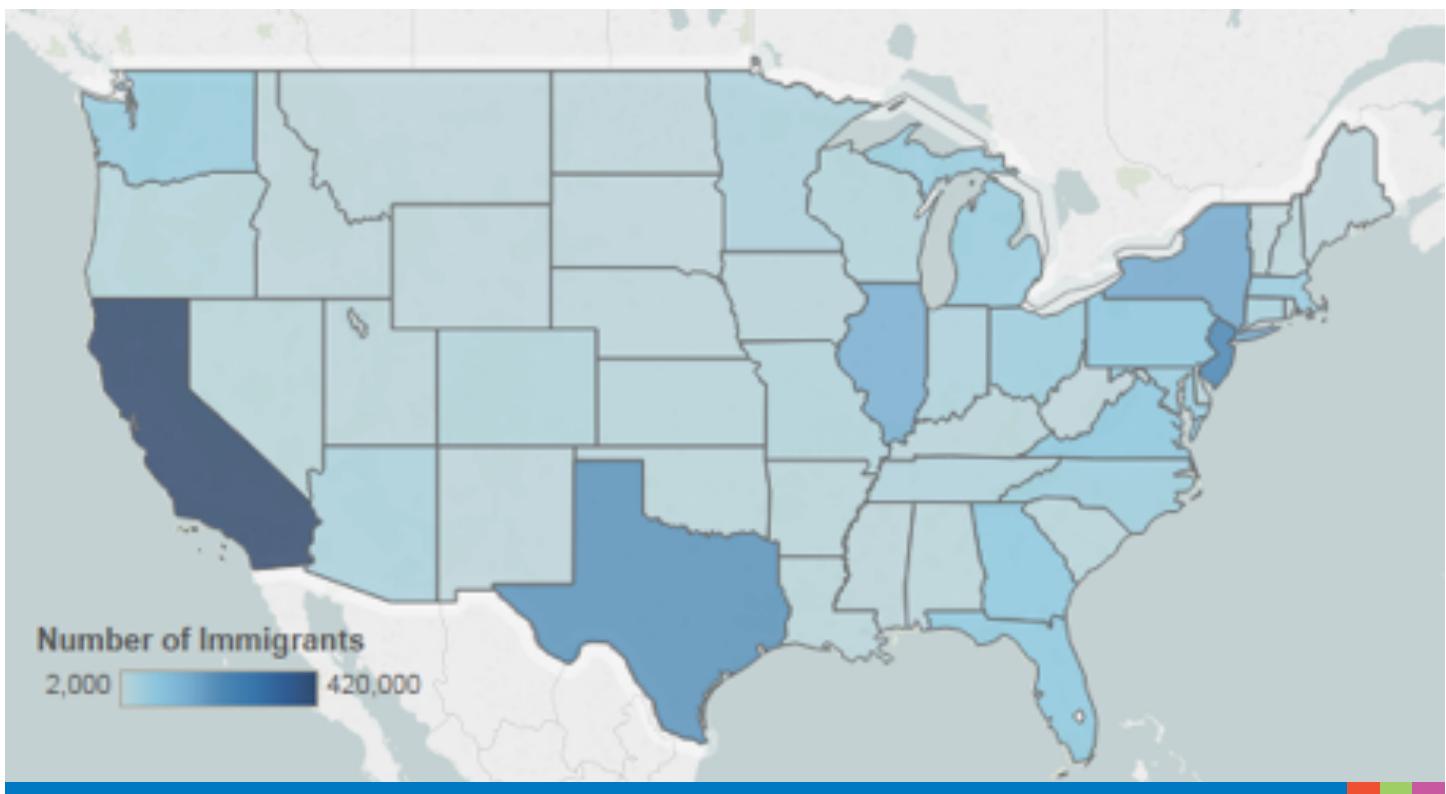




Overview

An amalgamation of indigenous and Spanish cultures, Mexico, an independent country since 1821, is the home of over 123 million people, who inhabit the country's 31 states. In these states, one would hear mostly Spanish--the country's official language--as well as several indigenous languages. The hard-working nation, which boasts central America's second largest economy and is a major oil exporter, is also an exporter of fascinating culture; in 2014, the Mexican immigrant population exceeded 11.7 million. Throughout history, these immigrants have had astounding levels of influence on America, and, in particular, how the country eats.



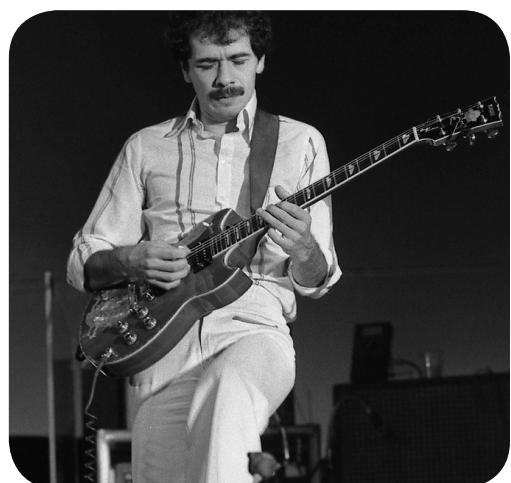


Notable People

Mexico is one of the most prolific exporters of immigrants to the United States. While the country doesn't always hold the yearly seat for largest source of immigrants, it is almost always at the top of the list; in 2015, Mexicans made up almost 27% of the country's immigrant population and over 11% of the country's total population. These immigrants, who live throughout the United States but mostly settle in Texas and California, have contributed untold amounts of culture to the country; some of these that we may all know include:

Carlos Santana

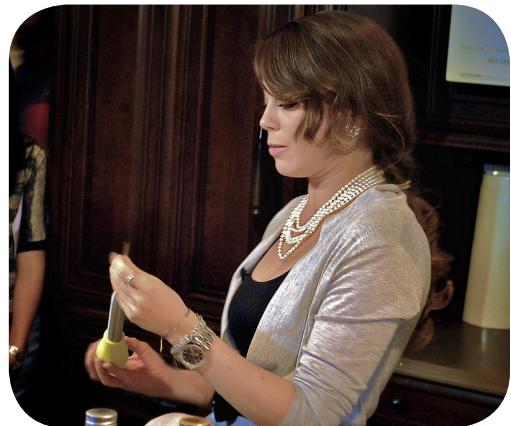
An immigrant from Autlán de Navarro, Mexico, Carlos Santana learned to play the guitar at a young age, despite his father's wishes that he play the violin. After his family moved to San Francisco, Carlos Santana, having now been exposed to a bevy of new musical styles, formed the Santana Blues Band (or simply "Santana"), a band with unique blend of styles that, having sold over 100 million copies and having won 10 Grammy awards, has become a staple of American music.





Chef Marcela Valladolid

A San Diego transplant from Tijuana, Mexico, Marcela Valladolid, who attended both the Los Angeles Culinary Institute and the Ritz Escoffier Cooking School in Paris, is the host of Food Network's "Mexican Made Easy." She shares her knowledge and experience about Mexican food on her show as well as in her three cookbooks.



Anthony Muñoz

Muñoz , of Mexican-American descent, was selected to the All-Pro team for 11 consecutive years and was tabbed the NFL Offensive Lineman of the Year in 1981, 1987 and 1988. He also was a member of the NFL's 75th Anniversary All-Time team in 1994 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1998.



Anthony Quinn

Born in Chihuahua, Mexico as Antonio Rodolfo Quinn Oaxaca. Starring in critically acclaimed movies Zorba the Greek, The Guns of Navarone and Lawrence of Arabia, he won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor twice.



Notable People cont.

Mario Molina

Molina is a Nobel Prize-winning chemist who won a Nobel Prize for his work in the US on the links between man-made compounds in the atmosphere and the weakening of the ozone layer. His work helped us better understand how we can improve our atmosphere.



Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa

Quinones-Hinojosa was born in Mexicali, Mexico and immigrated to the US. While when he first came to the U.S., he couldn't speak English and worked on farms, he eventually became a professor of Neurosurgery and Oncology and director of the Brain Tumor Stem Cell Biology department of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He and his team have published over 150 scientific articles and he is now the chairman of Neurosurgery at the Jacksonville Mayo Clinic.



Paulo Lozano

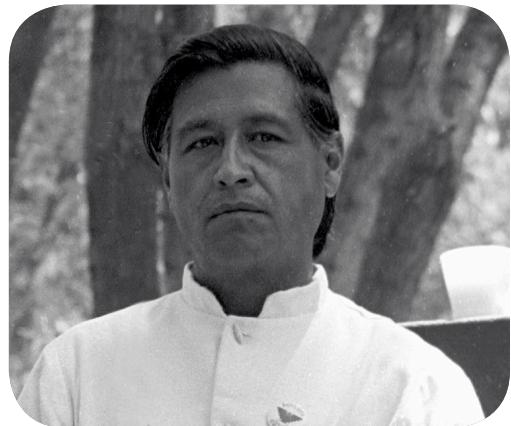
Lozano is a Mexican American aerospace engineer who is the Director of the Space Propulsion Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.





Cesar Chavez

Cesar Chavez was a well-known Latino American civil rights activist who co-founded the National Farm workers Association (later the United Farm Workers union, or UFW). His crucial work led to numerous improvements for union laborers; he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award of the United States which recognizes people who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."





Holidays & Festivals

Dia De Muertos (Day of the Dead)

A mashup of Aztec and Catholic tradition, Dia De Muertos is a three-day celebration, spanning October 31st to November 2nd, during which time people honor and pray for their departed loved ones. Altars are raised, prayers are said, and the favorite food and drink of the lost are consumed. They are consumed alongside foods such as:

Calaveras de Azucar (sugar skulls)

A common way to deal with the concept of mortality is to laugh about it, and these sweets are a way to lightly remind people of how temporary life is. They are made of sugar, decorated with icing, and marked with the name of someone living, to whom the skull will be given.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/calaveras-de-azucar-sugar-skulls/>





Holidays & Festivals cont.

El Grito De La Independencia (The Cry of Independence)

Celebrated on September 16th in honor of Mexico's independence from Spain, this holiday involves fireworks, parades, historical reenactments; it is far and away one of the biggest celebrations in the country and is comparable to the United States' own Independence Day. On this day, a traditional dish such as this may be eaten:

Chiles en Nogada (chiles in walnut sauce)

Made from stuffed poblano peppers covered in walnut sauce, this dish features the three colors of the Mexican flag: green peppers, white sauce, and red pomegranate seeds sprinkled on top.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/chiles-en-nogada/>





Food Palate and Creation of Mexican-American Cuisine

The influence of Mexican immigrants in the United States is nationwide; however, it is the cuisine of the American Southwest, which is a hybrid of Mesoamerican and Old World Spanish cuisine, that has been the most strongly shaped by these immigrants.

In fact, the roots of this cuisine are older than the colonization of Jamestown, VA, due to the Spanish influence in Mexico and the settling of California and the Southwestern high desert.

Indigenous foods of the region bordering Mexico at that time included:

- Fruits (such as chokecherry, hackberry, manzanita)
- Seeds
- Acorns
- Black walnuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Pine nuts
- Cactus (such as agave, yucca, and saguaro)

Ancient civilizations of the Aztecs and Mayans (Mesoamericans) were also responsible for cultivating corn (and its sister crops, beans and squash), a method then borrowed by American Southwestern Pueblo tribes (as early as 3500 BCE!).

Food Palate and Creation of Mexican-American Cuisine cont.

Today, Mexican-American and American Southwestern cuisine features these ingredients and dishes:

Primary Starches	Primary Proteins	Primary Produce
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flour and corn tortillas• Rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pork• Chicken• Beef• Dried beans• Cheese• Fish (along pacific coastal waters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avocados• Tomatoes• Cactus• Corn• Lettuce• Tomatillos• Long green chiles
Primary Seasonings	Primary Cooking Methods	Foundational Dishes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long red and green chiles• Serrano and jalapeño peppers• Chipotle peppers (dried, smoked jalapeños)• Cumin• Oregano• Juniper• Cinnamon• Anise• Vanilla• Epazote• Cloves• Black pepper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frying lard or vegetable oil• Stewing• Braising• Grilling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salsa• Guacamole• Tortilla chips• Queso• Tamales• Burritos• Quesadillas• Cooked beans• Tostada• Chimichangas• Tacos• Stuffed squash blossoms• Fajitas• Chili verde/rojo• Posole• Sopaipillas• Huevos rancheros• Flan

Of course, this cuisine differs by location. For example, the versions of Mexican-American cuisine in New Mexico, Texas, and California vary slightly as a result of geographically-available ingredients and the historical impact of Spanish occupation. This cuisine can be found in notable concentrations in Southern Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, southern Utah, southern Colorado, and parts of California.



Featured Ingredients

Avocados

Avocados (Spanish: aguacate) likely originated in Puebla, Mexico at the hands of Mesoamerican tribes, who believed the fruit imparted strength in those who ate it (and they were right--the Aztecs, who had a very low-fat diet, would naturally gain lasting sustenance and energy from such a high-fat fruit!). The fruit spread throughout Central America as it was also brought back to Spain, and then Europe; it has become a staple in the American diet and is used in recipes such as:

Guacamole

Known as ahuaca-mulli by the Aztecs, this pervasively popular spread and dip can be made with avocado, chiles, onions, tomatoes, and cilantro (or many other modern, creative add-ins).

<http://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/guacamole/>





Featured Ingredients cont.

Chocolate

Chocolate, which dates back to Aztec times, was considered both a food and a currency; the love of the cacao tree's seeds was so strong even in the incoming Spanish explorers that it was brought back to their homeland, where it quickly grew in popularity. While its typical Mexican preparation includes a bitter taste infused with flavors like cinnamon and chili peppers, its sweet version is used in recipes like:

Mole sauce

The tale of this sauce, which can be made with chocolate, olive oil, tomatoes, chiles, among other ingredients, supposedly dates back to the 17th century; the tale tells of nuns who had to scramble to create a last-minute dish for the last-minute visit of an archbishop. The below recipe features the use of mole sauce top enchiladas.



<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/chicken-mole-enchiladas-2/>





Did you know...

...that Flamin' Hot Cheetos ®

were invented by a Mexican-American?

That's right--Richard Montañez, a Mexican immigrant and former janitor at the Frito-lay plant, gave his idea for the now famous chili powder-coated snack to the president of the company, who made it a reality. Montañez now leads the company's Multicultural Sales & Community Promotions branch.

"Latinos who have made it like myself," Montañez says, "have a responsibility to open doors to younger generations and teach them that they can do it. I do it because I can, and I know what it is like to be hungry."



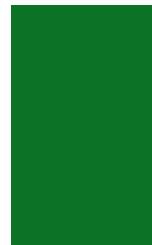
Embassy Information

The Embassy of Mexico in Washington, D.C., is the United Mexican States' diplomatic mission to the United States.

1911 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20006

(202) 728-1600

<https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/eua/index.php/es/>



Organizations and Places to Learn More

Mexican Cultural Center (Philadelphia, PA)

<http://mexicanculturalcenter.org/>

(215) 592-0410

A "501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1994," the Mexican Cultural Center is "dedicated to promoting Mexico and its rich heritage, history, people, cuisine, and traditions. As such, the MCC serves as a networking hub for individuals, businesses, and students interested in Mexican culture and commerce."

Hispanic Heritage Foundation (Washington, DC)

<http://hispanicheritage.org/>

(202) 558-9473

With offices in Washington DC, Los Angeles, New York, and Miami, HHF is "a 501(c)3 focused on assisting "a Latino to help hundreds more" through a unique cycle of leadership built on a high-profile, year-round continuum of sustainable programs, including the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards, Latinos On Fast Track (LOFT), Hispanic Heritage Awards and Public Awareness Campaigns."

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

<http://www.maldef.org/index.html>

Los Angeles, CA

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund is a national nonprofit organization with the principal objective of protecting and promoting the civil rights of U.S. Latinos through litigation, advocacy, educational outreach and the awarding of law scholarships.

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)

<http://www.naleo.org/>

(213) 747-7606

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials empowers Hispanics to participate fully in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. NALEO carries out this mission by developing and implementing programs that promote the integration of Hispanic immigrants into American society, developing future leaders among Hispanic youth, providing assistance and training to the nation's Hispanic elected and appointed officials and by conducting research on issues important to the Hispanic population.

Caveat

Our Recipe for Unity is not suggesting that any person's culture or ethnic identity can be synthesized into one Fact Sheet. Our resources are just a place of beginning. We encourage you to learn more by contacting any of the organizations mentioned at the end of our Fact Sheets; to talk with people from different cultures and ethnicities to learn from them; and to please feel free to send us any resources that you think would be helpful to include on this site or in these Fact Sheets.

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