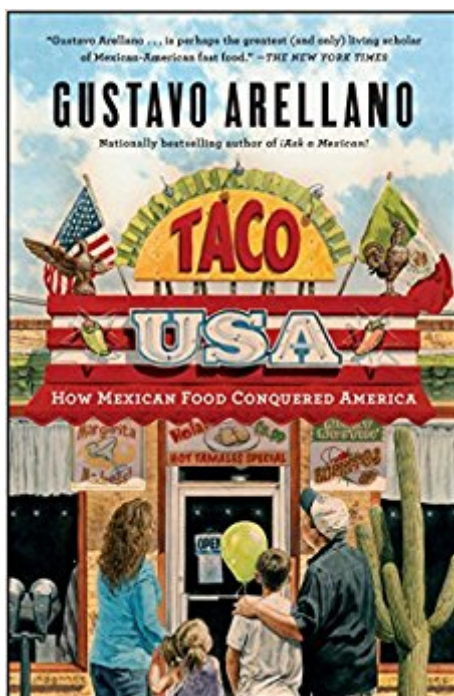


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Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America



Synopsis

The nationally syndicated columnist and bestselling author of *Ask a Mexican!* presents a fascinating and tasty trip through the history and culture of Mexican food in this country, uncovering great stories and charting the cuisine's tremendous popularity in el Norte. Nationally syndicated columnist and bestselling author of *Ask a Mexican!* Gustavo Arellano presents a tasty trip through the history and culture of Mexican food in this country, uncovering great stories and charting the cuisine's tremendous popularity north of the border. Arellano's fascinating narrative combines history, cultural criticism, food writing, personal anecdotes, and Jesus on a tortilla. In seemingly every decade for over a century, America has tried new culinary trends from south of the border, loved them, and demanded the next big thing. As a result, Mexican food dominates American palates to the tune of billions of dollars in sales per year, from canned refried beans to tortilla wraps and ballpark nachos. It's a little-known history, one that's crept up on this country and left us better for it.

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Customer Reviews

"In this entertaining nod to culinary and cultural histories, journalist Arellano traces the roots of Mexican food in the U.S. and explores the cuisine's many offshoots, underscoring why salsa is now our #1 condiment. Arellano makes the point, one that's particularly relevant in today's heated immigration debate, that as much as some Americans may protest Mexican immigrants, they're in love with Mexican food."

• Publishers Weekly "An appealing cultural exploration of Mexican food in the United States. Readers will come away not only hungry, but with a deeper understanding of the Mexican people and their cuisine."

• Kirkus "In a chatty, lighthearted style and with mordant wit, Arellano traces the steady northward creep of Mexican cooking from Texas and the Southwest into the heart of Yankee territory."

• Booklist "[Arellano] manages to squeeze in mentions of just about every Mexican restaurant (including, believe it or not, both Taco Cabana and the dining room of the Austin Hyatt), product line, and preparation in the country. If you've ever wondered about the roots of Taco Bell or why fajitas are called that or who invented the frozen-margarita machine, you'll find answers here."

• Slate Magazine "Gustavo Arellano is perhaps the greatest (and only) living scholar of Mexican-American fast food."

• (The New York Times) Arellano approaches his subject with incisiveness, humor, academic rigor, and, of course, an endless appetite. (Southwestern American Literature)

Gustavo Arellano's Ask a Mexican! column has a circulation of more than two million in thirty-eight markets (and counting). He has received the President's Award from the Los Angeles Press Club, an Impact Award from the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and a 2008 Latino Spirit Award from the California State legislature. Arellano has appeared on the Today show, Nightline, NPR's Talk of the Nation, and The Colbert Report. For more information, visit AskAMexican.net.

I don't understand why some gave bad reviews to this thoroughly engrossing book. I love Mexican food like so many others and found the detail and range of topics very interesting and informative. You can appreciate the menu more when you understand it's history. Arellano is an entertaining and funny writer. His Ask a Mexican book and columns are outrageously politically incorrect (God bless him) and he is as fearless here but this is no polemic. This is like a great Menudo, a savory blend of several cultures and regions to produce a bit of culinary heaven. I especially liked the stories of the rise of Tamales, Tacos, Burritos, La Victoria, Taco Bell, Pace, Tapatio and so much more we encounter every day. I highly recommend this book to anyone that has a real interest not just in recipes but how they came about. Well done Gustavo!

Those with a high-minded take on food -- the kind who sigh and think warm thoughts of Paris and Prague when you say what you like to eat -- might find this book impertinent. Those who love

Mexican food and insightful romps down the backstreets of American culture will savor every last word. Gustavo Arellano has a distinctive voice -- passionate, humorous, welcoming -- and a strong sense of history. You'll eat your next Mexican plate with a greater awareness of the entree's origins and terrific stories to share with those at your table.

I had always wondered about Mexican food and how it came to occupy its place in American cuisine. Now I know. The information is solid. If you want to know where frozen margaritas and Ortega chilies came from this will tell you. The social history of the burrito and its relation to the braceros is there as are the old Chili Queens and Tamale Kings. My only problem is the quality of the writing. The author is a professional, and that may be the problem. He writes a magazine column which will be read once over quickly and discarded. The style is tabloid and disjointed. Sometimes it's just rapid-fire facts. It doesn't bear a close reading let alone re-reading as a book.

This is an important document about the history of Mexican American food, and get it for that. Surges in popularity of Mexican food have been part of American culture ever since the Mexican-American war, which was precipitated by the US invasions into Mexico. The book covers the rise of chili, tamales, burritos, and now tacos. Having eaten this food my entire life, it was fascinating to read the backstory. The boosterism toward the end, where he reviews different restaurants, isn't really where it's at.

Anybody who has ever eaten a burrito -- or a roll-up for that matter -- owes it to themselves to read this book. Cleverly written by Gustavo Arellano, the history of Americans and Mexican food is traced back to the late 1800s. This is a fun and enlightening read. I especially enjoyed it because much of the history took place in Riverside/San Bernardino Counties (the Inland Empire) where I live. For example, the Mission Inn is considered the jewel of the town I live in. I learned that the man who bought and ran it made his fortune putting burritos into school lunch programs!

I saw Gustavo at a book lecture and based on that as well as his clever column I had to read this! The book is very historical, in the way he speaks of Latino's culinary reach to the rest of the world. For that very fact the first part of his book drags. However, the second half is exciting and really captures the spirit of his notion. One big question I have after reading this book is in what way will Latino food influence our country's soc

It is what it is.

Having a taste for Mexican food and curious to hear more about the origins of cooking in America, I bought this book. While it does present much factual and interesting info, it reads like a history book, full of dates, facts and meetings but short on style and stories to keep the interest of the reader. While not a bad book by any means, The style of writing did not appeal to me. The information within, on the other hand, is interesting.

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