



[(Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food)]
[Author: Jeffrey M. Pilcher] published on
(October, 2012)

Jeffrey M Pilcher

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Planet Taco asks the question, "what is authentic Mexican food?" The burritos and taco shells that many people think of as Mexican were actually created in the United States, and Americanized foods have recently been carried around the world in tin cans and tourist restaurants. But the contemporary struggle between globalization and national sovereignty to determine the meaning of Mexican food is far from new. In fact, Mexican food was the product of globalization from the very beginning - the Spanish conquest - when European and Native American influences blended to forge the mestizo or mixed culture of Mexico. The historic struggle between globalization and the nation continued in the nineteenth century, as Mexicans searching for a national cuisine were torn between nostalgic "Creole" Hispanic dishes of the past and French haute cuisine, the global food of the day. Indigenous foods, by contrast, were considered strictly *declassé*. Yet another version of Mexican food was created in the U.S. Southwest by Mexican American cooks, including the "Chili Queens" of San Antonio and tamale vendors of Los Angeles. When Mexican American dishes were appropriated by the fast food industry and carried around the world, Mexican elites rediscovered the indigenous roots of their national cuisine among the ancient Aztecs and the Maya. Even this *Nueva Cocina Mexicana* was a transnational phenomenon, called "New Southwestern" by chefs in the United States. Rivalries within this present-day gourmet movement recalled the nineteenth-century struggles between Creole, Native, and French foods. Planet Taco also seeks to recover the history of people who have been ignored in the struggles to define authentic Mexican, especially those who are marginal to both nations: Indians and Mexican Americans.

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