

# Kosher Mexican Food

It's Cinco de Mayo! Which, by the way, is not Mexico's Independence Day.

Cinco de Mayo is a big celebration in Mexico. It marks the Battle of Puebla, when a small group of Mexican soldiers defeated a much larger assembly of French invaders on May 5 (obviously), 1862.

## Kosher Mexican Food? ¡Claro!\*

Mexican food is really popular. I recall reading a few years ago that salsa is now the Number One condiment in North America. COR, the Kashruth Council of Canada, has certified several commercially-available [salsa](#) products. We make our own, of course, to serve with our tacos.



acos are muy sabrosa.

Yes, we cater kosher Mexican food. It's one of our most popular requests, particularly for Bat and Bar Mitzvahs and family-oriented events. We also make empanadas (sort of like an enclosed taco) and other Mexican dishes upon request. Frankly, I am fully confident that our Executive Chef can create a kosher version of just about any recipe, regardless of where it originates.

We also turn to Mexico for dessert inspiration. Mexican wedding cookies are lightly sweet on the palate. Those who want something sweeter will love our Mexican flan.

*\*Of course!*

## Mexico's Unusual Jewish History

Jewish *conversos*, who converted to Catholicism during the Spanish Inquisition, are thought to have first arrived in Mexico in 1519. A larger emigration occurred in the 1530s. For the next several decades, some rose in Church ranks, while others returned to Judaism. A Mexican Inquisition began in the 1570s and ended in 1601. Thankfully, it never reached the intensity that it did in Spain but some 325 "Judaizers" were prosecuted, including 29 who were executed.

During the 1860s, the new Republic of Mexico ended official discrimination against non-Catholics and in the 1880s, announced it would accept Russian Jews if they agreed to live in unsettled, government-owned land. However, very few Jews knew how to farm—most European nations would

not allow Jews to own land—so few, if any, took up the offer in spite of encouragement from European Jewish leaders. By 1900, the Mexican census identified just 134 Jews in the entire country.

After 1900, however, Jews began to arrive from Eastern Europe to Latin and South America. More than 21,000 were in Mexico by 1930. There was even a Jewish bullfighter in Mexico, Sidney Franklin, who was born in Brooklyn and emigrated to live his dream in 1922. Ernest Hemingway wrote about him in *Death in the Afternoon*, which discusses how Franklin's innovations ended human fatalities in the bullfighting ring.

As Nazism spread into the 1940s, Mexico's Jewish population reached about 40,000. Most lived in Mexico City, which remains the center of Jewish life in the country.

As for Independence Day? Mexico's is September 16 and was first observed in 1810. Obviously, the French—along with the Spanish—had to learn this the hard way. On that day, patriotic Mexicans shout "¡Grito de Delores!" (Cry of Delores), named for the town where the battle for independence began.

## Mexican Flan for Mother's Day

Mother's Day is this Sunday. Make Mom a flan this year with this recipe from AllRecipes. All ingredients are available in kosher food stores.

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