

# Edible Immigrants

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following is a tribute for Indigenous Peoples' Day celebrated on Oct 14, National Immigrants' Day (Oct 28) and National Food Day (Oct 24).*

By Don Mathis

Immigration is a hot topic across the continent. But there is another type of immigrant that is welcomed at almost every table; Mexican Food! Oct. 28 is *National Immigrants Day*, Oct. 14 is *Indigenous Peoples' Day*, and Oct. 24 is *National Food Day*. It's time to take a look at Indigenous Ingredients – foods from south of the border.

Did you ever try a tomatillo? You may not like it, but it's only 99 cents a pound. Maybe you didn't like salsa the first time you tried it. But what would salsa be without a tomatillo?

Pick a papaya. Think of a large orange berry. Think of a small amber melon. Add 100 hard black seeds. Imagine soft sweet flesh. The time is ripe to try one.

Choose chocolate for your chula. Thank you, citizens of Chiapas, for giving us the cacao bean, the purple Forastero, the pale Criollo, the red Trinitario. Try it with milk and sugar, or cinnamon, or almonds, or peppers. You're going to love it!

Get your girlfriend a guanabana. It's a spikey fruit - as big as your head. Remove the bitter green peel, and the dark toxic seeds. Cut it up for your fruit cup, or blend it for a delicioso licuado!

Ask for an agave. The stalks can be chewed, the leaves may be eaten, the sap used to make syrup. But my favorite use is tequila. ¡Salud!

Buy your baby a boniato. It's a tuber, a sweet potato with dry pale flesh and purple skin. Bake it, steam it, boil it, fry it, put it in your empanadas or mash it. Put it in your pudding, your pie, or your pie hole!

Have a jicama. Slice it or dice it, squeeze some lime up top. sprinkle it

with chili, Chase it with a shot of tequila!

Give yourself some sugarcane. Cut a section from the stalk. Remove the hard, green bark. Pop it into your mouth, and chew, and chew, and chew. Once all the sweetness is gone, cut off another piece. And chew.

Give you mama a mamey. Peel away the rough brown skin. Take out the big black seed. Enjoy the orange red pulp! It's like a pear with nutmeg, or an apricot with vanilla.

Chow down on a chayóte. Cook it like a squash. Serve it in your salad. You may think it has an identity problem. Buy you may be the one with an identity problem.

Get yourself a guava. If a fig married a kiwi, this may be their baby. Eat the greenish skin, savor the pale pink pulp, swallow the countless seeds.

Purchase some piñón nuts. Eat them raw or roast them. Put them in your fruits or vegetables. Add them in your yogurt or bread. Meats and pasta can be enhanced with the sweet and buttery flavor of el piñón.

Purchase a pitaya. You might have to go to a produce market. You may have to ask for a dragon fruit. Look it up. Learn about it.

Pick up a package of pecans. If a Mexican recipe calls for nuez, it's probably the pecan from Chihuahua. Eat some gollorías or garapiñadas or some leche quemada – Sweet!

I'll leaf you with a banana leaf. Did you ever wrap your tamales in a banana leaf instead of a cornhusk? Do the plantain leaves make the masa a little moister? Do they impart a sweeter flavor? Let your tamal be the judge.

The next time you enjoy a Durango desayuno, a Michoacán meal, or some Coahuiltecan cuisine, contemplate where your meal originated. And consider that people – as well as produce, can immigrate.

