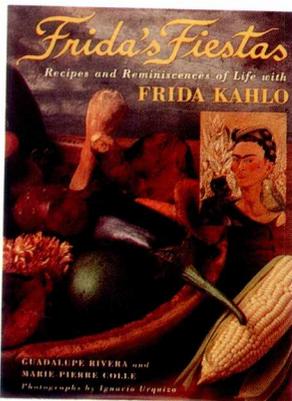


# Frida's Fiestas<sup>1</sup>

Guadalupe Rivera\*  
Marie-Pierre Colle\*\*



*Frida's Fiestas. Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo* takes the reader through life with Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, two of Mexico's world renowned painters, by way of their kitchen. In collaboration with Marie-Pierre Colle, Guadalupe Rivera Marín, Diego's daughter by a previous marriage, wrote this book about the year she lived with the couple in Frida's famous blue Coyoacán house when she was 18 years old. *Voices of Mexico* is proud to present its readers with excerpts for the month of March from this best-selling book.

## TEOTIHUACAN WHERE LIVE THE SUN AND MOON

The hot winds of March had begun to blow. Ash Wednesday arrived and with it the meatless meals of Lent.

When we sat down to eat one Thursday, I noticed that Frida was very upset. She had just read a newspaper article that linked my father romantically with an attractive Hungarian painter. The reporter, who was a woman, declared that Rivera was going to marry the Hungarian as soon as he divorced his current wife, the painter Frida Kahlo.

"At least this is between painters," Frida said. "I have to admit, Piquitos, that I'm not surprised. It won't be the first

time your father has left one artist for another. Just remember how he abandoned Angelina Beloff for Marievna, when both of them were pregnant!"

Then she said, "Come on, let's go to the library. We can talk more comfortably there."

In the library she took out her hidden treasures to show me. There, in two wood and glass display cases, was the splendid pre-Columbian jewelry that my father had given her over the years. There also were her collection of folk toys and her *retablos* on votive themes. She showed me marbles made of old glass, in all sizes. The many colored cat's eyes in the center made them seem like magical objects, whose shifting hues could predict the future.

We ended the afternoon consulting the work of Sigmund Freud. Frida had decided to paint something relating to the prophet Moses, about whom the Viennese master had written so brilliantly. She needed insight into Moses as a mythological figure. Her doubt about how much of

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<sup>1</sup> Guadalupe Rivera and Marie-Pierre Colle, *Frida's Fiestas. Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo*, Kenneth Krabbrenhoft (trans./text), Olga Rigsby (trans./recipes), Pavilion Books Ltd., New York, 1994. Photographs: Ignacio Urquiza; Recipes adapted by Laura B. de Carazo Campos.



Photo: Ignacio Urquiza

Frida used to make her husband special dishes for each month of the year.

Moses to see as human and how much as something else was reflected in her own work, where fantasy often substituted for reality, transforming it from a human experience into a superhuman or mythological one.

More evidence of Frida's search for identity was to be had the following day.

She was so angry at my father that she proposed we disappear. We left before daybreak the following day, with Cristina Kahlo in her little Ford. I had no idea where we were going. The only landmark I noticed, after we had driven the length of Insurgentes Avenue from south to north, was the road to Pachuca, capital of Hidalgo state. Then I realized we were going to San Juan Teotihuacan, a magical place not far from Mexico City.

In the ancient Nahuatl language Teotihuacan means "city of the gods." In those days the silence of a holy place reigned over the site. When we arrived the sun was beating down on the pyramids and palaces of the city. Because at that hour the majestic Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon cast no

shadows, they looked like two-dimensional drawings on a background of clear blue sky, as if we were gazing at a stage set lacking perspective or chiaroscuro contrast.

Frida was completely caught up in the spirit of the place. She reached automatically for the notebook she carried in her embroidered Otomi-style cloth handbag. Once again she sketched the silhouettes of the pyramids and the Temple of Butterflies, which stands next to the Pyramid of the Moon. She executed the sketch exactly as she had when she painted the portrait of Luz María, granddaughter of Don Tomás Teutli and his wife Rosa, direct descendants of the builders of Teotihuacan.

In this portrait the girl wears a sweater made from local materials woven in a regional design. She is sitting in a chair; in the background we see a pale moon and a washed-out sun, celestial bodies half extinguished by the child's presence, which boldly asserts her native identity. The pyramid's silhouette is also fuzzy, and the background is as somber as Frida's mood at the time of our visit.

Later Cristina drove us over a rough road to the edge of the holy city. Here was Don Tomás's house, surrounded by magueys and organ cactus, agaves and prickly-pear plants. Don Tomás was standing in his doorway, and when he saw us, he cried. "Doña Frida! We've been waiting for you since yesterday afternoon! I felt the sadness that brings you to us. I'm very happy to see you have arrived safely. Please come in, come in to my home."

He gave us something to drink, then asked Frida to go with him through the hallway to the garden. When he had finished speaking and the talk turned to other things, that simple, quiet man was suddenly transformed into a menacing creature like Quetzalcóatl, the Teotihuacan deity. A strange light shone in his eyes, and he spoke prophetic words.

"Niña Fridita", he said, "you have more suffering before you, but you will die sheltered and protected by the one who causes your present pain. You and Don Diego will not be able to live apart. Sometimes you are united in love and affection, other times hatred keeps you apart. But you will die together and, after your death, be a single shining star, sun and moon in conjunction. Have no doubt, my dear girl; you are destined to live forever in this universe, each one merged with the other in eternal eclipse."

With these words his prophecy was finished, and he was once again the humble, mild-mannered peasant who had waited for us amid the agaves and magueys, in the doorway to his house, with the peace of time reflected in his face.

After offering us the traditional refreshment of *agua de chia*, Doña Rosa invited us to eat. She had prepared a number of Lenten dishes typically served throughout the central Mexican plain, where the gods that Frida invoked in her paintings had once upon a time resided. As it turned out, Doña Rosa and Don Tomás extended their hospitality to us for three more days, days in which reality was inseparable from magic.



"Frida and Diego lived in this house, 1929-1954."



Frida's kitchen. Frida Kahlo Museum.

## Menu

*Potatoes in Green Sauce*

*Refried Beans*

*Shrimp Tacos*

*Lima Bean Soup*

*Cold Chiles with Vegetable Stuffing*

*Red Snapper Veracruz Style*

*Lettuce, Tomato, Cauliflower and Beet Salad*

*Mango Sorbet*

### Potatoes in Green Sauce

(8 servings)

2 pounds/1 k small potatoes

2 pounds/1 k tomatillos, peeled

1 cup/250 ml water

4 serrano chiles

salt

3/4 cup/100g coarsely chopped coriander

2 tablespoons lard

1 large onion, finely chopped

Peel the potatoes and parboil them for one minute. Set aside. Simmer the tomatillos with the water, chiles and salt to taste until tender. Let cool slightly, then puree with the coriander. Heat the lard in a skillet and sauté the onion until translucent. Add the tomatillo puree and cook for 10 minutes. Stir in the potatoes and continue to cook until the potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.



### Refried Beans

(8 servings)

1/2 pound/250g lard

1 onion, finely chopped

3 cups/500g cooked beans

1 cup/250ml cooking liquid from beans

salt

Grated añejo cheese (or parmesan)

*Totopos* (fried small tortilla triangles)

Heat the lard in a skillet. When it starts to smoke, add the onion and sauté until golden. Add the beans and cooking liquid. Mash the beans to make a puree. Season with salt to taste. When the beans are well fried and pull away from the bottom of the pan when stirred, remove from the heat. Place the fried beans on a serving platter, shaping them into a log. Sprinkle with cheese and garnish with *totopos*.



Photo: Ignacio Urquiza

Potatoes in Green Sauce.

### Shrimp Tacos

(8 servings)

1 medium onion, chopped

4 serrano chiles, chopped

4 tablespoons/65g butter

3 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

salt and pepper

1 pound/500g cooked shrimp

24 medium tortillas

Sauté the onion and chiles in butter until the onion is translucent. Add the tomatoes and salt and pepper to taste. Cook for 10 minutes, until the tomato is thoroughly cooked. If the sauce becomes too thick, thin it with a little chicken broth or water. Add the shrimp and cook 2 minutes, just until they are heated through. Fill the tortillas with the shrimp mixture and serve piping hot. Or serve the shrimp mixture with the tortillas on the side.



### *Lima Bean Soup*

(8 servings)

- 1 pound/500g dried lima beans
- 3 quarts/3 chicken broth
- 4 tablespoons corn oil
- 1 1/2 cups/450g tomatoes pureed  
with 1/2 onion and 1 garlic clove and strained
- 2 parsley sprigs
- salt and pepper
- 2 crusty rolls, sliced and fried

Soak the beans in cold water overnight. Drain and discard the water. Cook the beans in chicken broth until tender. Let cool slightly, then puree with their liquid. Heat the oil in a stock pot. Add the tomatoes and parsley and cook until tomatoes are thickened. Add the pureed beans and season with salt and pepper to taste. If necessary, add a small amount of chicken broth. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes to blend flavors. Serve the soup piping hot, garnished with fried bread slices.



Photo: Ignacio Urquiza

Lima Bean Soup.



### *Cold Chiles with Vegetable Stuffing*

(8 servings)

- 16 *poblano* chiles, roasted, seeded and deveined
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup/60ml white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon *each* fresh thyme, oregano, marjoram  
and coriander
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup chopped cooked cauliflower
- 1 cup chopped cooked carrots
- 1 cup cooked peas
- 4 avocados, peeled and cut in cubes
- 2 scallions, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup/125ml olive oil
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- salt and pepper
- 3 cups/750ml heavy cream
- 1/2 pound/250g añejo cheese, crumbled (or parmesan)

Place the chiles in a saucepan with water to cover. Add the onions, white vinegar, and herbs and cook until tender. Drain and let cook. Combine the vegetables with the oil, vinegar and salt and pepper to taste. Stuff the chiles with the vegetables mixture. Top with cream, sprinkle with cheese, and serve at room temperature.



### *Red Snapper Veracruz Style*

(8 servings)

- 1 red snapper (about 4 1/2 pounds/2k)
- salt and pepper
- 6 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 20 pimento-stuffed olives
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 5 bay leaves
- 3 thyme sprigs

5 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced  
 2 large onions, thinly sliced  
 8 *güero* chiles, pickled or fresh  
 1 cup/250 ml olive oil

Dry the fish thoroughly. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and arrange on a large baking dish. Top with tomato slices, olives, capers, oregano, bay leaves, thyme, garlic, onions and chiles. Drizzle with the olive oil.

Bake in a preheated 375°/190°C oven for about 40 minutes, or until the fish is cooked, basting the fish with its juices 3 times during cooking.



### *Lettuce, Tomato, Cauliflower and Beet Salad*

(8 servings)

1 head romaine lettuce, cut in chunks  
 4 medium tomatoes, peeled and quartered  
 2 cups cooked cauliflower  
 2 beets, cooked and sliced

#### *Vinagrette*

1/2 cup olive oil  
 2 tablespoons lime juice  
 1 teaspoon mustard  
 salt and pepper  
 1 teaspoon honey

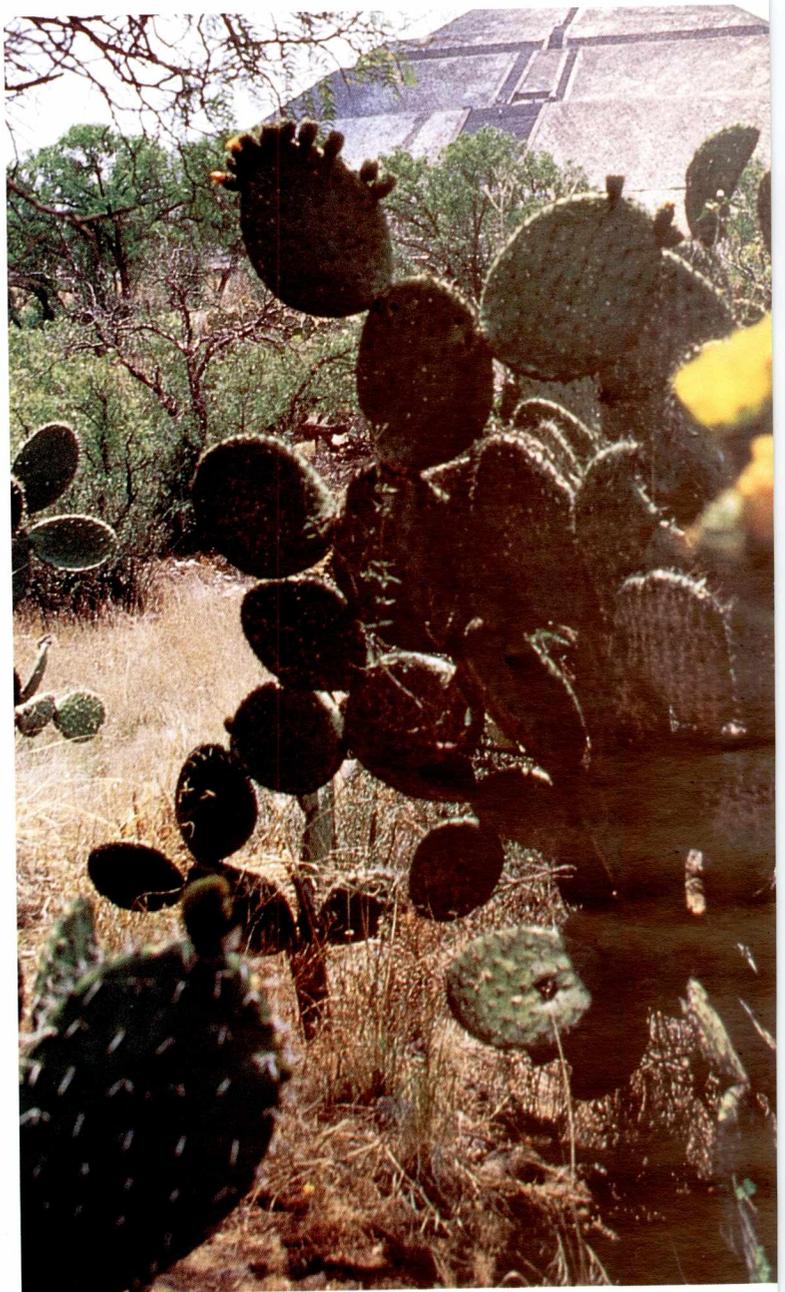
Arrange all the vegetables in a salad bowl. Dress with the vinagrette. To make the vinagrette, combine all the ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Shake to blend thoroughly.



### *Mango Sorbet*

(6 to 8 servings)  
 1/2 pound sugar

Photo: Ignacio Urquiza



*Nopal* cactus leaves are one of the most common ingredients in traditional Mexican cuisine.

1/2 cup water  
 2 cups mango pureed with 1/2 cup water

Combine sugar and water and heat until syrupy. Remove from heat. Stir in mango puree. Strain if desired. Chill, then place in an ice cream maker and freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions. 



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