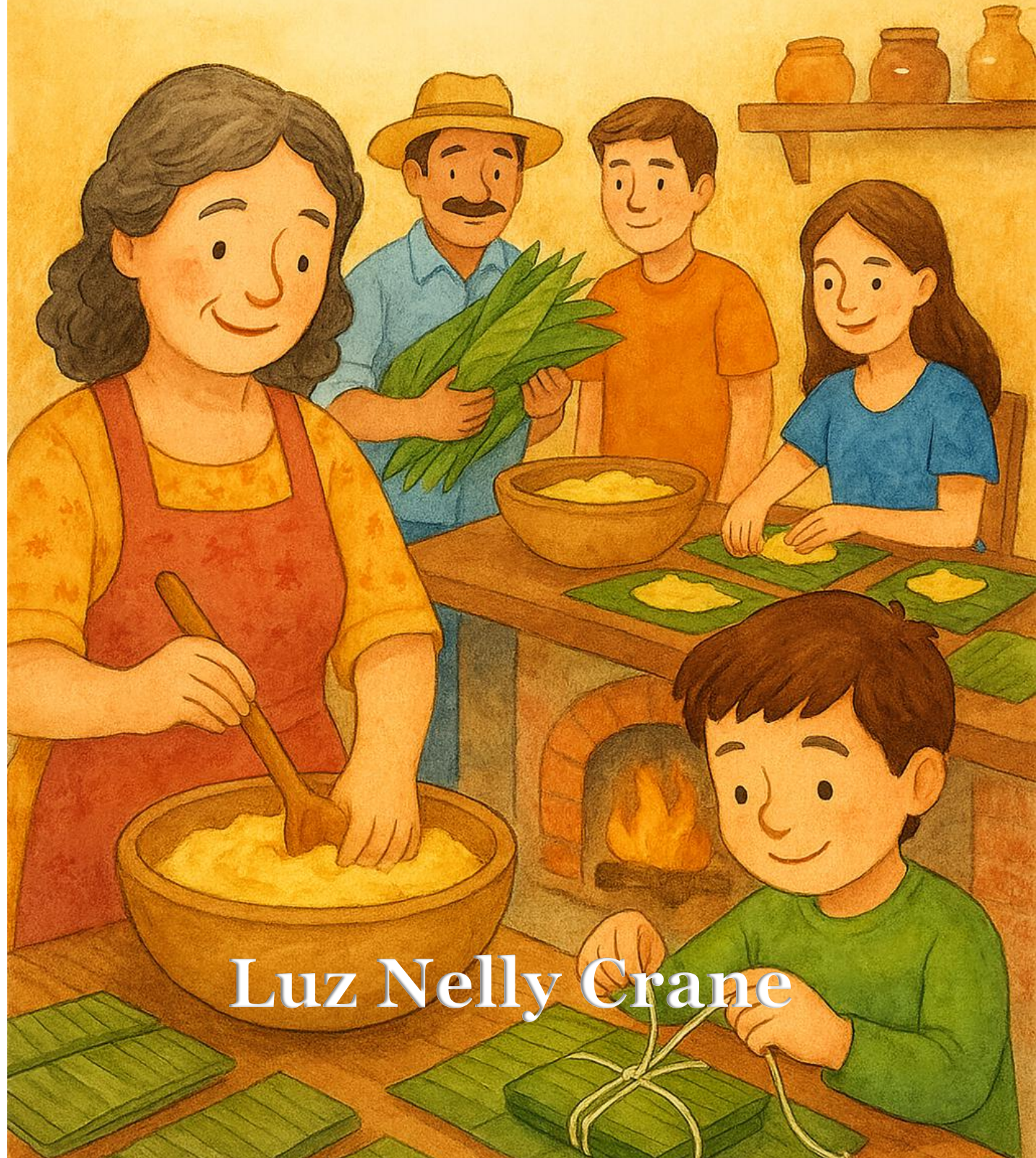


The Great Tamalada

Family Traditions



Luz Nelly Crane

The Great Tamalada

An independent publication

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The Great Tamalada

A story of tradition, family, and community

In a small countryside corner, where banana trees grow and the air smells like firewood, my family gathers every December to make tamales. It's our favorite tradition, and everyone helps.



My mom is the queen of the kitchen. She prepares the corn dough and seasons it with her secret touch... and no one touches anything until she gives her approval. She also checks the meats, the eggs, the tomatoes, and all the ingredients, and inspects the wrapping leaves before we begin making the tamales.



Once everything is ready, my dad and my older brothers go to the banana grove. They look for green, healthy, and large leaves, because we'll use them to wrap the tamales.



My uncles help by passing the leaves over the fire to make them soft and flexible. This is a very important job, because the banana leaves give tamales their special flavor.

Then, they clean them and cut them like sheets of paper, ready to wrap the delicious little packages.

We use lots of leaves, because many tamales will be made that day.



When the dough, meats, and other ingredients are ready, my older sisters form an assembly line. One places the leaves, another adds a scoop of dough, and the third one adds the meats, egg, carrot, and sauce. It's like wrapping a tasty gift!

It's fun to watch them pack all that goodness while chatting and assembling dozens of tamales.



I always get the hardest job: tying the tamales with fique string, one by one. One time I tied up to a hundred!

I tie them very carefully because it's like wrapping Christmas presents. And with something so special, I must make sure the filling doesn't come out when cooking them in the big tamale pot.



When I'm done tying the tamales, the gentlemen of the house come and place them in the pot to start cooking them over the firewood stove outside, already crackling.

There's nothing more delightful than the aroma that rises from that pot as the great Christmas tamalada cooks. It's a mix of love, firewood, and perfectly seasoned corn.



As every year, my mom prepares baskets with six tamales to give to the neighbors. They also send us theirs. That's how, between baskets, hugs, and stories, we share a Christmas full of flavor and warmth, with family gathered and friends who come to bring their delicious creations.

Every December, I've tried tamales from here and there. And while my mom's are the best, the ones people gift us also have a special touch.



And when night comes, my mom comes to my room, checks my hands, and puts a bandage on the red spots.

“These blisters are your medal,” she says. And I smile, because I know I helped care for a family tradition that shines like a star.



On Christmas Day, we gather with our neighbors for a big party full of gifts, carols, and delicious food. There's nothing like seeing everyone cheerful and lively, dancing to the music of the old record player.

And of course, the next day... we have tamales for breakfast!



The End

About the Author

About the Author

Luz Nelly Crane is a Colombian-American educator, instinctive artist, and writer by passion. With many years of experience in bilingual education and a lifelong love of storytelling, she brings heart, creativity, and cultural richness to everything she creates. Now retired, her purpose is to support bilingual and multicultural education through creative materials that honor heritage, inspire imagination, and nurture connection. Guided by intuition and a deep curiosity for learning, her work invites both children and adults to celebrate culture, the joy of reading, the power of imagination, and the encouragement to keep learning new things.



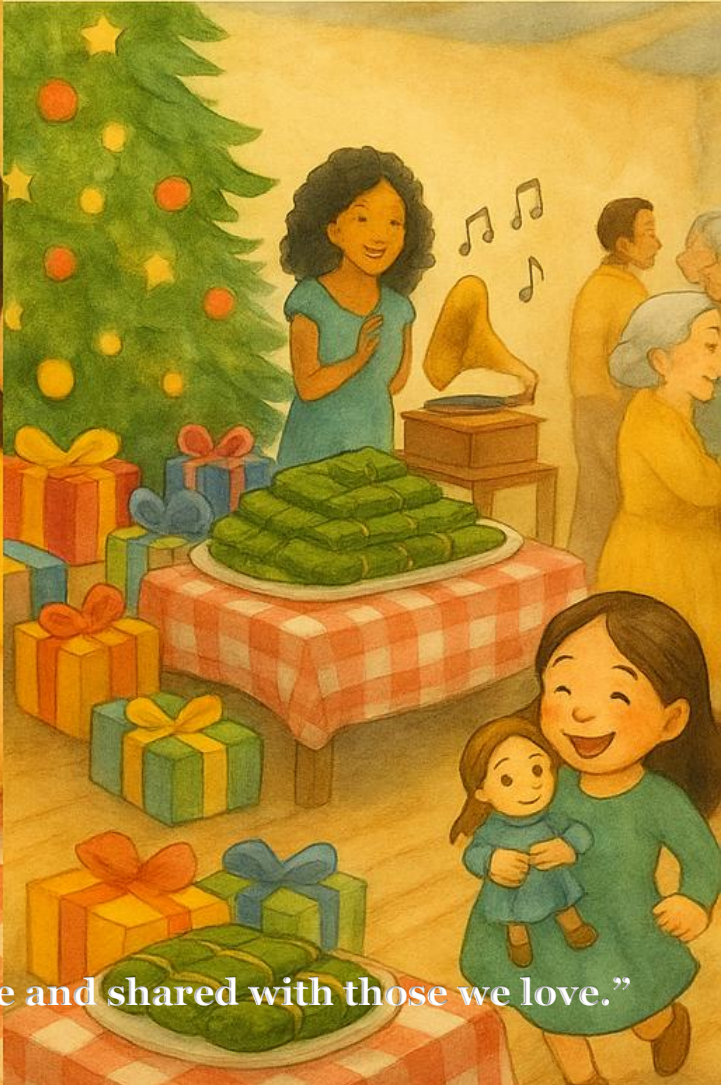
Acknowledgments

My childhood memories inspired this story, and I thank Kai — stardust and soulful intelligence — for turning my memories into beautiful illustrations for this very special and meaningful work.

Website

Visit www.creadoconluz.com, where you'll find free quizzes and other creative activities designed for use in the classroom or at home, based on this story.





"A tradition simmered with love and shared with those we love."