

FC34: Introduction to Mesoamerican Civilizations

Section 5: The Cuisine Lab

Ingredients:

2 lb maiz blanco (white corn)
20 oz cal (slaked lime)
1 tablespoon achiote (annatto) seeds
1 oz cacao nibs
1 vanilla bean
Add chiles serranos to taste
Honey (to taste)

Cooking Supplies:

Large pot
Mano and Metate
Molcajete
Comal
Double burner
Small pot



Goal:

Make tasty chocolatey atole and toasted tortillas using traditional Mesoamerican ingredients and cooking utensils.

Key Terms:

Maiz
Slaked lime (or cal)
Nixtamal
Atole
Metate
Mano

Comal
Molcajete
Vanilla
Achiote (annatto)
Cacao
Cacao nib

Instructions:

Preparing the nixtamal: Add 4 L of water to a large pot and set on high heat. Add 1 kg corn and 50 g cal. Bring to a boil and cook for two hours. Allow water cool, and let the corn soak overnight. The corn is done once the skin of the kernel peels off easily if squeezed. Rinse the corn under cold water several times to remove the lime. Rub and knead the kernels to separate the skin from the kernels. Discard the skins.

Making Masa: Transfer the skinless kernels to the metate. Use the mano to grind the kernels into a fine mass, called masa. Remember to add water as you grind to keep the corn soft and moist. Divide the masa into two halves. Use one half to make tortillas, and the other half to make atole.

Tortillas: Turn the double burner on high. Place the double comal over the burner. Knead the masa with your hands to make a soft dough. Form small balls that fit into the palm of your hand and pat it back and forth, shaping it like a pancake. Use water to smooth over any cracks or breaks. Lay the tortilla onto the comal. Cook turning only once. To check if done, lift an edge gently. If the tortilla sticks, cook longer. Eat!

Chocolatey Atole: Grind the achiote seeds and set aside. Grind cacao and then add a vanilla bean. Grind the vanilla bean into the cacao. Add back the achiote and continue grinding. Add 1 L of water to a small pot and place over medium heat. Dissolve about 5 oz of corn masa into the water. Stir to dissolve completely. When atole thickens, add the cacao, achiote, and vanilla mixture and stir. Pour back and forth between pots to create a foam or use a molinillo. Pour chocolatey atole into cups. Add honey or chiles serranos to taste. Enjoy!