



QUELITES

The Spectrum of Superfoods from Indigenous Mexico

Talk & Cooking Session

hosted by

BEATRIZ PAZ JIMÉNEZ and SU-YING LEE

for the

Art Gallery of Burlington



This booklet is material to accompany my talk & cooking session “Quelites. The Spectrum of Superfoods from Indigenous Mexico” at the Art Gallery of Burlington.

In this challenging historical moment, I welcome you to this talk. I feel blissful and honored to share with you elements of an ancient culture that precedes me, where the history of my ancestors is embedded but largely veiled from me through centuries of dispossession. It is through food and seeds that I connect with that history and find a piece of my identity, knowing that I will never see the full picture. Therefore, I dedicate this exercise of sharing traditional food with you to my great grandparents; as if this was a message sent through time, in which I am finally able to tell them with my head held high: despite everything, no, I do not forget you. And I will not.

On top of all this, the date on which the gallery is welcoming us, is the tenth anniversary of my father’s death, which gives me a renewed impetus and serenity, reaffirming that the love we share is a boomerang moving within and between us.

This talk is part of the cycle *Alimentary* organized by independent curator Su-Ying Lee. I give her my full gratitude and appreciation for sharing the love of ancestral traditions, and for fraternally making all of this possible. I also want to thank the Senior Curator, Suzanne Carte, and the Head of Programming, Hitoko Okada, for their generous support. To the rest of the Art Gallery of Burlington staff, and the attendees of the workshop, I am sincerely grateful.

The information you will find here is documented in numerous archives and oral sources. The color illustrations were done by Ro, an emerging Mexican artist whose friendship is a gift to me. The translation was a collaborative effort with my fellow freedom fighter and comrade, Ryan A. Knight.

Tlazohcamati ipampa otitechitaco.

Mah qualli ohtli!

Beatriz Paz Jiménez

September 26th, 2020

WHAT ARE QUELITES?

Quilitl or *quelites* are the inheritance of pre-Hispanic agriculture and gastronomy. They contain large quantities of fiber; they strengthen the immune and cardiovascular systems; they are anti-carcinogenic, antioxidant, antidiabetic and antihyperlipidemic; they are rich in beta-carotene, vitamins A and C, calcium, potassium and iron; they possess bioactive compounds, like phenolic acids (caffeic, ferulic acid) and flavonoids (quercetin, kaempferol, espinacetina), carotenoids, a-linolenic acid and betalains. Furthermore, they are inhibitors of *h. pylori*, the bacterium which is responsible for gastritis, ulcers and gastric cancer.

Due to their high nutritional content planting quelites will provide a good source of:

- Food diversity and an expanded gastronomic culture
- Healthy soil maintenance because they prevent soil erosion
- Fertilizer for crops before and after the harvest which improves soil quality
- Biological control through pest control accordingly to the area of the milpa they are planted

Depending on their species, quelites can be eaten raw, boiled (sometimes in alkaline solutions with ash or sodium carbonate), fried in lard, roasted in their own juices, or vaporized with corn dough for tortillas and tamales. Also depending on the species, the leaves and stems, sprouts, petioles, seedlings or complete plants including roots may be eaten.

Quelites serve different uses in the preparation of food according to their properties and flavor: they can be aromatic and serve as a seasoning, serve as companions to carbohydrates, be cooked as the main course, or mixed with corn dough. The majority of quelites have medicinal uses if prepared as an infusion, fomentations or made into a powder in combination with other plants. In some cases, they are used ornamentally as decorations. They are harvested both for self-consumption and to be sold in traditional local markets called *tianguis*. In ethnobotany, quelites are divided into everyday quelites, quelites for festivities, and quelites that serve as emergency foods when there is nothing else to eat. Emergency quelites usually have a bitter taste and require specific processes to remove the bitterness or stinging.

The 16th century Badianus Manuscript was the first colonial document of the entire continent which records native herbal medicine and botany. It was made by Xochimilcas—ancestral inhabitants of the green region of Mexico City where they still grow without chemicals, conserving the planting techniques on parcels of land floating above the water, known as the *Chinampas*. My father and his grandfather and his grandfather were Xochimilcas too. I grew up two blocks from the water channels. I was the first generation that left.

As an editor and a publisher, I am interested in the in pre-Hispanic written culture and how its contents can be actualized so that we Mexicans better understand where we come from. Here I share with you some illustrations with a contemporary reinterpretation of the style of the Badianus Manuscript made by Ro, a multidisciplinary artist I admire. The selected quelites in this booklet are the most widespread and well-known in popular Mexican gastronomy.

At the end of the booklet I share some recipes for you to try a variety of dishes and the different effects that epazote has on them. I hope you enjoy!



Epazote
Tulsi ambrosioides

EPAZOTE

Eaten raw, boiled, vaporized or fried

Nutrition Facts

Vitamines

A, B, C

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium,
Iron, Magnesium, Zinc

Medicinal Uses

Helps strengthen the immune system, preventing illnesses such as allergies, colds and other problems related to the respiratory system. Softens and hydrates the skin, if applied as a poultice. Cleans and disinfects wounds, thanks to its antiseptic properties. It is a disinfectant that contributes to the treatment of skin irritations, scabies, fungi and

bug bites. For this use you must let the epazote leaves dry, pulverize them and sprinkle them on surfaces prone to absorb fleas, mites and similar insects. In addition to eliminating them, it repels them. This natural insecticide repels insects without polluting the earth. Relieves stomach pains, diarrhea, colic and flatulence, especially if taken as an infusion. Calms and reduces inflammation, so it works against muscle aches and other ailments, both internal and external. Assists in the natural healing of wounds. Helps with weight loss, thanks to its purifying and slimming effects. It favors the elimination of toxins present in the body. Helps regulate the menstrual cycle and reduce pain during periods in cases of delays or little menstrual discharge.

EPAZOTE ZORRILLO

Taken in infusion or pulverized

Nutrition Facts

Vitamines

A, C, B6

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium,
Iron, Magnesium, Zinc

Folic Acid

Medicinal Uses

A medicinal plant due its anthelmintic properties. Used to sooth some stomach pains. Also, for ceremonial and religious purposes, as well as a condiment and to relieve infections in animals. If you combine it with dandelion, oregano and rosemary, a potent antibiotic is produced to combat nearly any infection.



Hoja Santa

Piper auritum

HOJA SANTA

Eaten boiled or vaporized

Nutrition Facts

Vitamines

A, C, E, B complex

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Iron

Flavonoids

Medicinal Uses

Improves brain function, reduces pain and stress and stimulates memory. Improves the immune system, serves as an antioxidant and helps reduce cholesterol. Helps with digestion, stomach ache, headache, cough, asthma and rheumatism.



Huauzonile
Chenopodium mathewsii

HUAUZONTLE

Eaten boiled. Leaves eaten fried or roasted

Nutrition Facts

Vitamines

A, B, B1, B2, B3, C, E

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Iron

Flavonoids

Medicinal Uses

It stimulates brain function along with helping digestion and pain from colitis. It has anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory properties. It strengthens the immune system and protects against developing infectious diseases, diabetes, and heart disease.



Pájalo
Porephyllum macrocephalum

PÁPALO

Eaten raw

Nutrition Facts

Antioxidants

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium

Medicinal Uses

The properties of pápaloquilitl are said to prevent respiratory diseases, help reduce inflammation and pain caused by rheumatism and other chronic diseases. It relieves toothaches, improves vision, controls cholesterol levels, prevents atherosclerosis, helps fight anemia and helps prevent cancer.



Quelite Cenizo
Chenopodium album

QUELITE CENIZO

Eaten boiled, fried or roasted

Nutrition Facts

Alkaloids

Betanine, Isobetanin, Celosiasin

Proteins

Amarantin, Isoamarantin, Quinoid
Phyloquinone

Steroids

Dehydro-makisterone A and B,
Beta-ecdysone

Medicinal Uses

Treats digestive diseases such as dysentery, liver disorders and diarrhea. Promotes urination when there is inflammation in the kidneys. It helps rashes and hives on the skin and can also be used to wash wounds.



Quintonil
Amarantus Hybridus

QUINTONIL

Eaten boiled, fried or vaporized

Nutrition Facts

Vitamines

A, B, B1, B2, B3, C, E

Minerals

Calcium, Phosphorus, Iron, Zinc,
Magnesium, Potassium

Omega 3 and Omega 6

Polyphenols

Amarantin

Lysine

Medicinal Uses

It works as an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.

Recipes with Epazote

Mushroom quesadillas

Ingredients

*1/2 onion
3 cloves garlic
8 to 10 epazote leaves
30 mushrooms
Oaxaca or manchego cheese
Corn or flour tortillas*

Cooking instructions

Chop 3 cloves of garlic and leave one whole.

Chop up half an onion, cut it into julienne strips.

Wash and slice the mushrooms.

Put a little oil in a saucepan and sauté the onion and garlic cloves.

Add the mushrooms

Season with epazote, a teaspoon of bouillon powder or salt and pepper.

Lower the heat and cover until softening.

Preheat the tortillas on a skillet or comal. Preferably without oil.

Fill the tortillas and add a little cheese.

Heat on both sides.

Serve once the cheese has melted.

Mushroom soup

Ingredients

*2 tablespoons oil
1 tablespoon garlic, finely minced
1/2 cups onion, chopped
1 tablespoon epazote, finely chopped
2 cups mushroom, sliced
2 cups oyster mushroom, sliced
5 cups of chicken broth
1 pinch of cumin, ground
1 pinch of salt
Add avocado to taste, to decorate
Add panela cheese to taste, to decorate
Add epazote to taste, to decorate*

Cooking instructions

Heat a pot over medium heat with the oil and fry the garlic with the onion, add the epazote with the mushrooms and cook until they are shiny. Fill with chicken broth with cumin powder and salt. Cook for 20 minutes. Serve and decorate with avocado, panela cheese and fresh epazote.

Cheese soup

Ingredients:

*1 liter of cow's milk
100 grams of wheat flour
100 grams of butter or margarine
250 grams of Manchego or gouda cheese
1 branch of epazote
1/2 onion, chopped
1 clove garlic
1 carrot, squared
1 stick of celery, small
1 ounce of tequila or rum*

Cooking instructions

Fry the celery and carrot in butter. Add the flour and stir for about 10 minutes. Add the milk and let it thicken for another 5 minutes while stirring with a balloon whisk. Strain the sauce and set aside. Another option is to fry the carrot with the celery, let it cool and then blend with the milk and strain. In a pot, fry the garlic, onion and chopped epazote with a little olive oil. Tequila is added (if you know how to flambé, it gives it a very good touch). The milk is added to the garlic, onion and epazote. Chunks of cheese are put on each person's plate and the cream is served.

Mexican vegetable creamy soup

Ingredients

*2 zucchinis, cubed
1 tomato, small diced
1 corn kernel
1 can of evaporated milk
1/2 cups of chicken broth
2 cloves of garlic
1/4 onions, finely chopped
1 branch of epazote
Add pepper to taste*

Cooking instructions

Over medium heat, add the onion until it turns transparent.
Add finely chopped garlic. Mix until the garlic turns a light golden color.

Add the milk and the chicken broth and the corn kernels.

Let it come to a boil and add the chopped pumpkin and tomato.
Add the epazote branch, salt and pepper. Mix in the ingredients. Let it
boil for a couple of minutes. It is served really hot.

Ricotta with epazote

(It can also be prepared with virgin goat cheese or with jocoque)

Ingredients

*1 kilo of cottage cheese
1 medium onion finely chopped
1/2 cup of epazote finely chopped
1 or 2 jalapeño peppers roughly chopped
Salt to taste
Corn chips.*

Cooking instructions

The cottage cheese is mixed with all the ingredients, poured into a saucepan and served with the tortilla chips. If you prefer to do it with jocoque, you can eat it pita bread chips.

More information about the milpa and its quelites, [here](#).

Where to [buy epazote seeds](#) in Canada

Quelites

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BOOKLET

Research, writing, editorial design,
graphic design, and original idea
Beatriz Paz Jiménez

Illustrations of quelites
Ro

Translation
Ryan A. Knight

A virtual workshop

in between

MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

and

TKARONTO/TARANTON

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