



# COCINA MEXICANA



Level: middle school  
Course: beginning Spanish

## Rationale

In most parts of the USA there is hardly a middle school student who does not believe that the taco is the staple of all diets from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, with the Caribbean thrown in for good measure. Spanish teachers fervently believe that it is their job to lead students to an awareness of the richness and diversity of cultures in the Hispanic world. Therefore the aim of this lesson and the two that accompany it is to deepen students cultural knowledge of the cuisine of Mexico (this lesson and Peterson's lesson) and then contrast it with that of a different Latin American culture (Clifford's lesson on Dominican food). The second goal of this lesson is both cultural and linguistic. In our Spanish I textbook the vocabulary of food is presented in an American context, words for hamburgers and sandwiches, etc. The goal of this lesson is to expand the Spanish vocabulary to include those foods and dishes which are native Mexican.

## Lesson Overview

This lesson is to be presented just after the textbook vocabulary of food has been acquired and concurrent with the computer lesson (Lesson by Peterson). It requires students to use the Internet skills they are learning to find Mexican authentic recipes written in Spanish, decode those recipes and learn the expanded vocabulary. Students will work in cooperative learning groups, in a variation called the Jigsaw Activity.

by  
Joan Clifford  
clifford@meol.mass.edu  
Parker Middle School  
45 Temple Street  
Reading, MA 01867  
617-944-1236

## Objectives:

Students will:

- \* expand their Spanish active vocabulary to include authentic foods and dishes
- \* practice and strengthen the Internet skills they are learning in their computer class
- \* take an active role in their learning via mystery box and jigsaw activities
- \* discover that the cuisine of Mexico is rich and varied.

## Time needed

2-3 class periods

## Materials

At least one computer with access to the World Wide Web (or gopher). A box containing Mexican food-stuffs (whatever you can get your hands on: chiles, cactus leaves, a bottle or can of mole poblano, jicama, etc.) and cooking utensils, such as a molinillo. See the bibliography for cookbooks which illustrate utensils and give lists of mail-order houses for foodstuffs. Also sets of 3-color highlighter pens (1 set per group), art supplies, index cards with categories written on them

## Procedures

### 1. Introduction

Teacher produces the mystery box [full of exotic foodstuffs and cooking utensils (e.g. molinillo)] and asks the class to inspect objects and speculate on their nature and use. Discussion. [What is this thing for ? Is it old or is it something still in use today ? What in your life can you compare it to ? Where did it come from ? Is this edible ? How do you cook/serve it ?]

### 2. Class dissects a recipe: title, measures, ingredients and cooking steps.

### 3. Jigsaw Activity

\* The class will be divided into several groups. Each group will access the Spanish language version of the University of Guadalajara's web site. Groups will be instructed to search for and print a recipe from a certain category : Teacher gives each group an index card with a category from the web site (e.g. postres y bebidas, carnes, salsas, huevos, verduras, sopas).

\* Working in groups with 3 different color highlighter pens, first highlight those words in recipe which the class has learned from text. Next, change colors and highlight words that are cognates or otherwise easy to guess meaning. Finally, take third color pen and highlight unknown words. Each group will compile a list of ingredients, measuring terms and key words for directions. List them on a poster in the class (using a different color marker for each group), and search cookbooks and references for their meaning. Post English meanings next to the Spanish.

\* My trial class formed six groups with 4-5 members in each group. One person in the group recorded measurements (tablespoon, liter, etc.) on the appropriate poster, another student wrote cooking terms on the Procedures poster, a third member of the group made up a shopping list and the remaining students looked up unfamiliar words in the dictionary and in the reference cookbooks.

\* As closure for this part of the activity, the teacher brought all the groups together to inspect the posters. Thanks to the different colored markers, it was easy to see which terms overlapped in more than one recipe. The class then observed common terms and ingredients. For fun, return to the Guadalajara web site, but this time access it in English, to check how accurately the recipes were understood.

\* Students then will form new groups (Day 3 ) with a specialist from each category. The group will design and illustrate a menu for a special dinner.

#### 4. Homework

Learn new vocabulary. One possibility for this assignment is a crossword puzzle. The teacher or students can create this using one of the many software programs for composing crossword puzzles.

### Supplementary

Show video "Cuisine of Mexico" and also a clip from one of the network television morning programs ("Today," "Good Morning America," or from a Spanish-language channel) of a cooking demonstration. Students will create a similar cooking demonstration in Spanish and videotape it.

Sequencing activity - distribute envelopes with Spanish recipes in which steps for preparation have been cut up. Students must put strips back into correct sequence.

Play memory game: cards with pairs of vocabulary words English-Spanish or Spanish-images face down which students try to match up by remembering the location of cards. Each player is allowed to turn 2 cards face up, if they match the player removes them from the board, if not the player turns them face down again and loses the turn. The player (team) with the most matches wins the game.

Play bingo using student-made bingo sheets in which students have written vocabulary words.

Read ads for Spanish grocery stores in local Hispanic or Mexican newspapers, make your own ads.

Make hot chocolate using the molinillo

Sing the chocolate song in Spanish (see De Colores songbook in resources)

Take field trip to authentic Mexican restaurant, if one exists nearby



## Bibliography

(see also the lesson by Peterson and chocolate lesson by O'Rourke)

### *Mexican cooking*

Quintana, Patricia, Mexico's Feasts of Life, Council Oak Books, Tulsa OK, 1994

Large format paperback with fine Mexican cooking divided into the occasions when it is eaten: holidays, weddings, etc. An indispensable aid for connecting the food and the culture. Beautiful photos including charts of herbs and chiles. 242 pages (ISBN 1-57178-000-9)

Peinado, L, Bienvenidos to Our Kitchens; Authentic Mexican Cooking, Pelican Press, Gretna, LA 1992

210 pages, two dozen color photos, good explanations, cultural information and addresses for purchasing supplies

Bayless, R, Authentic Mexican, William. Morris & Co., NY, 1987

20 pages of great background information, 30 pages of glossary, illustrations of utensils, many recipes and suggestions for finding ingredients.

Rexach, Nilda, The Hispanic American Cookbook, Lyle Stuart, Inc., Secaucus, NJ 1985

185 pages, no illustrations. The recipes are not labeled as to country of origin, but this book is extremely useful as all recipes are in Spanish on one page with English on the opposite page. Also provides a glossary and conversion chart from American measures to metric. (ISBN 0-8065-1601-1)

Kennedy, Diana, Cuisine of Mexico, cookbook and video  
(available from Curriculum Research Center Tulane, University, New Orleans, LA )

Video, 28 minutes long

### *Resources on Mexican culture which mention food*

Lomas, Carmen, Family Pictures, Children's Book Press, Emeryville, CA.

A paperback picture book recounting a girl's memories of growing up on the Mexican-US border. (ISBN 0-89239-108-1)

Irizarry, Carmen, Getting to Know Mexico, NTC Publishing, Passport Books series, Chicago, IL 1994

Good middle school book on Mexico, 2 pages on food and eating. (ISBN 0-8442-7703-7)

Kalman, Bobbie, Mexico: the Culture, Crabtree Publishing, Lands, People and Culture series, NY, 1993

Another good middle school book. (ISBN 0-86505-296-4)

Orozco, José, De Colores, Dutton Children's Books, NY 1994

This book of Latin American children's songs contains words and sheet music with illustrations and cultural notes. For example, on the page with the chocolate song it mentions that the word chocolate comes from the Nahuatl language, and explains the Aztec origin of this food. Illustrated. (ISBN 0-525-45260-5)

Hall, Nancy Abraham and Syverson-Stork, Jill, Los Pollitos Dicen, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1994

Children's rhymes and songs from Latin America. Includes a song with hand motions to suggest whipping up some chocolate with a molinillo. Soon to be available on CD-ROM

Kids Explore Mexico, International Video Network, San Ramon, CA

This 28-minute video from the "Where in the World?" series is more appropriate for elementary school, but there is a small sequence where an American girl visits a Mexican restaurant. The video shows some quick shots of Mexico, but also emphasizes Mexican resources that may exist in U.S. communities.

#### *Internet Sources*

University Guadalajara, Mexico World Wide Web

URL [http:// www.udg.mx/Cocina/menu.html](http://www.udg.mx/Cocina/menu.html)

Fabulous web site ! Beautiful images and plenty of recipes, accessible in English or in Spanish. Other interesting material for Spanish classes at this site. Recipes can also be retrieved via gopher.