

Topic: Family Traditions

Abstract: My family and I use to live in Paicines as well as most of our other family members. One of our traditions we had was a big family gathering at my godparent's house. All of the woman would go shopping for the food and prepare big pots of all kinds of dishes for dinner. After dinner the kids would play games and my godmother would sing. It was always a fun filled time with all of our family whether it was a special occasion or just because.

Key Words: Paicines, Traditions, Delicious Food, Games, Singing, Godparents, Family Gatherings, Festivities

Ethnic Designation: *Mexicano*

Cultural Category: Social/ Food Practice:

The Small Town

In my childhood, my family had always practiced most of our traditions in a little town named Paicines. I remembered how nice the weather was and me holding my one dollar bill in one hand and my mom's hand in the other. I was wearing my favorite blue hat my dad had bought me and kicked rocks from the dirt path on to the road. My mom always hated the fact that I did that, but I still did it every once in a while just to amuse myself and laugh when she would try to tell me to stop. We had walked into the lonely old little store and I immediately grabbed an ice cream sandwich out of the freezer since they were my favorite. I had met my mom at the counter and gave her my one dollar bill since I wasn't able to reach the counter just yet. The cashier smiled and me and asked my name, I replied by saying William, but in a Spanish tone since I could not say it in English. She smiled and handed me the ice cream, told us thank you, and we left the lonely old store happily eating my delicious ice cream.

After I had moved out of Paicines due to deconstruction purposes of our houses, I relocated to Hollister. However, most of my family that had lived in the same area of where I used to live had found work in a local ranch close to my old home which also provided residency on the ranch itself. Eventually, the ranch became a significant symbol of family union and cultural practice for my family. Almost every weekend my godfather would hold large family dinners that brought our family together again with laughter and joy. The woman of the family would prepare the food they bought from Hollister's grocery markets since the small local market would not have all the groceries needed for the dinner. My godmother would give my mom a grocery list through the phone and we would head to K&S to collect everything else needed for the dinner. As we arrived we would see many of our family member's cars parked outside my godparent's house. My family would walk into the house and greet everybody in the household one by one. While the children set up the tables lined up one after another, the men of the family would slaughter and carve the meat of the animals. As all the food was prepared, most of the adults would take the food out and place it on the dinner table. A variety of pots and pans filled my line of sight as the thought of such tasty and delicious food made my mouth water. The smell of freshly made frijoles and Mexican rice filled my nostrils, while the sight of such succulent meat made me impatient as all the other children took their time to arrive at the dinner table. When everyone was set in their own chairs, we started off the dinner with a prayer to show our appreciation for having something to feast on. After the prayer, everyone was finally able to enjoy the food, while laughter and screams filled the table.

This tradition continued for many years to come. However, as time passed by, many people had moved out in search of a new, free, independent life from my godparents. The dinner table became less crowded, and less food was prepared. It was sad seeing how empty and

vacated my godparents' house had become, but after a few months of independence, a few of my aunts and uncles began to come back, and it felt like the old times.

Holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, were the most joyful and significant times of the year for my family. As before, somehow everyone found the time to regroup at my godparents' house to enjoy the festivities and great food. Dinner was once again the center of family interaction. My aunts would all make different foods to make the dinners more unique. What made holidays more special, however, were the treats that were made for the occasions. Homemade sugar cookies were the main attraction for our family, as everyone would gather around the pot containing the sugar cookies to take as many of the cookies as possible before they were yelled at by my godmother. One huge difference, however, was the fact that during holiday visits, a large number of games were played to bring a more cheerful atmosphere throughout the house. The children would help create the games and establish the guidelines on how they were played. A variety of games, from Charades to *Mar Y Tierra*, Sea and Land, which was a game created from scratch by the parents, entertained us all night. Mexican music filled the house as the adults talked about gossip, while my godmother sang *Corridos* until her old, fragile voice gave out. My uncle's guitar expressed sounds of relaxation and tranquility, as the entire house stayed quiet to listen to the peaceful notes blend in with my godmother's soothing singing voice. By 12 AM, most of the children were asleep, so the adults would take their conversations outside as to not wake up the children. My uncles would go to collect firewood from dead trees by my godfather's shed and light up the outdoor fireplace. The fireplace would illuminate the night sky as my uncles decided to spend their time looking at the stars, talking about our family's past and events that made their mark on our family's history, while my aunts talked about the latest gossip and cooking techniques that they had recently learned. Events like

this brought the family closer together, even though most of our family had split up and moved to other cities, or even states. The night would end with everyone hugging each other, saying their goodbyes, exchanging gifts that had been brought to fill the children with glee. We made these nights as valuable and enjoyable as possible, as no one knew when would be the next time that such a large family gathering would be planned out again.

Paicines has always been the center of family gathering for my family. It has made a special impact on our family, seeing as how now every occasion, whether it is holidays, baptisms, birthdays or just a normal weekend event. Even though my old home, my first home in Paicines is long-gone by now, I still think of my godparents' house as an important location in my life. It is where I'm able to see my cousins who I used to hang out with for so long, where I can enjoy myself and get away from the stress of daily life. I learned a lot from all the time spent in Paicines, whether it is about my family or me in general. To this very day, I continue to go to my godparents' house, even though I don't visit as frequently as I used to in my childhood. The same festivities occur every year on any occasion, although my family has become even more independent and the family reunions aren't as large as they used to be. Despite that fact, I'm never going to forget the feeling of unity, the happiness, cheer, joy, and glee that Paicines had brought to my life.