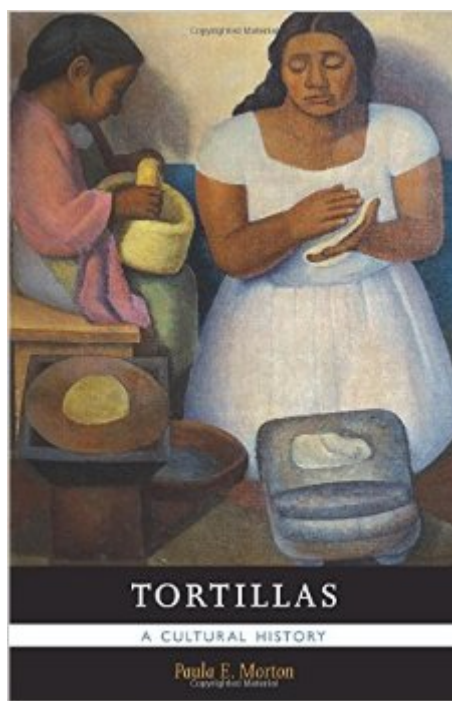


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Tortillas: A Cultural History



Synopsis

"The ordinary tortilla was an extraordinary bond between the human and divine. . . . From birthdays to religious ceremonies, the people of Mesoamerica commemorated important events with tortillas. One Maya tribe even buried their dead with tortillas so that the dogs eaten as dinner during life would not bite the deceased in revenge."--from *Tortillas: A Cultural History*

For centuries tortillas have remained a staple of the Mexican diet, but the rich significance of this unleavened flatbread stretches far beyond food. Today the tortilla crosses cultures and borders as part of an international network of people, customs, and culinary traditions. In this entertaining and informative account Paula E. Morton surveys the history of the tortilla from its roots in ancient Mesoamerica to the cross-cultural global tortilla. Morton tells the story of tortillas and the people who make and eat them--from the Mexican woman rolling the mano over the metate to grind corn, to the enormous wheat tortillas made in northern Mexico, to twenty-first-century elaborations like the stuffed burrito. This study--the first to extensively present the tortilla's history, symbolism, and impact--shows how the tortilla has changed our understanding of home cooking, industrialized food, healthy cuisine, and the people who live across borders.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is exactly what the title says, a cultural history of tortillas. It's got some oral history (and several "guest essays", an unusual feature but each contributes information), it's very slightly academic in a few sections, and the overall tone is something akin to social anthropology. The writing is lively and the reader will find out a lot about tortillas. Morton provides some history for the tortilla in

pre-Columbian Mexico. Much of the history is the interplay between corn tortillas and flour tortillas. The Spanish considered wheat to be better and somehow, more civilized, so the tortilla became a mark of the poor and the Indian. Flour tortillas eventually happened, and this is somewhat mysterious. Among the possibilities are closeted Muslims or secret Jews, both groups apparently settling on the frontier. There's also what might be described as the interplay between grandma's and the industrial tortilla, with grandma's tasting better but being hell on women to make. Some of the story is the similarities and differences between the northern areas of Mexico and the more traditionally Indian portions. Morton describes particularly Aztec and Maya cuisine, sharply different. Then there are several stories about Mexican and Mexican-American entrepreneurs who set up tortilla manufacturing companies or restaurants. The last chapter is on the world tortilla, mostly in the USA and certainly not Mexican but in a way a sort of ambassador for Mexican culture; and there are stories of Mexicans now Americans and their foods. This is a quick (125 pages or so, with an additional helpful short annotated sources section at the end).

If you want to know about the cultural history of food this is a must read. I live in Mexico so all the more interesting for me.

Fantastic book! This gives a phenomenal history about corn and the tortilla.

A very good read on the history of the tortilla.

Very educative

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