

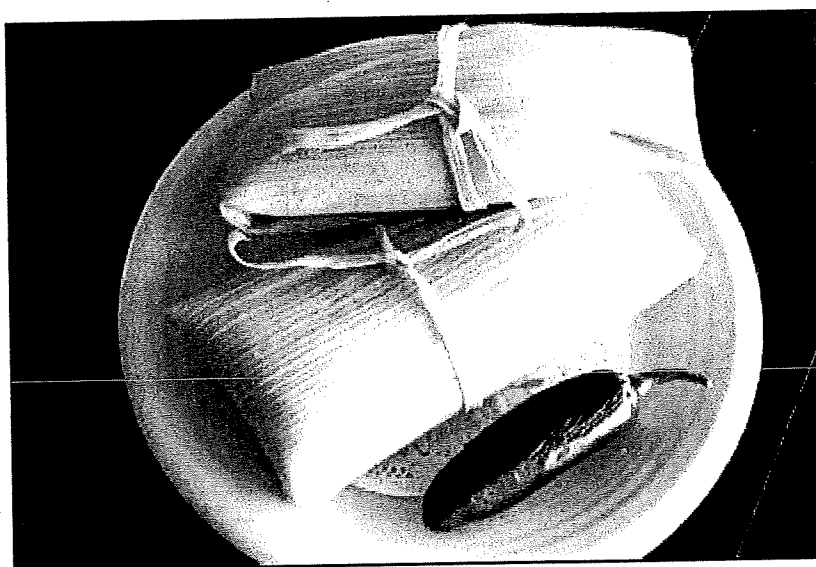
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Tamara's Tamales

History of Tamales

The History of Tamales

The tamale is recorded as early as 5000 BC, possibly 7000 BC in Pre-Columbian history. Initially, women were taken along in battle as army cooks to make the masa for the tortillas and the meats, stews, drinks, etc. As the warring tribes of the Aztec, Mayan, and Incan cultures grew, the demand of readying the nixtamal (corn) itself became so overwhelming a process, a need arose to have a more portable sustaining foodstuff. This requirement demanded the creativity of the women.hence the tamale was born.



The tamales could be made ahead and packed, to be warmed as needed. They were steamed, grilled on the comal (grill) over the fire, or put directly on top of the coals to warm, or they were eaten cold. We have no record of which culture actually created the tamale but believe that one started and the others soon followed.

The tamale caught on very fast and eventually grew in variety and diversity unknown in today's culture. There were plain tamales, tamales with red, green, yellow and black chile, tamales with chocolate, fish tamales, frog, tadpole, mushroom, rabbit, gopher, turkey, bee, egg, squash blossom, honey, ox, seed and nut tamales. There were white and red fruit tamales, white tamales, yellow tamales, dried meat tamales, roasted meat, stewed meat, bean and rice tamales. There were sweet sugar, pineapple, raisin, cinnamon, berry, banana and pumpkin tamales. There were hard and soft cheese tamales, roasted quail tamales, ant, potato, goat, wild boar, lamb and tomato tamales. Well, you get the idea.

The sizes, colors and shapes varied almost as much as the fillings. They were steamed, oven-roasted, fire-roasted, toasted, grilled, barbecued, fried and boiled. The wrappings were

cornhusks, banana leaves, fabric, avocado leaves, soft tree bark, and other edible, non-toxic leaves. The most commonly used were corn husks, banana and avocado leaves.

Over the millennia, the varieties were minimized to the most common now being red and green chile, chicken, pork, beef, sweet, chile, cheese, and of late, vegetables. Also changed was the every day occurrence of making the tamales. With the preparation being so labor and time intensive, tamales became holiday fare, made for special occasions. This tradition remained for thousands of years, with the women of the family working together to make the sauces and meats, preparing the masa, and finally assembling and wrapping the tamales before steaming them in large pots on the stove. The process takes all day, the preparation often starting one of two days in advance. It is virtually unheard of to make a few tamales. In most cases, when they are made, hundreds are made at a time. Everyone, young, old, family and friends, is invited to tamale feasts where they are enjoyed, savored and loved by all.

Tamales have always been loved by the Hispanic people and in the 1900s they have become known and loved by all cultures as much as sushi and dim-sum, which were, in the past, also holiday and celebration foods.

The different regional names for tamales are:

Nicaragua	Nacatamal
Guatemala	Paches and Chuchitos
Bolivia and Ecuador	Humita
Columbia	Bollo
Cuba, Mexico, South and Central America	Tamal
Michoacan, Mexico	Corunda
Veracruz, Mexico	Zacahull
Venezuela	Hallaca

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