



Food & Guatemalans

A look at food, memories and re-creation of 'home'

Introduction

- The role of food among Guatemalans
 - in the migrant experience (within Guatemala)
 - in the migrant experience (outside, in NYC)
 - during the conflict (using food to remember a 'home' that no longer exists because it was ravaged by war)
- Food as a form of media
 - Means so much more than what we put in our stomachs for sustenance, charged with meaning
 - Captures and conveys culture, identity
 - A symbol of authenticity, history
 - evoke a sense of home
 - it influences how we negotiate spaces and other people in them
 - it can bridge communities or even cause conflict
 - used to appropriate a foreign culture, or even differentiate oneself from the Other

My Project

Long term goal: Explore food memories of Guatemalans, in and outside of Guatemala

Initial steps:

- research interview with Jessica Kaire
- Investigation into other communities

Final Product for Spring 2015:

Interviews with Guatemalans in NYC, using qualitative interviews, videos, photography to create a visual kaleidoscope of what it means to relate to food as a Guatemalan living in the US.

Different perspectives:

- A Guatemalan mother, who is a homemaker, cooks for her family
- A Guatemalan who works in the restaurant business
- A Guatemalan who works as a day laborer
- A Guatemalan artist / migrant within Guatemalan society

Investigation

- Other migrant communities
 - Sierra Leone migrants in South Africa
 - Dominicans in New York City
 - Farm workers in Vermont
 - West Africans in the US

Food, Memories & Home

- The further you are, the more food memories form
- The role of the internet
- Food as a language
- The search for authenticity, despite abundance of food in new space
- Dietary restrictions
- Cuisine isn't static

Source www.organicallycooked.com/2011/11/food-migration-and-identity-t.html

Case Study #1

- Sierra Leone migrants in South Africa
- Communities with strong ties to homeland
- Sensory memories
- Re-territorializing
- Food rituals
- Maintain identity

Source: "Transnationalised Memories among Migrants: How 'Indigenous' Food can Bring Home Closer." by Maheshvari Naidu & Nokwanda Nzuza

Case Study #2

- Migrant workers on isolated farms in Vermont
- Search for familiar flavors
- “Paradox” of lengths they will go to
- Complexities of what constitutes local food
- Source: " TASTE OF HOME: MIGRATION, FOOD AND BELONGING IN A CHANGING VERMONT" by PABLO BOSE & ALISHA LARAMEE

Case Study #3

- West African foods in specialty grocery stores
- Food processing: traditional methods vs. technological transformations
- Reinvention to acclimatize and accommodate
- Marketing claims: authentic?
- Source: “Mass producing food traditions for west africans abroad” by Elisha P Renne

Case Study #4

- Dominicans in NYC
- Creating food ways to create a personalized map of the city
- networks of survival
- Cooking practices within specific kitchens → local food relations
- Food memories need the support of cooking or consuming
- Food practices and domestic routine → investment with trauma and past struggle
- Even if physical foods present, they are a proxy.
- Meals as myths.

Source: "Migrant Seasonings: contexts, relations, histories" by Lidia Marte

Post Research: Further Development of concept

Immigrant Mothers of Guatemala

- Video, audio and photo compilation, presenting recipes of Guatemalan women living in the NY region
- Disseminated via a recipe blog (accessible to public) yet is a cultural product simultaneously

THANK YOU!