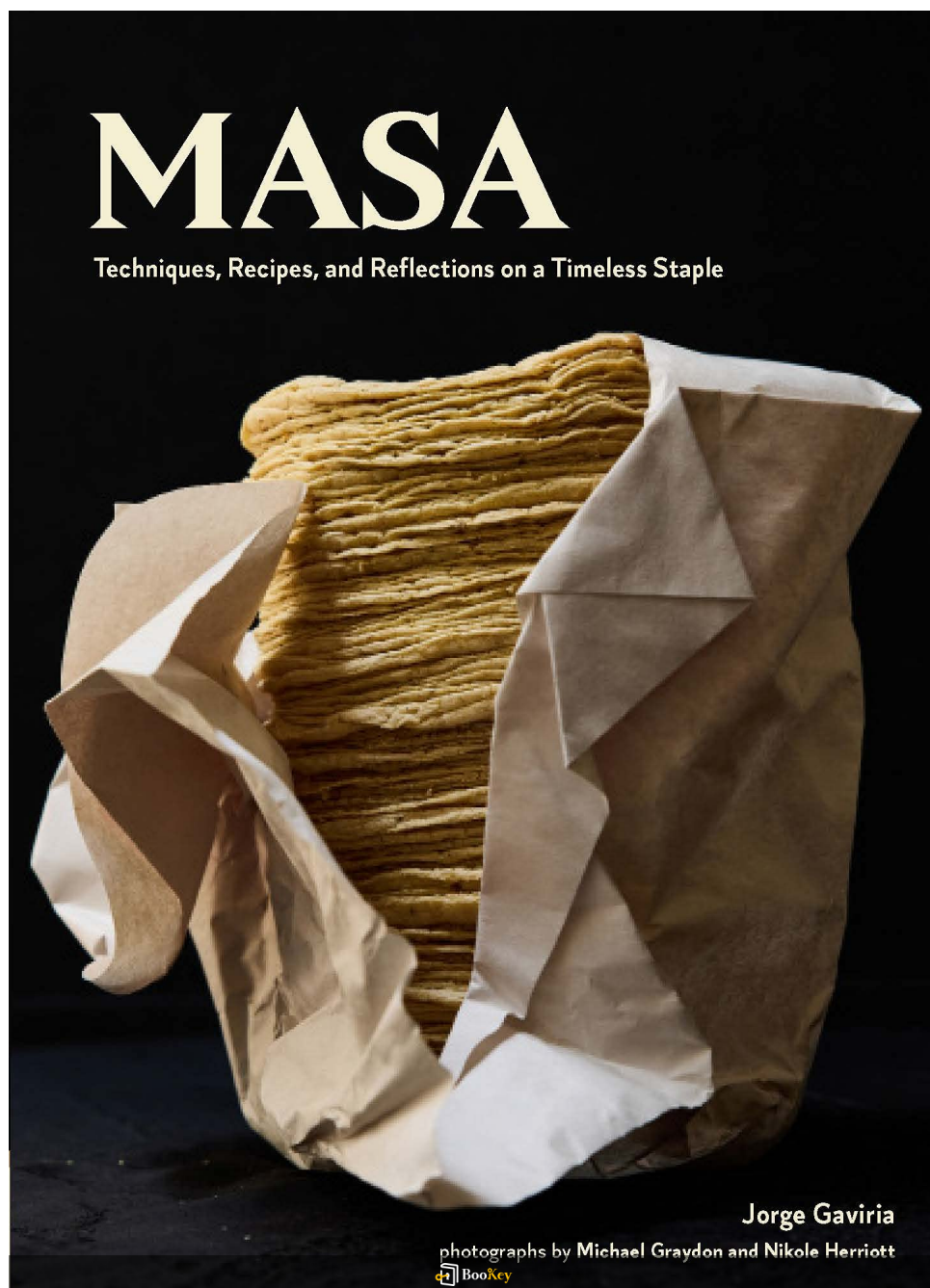


Masa PDF (Limited Copy)

Jorge Gaviria, Graydon Herriott



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Masa Summary

"Exploring the Art and Craft of Authentic Nixtamalization."

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About the book

****Masa by Jorge Gaviria and Graydon Herriott presents a sumptuous exploration into the world of masa, the soft dough that forms the backbone of many cherished dishes throughout Latin America and beyond.**** With meticulous attention to detail, this volume not only delves into the vibrant history and cultural significance of masa but also serves as an indispensable guide for home cooks and culinary adventurers eager to master the art of homemade tortillas, tamales, and more. By introducing readers to traditional techniques, versatile recipes, and the art of nixtamalization, Masa offers an authentic journey into rich culinary traditions. This book is a celebration of flavor, heritage, and skill – an invitation to transform simple ingredients into extraordinary dishes, each with a story rooted deep in centuries-old traditions. Perfect for both novices and seasoned chefs, this book promises to infuse your kitchen with the irresistible aromas and vibrant colors of masa's ancient yet timeless culinary legacy. Whether you're yearning to reconnect with your roots or expand your culinary repertoire, Masa will undoubtedly inspire and engage your culinary senses, inviting you to reimagine what masa can become in your hands.

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About the author

****Jorge Gaviria**** is a passionate culinary artisan and entrepreneur, celebrated for his dedication to fostering appreciation for traditional Mexican cuisine, particularly through his pioneering work with masa. As the founder of Masienda, Gaviria has spent years cultivating relationships with smallholder farms in Mexico, committed to bringing the highest quality, agriculturally sustainable corn to tables worldwide. His expertise is complemented splendidly by ****Graydon Herriott****, an accomplished photographer renowned for his ability to capture the essence of culinary artistry in his visual storytelling. Together, they offer a symbiotic blend of meticulous narrative and vibrant imagery, merging culture and craft into a tantalizing homage to masa's rich tradition. Through their collaborative work, Gaviria and Herriott invite readers and food enthusiasts alike to delve deeper into the soulful journey of masa, offering a profound appreciation for this sumptuous staple of Mexican gastronomic heritage.

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Chapter 1 Summary: Masa Basics

The chapters provide an in-depth exploration of masa and corn, diving into their cultural significance, historical origins, and practical uses in cooking. Masa, a staple ingredient in Mexican cuisine, is essentially a dough made from corn through a process called nixtamalization, involving an alkaline solution. The text makes it clear that masa's influence extends far beyond Mexico, deeply entrenched in various cultures across the Americas and, with globalization, the world. Its preparation and consumption are culturally ubiquitous and complex, without a definitive origin, though Mexico holds a prominent place due to its historical and culinary diversity.

Corn, known scientifically as *Zea mays*, has a storied past deeply interwoven with human civilization in Mesoamerica. Beliefs in these ancient cultures often revolved around corn as a life-giving force, with myths depicting humans as emerging from corn itself. Corn's evolution from the wild grass teosinte in the Balsas River Valley of Mexico to the staple crop we know today involved significant human intervention. Domestication enabled the transition of Mesoamerican societies from small communities to thriving civilizations, underscoring corn's monumental impact on human history.

Distinct from its original form, industrialization has transformed corn into both hybrid and genetically modified varieties. Hybrid corn, bred for commercial agriculture since the early 20th century, offers high yield but

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often sacrifices flavor. The seed industry's rise locked farmers into buying new seeds annually, maintaining control over genetic properties. Despite hybrids, many traditional farmers remain devoted to landrace maize for its superior taste and cultural significance.

The chapters also detail the practicalities of working with masa and corn. Key ingredients such as alkaline substances (like slaked lime) and water play crucial roles in nixtamalization. Tools for grinding and cooking masa vary, from traditional metates to electric molinos and food processors. The comal, an essential cooking surface, highlights masa's cooking intricacies, with its maintenance and seasoning processes being just as vital as those of cooking implements made from volcanic stone or steel.

In showcasing masa's preparation, the text also delves into the cultural and culinary significance imparted by different varieties of corn. Mexico hosts dozens of landraces, each adapted to regional environments, impacting both traditional cuisine and the broader corn system. The smallholder farmers continue to cultivate these varieties, employing sustainable practices like milpas and recognizing the integral nutritional balance offered by corn alongside companion crops.

The narrative intertwines agricultural history with culinary practice, emphasizing masa's timeless relevance and adaptability. It blends cultural reverence with practical guidance, underscoring masa and corn's roles in



shaping cuisines and their profound influence on societies across the ages.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Masa History: A Mostly Modern Account

The fascinating historical journey of masa, a cornerstone of Mesoamerican cuisine, is chronicled in "HistoryA Mostly Modern Account," exploring its deep-rooted significance and evolving cultural impact. Masa, a dough made from nixtamalized corn, holds a pivotal role in traditional dishes such as tortillas and tamales, yet is often overlooked for its broader contributions to human civilization. This chapter delves into masa's storied past and contemporary resurgence, framing it as a culinary movement of historical and modern significance.

Masa Genesis: A Prehistory

The origins of masa are entwined with the history of corn in Mesoamerica. Archaeological evidence from Guatemala suggests that the process of making masa dates back to as early as 1500 BCE. The Maya and Aztecs used an alkaline cooking process, nixtamalization, which released essential nutrients from the corn, making it a vital dietary component. This ancient method turns corn into a versatile staple, contributing significantly to the health and development of Mesoamerican civilizations alongside beans and squash.

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First Wave: Masa Flour Versus the Traditional Method

Traditionally, masa was made through labor-intensive nixtamalization and stone grinding. The 20th century introduced mechanization, providing relief from manual labor but also significantly altering masa production. In the U.S., José Bartolomé Martínez pioneered masa harina, a dehydrated masa flour that revolutionized convenience and shelf life. His invention, initially named masolina, was a precursor to Maseca, which became synonymous with first-wave masa, characterized by convenience and mass production.

Second Wave: Masa Diaspora and the Experience of Authenticity

The second wave of masa focused on authenticity and the experiences of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Entrepreneurs like Raul Lopez founded tortillerias such as El Milagro in 1950, serving the growing diaspora with traditional masa methods. These tortillerias, rooted in authenticity, dotted American landscapes, introducing the broader population to genuine Mexican cuisine. However, as mechanization increased, many turned to Maseca for economic survival, leading to a homogenization of flavors and the eventual decline of some traditional methods.

Third Wave: From Milpa to Mesa, Modern Mexican Masa as a Movement

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The current third wave of masa transforms it into a modern culinary art form, emphasizing authenticity, quality sourcing, and conscious consumption. Spearheaded by modern Mexican restaurants, this movement respects traditional practices while embracing innovative approaches. Chefs meticulously source heirloom corn, highlighting masa as a canvas for culinary creativity. This movement draws from grassroots influences like the Sin Maíz No Hay País initiative and ties into broader cultural trends of food sovereignty and sustainability.

In the timeline of masa, milestones such as the introduction of mechanized milling in the late 19th century, the foundation of iconic brands like Maseca in 1949, and the launch of third-wave purveyors like Masienda in 2014, underscore its cultural evolution. This chapter encapsulates masa's journey from an ancient staple to a global culinary icon, inviting readers to participate in its legacy by recognizing its historical significance and experimenting with its craft in their kitchens.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace the Power of Authenticity

Critical Interpretation: In the realm of your personal and professional life, the story of masa's evolution urges you to embrace authenticity. Just as the masa movement cherishes traditional techniques while integrating modern innovation, strive to stay true to your roots in an ever-changing world. Recognize the value in preserving and celebrating your unique experiences, cultural backgrounds, and personal narratives, even amidst pressures to conform. Authenticity does not mean resisting change but rather welcoming growth while holding onto your core identity. Like masa, allow yourself to become a canvas of creativity, underpinned by time-honored values, leading to a more enriched and meaningful life.

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Chapter 3 Summary: From Kernel to Masa: The Process

The chapters you provided from "Kernel to Masa: The Process" detail an in-depth journey of transforming corn kernels into masa, emphasizing the cultural and technical aspects of this traditional culinary art. This process is carefully broken down into several crucial steps, each contributing to the ultimate goal of creating high-quality masa.

Chapter Summary:

Overview and Philosophy

The author draws on encounters with masa experts worldwide to craft a consistent guide for achieving perfect masa. By comparing masa preparation to the varied methods of brewing coffee, the author articulates that just like coffee, masa making offers diverse approaches tailored to individual preferences.

Step 1: Precooking

The journey begins with kernels of dry corn, inviting readers to envision their ideal masa dish, whether it's a soft tortilla or a dense tamal. The initial step involves understanding the purpose of your masa, as different applications require different processes. Key factors include moisture content affecting cooking time, kernel starch density influencing texture, and

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the corn's source impacting taste and applications.

Step 2: Cooking with Cal

Cooking the corn in an alkaline solution (calcium hydroxide) is integral to a process known as nixtamalization. This enhances the corn's flavor, aroma, and texture, and makes its nutrients more bioavailable. Proper calibration of cal is crucial; too much or too little significantly affects taste, texture, and overall quality.

Step 3: Nixtamalization

Nixtamalization is where the real magic happens. It ensures safety, enhances nutritional content like vitamin B3 activation, adds calcium, and begins the crucial process of breaking down kernels for masa formation. This soaking stage allows for chemical transformations that are vital for the texture and flavor of the masa.

Step 4: Nixtamal Rinsing

Rinsing is a short yet significant step. It controls how much of the corn's skin remains, influencing elasticity and taste. Achieving a wash-off percentage specific to the desired masa texture (typically starting at 50%) helps decide the final product's chewiness.

Step 5: Nixtamal Grinding

Grinding involves converting nixtamal into masa using a molino or more

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accessible tools like a hand mill or food processor. Precise stone settings and water management during grinding ensure an ideal texture, consistency, and aromatic masa. The methodology varies slightly depending on the grinding tool, but the essence remains the same: achieving a balanced, uniformly textured masa ready for mixing.

Step 6: Masa Mixing

In this stage, masa is prepared for its final form whether for tortillas or other dishes. Mixing helps to achieve uniform texture and flavor, allowing for moisture and alkalinity control. Adding elements like salt or natural dyes from ingredients like carrots or beets can enhance or diversify the masa's appearance and flavor profile. This step also allows for creativity, making the masa suitable for a variety of applications.

Overall, "Kernel to Masa: The Process" is a detailed examination of each step in masa creation, emphasizing understanding and mastering each phase for personalization and perfection in masa making. This careful attention to detail ensures a deeper appreciation for the artistry and science behind this staple food.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Different processes for different purposes

Critical Interpretation: Imagine embracing the wisdom of being intentional in your actions, much like the initial step in masa making where you determine the ultimate purpose of your creation. This chapter encourages you to approach life's endeavors with a similar mindset: what is your goal, and which path will lead you there? Recognizing that different objectives require tailored methods, just as masa's intricacies differ for tortillas versus tamales, inspires a holistic approach to decision-making. It's a reminder to harness awareness and mindfulness, crafting a path that aligns with your desired outcomes. By understanding and embracing your unique journey and purpose, much like the meticulous masa process, you spark personal growth and fulfillment.

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Chapter 4: Masa Recipes

The chapter on masa illustrates an exploration of its culinary applications, from its traditional uses in Mexico to modern interpretations that push its limits in contemporary cooking. The narrative begins with acknowledgment of masa's profound documentation by culinary experts like Diana Kennedy and Rick Bayless, moving on to detail the author's goals to delve deeper into its contextual significance and varied applications across different cultures.

The first goal is to understand the diversity of masa used in cooking. This involves recognizing that not all masa is the same and establishing a foundation for creating traditional and modern dishes. This context helps readers comprehend the texture, flavor, and function differences inherent in various types of masa, setting the stage for their culinary application.

Traditionally, masa has been a cornerstone of Mexican cuisine, used in numerous dishes like tamales, tortillas, and tostadas. However, this chapter underscores that masa is not confined to Mexican cuisine alone but is equally significant across numerous cultures, reflecting a global culinary tapestry. The Masa Shapes dossier within the chapter is cited as an effort to catalog this diversity.

The chapter also encourages culinary experimentation, suggesting ways to incorporate masa into daily meals. Examples are provided, such as



integrating leftover ingredients into masa-based preparations like sopos or memelas, stressing that masa's potential extends beyond traditional boundaries.

The text recounts a detailed encounter with El Milagro's large-scale tortilla production as an example of masa's commercial applications. It describes the process and the complexity of manufacturing, highlighting the sophistication involved in producing different types of tortillas, termed as table or frying tortillas. This experience emphasizes the depth of tradition and innovation within the masa industry.

Further on, the chapter provides precise recipes and techniques for making tortilla masa, both for table use and for frying. It explores the intricacies of pressing, cooking, and achieving the perfect texture and puff in a tortilla. The description of 50/50 tortillas, blending masa with wheat flour, illustrates a creative fusion approach.

Tamales are another focus area, discussing the preparation of masa cernida and masa refregada, identifying textural differences and the substantial labor involved in making tamales for special occasions. The chapter concludes by addressing masa harina, its process, advantages, and nuances compared to making fresh masa, stressing convenience but with a nod to traditional methods.



Lastly, the recipe portions offer comprehensive instructions for preparing masa for both traditional and modern uses, showcasing the transformative journey of corn into masa and ultimately into a variety of global dishes. This structure ensures readers are equipped with the knowledge to not only replicate traditional recipes but also innovate and adapt masa to myriad culinary contexts.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Traditional Applications (Masa Shapes)

In the chapters about masa applications, the text outlines the rich diversity and culinary significance of masa, a nixtamalized corn dough, primarily in Mexican culture but also across other regions in the Americas. We start with an understanding that while there are around 350 pasta shapes, masa boasts over 600 documented uses in traditional Mexican dishes alone. Masa's adaptability is highlighted, much like the taco, which can be endlessly varied and adapted globally. Traditional masa shapes, steeped in cultural heritage, offer a finite yet rich source of inspiration for preparing both traditional and innovative dishes.

The instructions provided emphasize a base of Table Tortilla Masa for shaping, with variations such as Frying Tortilla Masa suggested for specific fried applications like hard-shell tacos. Users are encouraged to experiment with masa harina for practice before creating fresh masa. Essential tips include the use of comal with or without oil, the potential of adding fat for richer taste, and the importance of masa color choices in crafting these dishes. Handy tips suggest having water nearby to prevent drying while shaping, and the text underscores the preference for fresh consumption of masa dishes, though storage notes are comprehensively covered.

Each shape is introduced with its roots, format (stuffer or topper), and

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cooking methods across a spectrum of preparations, from the comal and frying to simmering and boiling. Regional variations and contextual trivia enrich the understanding, encouraging explorations beyond the traditional realm.

Among the iconic masa shapes described are:

- **Arepa:** A thick, stuffed pocket from Venezuela and Colombia, cooked on a comal and resembling a gordita, often filled with various ingredients like meats or cheese.
- **Atole:** A beverage from Mexico, masa-based and often simmered, enriched with flavors such as cacao in champurrado or spices in tanchucúa.
- **Bollo:** A Venezuelan masa dumpling, boiled and stuffed, sometimes with a ground beef picadillo.
- **Cazuelita:** A dimpled fritter from Mexico, combining masa, potatoes, and optional cheese, typically topped with beef picadillo.
- **Chalupa:** An oblong masa vessel used as a topper, varying widely across regions, with notable types from Puebla and Guerrero.
- **Chochoyote:** A "little belly button" dumpling used as a topper, common in soups, stews, and beans in regions like Oaxaca.
- **Empanada:** A fried or comal-cooked turnover, stuffed with meats or cheeses, with roots in Spanish culinary traditions.
- **Flauta:** Rolled, deep-fried tacos from Mexico, often stuffed with meats and topped with traditional condiments.
- **Gordita:** A thick tortilla pocket from central Mexico, stuffed after



being cooked, with various regional interpretations.

- **Panucho:** A Yucatán dish of filled, fried tostada made from a puffed tortilla, traditionally featuring black beans and meats.
- **Pupusa:** A Salvadoran or Honduran stuffed masa pancake, associated with traditional toppings like curtido.
- **Quesadilla:** A versatile Mexican dish, either comal-cooked or fried, often filled with cheese, but can host a diversity of fillings.
- **Salbut:** A puffed and chewy variation on tostadas from Yucatán, commonly topped with meats and vegetables.
- **Sope:** A thick masa pancake with a ridge, used to host toppings, popular as an appetizer throughout Mexico.
- **Tamal:** Steamed masa cakes, with variations spanning Mesoamerica, South America, and the Caribbean.
- **Totopo:** Crunchy chips, usually fried, representing a staple side dish across Mexico, with elaborate regional variations.

Accompanying these descriptions, a comprehensive breakdown of "topping and stuffing basics" provides guidance on how to flavor and garnish masa-based dishes, spotlighting common ingredients like cheese, salsa, beans, and a wide array of additional condiments from various cuisines.

The chapters emphasize creativity in approaching masa dishes, encouraging readers to blend traditional methods with personal culinary innovations, thereby continuing the rich legacy of masa across culinary cultures. For



those interested in further exploring these preparations, Masienda's YouTube channel offers detailed visual guides.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Modern Masa Explorations

Modern Masa: Explorations

Masa stands as a versatile culinary cornerstone akin to staples like coffee, wine, leavened bread, or steamed rice. Its origin traces back to Mesoamerican cultures, yet it has undeniably expanded to become an integral part of the global culinary landscape. Whether produced by multinational corporations like Gruma or traditional family-run tortillerias such as El Milagro, or even crafted by high-end chefs and home bloggers, masa is more accessible now than ever before. Its evolution is evident globally, in places as diverse as Kenyan taquerias to German tortillerias, and within indigenous communities that maintain their cultural heritage.

Masa is in a constant state of transformation, mirroring the dynamic nature of cultural and culinary practices. Restricting masa to a mere traditional concept misses its broader significance and continuous development. The diverse recipes presented in this section are not strictly traditional but exemplify how masa has evolved and enriched human experiences across cultures. This ongoing journey of masa inspires innovative ways to appreciate this timeless and dynamic ingredient.

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Profiles and Recipes

1. **Carlos Salgado and Coffee Atole:**

Michelin-starred chef Carlos Salgado rarely serves dessert at his restaurant, Taco María, in Costa Mesa. One of his experimental creations is Coffee Atole, a breakfast drink blending masa with dark-roast coffee, milk, and a dash of vanilla for a unique twist. The process involves steeping ingredients to develop robust flavors.

2. **Karlo Evaristo and Blue Masa Sourdough Bread:**

Karlo Evaristo, a Philippine-born chef turned baker, uses blue corn masa for his sourdough bread at 61 Hundred Bread. The process draws from nixtamalization, a traditional method enhancing the masa's flavor. The intricate preparation involves creating a levain and hydrating masa to craft a distinct sourdough loaf.

3. **Alex Stupak and Masa Tempura Batter:**

Alex Stupak of New York City's Empellón elevates tempura with masa, creating a light, flaky batter ideal for enrobing seafood or vegetables. By utilizing a cream whipper or extended blending, the batter achieves a desirable texture, offering a novel way to enjoy fried dishes.

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4. Gerardo Gonzalez and Lamb Birria with Masa Gnocchi:

From his eclectic restaurant Lalo in NYC, Gerardo Gonzalez merges diverse culinary traditions into his masa gnocchi with lamb birria. The birria—a traditional stew—is paired with masa gnocchi, requiring careful preparation over multiple days to achieve deep flavors and textures.

5. Daniela Soto-Innes and Chilpachole:

Chef Daniela Soto-Innes utilizes masa as a hydrocolloid to thicken her Veracruz-style chilpachole, a seafood stew. Her approach maintains a creamy texture akin to bisques but without dairy, illustrating masa's versatility beyond traditional uses.

6. Sean Brock and Shrimp and (Masa) Grits:

In a Southern twist, Sean Brock replaces traditional grits with masa, cooked in milk for a smooth base. A savory sofrito and shrimp flavor this dish, combining Southern comfort with Mesoamerican tradition, showcasing Brock's homage to his culinary roots and respect for masa.

7. Saw Naing and Masa Samosas:



Burmese chef Saw Naing, leveraging his foundational experiences and Mexican culinary influences, creates masa samosas. His innovative fusion of cultures results in samosas filled with a spicy potato mix, merging Burmese flavors with Mexican masa for a unique appetizer.

8. Alex Stupak and Masa Corn Dogs:

At Empellón, chef Alex Stupak combines masa with his molecular gastronomy background for masa corn dogs, served with huitlacoche mustard. The dish features corn dogs coated in a masa batter, paired with a unique mustard made from huitlacoche, showcasing a playful, transformative take on classic flavors.

9. Jess Stephens: Masa Harina Waffles and White Chocolate Chip Cookies

:

Pastry chef Jess Stephens experiments with masa harina for sweet creations like waffles and cookies, integrating it into batters traditionally dominated by flour. Her dishes highlight the potential of masa in sweet applications, offering depth and complexity in otherwise familiar treats.

Through these diverse recipes and profiles, the exploration of masa transcends cultural boundaries, showcasing its evolution from traditional Mesoamerican uses to modern, global applications. The culinary journey of masa continues to inspire creativity and cross-cultural appreciation.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Masa's Versatility and Evolution Inspiring Creativity

Critical Interpretation: Masa's journey from traditional roots in Mesoamerican cultures to becoming a beloved global ingredient represents a symbolic evolution capturing resilience, adaptability, and the power of transformation. Like masa, you have the ability to transcend traditional boundaries and embrace a constantly evolving world. This relentless innovation, demonstrated by chefs and culinary creators worldwide, can inspire you to explore new avenues in your practices, challenge conventions, and develop a deeper appreciation for diverse cultural exchanges. Masa's story is your invitation to recognize the potential within change and transformation, driving you to create something extraordinary from the familiar and to infuse your life with a spirit of ingenuity.

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Chapter 7 Summary: Appendix

In the appendix of "256MASA," we delve into two practical aspects crucial for maintaining essential kitchen equipment related to traditional Mexican cooking: stone sharpening and comal seasoning. The appendix provides detailed instructions and background knowledge to ensure these processes are carried out effectively.

Stone Sharpening/Picking

Sharpening or picking stones, like those used in a molino—a traditional Mexican grinding tool used mainly for corn—is vital for efficiency and longevity. Due to the complex nature of this task and the specialized equipment required, such as a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch carbide chisel, rotary saw with a diamond blade, or an air compressor system, it is advised to consult a professional. The subsequent noise and dust further discourage at-home sharpening endeavors. A recommended service, such as Azteca Machine Shop in Los Angeles, can expertly handle this task for around \$75 plus shipping, providing an extended lifespan to your equipment.

Before sending stones for professional sharpening, it's essential to run wet sand through them to recalibrate the surface. This process, known as 'picking', partially erases the stone surfaces, preparing them for optimal

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function. Using silver sand #20, moistened to the consistency of wet masa (with about 1 cup of water per 2½ lb of sand), ensures the stones align properly. Running this sand through the molino while tightening the stones grinds the surface to a fresh finish, crucial for maintaining the authenticity and effectiveness of tools like the Molinito.

Seasoning a Carbon Steel or Cast-Iron Comal

Seasoning a comal—a griddle typically used in Mexican cuisine for cooking tortillas and roasting—ensures it delivers the best culinary results while remaining in good condition. The appendix highlights the importance of understanding the smoke points of various oils used in the seasoning process. Smoke points can vary due to factors such as extraction methods and oil sources; thus, the provided temperatures serve as general guidelines.

For optimal seasoning, choosing an oil with a suitable smoke point is critical. Oils such as canola (400°F-450°F), grapeseed (425°F), and peanut (400°F-450°F) are considered ideal. These temperatures protect the comal from overheating, thereby maintaining a non-stick surface that enhances the cooking process.

Additionally, the appendix provides a pH chart to guide the understanding of acidity and alkalinity, though it is not directly related to stone sharpening or

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comal seasoning, it serves as a general reference for balancing pH levels in other aspects of kitchen maintenance.

Together, these sections offer insightful guidance into the maintenance and preparation of traditional cooking tools, ensuring they remain functional and effective in replicating authentic Mexican culinary techniques.

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Chapter 8: Bibliography

The chapter delves into the intricate history and cultural significance of masa, the dough made from corn, which is foundational to many traditional Mexican dishes like tortillas and tamales. The text draws on an array of scholarly works and culinary insights to explore the evolution and transformation of corn through a process known as nixtamalization, a method that not only enhances the nutritional value of corn but also unlocks its full culinary potential.

Paul Adams's work, "Transforming Corn: The Science of Nixtamalization," provides a scientific perspective on this ancient Mesoamerican process, which involves soaking and cooking corn in an alkaline solution. This technique, explored further in Betty Fussell's "The Story of Corn," highlights how nixtamalization revolutionizes the corn by enriching its flavor and making essential nutrients available.

The bibliography points to an intersection between historical and modern kitchens, where figures like Rick Bayless and Diana Kennedy have played pivotal roles in bringing authentic Mexican dishes into the global culinary spotlight. Kennedy's works, including "Oaxaca al Gusto" and "The Cuisines of Mexico," offer deep dives into the regional diversity and richness of Mexican cuisine while stressing the significance of maintaining traditional methods like nixtamalization.



Explorations in Jeffrey Pilcher's "Que Vivan Los Tamales!" and "Industrial Tortillas and Folkloric Pepsi" provide a broader cultural and political context, discussing how globalization and industrialization have altered traditional foodways in Mexico, sometimes leading to hybrid cuisines with

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on, and the mind maps help reinforce wh
I've learned. Highly recommend!

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Chapter 9 Summary: Glossary

This glossary serves as a comprehensive reference for terms related to the traditional preparation and cultural significance of masa, a cornerstone of Mesoamerican cuisine. Let's delve into these terms to better understand this culinary heritage.

The glossary starts with fundamental chemistry concepts such as "acid" and "alkali," essential for understanding the pH scale, which ranges from 0 to 14. Substances with a pH below 7 are acidic, meaning they contain more hydrogen ions than pure water. Conversely, those with a pH above 7 are considered basic or alkaline and contain fewer hydrogen ions.

In the realm of Mesoamerican cooking, certain ingredients and tools are particularly significant. "Asiento" is an Oaxacan term for a type of lard derived from cooling pork rind fat, extensively used in masa dishes across the state. The "comal" refers to a traditional flat griddle, often made of earthenware or metal, crucial for cooking tortillas and other staples.

The glossary also explains the composition of corn, crucial for masa preparation. The "endosperm" is where corn derives its protein and starch, serving as key emulsifying agents in masa. Within the endosperm, there are "soft" and "hard" endosperms, the latter being the densest kernel part, contributing significantly to masa's structure. The "germ" represents the



kernel's living part, rich in natural oils and instrumental for masa texture when ground. The "pericarp," meanwhile, is the kernel's outer layer that, when nixtamalized, enhances the masa's moisture and pliability.

"Masa" itself, meaning dough in Spanish, is central to Mesoamerican cuisine, made from ground corn cooked in an alkaline solution. It can be converted into "masa harina," a dehydrated version commonly used for quick masa preparation. Brands like "Maseca" dominate the masa harina market, simplifying traditional methods that involve "nixtamalization"—a process where corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline solution to enhance its nutritional value and flavor.

Nixtamalization traces back to the Nahuatl term "nextamalli," demonstrating the deep cultural roots of these cooking practices, preserved and passed down across generations. This process also produces "nejayote," the alkali-rich residue left after nixtamalization, containing corn by-products like starch and leached pigments.

Traditional Mesoamerican agriculture is represented by terms such as "milpa"—a system of cultivating corn, beans, and squash (the three sisters) together, signifying ecological harmony and sustainability. The diversity of corn is highlighted by varieties such as "maíz criollo" (native maize), "maíz nuevo" (new corn), and "heirloom" seeds—valued for their historical and genetic significance.



Tools like the "molino" (mill) and "metate" are integral to traditional masa preparation, while roles like the "molinerx" (mill operator) and "tortillerx" (tortilla maker) are crucial in the cultural tapestry. For those deeply embedded in this rich culinary tradition, understanding these terms deepens the appreciation of masa's profound cultural and historical context, illustrating a heritage that continues to endure and adapt through time.

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