

Topic: Mexican Culture through My Family's Generations

Abstract: Although I grew up in a diminishing Mexican culture, I found ways to bring back many traditions that were not carried on in early generations. Part of keeping our culture was my mom's cooking. I grew up eating all different kinds of Mexican dishes. Being catholic also helped in preserving what we had left by me being baptized, attending mass and also taking part in my friend's quincenera. Being around my friends aided in learning my culture more because they are fluent Spanish speakers and they teach me how to speak it and also introduced me to many other traditions like making tamales and playing games like la loteria. Even though our culture started to fade, my family and I strive to get back to the old traditions and preserve it for our future generations.

Key Words: Mexican, white washed, fading, prejudism, Mexican food, culture, tradition, Catholic religion, church, preserve, generations

Ethnic Designation: Mexicano

Cultural Category: Social/Food Practice

My cultural background is mainly Mexican. I grew up in a very white washed Mexican life, though. My great great grandparents were from Mexico. Starting very early on our culture started fading greatly because of the environment and society my ancestors grew up in.

Unfortunately, my family didn't really try to preserve any of the Mexican traditions that were once taught a long time ago. These traditions were not carried on

because in the time my great grandma was raising her family, including my grandma, there was a lot of prejudism against Mexicans. My great grandma taught my grandma and her other children to not speak Spanish. They were to learn and speak English although they still spoke Spanish at home. My grandma was raised in little towns near Santa Rosa in New Mexico. These little towns did not have a very big Mexican population so my grandma and her siblings mingled a lot with the white culture. Because the majority of the populations around them were white, they took on most of their practices.

One of the practices my great grandma took on was the food and cooking. My grandma was raised with all American food because her mom would never cook Mexican food. One of the main reasons my great grandma didn't cook Mexican food was because my great grandpa worked on a ranch and he would get meat, milk, eggs and crops along with part of his pay so she just used what they had available to them. She also got Good Housekeeping and other magazines like that from the boss's wife so she would read those all the time and learn to cook different types of American food. They never ate enchiladas, tacos, posole or menudo which I found suprising because my parents make all of those for dinner for us all the time. They didn't even have tortillas yet they were pure Mexican!

So that being said, my Mexican culture now is very white washed. But I also feel like I have been raised in a more Mexican culture than when my grandma was growing up even though I'm three quarters Mexican. My mom has always cooked Mexican food for us. We eat a lot of red and green chile with meat and tortillas, rice, beans, tacos burritos, enchiladas and all that good stuff. I remember since I was young my mom and I would make like an assembly line when she made enchiladas. She would have the

shredded meat, chopped onions, shredded cheese, olives, and sauce all set out on the table. Once she fried the corn tortilla a little bit in oil to get it soft, she would dip it in the sauce and lay it in the pan for me to fill with all the ingredients and I would roll it up for her. Now she never wants to make enchiladas without my help. She makes big pots of posole and menudo. Most of the time its posole though because cleaning and cutting the tripe for menudo is more work. My mom also makes homemade tortillas for us once in a while but it's just easier for her to warm up store bought tortillas instead of rolling out each one and having a mess of flour everywhere. On Christmas Eve we have a tradition of always having tamales but we don't make them ourselves, they are made by my grandpa's sister.

The one thing that has been passed on in our culture is our Catholic religion. I was baptized at Saint Catherine's Church in Morgan Hill when I was very young. My mom would bring me to church every Sunday morning or Saturday night up until I was around 6 years old. I always remember sitting there in those hard wooden seats tired and hungry. I would always go through my mom's purse searching for gum or anything to eat while mass was going on because at that time I didn't understand what was going on and I would be so bored. Although we stopped going weekly when I was about 6, we still try to go on Easter morning, Christmas, Psalm Sunday and Ash Wednesday.

Although I wasn't raised in a very strong Mexican culture, all of the close friends I have were so they introduced and taught me a lot of their traditions they've kept. I always stick out in my group of friends because I'm the only one that looks totally white. I was able to be a dama in my best friend's quinceniera. We practiced our dances for weeks and it was a lot of fun. I had to learn bachata for the dance and I think I pulled it

off pretty good for being white washed! My best friend also taught me and let me help her and her family make tamales during Christmas. It was actually much simpler than I thought it would be and it was fun to just sit and talk about all kinds of things while we made the tamales. She also introduced me to the game loteria. It was fun because I was excited that I knew all the words. All my friends help me with my Spanish. They always practice talking with me and correct me. That is my biggest goal to become fluent in Spanish.

Even though most of my Mexican culture has faded through the generations, I want to try and preserve what I have left of it. I am proud of my culture and I want to keep and pass on all the traditional recipes of my mom's. Even though my parents don't know Spanish I want to learn it. And with the help of my friends, I can learn even more about my culture.