

Taco History

Corn is the more important agricultural harvest in the country. The first nourishing product of the Mexican population. For many centuries was considered a sacred grain, as they believed that the Gods, people and colors were made out of corn. « And when the corn grain is grown, the corn peoples grind it on a stone and rise it and applaud it and lie it on top of the fire and eat it so the corn peoples might continue growing the corn and it will not die on the earth» (Eduardo Galeano, Las palabras andantes, p81).

Such is the importance of the corn grain in Mexico, that is consumed 20 three times more than rice, nine times more than beans and three times more than wheat. Corn is consumed in many different ways: as pozole, huarache, chilatole, panucho, garnacha, atole, peneque, etc. It is used for many dishes: dry, tender or with a fungus that grows on top of it, better known as «huitlacoche».

But its most important presentation is la tortilla. When this marvelous invent wraps any kind of food, becomes the main dish for the Mexicans: EI TACO.

Related to the origin of this word «Taco» are several options. The mejicanismos dictionary of Francisco J. Santamaria mentions that « everything comes from the word attack». Antonio del Bajio tells us that it's a derivation of a common Spaniard language corruption due to their difficulty to learn the American dialects: from the diversity of tortillas written by Sahagun: ueitlaxcalli, quauhtaqualli and tlaxcalpocholi, he means from, taqualli or tlaco and finally taco».

The 1970 Academy dictionary designates the taco origin as onomatopoeia of tac. A piece of wood, metal or any other material short and thick that might fit in any hole. A tissue cylinder, paper or something alike. It is also defined as something light to eat out of the regular meal hours.

No matter which is the correct origin of this word, evidently the taco was a very popular food among the inhabitants of North America, later adapted to the food taste of the Spaniards and obviously to the Creoles and Mestizo who later formed the Mexican nation. Its permanency comes from centuries ago and has been integrated to the Mexican people food through their history not only during their wars and crisis but also in their victories and success. However the most ingenious definition of taco is given by Jorge Ibarguengoitia when he wrote:

« I would like to invent something that will be at the same time dish, spoon, napkin and tablecloth – he most have thought – that it does not need to be washed but at the same time will assure the person who is about to put in his mouth that it is clean and has not been touched by other lips. Something that could be eaten so at the end of the banquet nobody has the anything to wash and not leftovers be seen on the tables «



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Tacos are very nourishing, they provide energy and its formula is so simple – just a tortilla and any kind of food inside – giving ideas to try different gastronomic combinations. The taste and personality are the elements that accompany the El Fogoncito exquisite tacos.

Grilled meat tacos.

Among the different variety of tacos, it could be carnitas, guisado, canasta, barbacoa, etc. There is one which maybe is the most famous in the last decades and the one more consumed where different cultures are gathered: tacos al carbon, a Mexican product that has combined different gastronomical cultures to create a national fast food with un doubtful success.

They appeared during the 60s and the fact that its main ingredients are grilled meats reveals its North origin. Their price, quality, taste and the success of the fast food in the Mexican life style made out of these restaurants a great success. In some restaurants a big grill was installed heated with charcoal where they put marinated meat and onions to grill, pots with cheese and tortillas.

Different type of sauces was prepared: Mexican, guacamole, green, red or morita pepper, etc. The combination of taste of the charcoal grilled meat and the tortilla and sauces was excellent. El Fogoncito is a witness and protagonist of the development of the most popular tacos now days.

The Tacos al Pastor.

In the same sites where the charcoal grilled meat tacos were prepared the popular tacos al pastor were born. As there is also a dispute about its origins, clearly the style of putting the meat and the cooking recipe is of oriental origin. In Beirut we can observe the traditional food stands that have a vertical rod with marinated lamb meat that is turning around a cylinder to grill the meat on open fire. Charcoal, wood or gas heats this cylinder. This same system is being used by the Mexican taquerias but using pork meat instead, as this is meat highly appreciated by the Mexican population and it is also abundant.

The tacos al pastor are prepared in small corn tortillas, heated in a comal and accompanied with raw onion or grilled, cilantro, green or red sauce – better with morita pepper sauce – and some add some lemon drops.

Very soon each taqueria invented their own recipe which determined the difference and quality among them and the consumer preferences. To this proliferation of recipes a new important ingredient was added giving its characteristic to these tacos that were also known as Hawaiian style tacos, the pineapple.

Today 30 years later, charcoal grilled tacos represent a total success and each day more and more are consumed, as they are easy to consume, inexpensive, accessible and delicious.



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