

# EDITOR'S NOTE



My mother and I immigrated to California from Canada when I was 7, but we hadn't been here long before tacos became part of her cooking repertoire—they just appeared one evening at dinner and continued to appear at regular intervals for the rest of her life. Her recipe never changed, and I have no idea where she first ate them or how she learned to make them.

A staple in our home now is the tortilla and my son's favorite after-school snack is a quesadilla; my favorite cocktail is a margarita and my favorite snack is guacamole with tortilla chips. I cook almost everything with chile peppers and can't imagine life without salsa. For that matter, I can't imagine life without the food and culture of Mexico!

In our golden state of California, along with all the states that share a border with our neighbor to the south, the culture of Mexico is integral to our way of life. This issue celebrates the culinary history and heritage of Mexico; it is our intention that this tribute becomes a regular feature. Many of the contributors are new, and some are familiar, but all have brought something heartfelt and thoughtful to the party (in this case, to the fiesta!)

One of my biggest regrets is having studied French instead of Spanish in high school. I have had very little use for the former and, since I've lived in California most of my life, an almost daily need to know the latter! My fantasy was to have the entire issue be bilingual, and, to some extent it is—although only one story, by Brenna Furness, is, word for word, presented in both English and Spanish.

My brain is buzzing from all the new information and inspiration that came my way while putting this issue together—from the Permaculture philosophy and farming ethos of Ed Mendoza, to the culinary magic of Chef Roberto Garcia; from tamales to tequila, with some corn smut thrown in for good measure.

Two writers, Denise Chavez and Melinda Palacios, were brought to us as beautiful gifts from Perla Batalla and I am forever grateful to all three individuals for bringing so much insight, soul, love and humor into the mix.

But nothing thrills me more than to share the work of Rene Yanez and his talented son, Rio. Rene was the first person to exhibit my artwork at Galeria de la Raza when I lived in San Francisco so I'm profoundly honored to provide a venue in which their work is featured. Inspired by the phenomenon of individuals who see various apparitions on tortillas, their Great Tortilla Conspiracy takes things to a new level of the irreverent, the ridiculous, and the sublime.

We have published numerous random memoirs over the years that tell individual stories about how cooking, eating, growing, desiring, savoring and imagining food has shaped our lives and psyches. But we've decided to make the food memoir a regular feature. And although DK Crawford's story in the last issue might have been the standard-bearer for such a feature, this next installment by her is the formal kick off.

I have been hearing about Larry Yee's amazing dried persimmons for years and was delighted when he accepted my invitation to write about them and provided such gorgeous photos of the process. When I'm not busy curing olives, I may give it a try. Speaking of which, I promised to keep our gentle readers informed of my ongoing olive quest: My own tree was the only one I found in the valley from which I could harvest any viable olives untainted by the dreaded olive fruit fly. I have them curing now but not as many as I'd like, since many on my tree were also infested. Still, I feel a profound sense of satisfaction knowing that this is the very first harvest from my own tree!

Finally, I'd like to extend a warm thank you to Richard Houser for holding down this magazine's fort for the previous two issues. We are so grateful to all the work he did on our behalf and wish him well in all his future endeavors.

Feliz Año Nuevo y Viva la Vida!

Jane Handel, editor

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