

# Homage to Corn

## CENTRAL AMERICA GASTRONOMY

GUATEMALA, EL SALVADOR, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA AND COSTA RICA



Without a doubt, corn is a Native American crop, although today this gramineae is one of the most important nutritional supplements due to its high nutritional value and is cultivated throughout the world; it represents one of the main economic activities and is an essential part of the food security of much of the planet.

Although we find corn both in the native cultures of North America to the South of the continent, archaeological studies indicate that the cultivation of *zea mays*, from which the current cultivation derives, began about 12 thousand years ago and is originally from Mesoamerica (an area from central Mexico to northern Nicaragua). Like many other New World crops, it was brought to Europe in the 16th century.

On a historical level, it has deep significance in the Mayan worldview, spirituality, customs and traditions. Among these, the origin of man from corn that appears in the *Popol Vuh*, a sacred book of the Mayans. In all the Mayan ceremonies with which an event of great significance is commemorated, the corn offering is present: white, yellow, red, black, representing the four cardinal points, as in ancient times, when they were offered to deities, rulers and principals, elaborate corn-based dishes for big celebrations.

The cuisine based on corn is widely rich and diverse, from a simple tortilla fresh from the comal to elaborate dishes that have this grain as the main actor, with its own variations in each place.

According to Ministerial Agreement 767-2011, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala declared corn a Cultural Heritage of the Nation. Later, Legislative Decree 13-2014 declared it a Natural and Cultural Heritage, given its historical importance and its socio-cultural implications, in addition, because it is the fundamental product in the Guatemalan diet, establishing August 13 "National Corn Day".

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## Guatemala



### Chuchitos

The corn dough (usually white) is wrapped in different types of leaves, particularly tusas (dried corn leaves) and is filled with pork or chicken, tomato sauce and different chili peppers, also products of the rich Mesoamerican cuisine.



### Tamalitos con loroco

Edible and aromatic loroco flowers (*Fernaldia pandurata*), also native to Mesoamerica, are added to the corn dough and wrapped in maxán or banana leaves, which add flavor and smell.



### Elotes asados

If you have traveled through Guatemala, mainly the highlands, you will find stalls that offer you this simple and tasty snack, especially during the rainy months, alone or with lemon and salt, they are delicious



### Enchiladas Chapinas

Pickled beetroot and minced meat, on a crispy toast -like many of the traditional dishes based on corn, the tortilla is fried in oil-, bathed with tomato sauce, garnished with hard-boiled egg, powdered cheese and chopped parsley



### Tacos y Dobladas

Golden in hot oil, stuffed with melted cheese, minced meat or potato; without missing its respective tomato sauce, parsley and hard cheese



### Tostadas

Spread with beans, salsa and / or avocado. A tasty trilogy, where avocado -another purely Mesoamerican product- contributes its delicious flavor, also with powdered cheese, parsley and thin slices of onion

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## *Guatemala*



### Mixtas

A fresh tortilla from the comal with pieces of sausage or juicy roast meat, guacamole and tanned cabbage, mayonnaise, mustard and sweet sauce



### Atol de elote

Soft corn-based drink, garnished with granites. As it is generally served very hot, the well-known "wiggles" is made in the container so as not to burn yourself



### Tamalitos de cambrey

Also wrapped in cob leaves, called tusas, they are a sweet variation, with raisins and rosicler (sugar dyed with red food coloring).

## *El Salvador*



### Pupusas

Popular snack that has spread in several countries. Tortillas golden and stuffed with chicharrón and quesillo, similar to mozzarella on pizza. Accompanied by abundant pickled cabbage and sauce



### Elotes locos

Cooked corn covered with ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard and hard cheese, or just lemon and salt. They cannot be absent from any popular festival

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## *Honduras*



### Ticucos

A version of tamalito from the western region of Honduras. Dough tamales stuffed with whole cooked beans, wrapped in tusa. Like many of these dishes, ticucos are one of the snacks that are found in any traditional party or celebration

## *Nicaragua*

### Enchiladas nicaragüenses

In Nicaragua also known as fritanga, it is generally part of the night street gastronomy. Refried folded tortillas stuffed with beans, accompanied by cabbage salad and pico de gallo (tomato and chopped onion)



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## *Costa Rica*



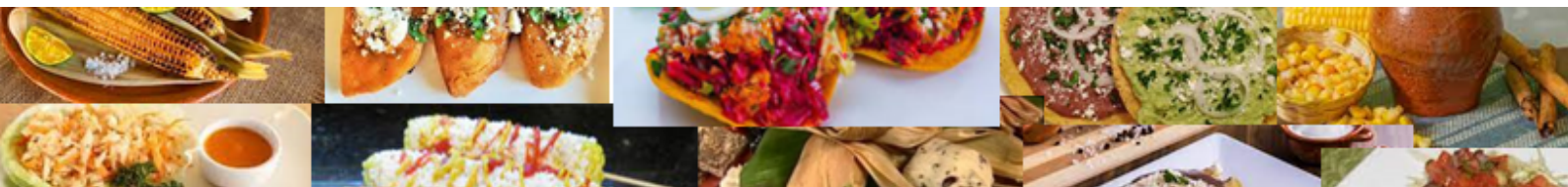
### Chalupas ticas

Tortillas toasted with guacamole or beans, shredded beef or chicken, garnished with julienne lettuce, cream and fresh cheese



### Enfrijoladas de pollo

Flautas stuffed with shredded chicken bathed with ground beans, cream and plenty of cheese



Many of these traditional and popular dishes have variants among themselves, depending on the country and region where they are prepared, but they all share distinctly American ingredients, of pre-Hispanic origin: in addition to corn, Central American cuisine shares beans, avocados, tomatoes and tomato for green sauces, achiote, aromatic herbs (coriander, apazote, chipilín), great diversity of chili peppers, among many: bell pepper, chiltepe, huaque, chamberote, zambo, raisin, chocolate, green, serrano, habanero, dog's tooth. Except for the bell pepper, all are extremely hot

*These native New World ingredients were splendidly fused with plant and animal products, such as milk to make fresh and dry cheeses, as well as a large number of spices from Spanish and Arabic gastronomy, which today delight us with their color, smell and flavor*