

Topic: Food being the heart and soul of families

Abstract: Food has always played a big role in my life and culture. For as long as I can remember it has brought our families together and giving us a sense of unity. From adapting to new cultures to our old customs and traditions, food has always been the heart and soul of many, including my family.

Key Words: Food, Culture, Unity, Traditions, Customs, Family, Memories,

Food is the Heart of My Family

Ever since I was a little girl and as long as I can remember food has always been a big part of my life and culture. It has always had a way of bringing families together. Food has a certain understanding that can unite people from many cultures and make them feel like just one big family. Food has always been the heart of cultures that can bring the best out families. Many important events and decisions in my life have been discussed and resolved over a good plate of food. Somehow food and what revolves around it has always been a big part of my life.

Coming from a Mexican family, our lives always revolve around food. It is something that our culture is very big on. From the preparation of the food to the eating of the food, my family has always been one to make it a very big ordeal and a somewhat family reunion. The girls of the family always come together to make food and this is when we take the opportunity to catch up, gossip and fill each other in on what has been happening with our families and personal lives. It helps us loosen up and relax. It has always been able to bring out the secrets. Whether we're cooking up a storm of traditional dishes like tamales or posole or if were preparing a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner it always gives a sense of unity.

In my Mexican culture and customs, it is a tradition to always throw overly big parties for any little celebration and the most important thing in every party is always the amount and what kind of food will be served that day. It is always the highlight of the parties because without good, genuine food a party, isn't a party. My earliest memories I have as a child is celebrating my fifth birthday with a huge party and all I can remember is the tables piled with food and how everybody was gathered around that particular table, talking, eating and enjoying the night. We also have the habit of making too much of everything because, "Pansa llena, corazon content" is what my grandpa used to tell me. Full tummy, happy heart.

I feel like food has always had a way of bringing my family closer together. Relationships have been mended over dinners and so many problems have been resolved. I remember my family used to always make my siblings and I discuss our days and what our troubles were over dinner. Many of my childhood memories are during dinner. I remember being told as a child that food warms the heart and mends the soul, that's why I feel so strongly about food making families feel a sense of unity.

There is one memory that clearly stands out from all of them. I remember sitting at the dinner table waiting for my family to arrive and thinking about how everything had finally been falling into place. I could hear the chit chatting of my parents as they walked in through the front door and the look on their faces when they saw the array of plates my sister and I had prepared for dinner. That night, like all the other nights, my family sat together, discussed our days and had a wonderful time. I remember that by the end of the dinner, the air had tensed and my father kept getting up and walking around. As he was returning to the table he collapsed to the ground and had suffered a stroke. I find it so uneasy that even to this day, the plates of food that were

served that day make my stomach turn. Something that used to bring my family together every night was suddenly keeping us apart.

Between the doctor visits and taking care of my father, we began to question what had caused this to my dad. This is when we began to learn that Mexican cultures have a high rate of strokes and heart attacks because of the food that we are so used to consuming. Food, what never fails to bring many families under one roof was suddenly becoming, to me, something to be afraid of. As time went on and we became accustomed to eating healthier life got easier. Sitting for dinner was finally becoming something that we all found joy in doing again. The way that our Mexican culture is used to eating and the way that we adapted eating like other cultures suddenly felt, to us, like the Mexican way. Whether I want to believe it or not, food had such a big role in this life changing event that I had to go through. Even though my father is now one hundred percent recovered we still have learned to tone down our customs and adapt a healthier lifestyle.

It is very odd for me to see how the mixing of cultures has come about. Over the years I have seen my family grow from being strong Mexicans in their culture, to taking on some of the American ways. The mixing of cultures always reminds me of where I came from. Food also has a way of reminding me that cultures and traditions change over time. I would have never imagined my family to be gathering over a grill of hot dogs and hamburgers because how my father used to say, “Eso no es comida.” Even though cultures mix and traditions don’t stay as strong, food is always a pleasant reminder of where come from and what we’re made of. Where ever I go and the different cultures I experience, I can always feel right at home eating a good warm plate of food because food is the heart and soul of my family.

