

## odds and ends

an introduction, and photographs and notes are provided for all of the works. A bibliography to support the notes rounds out the volume.



**Instrucciones de la fábrica y del ajuar aclesiásticos (Church Vestments and their Fabrication)** Carlos Borromeo; UNAM.

68

A book for specialists on the colonial period. The Institute for Esthetics Research and the Institute for Philological Research prepared the work, unpublished in Spanish until now. The original was written in Latin by the famous Tridentine reformer, Carlos Borromeo (1538-1584), Bishop and later, Cardinal who took a major interest in the development of sacred art, and of culture in general. The work was translated to the Spanish by noted Latinist, Bulmaro Reyes Coria of the Institute for Philological Research. It is accompanied by a study written by Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero, professor at the School of Arts and Letters, and a specialist in Spanish colonial iconology.



**El pensamiento histórico: ayer y hoy (Historical Thinking: Yesterday and Today)**, by Pilar Barroso Acosta, Ricardo Martínez Lacy, Ma. Cristina Montoya Rivero and Rosalía Velásquez Estrada; UNAM.

Finally, the third volume of this very complete collection is being published. The entire anthology presents a critical view of the diverse schools of thought and reflections regarding historical science, which have been developed through the centuries. This new volume is subtitled "From Marxism to Contemporary Currents." It includes writings from such diverse thinkers as Karl Marx, Wilhelm Dilthey, Benedetto Croce, Oswald Spengler, José Ortega y Gasset and Jean Paul Sartre. The underlying premise for the entire collection is that history is not a simple reflexion on the past, nor is it a consciousness of the passage of time. Rather, it demands a consciousness of the fact that the present, past and future are interrelated and interacting.



## Food

Huichos, Aztecs, Mayas, Zapotecs, Toltecs and Totonacas. Consequently, each had their own culture of nourishment.

"It was the same type of situation as when you travel from one country to another, where you find a great variety of foods," says Tovar y de Teresa.

The wealth and variety of the nation's culinary art led another Mexico City Historian, Salvador Novo, to write a 350-page book, *Mexican Cookery, or Gastronomic History of Mexico*. In his introduction, Novo—who was also a member of the Mexican Language Academy, and received the National Award for Journalism in 1976—provides valuable insights on the topic:

"The verb *cua*, used by one of the main pre-hispanic cultural groups, the Nahuas, means to eat. The adjective *cualli* means both the beautiful and the good, which is to say, that which is edible, that which is digestible, that which is pleasing to our sight and to our hearts, to the spirit and to the flesh."

A verb or an adjective-noun, —*cua* or *cualli*—, define or qualify the subject that receives them, and allow for the composition of words and phrases with which this admirable, many-hued tongue expresses its people:

*Cla-cua-ni*, he who eats things;

## Gastronomy as a Cultural Tradition

Do hot peppers and tortillas, both native staples, constitute the basis of Mexican's food-intake?

"No, definitely not," says Guillermo Tovar y de Teresa, the Official Historian of Mexico City. "These are merely complements." And he adds, "What's more, I believe that in terms of variety and tastiness, Mexican food is comparable to the most important cuisines in the world, such as the Chinese and Japanese, the Italian and the French."

Tovar explains that each of the pre-hispanic peoples had their own culture, among them the Quichés, Tzetzals, Mixes, Zapotecas, Tarahumaras,



Mexican kitchen in the 19th century as painted by A. Serrano (Nat. Museum of History).

*Te-cua-ni*, he who eats people; *Cual-tlacatl*, the good man; *Cual-tlaxcal-chihua-ni*, she who makes good tortillas, the food-stuff made from corn.

On the subject of hot peppers, —*chile* or *aji* in Spanish— used by most Mexican's as seasoning, Novo says:

"Europeans desperately sought spices with which to season their food. When Columbus —Cristopher, who discovered America on October 12; 1492—, tasted a vegetable pepper and found it was hot, he thought —Eureka!—, he had found a pepper spice. Such was the description of his discovery that he conveyed to his sponsors."

"Transplanted to other countries, our peppers lost their aggressiveness and some, but not all, of their taste. After being dried and ground, they became the Spanish *pimientón*, the Austro-Hungarian *paprika*, the *morrón* peppers used to prepare cod-fish or to decorate the *paella*."

"Peppers soon spread throughout the world. They were taken to Asia, where they were well-received by both Indonesians and Hindus, who incorporated them into their own curry."

"But this was the real homeland of the fierce pepper: the one that seasons the broth and has the ability of *Tezcatlipoca* to take on a thousand different forms, colors, aromas, sizes and uses. There are long peppers, broad peppers, raisin and rattler peppers, and *cuaresmeños*, *poblanos*, *comapeños*, *chipotles*, *piquines* and *habaneros*. They can be used fresh and whole, or roasted, peeled and un-veined (which makes them a little less hot.) They can be dried-out or toasted, just a little or to the point of charring, as is the custom in south-eastern Mexico. They can be pickled with onion rings, garlic, aromatic herbs and carrot slices."

Peppers are vital, together with tomatoes, onions and coriander leaves, to arrive at the delightful *guacamole*, a sauce made with avocados.

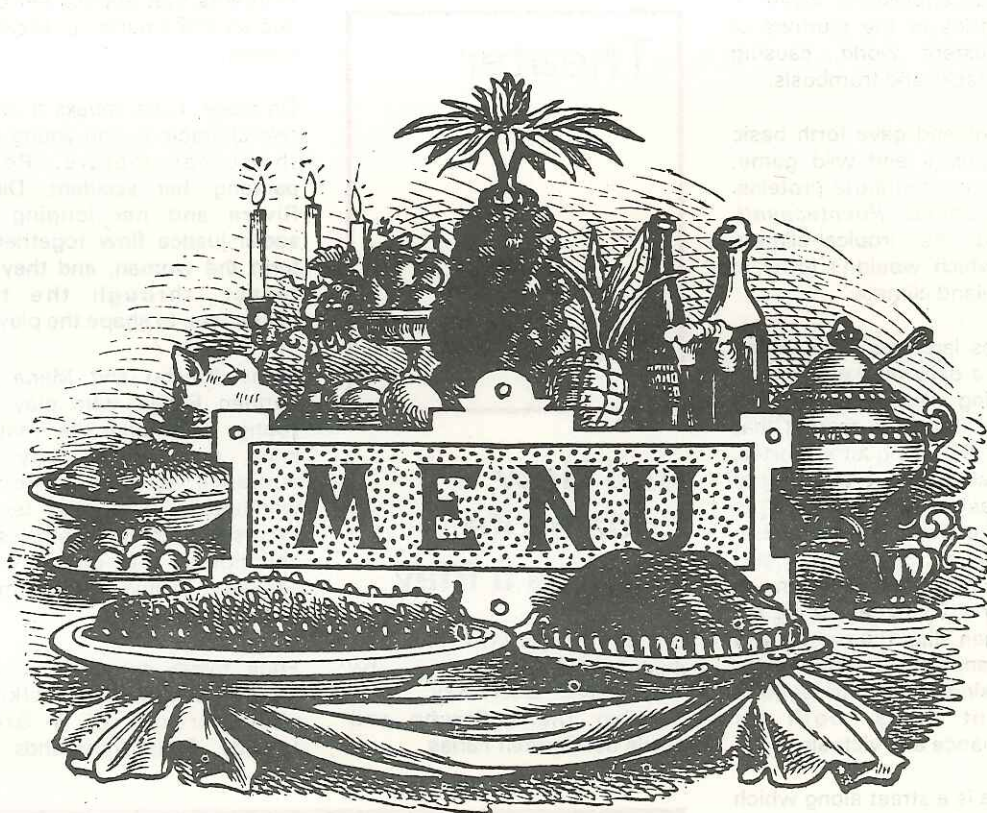
And Novo adds: "Even Spanish dishes improved considerably with the introduction of Mexican peppers. Such is the case of cod-fish a la *Vizcaína*."

On the corn tortilla, Novo explains: "The Nahuas were a frugal people". The Mendocino Code reveals what their children were fed: for children over the age of three, half a tortilla a day; between four and five years of age, one whole tortilla; from six to twelve, a tortilla and a half. From thirteen on, two tortillas.

The fact that this was the custom for reasons of discipline up until the time the Spaniards came, should amaze us less

nutrition of Mexicans with the protein supplements they consider vital: capsule vitamins, which are the nutritional complement that over-fed city dwellers turn to." Yet the healthy, vigorous Nahuas, who have lasted throughout the centuries, have not needed such compromises.

Novo then talks of the Mexicas. "Once they settled in Tenochtitlan, currently Mexico City, the lagoon offered a rich provision of protein: the caviar-



than the sad fact that these many centuries later, and no longer for disciplinary or educational purposes but rather because of sheer misery, many Indian's nutrition is neither more abundant nor more varied.

And Novo asks the question: "Should we feel sorry for this hereditary nutritional austerity of our Indians?"

His response is that "modern dieticians advise enriching the

like *ahuauhtli*, the *acociles*, the minute fish called *charales*. There were also frogs and ducks, *gallaretas* and *apizcas*."

"The floating gardens, called *chinampas*, began to yield vegetables, *quitil*, and the tomato proclaimed its rosy ruddiness, the plumpness from whence its name comes: *tomatl*, a certain fruit that gives a sharp edge to cooked dishes and sauces."

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The combination of tomatoes, quelites and peppers produced the *mole*, vitamin-rich juices pressed out on the stone-grinder called *molcaxitl*. Today this Mexican dish is characteristic of the states of Oaxaca and Puebla.

70 According to Novo, both ignorance and an absence of fats and cooking oils, excluded fried foods from Mexican cooking. Their techniques were limited to boiling and roasting food, as well as pickling raw fruits and vegetables. Absent in the frugal diet of these Indians were the fried foods that make digestion a difficult and heroic process; the fats that accumulate into adipose tissue and raise cholesterol levels in the arteries of the gluttons of the Western world, causing heart attacks and trombosis.

"The highland gave forth basic seeds, plants and wild game; the lagoon contribute proteins. Trade, called *Pochtecayotl*, provided the tropical-climate foods which wouldn't grow in the highland climate."

A city as large as Tenochtitlan needed a daily market in which everything was available. This was the Tlatelolco market that dazzled the conqueror Cortés, who described it to the King of Spain as being "as large as twice the size of the square in the city of Salamanca, surrounded by archways on all sides, and where *daily* there are more than sixty thousand souls buying and selling; where there all the kinds of goods found in different lands, both for maintenance and victuals."

"...There is a street along which all sorts of fowl are sold, such as hens, partridge, quail, wild ducks, flycatchers, turtledoves, pigeons and many other small birds. They sell rabbits, hares, deer and small castrated dogs raised especially for eating... There are all sorts of vegetables, especially onions, scallion, common cress, borrego, thistle and cardillo."

"There are many fruits resembling those found in Spain, such as plums and cherries. They sell bee honey and wax, and a syrup from sugar cane which is as honeyed and sweet as that made from sugar."

"They sell corn..., fish cakes and pies filled with birds' meat... a lot of fish is sold salted and fresh, raw or cooked... there are

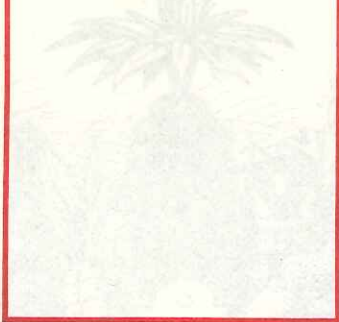
eggs from hens and geese..."

Finally, Cortés adds: "that in these markets they sell everything found on earth, which besides what I have already mentioned, are so many and of so many qualities, that because they are so prolific and will not come to my memory, and even because I have no name for them, I cannot express them all."

"Ours is a fun country because of its diversity, especially concerning food," says Guillermo Tovar y de Teresa.★

Jesús Yáñez Orozco

## Theater



### And Now, Frida's Life Inspires a Play

Las dos Fridas (The Two Fridas) Directed by Abraham Oceransky  
Starring Diana Bracho and María del Carmen Farías

Thirty years after her death, Frida Kahlo is in vogue in the contemporary Mexican cultural scene. Her life and her works are being examined in new biographies, art exhibits, a film, and now, in an extraordinary play.

Frida was a strong woman, a painter by trade and vocation, a person of deep roots, strong emotions and much love for Diego Rivera; a woman who cared about color combinations, about the libertarian struggles of her times, a woman shattered: Frida's life presents a wealth of angles. "The Two Fridas" is cut from that wealth, from the depths of the person, from the decisive moments that marked her path and an entire period of Mexican history.

On stage, Frida speaks through two characters, one young and the other mature. Polio, painting, her accident, Diego Rivera and her longing for social justice flow together to form the woman, and they interact, through the two characters, to shape the play.

Diana Bracho and María del Carmen Farías, who play the young Frida and the mature Frida, respectively, carry the audience with them on a wonderfully fresh and tender excursion into the fantasies of childhood, the audacity of adolescence and the cruel passion of solitude.

Frida, totally *sui generis* in life becomes universal. Like a character out of a Greek tragedy, Frida transcends the

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