at the same time

Tips:

Do not let the oil to get too hot, otherwise the quesadillas will burn immediately without really getting cooked in the inside.

Be creative with the ingredients; make quesadillas of anything you like.

American Quesadillas

1 can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
 1 jalapeno, seeded and roughly chopped
 1 red onion, roughly chopped
 1 teaspoon taco seasoning
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 ½ cup fresh parsley

Throw everything in a food processor and pulse until still chunky. Spread ½ inch between 2 tortillas and heat until toasted on hot non stick pan. Good with salsa, sour cream, and guacamole.

Spanish Rice

Prep & Cooking Time: 30 minutes
 Servings 6

1 cup long grain white rice
 2 cups hot water
 1 can diced green chilies
 1 can corn
 1 can tomatoes diced
 1 tablespoon taco seasoning
 1 small yellow onion diced
 2 tablespoons oil

In a large sauce pan (or wok) place onion and oil – sauté until the onions are golden. Add the long grain white rice to the onions and oil and brown. Add the remaining ingredients, mix thoroughly and bring to a boil; cover and lower heat to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Fluff rice with a fork when done, sprinkle rice with cheese, guacamole, and/or sour cream.

Nanna Betty's Tamales

Tamales, real old fashioned, yummy tamales are a labor of love – something my Nana

Betty taught me. When someone is kind enough to offer you homemade tamales you know how much they think of you. Sit down with a few friends, some *cervezas* and talk away the time while you are processing these miniature masterpieces. Every masa spreading corn husk bending minute of it is oh-so worth it.

7 pounds boneless pork loin or shoulder
 8 ounces (1/2 lb.) chili peppers
 ¾ cup cooking oil
 4 cups of water
 2 tablespoons of salt
 8 ounces corn husks
 12 pounds prepared *masa*
 Olives optional

Cover meat with cold water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until done, about 2 hours. While meat is cooking, remove stems and seeds from chilies. Roast chilies lightly in ¼ cup oil. Place in water, and blend until smooth. Cut meat into small pieces and cook in ½ cup oil until browned. Add chili mixture and salt: cook for 7 minutes. Soak cornhusks for a few minutes and rinse well. Spread masa evenly over husks; place a rounded tablespoon of meat mixture in center. Fold all sides to the center; place in steamer. Cover with a wet cloth and steam for approximately 2 hours. Make 7 to 8 dozen. These are often better the next day, just like good soup usually is, because...they have time for the flavors to seep into each other.

Enjoy with fresh cup of Mexican chocolate.

Tijuana Fish Tacos

I have had fish tacos many different ways, but ultimately, there are two main ways to prepare the fish, everything else is just variety. The fish, which is preferably the freshest white fish you can find at the market, will either be grilled in the Tijuana

or San Felipe style or battered & fried, in the Ensenada style.



Good choices include catfish, cod, and haddock or flounder although I love halibut and red snapper, and even enjoy fresh swordfish or shark when I can get it. Mahi mahi is also an alternative as is sea bass. Go with whatever is the freshest and you won't go wrong!

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Servings: 3 tacos per person – Serves 4

1 package of small taco tortillas – traditionally these are corn, I prefer white corn, although some like wheat flour.

1 pound of white fish filet cut into 1-inch wide strips. *If you plan on grilling rather than battered & fried, marinate the fish, it tastes yummy.

½ head of green cabbage, shredded
2 ounces fresh cilantro, chopped
2 medium sized ripe tomatoes (optional)

Runny Mexican White or “Tarter” Sauce

½ cup plain, unflavored yogurt
½ cup mayonnaise
1 jalapeño pepper cleaned & chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon capers
½ teaspoon crushed Mexican oregano
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon dried, crushed dill

¼ teaspoon ground cayenne chile
fresh lime juice as needed
ground white pepper to taste

* Marinating option: Rinse fish, pat dry and place in a zip lock baggie with ½ cup lime juice and 3 shots of tequila. Turn to coat. Refrigerate for 15 minutes or up to 4 hours, turning occasionally.

Batter method:

1 egg
1 cup flour
1 cup beer (Corona or the cheapest you can find – Chihuahua is really good.)
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup canola oil

Mix the flour, cornstarch, baking powder and salt together. Blend the egg and beer and quickly stir into the flour mixture. Don't worry about a few lumps. Fish will be battered in this just moments before frying.

To make white sauce: In a medium bowl, mix together yogurt and mayonnaise. Gradually stir in fresh lime juice until consistency is slightly runny. Season with jalapeño, capers, oregano, cumin, dill, and cayenne.

Fish taco preparation:

I use a skillet and my wok so everything stays nice and hot. Tortillas in the skillet, fish in the wok.

Heat a skillet, spray VERY lightly with non-stick cooking spray. Heat tortillas in skillet one at a time, making sure they don't get too hard. These aren't your typical store bought crunchy taco shells. They should be slightly golden and firm, but not hard and crunchy.

Marinated version: Heat wok. Drop a dribble of water on it and if it boils instantly, the wok is ready. OR use the wooden spoon handle method, put the wooden spoon handle in the oil and if it bubbles up around it the oil is hot enough. Take fish from the marinade and place in wok. Stir fry the fish until it is slightly cooked. Remember don't overcook fish!

Place warm tortilla on a plate; generously rub white sauce in a line down the middle. Scoop a few pieces of fish from the wok and place in the middle. Top with shredded cabbage and chopped cilantro. Dribble more white sauce or sprinkle chopped tomato if you desire.

Repeat until all fish is gone and serve.

Batter method:

Cut the fish up as directed for the marinated method. Prepare batter. Pour ½ cup canola oil into wok. Use a dry wooden spoon handle to determine if oil is ready. If bubbles appear around the handle when it is placed in the oil, the oil is hot enough to begin frying.

Batter fish pieces and place in wok. Fry until golden. Remove and place on paper towel to remove excess oil.

Follow assembly method until fish is gone.

Tortillas mexicanas de Harina de tía Vicenta

“Auntie” Vicenta's Flour Tortillas

In a bowl, cut in shortening with a fork:

2 cups flour (wheat flour or corn flour your choice)
Pinch salt
3/8 cup solid vegetable shortening

Add warm water mixture a little at a time, until dough is pliable. Depending on the humidity and flour, you may only use 3/4 cup total:

7/8 cup warm water
1/8 cup milk

Knead until elastic, then roll pieces into rounds the size of golf balls and place on a towel. Cover with another towel. Let set for at least 30 minutes. Heat griddle. Roll into nice thin rounds. Place on hot griddle; when bubbles form, flip the tortilla and cook on the other side. Stack tortillas on a towel. Makes 15-20.

Serve warm with butter or use for "roll your own burritos" or "soft tacos."