Eating Transnationally: Mexican Migrant Workers in Alaska

by

Sara Victoria Komarnisky

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

This thesis is about how transnational lives and identities are lived out as much through what people eat – or say they eat – as through other global cultural flows. This is what I call "eating transnationally" – meals that connect places and the people in them or foods that depend on interconnectedness and mobility across space. Based on multi-sited fieldwork with Mexican migrant workers and their families in Anchorage, Alaska and Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, I investigate the food-related connections and interconnections between Alaska and Mexico and the complexity, irony and hybridization that results from the movement of people and foods. As well, I explore how eating, shopping for, and talking about certain foods (notably chile) are identity performances. This study advocates in-depth study of the relationship between food and identity, and finds that the exploration of food and eating in the lives of transnational Mexican workers in Alaska provide considerable insight into conceptualizations of Mexican people and of places like Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage in a globalized world.

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…who taught me that food means a lot.

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Glossary

Abarrotes- general store

A la mexicana- served with onion, tomato and jalapeño

Añejo cheese- also known as cotijo; it is a salty, crumbly, white cheese similar to feta in appearance.

Antojitos- literally translated as "little whimsies", these are traditional Mexican appetizers or snacks

Arroz- rice

Arroz con leche- rice with milk; rice pudding

Atole- a traditional corn-based hot drink, typically accompanied by tamales.

Atole blanco- unflavoured atole made with milk; in Acuitzio, traditionally served with buñuelos

Barbacoa- barbecue

Borscht- beet soup; a traditional Ukrainian dish

Braceros- participants in the Bracero Program (1942-1964), a temporary program that legally brought workers from Mexico for agricultural work in the United States, primarily to California

Buñuelos- a fried and crispy dough-based dessert; in Acuitzio, served with atole blanco; see description page 67

Burrito- filling (could be meat, beans, rice, vegetables, salsa, and cheese, or any conceivable combination) wrapped in a large flour tortilla

Cal- Calcium oxide (CaO), commonly called lime

Carnecería- butcher shop

Carnitas- braised pork

Cazuela- pot

Cazo- saucepan

Cebolla- onion

Cena- a light evening meal

Charales- small fish which are dried and fried; a specialty of Pátzcuaro

Chayote- pale green, mild flavoured squash

Chile adobado- a paste made of ground chiles, herbs, and vinegar

Chile de arbol/chile cola de rata- a thin, short, small and papery red chile that is very hot; often sold in supermarkets as a Chinese hot pepper

Chile guajillo- thick, leathery dark reddish brown chiles that contain mild to moderate amounts of heat

Chile mulato- looks like the ancho (dried chile poblano), but is darker and sweeter; is fairly mild and has an earthy flavor

Chile pasilla del ancho/chile negro- a hot, dried chile; used in Sopa Tarasca; see recipe page 10

Chile perón/chile manzano- shaped like a small apple, bright reddish-orange and hot

Chile poblano- a large, mild and dark green chile used for chiles rellenos; dried, it is called an ancho

Chiles rellenos- stuffed chiles; see recipe page 39

Chile rojo- a red sauce made with chiles

Chile verde- a green sauce made with chiles

Chiles en escabeche- pickled fresh chiles with vegetables

Chiminea- old-style kitchen with wood-oven

Chipotle- dried and smoked version of a ripened jalapeno chile

Chorizo- sausage made with pork, paprika, garlic, and salt

Comal- griddle; *comales* have a very long history in Mexican cooking

Combi- a privately owned combination of a taxi and a bus

Comida- food; also refers to the main meal of the day

Conchas- a type of pan dulce that resembles a shell; it is round with swirled and hardened icing on top

Corundas- triangular tamales that are a specialty of Michoacán

Cuñado/a- brother-in-law/sister-in-law

Día del canje- Day of the exchange; December 5; celebrated in Acuitzio to recognize the exchange of Mexican prisoners for Belgian and French prisoners in Acuitzio in 1865.

Día de los reyes- Three Kings' Day or Epiphany; January 6

Día de Guadalupe- Day of the Virgin or Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe; December 12; a national holiday in Mexico

Duro- hard or tough

Enchiladas- a corn tortilla fried briefly in lard or oil, then dipped in sauce (whether chile rojo, chile verde, or mole) before being filled and rolled up; fillings may be almost anything but enchiladas made with chicken, meat or cheese fillings are the most popular; in Michoacán, they are usually filled with cheese, topped with fried potatoes, onions, and carrots, and served with fried chicken

Enchilados- with chile

Frijoles - beans

Greta- glaze for pottery

Habanero chile- the hottest chile in Mexico, it is small and yellow-orange and used primarily in the Yucatan region

Hacer un cigarro- literally translated as "to make a cigarette", but refers to rolling up a tortilla

Lo basico- the basics

Lo mexicano- that which is Mexican

Machismo- a central cultural norm in Latin America, it is a celebration of the sexual and social expressions of masculine power and virility (Skidmore and Smith 1997:62)

Maíz- corn

Masa- dough

Maseca flour- a brand-name industrially produced corn flour used for making tortillas and tamales.

Más sano- more relaxed and tranquil, calmer

Menudo- a spicy soup made with hominy and tripe

Mole- sauce; usually referring to mole poblano

Mole con pollo- mole with chicken; see recipe page 54

Mole en pasta- mole in paste; mixed with chicken broth to make mole sauce

Mole en polvo- powdered mole; mixed with chicken broth to make mole sauce

Mole poblano- a sauce prepared with chile peppers, spices, unsweetened chocolate, and a variety of other ingredients; see recipe page 54

Nieve- literally translated as "snow", here means ice cream

Nisparos- loquats

Nopal- the leaves of the prickly pear cactus

Norteño- northern

Panadería- bakery

Pan dulce- refers to a variety of sweet breads

Picar- to be hot and spicy

Picante- hot and spicy

Piloncillo- unrefined brown sugar pressed into a cone shape

Pinole- toasted and lightly sweetened corn meal

Poco raro- a little strange

Ponche mexicano- Mexican punch; in Acuitzio it is served hot and contains a variety of fruits (such as guava) as well as sugar cane and cinnamon

Por el otro lado- literally, "on the other side"; in Mexico, refers to the United States

Posadas- a nine-day holiday beginning December 16 and ending December 24 that re-enacts the search by Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary for a place to stay prior to Jesus' birth; each family in a neighborhood will schedule a night for the Posada to be held at their home

Pozole- a pork, chile, and hominy stew garnished with a variety of toppings such as lettuce, oregano, lime, onions, avocadoes, etc.

Pyrohy- perogy; dumplings, stuffed with sauerkraut, cheese, mashed potatoes, cabbage, onion, meat, or some combination, or with a fruit filling; usually fried or boiled until they float, and then covered with butter; a traditional Ukrainian dish

Que pica demasiado- too hot and spicy

Quinceañera- celebration of a young woman's fifteenth birthday marking her transition to womanhood.

Requesón- cottage cheese or curds

Sabor- taste or flavour

Sala- hall

Secundaria- high school

Semejanza- similarity, resemblance

Sopa de albondigas- meatball soup

Sopa tarasca- a traditional Michoacán soup; see recipe page 10

Sopes- thick fried masa pancakes, or cups with raised edges, that are topped or filled with beans, meat, lettuce, cheese, salsa or any combination of these ingredients; the filled variety are called *gorditas*

Suegra- mother-in-law

Taco- a corn or flour tortilla folded in half and filled with meat, vegetables and/or sauces

Tamales- a traditional Mexican food that begins with corn flour mixed with water and lard which is then spread onto a leaf (corn husk, banana leaf, or other leaf, depending on region) and filled with meat or cheese or any preparation according to taste before being folded up and steamed; see recipe, page 89

Tomatillos- a small, round and green or green-purple fruit surrounded by a paper-like husk; also known as the husk tomato

Tortillería- producer and vendor of tortillas

Tortuga- tortoise

Tres por uno- Three for one; a program that sees migrant contributions matched by those from three levels of government to provide funding for community improvement projects in migrants' home communities

Uchepos- a tamale made with fresh corn, see recipe page 1

Uno se adapta- one adapts (oneself)

Zoricua tacos- pig's blood tacos, rumored to increase one's sexual potency and stamina

Chapter 1
Introduction: Eating Transnationally

Uchepos
Ingredients:
Fresh ears of corn
Salt (optional)
Sugar
Baking powder
Cream and salsa
Instructions:
First, cut the kernels off of the corncobs. Then, grind the corn, reserving the liquid. Mix the ground corn with some of the liquid, a bit of salt if desired, sugar, and baking powder. Mix well and fill fresh corn husks (the part that surrounds the cob on the plant) with this mixture. Fold the leaves by bringing the two sides together, folding over, and folding up the end. Leave one end open. You need to act quickly because it will curdle if you wait too long. Steam them for about an hour or so. Serve piping hot with salsa and cream if you have any

Introduction

> With the first sip, Nacha appeared there at her side, stroking her hair as she ate, as she had done when she was little and was sick, kissing her forehead over and over. There were all the times with Nacha, the childhood games in the kitchen, the trips to the market, the still-warm tortillas, the coloured apricot pits, the Christmas rolls, the smells of boiled milk, bread with cream, chocolate atole, cumin, garlic, onion. As always, throughout her life, with a whiff of onion, the tears began…Chencha and Tita laughed reliving those moments, and they cried remembering the steps of the recipe (from *Like Water for Chocolate*, Esquivel 1992:124).

In the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* (Esquivel 1992), food takes centre stage. The story takes place in Northern Mexico during the Mexican revolution of 1910-1917, and in it, Esquivel writes about cooking and eating and everyday life and love in a Mexican woman-headed family of that time period. Food becomes the lens through

which the reader sees the revolution, so that everyday life and emotion rather than epic battles are highlighted, and the kitchen and the dinner table become the sites for the main character, Tita de la Garza, to discover her own identity. In the novel, an example of Magical Realism, food is powerful in conveying meaning and emotion and in understanding the place of the revolution in the everyday lives of individuals.

As Jeffrey Pilcher (1998) writes, "connections between food and identity – what people eat and who they are – reach deep into Mexican history". In this thesis, as well, food has symbolic value as a marker of transnational identity and as a material reality of the place of transnational migration in the lives of my research participants who travel between Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, Mexico to Anchorage Alaska, USA. The state of Michoacán more specifically has a very rich food culture, with foods like *mole poblano*, *carnitas*, *uchepos*, *sopa tarasca*, and *corundas* making up the traditional regional cuisine. Alaska, on the other hand, counts salmon, halibut, and blueberries among its distinctly regional foods. Here, too, food takes centre stage with globalization and transnational identity explored through the foods, recipes, and food-related memories of Mexican migrant workers and their families who live and work in Anchorage, Alaska.

Mexico in Alaska[1]: The thesis topic

On a broad level, this project grows out of an interest in the place of food in the world today. Even more so, I am interested in the place of food in peoples' lives. While nothing new, there is currently a lot of fear about food (eg., Nestle 2003; Ferrières 2006), including the uncertainty surrounding genetically modified foods, as well as anxiety about bacterial food contamination, outbreaks of mad cow disease in Europe and North America (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Ritvo 2005), and the possibility of an avian flu epidemic in the future. As well, there is fear about fatty foods, trans fats, fast foods (Schlosser 2001) and the existence of what some people call an obesity epidemic (e.g., Nestle and Jacobson 2000). There is also a larger and larger variety of food available in our grocery stores. For instance, I remember never having seen either an avocado or a maki roll, but now both are seemingly available everywhere. Food and food preparation

[1] Mexico in Alaska is the name of a Mexican restaurant in Anchorage. Interestingly, their advertising superimposes ancient Mayan and Aztec ruins over the Chugach Range, the mountain range directly east of Anchorage

has moved into the realm of entertainment, with dining in fancy restaurants described as an experience, and with entire television networks dedicated to programming focusing on the preparation, serving and eating of food. Industrial agriculture has intensified and so has the backlash against it in the form of organic foods, and movements like the Slow Food movement and the fair trade movement (e.g., Petrini 2001; Guthman 2003; Belasco 2005). Additionally, as is the case of the topic of this thesis, people are moving in great numbers, taking their foods with them as they move.

My own project does not deal with all of these things, but I am concerned with trying to understand how food and the movement of food and food-related things and ideas are wrapped up in configurations of power and the movement of people, commodities, technology, ideas, finance capital, and the media (among other things) in extremely complex ways. But also, it is important to remember that these travelling foods are a real part, a material reality of people's daily lives, as well as a symbol, a marker of those lives, articulating through them both place and movement and through place and movement, identity and identification (Law 2001:280).

To be even more specific, I am interested in how food might be a marker and a material reality of transnational identity for Mexican migrant workers and their families who live and work in Anchorage, Alaska. By using the word 'transnational', I draw attention to the fact that these identities are situated in more than one place, including the space between places. So by transnational identity I mean the creation and attribution of fluid and complex identities grounded in both Mexico and Alaska and how the negotiation of such an identity depends on the crossing of borders and boundaries and the exchange of information implied in the crossing. Identity remains a purposefully vague concept here, a process that is fluid and contingent. Since the negotiation of identity is a fundamental part of the migrant experience and food is a part of that, I am interested in how identity is constructed in relation to the food-associated connections that my research participants make between their homes in Mexico and Alaska. Food-associated connections would include narratives of traditional foods or modes of preparation as well as foods or recipes sent through the mail (or via email) or brought along in a suitcase. Food-associated connections would also include food-related knowledge carried across

borders and boundaries in cookbooks, as embodied knowledge, and in memories and imaginings. Finally, new food-related experiences in Alaska are important. I look for disjunctures or disconnections (or some might say hybrids or travelling culture). I also look at food and eating as performance to explore out how food serves as a marker and a material reality of transnational identity. In this way, I can understand how food connects places and the people in them and what place that food has in the lives of my research participants and in their identities as Mexicans in Alaska. It is also significant that many of my research participants in Alaska work, or have worked, in restaurants, and specifically in Mexican restaurants. That there are many Mexican restaurants in Anchorage, and in other parts of Alaska is important. In fact, the town of Barrow has the northernmost Mexican restaurant in the world (Bibbs 2006:89). What is especially important and interesting is that the food served in these restaurants is altered to fit American tastes. This raises questions about the kinds of food-related boundaries that arise between notions of "us" and "them", and about the creation and maintenance of difference, something discussed in both Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", and Chapter 7, "We Put Chile on Everything".

Therefore, my project is not just about food, it is about how globalization and migration becomes a part of people's lives and identities, right down to the very food that they eat. In my mind, globalization means greater connection and interconnection as well as kinds of disjunctures and disconnects, even unexpected situations, things that do not seem to go together, or culture that becomes deterritorialized from place and re-inscribed someplace else. Studying food emphasizes how global processes become part of daily lives and my study will suggest how food is a marker and a material reality of globalization as a condition and a process.

For transnational subjects, food and food practices become distinctive markers of cultural continuity and difference as well as of hybridity and assimilation. This makes food a crucial site for contestations and negotiations of gender, community, and kinship (Mankekar 2005). Thus, food is an important topic of study for understandings of the identity of transnational workers. By looking at the food-related connections between homes, stores, and restaurants of transnational migrant workers in Alaska – many of

whom are from the same town, Acuitzio del Canje – I hope to gain an understanding of transnational identity, with food as a marker and concrete reality of that identity. Such connections are part of the global flow of food culture as foodscapes or "culinascapes" (Bestor 1999:204, following Appadurai 1996), a concept that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, "Food for Thought". These foodscape connections across space and time help to constitute the identity and "imagined worlds" (Appadurai 1996) of transnational workers in Alaska. Foodscapes connect places and the people in them and they are also something uneven and creative. In this thesis, I show the two places and the people central to this study are connected, while also looking at how foodways change and how new ways of being Mexican are created.

The methodology for this project, further discussed in Chapter 3, "Recipe for Ethnography", was ethnographic, with particular emphasis placed on participant observation and semi-structured interviews. To compliment my interest and theoretical orientation in transnationalism and the connections and spaces between places, my methodology was multi-sited, with ethnographic research conducted in both the origin and destination of migration of the migrant workers and their families who are central to my study. As such, I spent time in both Anchorage, Alaska and in Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, putting myself wherever food and Mexicanness met, or might meet, and asking questions about food in the lives of migrant workers as well as for those who stay in place.

This project came about directly as a result of a paper about sushi written for a third-year globalization seminar at the University of Manitoba. Prior to that I had an interest in both Latin America and the place of food in contemporary society, but had not focused in any meaningful way on the literature dealing with how food can be an important symbol and useful way to look at globalization and the circulation of things and ideas. My advisor, Dr. Raymond Wiest, was just beginning a multi-year and multi-sited project generally concerned with the "theoretical and practical understandings of the impacts of globalizing forces" (Wiest 2002:10), and the examination of how "mobile livelihoods affect social relations among workers and their sense of identity, their social and cultural positioning, their sense of community, and their sense of empowerment"

(2002:10). His project was designed to include research in Acuitzio del Canje as well as in the sites of migration of individuals from that town, including California, Alaska, and Chicago. In 2003, I became a part of that project and, having an interest in going to Alaska, designed my project around the food-related connections between Anchorage and Acuitzio del Canje. Knowing ahead of time that food was travelling from Acuitzio to Alaska, and sometimes in large amounts (Wiest, personal communication 2004), I began to develop a project that followed the people and the food and food-related connections from Anchorage to Acuitzio in an effort to understand the transnational migrant experience as related to food, and what that might have to say about identity.

Significance of the topic

While much research is currently being done on the place of food in contemporary society, more research needs to be done in order to understand the place of food in the lives of people around the globe. Food is a part of everyone's lives by necessity, and is something that is generally taken for granted but sometimes invested with great symbolism and importance. Thus, food and eating deserve academic attention. Food, cooking, and eating are deeply cultural, yet also very creative and adaptable. With regards to transnational migration, food and ideas about food are also things that literally travel between two places, often alongside those who are migrating, in suitcases or carry-on bags. Food is connected to place, yet becomes dislodged as it moves alongside migrants or other mobile groups. This dislodging or deterritorialization (Appadurai 1996) fulfils growing cosmopolitan desires to eat the world without leaving home, or it brings bananas to Canada and ginger to Mexico. Theoretically, this means that one way to look at globalization and its impact on the individual is to look at food. Methodologically, it means looking at food ethnographically, focusing on recipes, ingredients, tastes, memories, performances, and other foods and food-related things and ideas.

A focus on food also privileges the kind of information generally held by or associated with women, particularly in a society like Mexico where women are associated with food and cooking. This is significant because, in Mexico, both historically and in the present day, men are much more likely to migrate across international borders to find work (Wiest 1973, 2002; Bjerén 1997). Women do migrate

(Ibarra 2003; Bjerén 1997), whether alone or with family, and a focus on food highlights this increasing movement and the place of migrant women in the maintenance of traditional foods and ideas about food and eating as well as the creativity that is part of cooking and eating.

Furthermore, this project encourages a re-thinking of both Alaska and Mexicanness. For so many people, ideas about Alaska do not include Mexicans or Mexicanness. Moreover, ideas about Mexicans or Mexicanness do not generally include Alaska. Part of the significance of this project is that it reconciles ideas about Alaska with those about Mexicanness, bringing new understandings to our imaginations about both.

Research aims and objectives

My key research questions are: What is the place of food and eating in the lives of Mexican migrant workers in Alaska? More specifically, how is food related to identity for these transnational subjects? What does the understanding of food and eating in the lives of transnational Mexican workers in Alaska bring to conceptualizations of Mexican people and of places like Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage in a globalized world?

In order to answer these key questions, I explore a set of interrelated issues that are tied to transnational migration and food: (1) How one might enact transnational identity through purchasing, eating, or demonstrating knowledge of particular foods; (2) Connections made between Alaskan and Mexican homes, including (but not limited to) narratives of traditional foods or modes of preparation, foods or recipes sent through the mail or via email, foods and food-related things and ideas carried with the traveller in the form of actual foods as well as cookbooks, various forms of embodied knowledge, memories and imaginings, and encounters with foods in Alaskan society; (3) Gendered relationships to both food and migration; (4) Particular experiences, social spaces, places, and constructions relating to food, such as "home" and "away", "restaurant", "store", and so on; (5) The movement of food and food culture in foodscapes and the connection of places and people through food and eating; and (6) What food has to do with conceptualizations of Mexican people and of places like Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage.

Overview of the thesis

Each chapter begins with a recipe, something that keeps the focus on food. These recipes were collected while doing research in both Anchorage and Acuitzio. In spending time with my research participants, cooking, eating, and talking about food, many recipes were shared with me. As I discuss further in Chapter 7, "We Put Chile on Everything", recipes are not just recipes, they show something about the person who is sharing them. Since I collected and included some recipes and not others, these recipes also say something about me. For me, by writing, preparing, and eating each dish that a recipe is provided for, I know that certain places, times, and persons from my time in Anchorage and Mexico will be remembered. Further, each recipe was chosen to represent something about each chapter, however basic. For some chapters, I provide recipes that relate directly to the subject of the chapter. For other chapters, the recipe roughly corresponds to the progression of the thesis as a meal (e.g., ice cream for 'dessert' in the conclusion). Other recipes are for dishes that are mentioned throughout the thesis.

The thesis as a whole is made up of a combination of creative non-fiction stories, translated interview excerpts, and fieldnote excerpts alongside analysis and anthropological discussion. Organizationally, the thesis reflects my own growing sensitization to the complexity of issues surrounding food and identity. Each chapter peels away another layer of the *cebolla*, or onion, as sensitivity to and understanding of the relationship between food and identity grows and becomes more complex.

Chapter 2, "Food for Thought", provides an overview of the theoretical understandings and academic literature that informed the thesis. Chapter 3, "Recipe for Ethnography", focuses on the methodology used in the collection of data, analysis, and writing of this thesis. Chapter 4, "Mexican Migration to Alaska", provides important background information in the form of a discussion of who migrates to Alaska from Acuitzio, when migration from that town to Alaska began, and why people migrate from Michoacán to the far north. In Chapter 5, "Suitcases Full of Mole", I explore the movement of foods and food-related things and ideas from Acuitzio and California to Alaska. The flow of foods across borders and boundaries is described as a ' foodscape', as something that connects places and the people in them. In Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos

and Blueberry Atole", I show that the movement of food and food-related things and ideas is more than just simple movement; there are hybrids, disjunctures, and disconnections that result from the movement of food from one place to another. In this chapter, food and eating are seen as creative and cultural acts, acts that are deeply indicative of transnational identity. In Chapter 7, "We Put Chile on Everything", I take it one step further and explore eating – especially eating chile – as an act, an enactment, a performance of transnational identity. In this chapter, eating is something that purposefully *shows* something. For transnational migrants in Alaska, this performance reinforces ideas about Mexicanness, while also creating difference. Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude by summarizing the major findings of the thesis before moving on to discuss recommendations for further research, particularly how this project might help the reader to re-think both Mexicanness and Alaska.

Chapter 2

Food for Thought: Theory and Literature Review

How to make Sopa Tarasca (Lupita's recipe)
Ingredients:
1 kilogram cooked beans
Chicken broth
Chile negro, cut in strips and browned lightly
Chile pasilla del ancho, browned lightly
4 tomatoes
4 tomatillos
Garlic
Instructions:
Combine everything in a large pot with a little bit of oil. Bring to a boil. Put everything in a blender and blend until smooth. To serve, top with browned strips of chile negro, strips of browned tortillas, cream, and cheese, preferably añejo or other dry cheese.

Introduction

In this chapter, I will situate my thesis within a larger body of literature and a theoretical orientation. My project is located within literature on globalization and transnationalism, and more specifically, at the junction between literatures concerned with the interdisciplinary study of food, especially the study of Mexican food, and studies of Mexican labour migration to the United States. Relevant works will be reviewed while I outline my theoretical perspective and accompanying key analytical concepts. This body of literature and theoretical perspective informed the writing of my project proposal, the things I did, the questions I asked, and the things I focussed upon while researching in the field. Afterwards, it also informed the analysis of the data I collected and the writing of the thesis itself. In other words, it informed my methodological and analytical approaches, subject of the following chapter, "Recipe for Ethnography: Methodology".

I approach the study of food for this project as both a marker and a material reality of transnational lives and identities. By considering food as a marker and material reality of transnational identity, the food and food practices of Mexican migrant workers in Alaska become important sites for exploring transnational, community, or individual identity. As a marker, food becomes a symbol for transnational identity, something that stands in as a metaphor for identities that are situated in Mexico and Alaska and the places in between. As a material reality, food is something that actually, literally travels from Mexico to Alaska alongside the migrant workers and their families who are central to this study. As both marker and material reality, food ties into the global flow of food culture on the level of imagination, memory, and symbol as well as on the level of distribution chains, importing/exporting, and material transport of goods across borders and boundaries. 'Connection' and 'interconnection' and, more specifically, connections and interconnections between the homes of the migrant workers central to this study as well as the connections and interconnections within Anchorage and Alaska more generally, become important, evoking how transnational subjects are simultaneously displaced while situated, travelling while dwelling, disarticulated while rearticulated, and nearby while faraway. Food is a marker and a material reality of these conditions and processes. In this chapter I explain how I came to that approach and how the literature supports it.

Global flows of food culture

Globalization and transnationalism are two interrelated and often ambiguous terms. I am particularly interested in the global flow of food culture and especially in the place of food culture in the lives and identities of transnational workers in Alaska. Indeed, "the development of the transnational migrant experience is inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism, and must be analyzed within that world context" (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992:5).

When thinking about globalization, I primarily follow Arjun Appadurai (1996), who sees the complexity of the world arising from "certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics" (Appadurai 1996:33). He proposes the study of global cultural flows as a way to explore such disjunctures, flows that he has termed

ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (Appadurai 1996:33). These scapes are fluid, and irregular, deeply influenced by the situatedness of different actors, and they "characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles" (Appadurai 1996:33) and, I would argue, the foods and cuisines available in a globalized world. Appadurai's scapes

> ...are the building blocks of what (extending Benedict Anderson) [he] would like to call *imagined worlds*, that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe (Appadurai 1996:33).

Extending these ideas, I use the analytical concept *foodscape* to draw attention to the global flow of food culture and its relationship to global capitalism as well as to reveal how movements of food are intertwined with the movements of groups, financial capital, and business, and hence with different configurations of power (Ferrero 2002:215). For instance, due to current conditions of global capitalism, food-related interconnections and disconnections (or disjunctures) have intensified, and in some cases, have increased so much as to become nearly commonplace. Food, while intimately connected to place in some ways (in that it must be grown somewhere, and that we associate cuisines with specific places – for instance, French food is from France – has become de-territorialized and then re-territorialized elsewhere so that food is connected to place as it connects places with one another. Consider, for instance, the fact that much of the food in North American and European grocery stores is grown thousands of miles away in the so-called 'third world', that 'Chinese food' (presumably a mish-mash of Chinese regional cuisines) is popular in India and has subsequently fused with regional cuisines there to create new dishes, that a tortilla factory has recently opened in Beijing (Arzate 2005), that sushi is particularly fashionable in North America these days (see Bestor 1999; 2005), or that migrants in Alaska have opened Mexican restaurants and stores in Anchorage and that these same migrants often travel long distances with food from Mexico to be consumed upon their return to Anchorage.

These instances – and the many others that are imaginable – are connected to configurations of power and the movement of people, commodities, technology, ideas, finance capital, and the media (among other things) in extremely complex ways, making

up a *foodscape*. Thus, foodscapes allow one to focus on food at an ethnographic level while allowing "an understanding of the different relations of power involved in ethnicity, gender, and economic forces" (Ferrero 2002:215). The concept also shows how different cultural flows or 'scapes' are intertwined with one another in everyday life. In a city, foodscapes help to "disclose a variety of interactions, tensions, and alliances in the dominant American society and within the Mexican community" (Ferrero 2002:215).

The movement of migrant workers and their foods and food practices are also part of a foodscape, as are the foods that they encounter in their destination. However, one can also talk specifically about a transnational flow of food culture in order to draw attention to the fact that these processes are not necessarily worldwide and global, but are anchored in places, and more specifically in nation-states (Levin 2002:3). The nation-state remains important as Aihwa Ong (1999) and Linda Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller, and Cristina Szanton-Blanc (1994) and others argue, a deterritorialized and flexible nation-state "may extend its hegemony over its citizens, who, as migrants or refugees, reside outside of its national boundaries" (Kearney 2004:223). To me, the term 'transnationalism' draws attention to the nation-state and to the specific relationships between places in ways that 'global' does not. I use transnationalism to refer not only to the "condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space" (Ong 1999:4) as Ong (1999) does in her study of flexible, "multiply-displaced" Chinese subjects, but also to emphasize, as Michael Levin (2002:3) does, that

> transnational processes are not worldwide, but are anchored in places, i.e. states, both homelands and nations of settlement. Both migrants and corporations whose journeys and activities cross borders of two or more states are best referred to as transnational.

As such, while both globalization and transnationalism draw attention to cultural flows, transnationalism draws specific attention to place (Levin 2002). For this reason, this thesis is concerned with the flow of food culture between particular places in specific nation-states, namely, Anchorage, Alaska and Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán.

At the same time, increased attention to gender differences in transnational space is important, especially considering Geraldine Pratt and Brenda Yeoh's (2003:159) assertion that "much scholarly work on transnationalism is implicitly gendered – as

masculinist". As such, attention to food and eating in transnational spaces must be accompanied by a dedication to understanding men and women as conscious gendered beings who trace "new maps of desire and attachment as they make multiple, circular, return, or provisional journeys across transnational space" (Pratt and Yeoh 2003:159). Indeed, migration is a gendered process, affecting women and men in different ways. For instance, gender is key in decisions about who migrates and to where. In Acuitzio, women have been less likely to migrate overall. Until recently, if they did migrate for work, they usually remained within Mexico. Men, on the other hand, were much more likely to migrate and usually did so across international borders, i.e., to the U.S. (Wiest 1973; 1983). However, women *do* migrate (Ibarra 2003; Wiest 2002), whether alone or with family to meet and live with husbands or partners who work in the United States.

Gender also matters in food centred activities, with each of production, distribution, preparation and consumption of food contributing to the identity and social position of women and men (Counihan and Kaplan 1998). Gender is a key part of one's identity, and I see migrants and individuals as conscious gendered beings who relate to both food and migration in decidedly gendered ways. Indeed, while a focus on food does not necessarily imply a focus on women (far from it, food is a part of men's identity too), food centred activities are often a large part of women's lives and knowledge and so women's lives and identities are of great importance in this study.

In this project, then, I study how the negotiation of transnational identity as related to food differs for men and for women. This is based on the notion that women and men have different relationships to food; for instance, different consumption patterns are one of the ways in which women may distinguish themselves from men (or vice versa) (Counihan and Kaplan 1998). In general, women buy and cook more food than men, while consuming less (Enloe 1990:143). Also, traditional recipes and modes of preparation may retain continuity across time and space as exclusively women's knowledge. Men often do not have access to – or interest in – this information, especially in a society where women are associated with home and cooking

In paying ethnographic attention to food in transnational space, I came to see that the food-related connections between Mexico and Alaska are numerous and strong. As

such, in this thesis, I explore the food-related flows or connections between specific places, in specific nation-states, between the homes (Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage) of the migrant workers and their family members who are central to my project. I also investigate the place of these food-related connections in the negotiation of a transnational identity, an identity that is also grounded in both Mexico and Alaska. Food thus becomes a marker and a material reality of transnational identity. What I mean by this is that food is a symbol, something that carries meaning in most societies. Cooking and eating are cultural acts. But food is also a material reality, something that tangibly *is*, and something that moves from one place to another, connecting places. Something that grows in the soil of one nation nourishes a body in another.

Migration: Transnationalism more specifically

I am inclined to view labour migration through a transnational perspective and follow Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1995), among others (e.g., Rouse 1992, 2002; Grimes 1998; Kearney 2004; Levitt 2004), who put forward that increasing numbers of immigrants are best understood as transnational migrants or "transmigrants" whose "daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation state" (Glick-Schiller et al. 1995:48). As such, these transmigrants are in a state of "in-betweenness" (Basch et al. 1994), building "social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders" (Basch et al. 1994:7) and boundaries (Kearney 2004). They "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities that connect them simultaneously in two or more nation-states" (Basch et al. 1994:7). In other words, from a transnational perspective migrants move across international borders and between different cultures and social systems, bringing change to localized communities through both economic and social remittances (Brettell 2000:104), where social remittances are "the ideas, practices, identities, and social capital" (Levitt 1998:76) that flow between two or more nation-states. These social remittances would also include food and food-related connections.

Thus, as Nina Glick-Schiller et al. (1995:50) write, "transnational processes are located within the life experiences of individuals and families, making up the [fabric] of

daily activities, concerns, fears and achievements", so it can be said that "migrants live transnational lives", something emphasized by Roger Rouse's (1992) "transnational migrant circuit" and his notion of "cultural bifocality". Referring to his work with migrants from Aguililla, Mexico and Redwood City, California, Roger Rouse (2002:162) writes,

> Aguilillans have forged socio-spatial arrangements that seriously challenge the dominant ways of reading migration. First, it has become inadequate to see Aguilillan migration as a movement between distinct communities, understood as the loci of distinct sets of social relationships.

Kin and friends may live thousands of miles away or in the immediate vicinity. Migrants are able "to maintain spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as the ties that link them to their neighbour" (Rouse 2002:162). With thanks especially to the growing use of the telephone (and other technologies, I would imagine), people can not only keep in touch periodically but also participate in household decision-making and familial events even from a considerable distance. Rouse uses the term "transnational migrant circuit" (Rouse 2002) to refer to the fact that "through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information, the various settlements have become so closely woven together that, in an important sense, they have come to constitute a single community spread across a variety of sites" (Rouse 2002:162). The other socio-spatial arrangement forged by Aguilillan migrants is that these migrants orchestrate their lives within the circuit as a whole rather than any one locale – they are living and working within a transnational framework, a transnational space where they maintain two (or possibly more) distinct ways of life. As a result, Rouse refers to their "cultural bifocality, a capacity to see the world alternately through quite different kinds of lenses" (Rouse 1992:41).

The idea that transnational migrants are living their lives in transnational space is also emphasized by Michael Kearney's (2004) "articulatory migrant network" and by Alison Mountz and Richard Wright's (1996) description of a transnational community where "alterations in the conceptualization and utilization of space and time enabled the creation of a *single* transnational locale, so that "the space that once divided two physically distant and distinct places – San Agustin, a village in the state of Oaxaca, and

Poughkeepsie – has been eliminated" (Mountz and Wright 1996:404) Additionally, Peggy Levitt (2001) writes of "social remittances" that flow between and connect Miraflores and Boston with "fashion, food, and forms of speech, as well as appliances and home decorating styles, attest[ing] to these strong connections" (Levitt 2001:2) between places. Each of these examples allude to the fact that transnational subjects are living their lives in two or more societies simultaneously, societies which may become so interconnected through frequent long-distance communication, the media, the imagination, and the movement of people, money, and things that they may be conceived of as a single transnational space such as 'Oaxacalifornia' (Kearney 2004) or Oaxaca-Poughkeepsie, or OP for short (Mountz and Wright 1996). Transmigrants "draw upon and create fluid and multiple identities grounded in both their society of origin and in the host societies" (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992:11). As such, their identities also link them simultaneously to more than one nation.

For such transnational subjects, Purnima Mankekar (2005:203) argues, "food acquires a distinctive valence, and a distinctively gendered valence... As markers of cultural continuity/difference, hybridity and/or assimilation, the gastronomic habits of [transnational] subjects become especially fraught areas for contestations and negotiations of gender, community, and kinship". Quite appropriately, an article by sociologist Peggy Levitt (2004) about the lives of Dominican and Gujarati transnational migrants in Boston is entitled "Salsa and Ketchup: Transnational migrants straddle two worlds", with condiments essentially standing in the title as markers and material realities of those two worlds.

The crossing of borders and boundaries, whether linguistic, cultural, or nation-state, is conducive to an exchange of information, including that relating to food. As Pnina Werbner writes, "labour migration forges global pathways, routes along which people, goods, and ideas travel" (1999:33). In my study I am particularly interested in transnational identity, that is, the creation and attribution of fluid and complex identities grounded in both Mexico and Alaska (see Glick Schiller et al. 1992) and how the negotiation of such an identity depends on the crossing of borders and boundaries and the exchange of information implied in these crossings. Certainly, 'identity' or even

'transnational identity' remains purposefully vague since identity is a fluid and contingent process of naming, performance, self-identification, belonging, and adherence to (or rejection of) discourses and ideals along lines of ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexuality, and age (among other things). The negotiation of identity is a key part of the migrant experience. In this thesis, then, I will explore how transnational subjects negotiate their identities in relation to the food-associated connections that they make between their Alaskan and Mexican homes. Food-associated connections would include narratives of traditional foods or modes of preparation, foods or recipes sent through the mail (or via email) or brought along in a suitcase, in cookbooks, as embodied knowledge, in memories and imaginings, and in encounters with new kinds of foods in Alaska. Connections made between homes, stores and restaurants in Anchorage are also important, as is the role of the nation-state since imports and exports of consumer goods – including food, and in some cases especially food – are very much controlled by government agencies. Finally, "Mexican" grocery stores, may be seen as similar to the Indian stores in Los Angeles discussed by Purnima Mankekar who showed "...how, in diasporic contexts, Indian grocery stores are sites in which people and objects on the move converge. As particular kinds of social spaces, these stores enable us to study the reconfiguration of gender, class, and race in an interconnected world" (2005:198).

For this thesis project, I articulate particularly with Mexican migration to the United States, a topic that has been rather well researched (see Durand and Massey 1992). I am interested in the relationship between transnational identity and food and more specifically in food as it relates to the transnational identities of Mexican migrants to the United States, and to Alaska in particular. Indeed, Aihwa Ong (1999:8) writes that

> there is a sense that the world we live in has changed dramatically; it is as if the continental plates of social life are sliding in new and unstable alignments...[As a result,] anthropologists and cultural theorists are much more concerned about cultural shifts and studies of migrations, diasporas and other transnational flows

With that, she identifies U.S.-centred migration studies as one of the main directions of current inquiry. However, studies of migration are not new. To develop an understanding of Mexican migration to the US and of the literature about it, I draw upon studies of

transnational Mexican labour migration to the United States (Cohen 2001, 2004; Kearney 2004; Grimes 1998; Rouse 1992, 2002; Wiest 2002)

Since my research focuses particularly on migrant workers from Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, Mexico, the published work and personal communications with Dr. Raymond Wiest, my thesis advisor and source of funding for my field research[2], began research in Acuitzio nearly forty years ago and recently returned there to continue his research about migration. His work is important for my study in that it deals with one of the particular places that I am concerned with in this study. His work has documented changes in attitudes toward migration and in the decisions about who migrates and why, providing a look back at how things were and how they have changed over time, something that provides a depth to my research that many are not so fortunate to have (Wiest 1973, 1979, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 2002). In Chapter 4, "Mexican Migration to Alaska: Who, Why and When", I outline some of the history of migration to Alaska, and the current situation in order to provide a background on Mexican migration to Alaska, particularly with regards to individuals from Acuitzio.

Why food?

But why food? First of all, it is a subject of personal interest and experience, stemming from the realization that what one eats can change significantly over time alongside other factors, such as identity. For me, having grown up on a farm where most foods were produced and processed by friends and family members is a key part of my identity and my relationship to food. I continue to travel from my rural home to my urban one with bags full of meat and vegetables raised by my father and grandmother. However, divorce, years of drought, and changing economic circumstances[3] have led to the drastic and difficult downsizing of our family farm. At about the same time I relocated to an urban centre and had the opportunity to eat like a cosmopolitan (sushi one day, Ethiopian food the next, for example) while meeting people who have restricted

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[2] Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Standard Research Grant 410-2003-0955, 2003-2007

[3] What I mean by changing circumstances is that, among other thing, the global industrial food system has made many foods cheaper to buy than raise oneself, that the 'mad cow crisis' has made it difficult to profit from raising cattle, and that my father, as a single parent with an hour-long commute to work, has come to depend on convenience foods.

diets (vegetarian, vegan, and kosher, for instance) and understanding the reasons why, whether ethical, moral, health-related, or religious. Finally, I also began to realize how important food is to my own identity as someone with a Ukrainian-Canadian family and a partly Ukrainian-Canadian identity. What all of this boils down to is that what one eats is intricately interconnected to identity, place, economics, politics, and history, and that all of this is changeable, as it has been for me.

In anthropology, early researchers "studied food because of its key central role in many cultures and several wrote pointed pieces on foodways" (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997:1). Later, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas wrote about food as something with great symbolic significance that can provide powerful insight into cultural systems. Douglas (1966) focussed on what is not eaten while Lévi-Strauss (1966,1969) was principally concerned with how things are eaten, namely whether or not they are cooked or raw. In North America and Europe, a burgeoning interest in food in academia and in popular culture – Food TV and the popularity of cooking shows, classes, and books, the arrival (or rather recognition) of food tourism both at home and away, and the increasing strength and popularity of food-related social movements such as SlowFood, anti-GMO protest, and the widespread interest in organic and fair trade foodstuffs – has resulted in a fascinating, growing, and very interdisciplinary body of literature about the place of food and eating in contemporary society. Recent edited volumes of essays and previously published articles focussing on food (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997; Atkins and Bowler 2001; Belasco and Scranton 2002; Ashley et al. 2004; Watson and Caldwell 2005, among others), specialty academic journals (such as *Gastronomica* and *Food, Culture, and Society*), academic blogs and websites (such as the Critical Studies in Food and Culture blog and message board),[4] and panels at conferences attest to the fact that food is a valuable medium through which to understand culture and history, powerful in its "extraordinary ability to convey meaning as well as nourish bodies" (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997:2) because of its material place in everyday life and the universality of eating and cooking among human beings. And, as James L. Watson and Melissa L.

[4] www.foodandculture.blogspot.com

Caldwell point out in the introduction to the edited volume *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating* (2005:1),

> ...food practices are implicated in a complex field of relationships, expectations, and choices that are contested, negotiated and often unequal. Food everywhere is not just about eating, and eating (at least among humans) is never simply a biological process.

And so, food is able to act as a symbol, a marker, as well as a reality. Food can symbolize one's identity yet is also physically connected to place, person, and body. In this thesis, the identity in question is the transnational identity of Mexican migrant workers who live and work in Anchorage, Alaska.

Food is also something that is very important to my research participants, something that I only discovered upon arrival in Anchorage. As Maria said in an interview in Anchorage,

> Maria- Um, Mexican Food. Well, it's also, it's, um...I think that it projects a lot of our culture, of who we are. But, yes, I think that, I think that for each person, the typical food of their country [is important] because it represents a lot of the culture of each, of each country. And the food as much as the clothing, the dances, uh huh, it's a combination of...
> Sara- Yeah, like at the Festival Latino downtown where there was music, dancing, food, and people.
> Maria- Uh huh, yeah. Yeah, it's true. And I think, and each person, well, feels proud of their traditions and their foods, uh huh. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

I asked many of my participants what Mexican food meant to them. Claudia, also in an interview in Anchorage said,

> Oooh, I...I think it's a lot of job, a lot of dedication. Like the *mole*. Um...is like, um, like the *mole* has that many different kinds of ingredients and the people used to...to dry outside all the chile, all the seeds, all the bread, everything. And then to be frying everything and then toast it then, is, is a lot of, of job and the people...has to be dedicated to the food when they are doing something, you know? Is not like, oh yeah, just put some water and that's it. No, is, is like they dedicate time to the food. And also we use a lot of ingredients that are growing in, in our country, you know, so I think is very interesting. And each country has a different kind of food and even in the same, um, state, each city has something different. So is very interesting to see how, like here some people from Anchorage, you go to Palmer that is too close and, and can change something. You can see the big difference in the food. Even in the

> people, the way they are is, is different. (Interview 4, September 27, English)

With regards to transnational subjects and food, there are works to draw upon, such as that by Lisa Law (2001:267) who writes in her article about Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong,

> "Food is significant for its ability to evoke a multifaceted experience of place, for by cooking and eating Filipino food on Sundays, domestic workers consume different experiences of Hong Kong, home and nation."

Indeed, there is an intimate relationship between gustatory and national memories and the power of nostalgic eating in the semiotics of food for migrant subjects (Mankekar 2005:203) so that one way to maintain one's Mexican identity abroad may be to eat Mexican food. Or to put it another way, an individual might enact their Mexicanness by purchasing, eating, preparing, or demonstrating their knowledge of Mexican food. On the one hand, because someone looks Mexican, others may assume that they eat only Mexican food, one may also demonstrate their worldliness or cosmopolitanism by eating and knowing about foreign or so-called "ethnic foods", something that may also serve to resist or deflect ethnic identification.

Speaking of enacting and demonstrating brings up performance, namely, food as performance. To perform is to *do*, "to make food, to serve food. It is about materials, tools, techniques, procedures, actions." (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999:1). Performance is also to *behave*, "to behave appropriately in relation to food at any point in its production, consumption, or dispersal, each of which may be subject to precise protocols or taboos" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999:2). Finally, to perform is to *show*, to display (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999:2). As Jeffrey Pilcher (1998:163) writes, "chiles now form part of the [Mexican] national identity" and in Chapter 5, "We Put Chile on Everything", I investigate what chile – the peppers commonly used in Mexican cooking – as well as other foods have to do with identity performance. Who eats chile? Who does not? Why? I will discuss how eating, preparing, shopping for, and talking about chile as well as other foods is related to the cultural performance of transnational Mexican identity in Anchorage, Alaska. Finally, there is the political economy of food. Another reason why food and Mexicanness in Alaska came up as a possible topic of research for me is that

many of the Acuitzenses in Alaska own, work in, or have worked in restaurants, canneries, grocery stores, and other links along the food chain in Alaska. Interestingly, many work at Mexican restaurants where the food is sometimes not so Mexican

In a review article, Sidney Mintz and Cora Dubois (2002:15) write of a conceptualization of "peoples on the move – migrants, refugees, colonizers – as agents of dietary change". Migrant labourers have commonly been recognized as agents of dietary change in the site of migration, but food shifts are also associated with a variety of economic and political changes in their society of origin, including male out-migration (Mintz and Dubois 2002:104-105). The traditional rural diet in Mexico is based on the combination of maize (corn) and beans along with chile and other vegetables. Over centuries of experimentation, ways of preparing and serving corn have contributed to a complete source of protein when eaten with beans[5]. The nutritional importance of maize is complimented by its cultural importance, since it is an important symbol of daily life in Mexico. As Maria, one of my research participants in Alaska who I also spent time with in Acuitzio, said,

> And, and almost always, Mexican food almost always, like the majority of Hispanic food, is based on corn. Uh huh, a lot, a lot on corn. On one occasion I heard that, that Mexican food like *sopes*, *quesadillas*, *pozole*, or like those are things that really make you fat. But what happens is that, as Mexicans we are accustomed to eating a lot. If we were to eat less, smaller amounts, ah, it would be balanced because they say, for instance, a *sope* has corn flour that is made of carbohydrates, it has beans that are, have iron, and if you put meat, there you have the protein also. It has cheese, which is calcium and lettuce and salsa that would be the, the vegetables. What happens is that you only need to eat one or two and no more for that reason. And they have oil, which gives fats. Ah, a quesadilla is similar and pozole has corn, has meat, has chile, has vegetables...so also it is, one goes with a balanced diet, but it is the quantities that we eat. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

However, in recent years, dietary intake is shifting towards a higher fat and refined carbohydrate intake (Rivera et al. 2004:150; Pilcher 2005) and a reliance on imported grains as Mexico has geared its own agricultural production towards export.

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[5] This complete source of protein is only created if corn and beans are eaten together, or close enough together to interact in the digestive system. Also the use of *cal* or lime (CaO) to treat corn releases niacin. Otherwise, corn is not a significant source of niacin.

There also seems to be a more recent shift towards the adoption of behavioural changes in diet and lifestyle, such as increased intake of fruits, vegetables, fibre and complex carbohydrates, and an increase in physical activity (Rivera et al. 2004:149). These shifts "at home" have gendered consequences for both the nutrition and identity of Mexican transnational workers. In Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", I write about how food and ideas about food change as they move across space and time so that the differences between food in Alaska and food in Mexico become important.

The crossing of borders and boundaries, whether linguistic, cultural, or nation-state, is conducive to an exchange of information, including that relating to food. I am particularly interested in transnational identity, that is, the creation and attribution of fluid and complex identities grounded in both Mexico and Alaska (Glick Schiller et al. 1992b) and how the negotiation of such an identity depends on the crossing of borders and boundaries and the exchange of food-related information that this process implies. In other words, what kinds of food-related connections are being made, and why? And what is the relationship between food and transnational identity for Mexican people living in Anchorage? How does food act as a marker and material reality for transnational identity? Again, in Chapter 5, "Suitcases full of Mole", I explore the food-related connections made across time and space and borders and boundaries, whereas in Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", I look at some of the disjunctures and hybrids of Mexican food culture in Alaska

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined my theoretical perspective and reviewed the literature that informs it. I focus on foodscapes in this thesis – the food-related connections and interconnections, the flow of food culture that moves between places and connects specific places in specific nation states. In this case, those places are Michoacán, Mexico and Anchorage, Alaska, USA. More specifically, I will explore how these flows of food culture relate to the transnational identities of Mexican migrant workers and their families in Anchorage. Theoretically, I am grounded in ideas about globalization, transnationalism, migration, and food, and I situate my thesis at the juncture of those three. Food is a lens through which we can understand how globalization and

transnationalism become part of individuals' lives, right down to the food on one's plate. Food is symbolic of the transnational experience, a marker of it, while it also literally travels, becoming a material reality of transnationality. It is on this key idea – that food is a marker and material reality of transnational identity – that my theories are based.

This idea is also the basis of my methodology, the subject of Chapter 3, "Recipe for Ethnography: Methodology". In that chapter I explain how my theoretical ideas fit with my methodological ideas before moving on to describe my research design for both Anchorage and Acuitzio, the data analysis I carried out after returning to Canada, the process of writing up my findings, and the ethical considerations that informed the whole process.

Chapter 3
Recipe for Ethnography: Methodology

Everyday salsa (Lupe's recipe)
Ingredients:
Chiles de arbol, blackened on a comal
Tomatillos, blackened on a comal
1 clove of garlic
Onion, blackened on a comal, optional
Instructions:
Combine everything in a blender and blend well. Serve with everything.

Introduction

In this chapter I will explain how the research for this thesis was conducted and how this methodology fits with the theoretical orientation and overall aims of the project. After that, I will explain how the data were analyzed and written up after my return to Canada. Before concluding, I will move on to discuss the ethical considerations that informed the whole process. This chapter will help the reader understand the succeeding chapters by explaining how and why the data were collected, how many people participated, and the viewpoint of the researcher on all of this.

Mixing theoretical ingredients with methodological ones

This project was multi-sited with nearly four months of fieldwork in Anchorage, Alaska and approximately one month of research in Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, the site of migration and origin, respectively, of the migrant workers central to this study (see Wiest 1973, 1979, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1984). Since transnational lives and identities depend upon constant interconnections between homes, a multi-sited approach was especially appropriate due to its emphasis on following the connections made within and between sites. It also fits well with my theoretical viewpoint, outlined in Chapter 2, "Food for Thought". As George Marcus (1995:97) writes in a review article, "strategies

of quite literally following connections, associations, and putative relationships are...at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research". As such, I "followed the people" (Marcus 1995:106) and the food and food-related connections that Mexican migrant workers make between homes as I travelled from Anchorage to Acuitzio alongside migrants and their families who return to Mexico each year, beginning in mid-October through early December, and returning to Anchorage after the New Year. For some, this coincides with the end of the summer landscaping season, and for others it coincides with the school schedule of their children, which for most is the holiday season in Mexico. Most have arrived by December 5, the town's annual celebration of the "*Dia del Canje*" or day of the exchange of Mexican prisoners for Belgian and French prisoners in 1865 during the French intervention in Mexico which lasted from 1861-1867. An important day for the town and in Mexican history, it also begins the festive season with December 12 (D*ía del Guadalupe*), the *Posadas*, Christmas and New Year's, and D*ía de los Reyes* (Day of the Three Kings) also as important celebrations during the season. During the time period when the migrants were returning to town, and the time that I visited Acuitzio, there were more and more people in town every day. More parties, weddings, baptisms, and other events are planned during this time, and business picks up for the shops in town.

> In this way, my project is intentionally
>
> designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography. (Marcus 1995:105)

I followed the flows or scapes of people, food and food culture from one specific place to another, focusing on the connections and interconnections between places in order to study food as a marker and material reality of transnational identity. At the same time, I also became one of those connections between places, someone who, along with my research participants, lived in transnational space. I take to heart the urging to "focus on any culture's farthest range of travel while *also* looking at its centres, its villages, its intensive fieldsites" (Clifford 1997:25). As I am interested in transnational migration and travelling foods, this is an especially suitable approach and I followed the lead of

anthropologists such as Roger Rouse (1992; 2002) and Michael Kearney (2004) who utilized multi-sited methodologies in their studies of Mexican migration. In following the flows of people, food and food culture from one specific place to another, and focusing on the connections and interconnections between places in order to study food as a marker and material reality of transnational identity, my methodology was designed to study the flow of food culture in a 'foodscape', a term introduced in Chapter 2, "Food for Thought", and revisited throughout this thesis.

I also intended for the research to encompass different sites in the same locale, to focus on the connections and interconnections within Anchorage as a specific site or place. For instance, stores may be seen as particular kinds of social spaces, "sites in which people and objects on the move converge" (Mankekar 2005:198). Restaurants are also a particular social space, as are houses or homes. As such, I focused on the interconnections between sites within Anchorage as well as on the connections between migrants' Mexican and American homes. However, to keep the focus on food, I specifically paid attention to, and where possible, followed, the food-related connections and interconnections made in transnational space as well as between spaces and places within Anchorage and in Acuitzio del Canje by putting myself wherever food and 'Mexicanness' might meet in homes, restaurants, stores, and festivals, and by asking questions about food and eating in interviews with Mexican migrant workers and their families. It is notable that I first met many of my research participants in restaurants, bakeries, and stores or in homes over plates of food. As well, in talking about something as sensuous as food, I focused a lot on the senses of food and eating, especially the smells and tastes of the foods included in my study. My methodological and theoretical approach to the study of cultural flows thus is a focus on the sensory and meaningful food-related connections, interconnections, and processes between places as a means to study at least one small part of the global flow of food culture.

Research design

i. Anchorage

> *Arrived in Anchorage yesterday, got through customs no problem (a relief after getting turned back last time!), checked in and went across the street to a little store in a mini mall. There I found a bunch of Mexican brands on the shelves and*

discovered that there's a tortillería in town somewhere. After that, I explored the city all day, seeing lots of Mexican restaurants. Went to the Sears mall, lots of signs in Spanish, overheard people speaking Spanish. And at the grocery store – lots of imported products from Mexico. All this on my first day!

During my four months in Anchorage (late July to early November 2005) I did participant observation wherever food and Mexicanness met at various sites throughout the city including mainstream grocery stores (Carrs-Safeway, Fred Meyer), specialty or "ethnic" grocery stores (Mexico Lindo, Taco Loco, Red Apple), Mexican restaurants (Pancho's Villa, Casa Grande, Mexico in Alaska, Carlos Mexican Restaurant, Los Arcos), other kinds of restaurants (Southside Bistro, Moose's Tooth, the Greek Corner), a bakery (French Oven), the annual Festival Latino and the Xochiquetzal-Tiqun Mexican dance group presentations, an after-church kermesse/fundraiser, parties and gatherings, and in the homes of my research participants. I located these sites through previous knowledge of them via my advisor, Dr. Raymond Wiest, advertisements in Spanish language publications in Anchorage, the phone book, in conversation with participants, or through serendipitous exploration. Most of the time I took brief jot-notes while at a site, returning home to take more detailed notes. I also tried to collect as many pertinent newspapers, magazines, and newspaper articles (*Nueva Frontera*, *Paginas Amarillas*, *Anchorage Daily News*, *Anchorage Press*) and flyers as I could while also taking note of websites that would be of use while in the field and afterwards as a source of data. I wrote every day (usually multiple entries) about my experiences exploring food and Mexicanness in Anchorage and I reviewed my field-notes often to find out what kinds of questions still needed to be answered. I ended up with nearly three notebooks full of data: descriptions, questions, conversations, and reflection.

I initially located potential participants in the project by talking to, for instance, the woman working at the Mexican grocery store and the women who work at the bakery that bakes Mexican bread. I also located participants through previous contacts made by Dr. Raymond Wiest, who arrived in Anchorage a few weeks after I did and stayed for five weeks. During that time he introduced me to many individuals he knew personally. From there, things snowballed; we were able to meet other potential participants who were friends or family members of those initial contacts. Through email I was also in

contact with a fellow student on Wiest's project who had spent nearly six months in Acuitzio doing her fieldwork. She also provided me with some contact information.

In Anchorage, I conducted thirteen semi-structured interviews, either in homes or in restaurants. Eleven of these interviews were tape-recorded. I also conducted several (8) follow-up food-focused interviews consisting of cooking, eating, or shopping for food with a research participant. During these interviews, I asked questions about food and migration, food and identity, and about food and daily life in Anchorage (see Appendix 2). Once my interest in food was known, these interviews were easy to set up and I participated in and observed the making of *tamales* (twice!), *buñuelos*, *chiles rellenos*, *atole*, and *mole con pollo*. With one family, we prepared Ukrainian dishes together (*borscht* and *pyrohy*) using my grandmother's recipes. These interviews and follow-up interviews, as well as informal conversations with research participants, were either in English or Spanish, depending on the preference or ability of the participant. The majority were conducted in Spanish, with nine in Spanish and four in English. Before, during, and after each interview I took notes about the setting, the interviewee, about my own state of mind during the interview and about anything else considered pertinent.

I worked closely with 26 research participants in Anchorage who were migrant workers from Acuitzio or their adult family members or individuals who owned, operated, or were employed at Mexican restaurants, bakeries, or stores in Anchorage. These participants were also from Mexico or were of Mexican descent. Of the semi-structured interviews that I did with thirteen of these individuals, eight of the interviews were with women and five were with men. They can be divided into two groups: participants whose immediate families live in Anchorage (10) and men working in Anchorage whose immediate family live in Mexico (3). All of the participants maintain close ties to Mexico, albeit of varying degrees, and all have family and friends who live there permanently. As well, all of the participants grew up in Mexico, with the exception of one participant who owns a bakery that bakes Mexican bread in Anchorage. I tried to work with a range of individuals of different ages, genders, and length of time migrating. However, most of the participants that I got to know the best were middle-aged women

with families, something that could be due to my focus on food and cooking or my own position as a young woman alone in Alaska. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> How I feel limited sometimes by being a young woman here alone. Like, for example, it's not appropriate for me to hang out with men, especially those whose families are really far away. But at the same time it might be easier to meet women. And that, in turn, might be better for my research especially since women end up doing most of the cooking and shopping. (Fieldnotes Book 1, September 6)

ii. Mexico

> *Walking down the street towards the plaza, at first everything seems unfamiliar. Red and white buildings line the streets, narrow sidewalks, open doors open onto darkened stores...a stationary shop, a bakery, a grocery store, a butcher shop with a carcass hanging out front. I hear someone calling my name, "Sarita, Sarita, que tal? Cuándo llegaste?"(Sara, Sara how are you? When did you arrive?) It's Antonio who I met in Alaska!*

Again, during my month in Mexico (early November to early December 2005), I could be found doing participant observation wherever food and Mexicanness met. Living in a house attached to a small grocery store or *abarrotes* gave me the opportunity to spend quite a bit of time understanding that space, the people in it, and how food fits in. I also spent time in markets, at fiestas, in people's homes (accepting invitations to eat or cook with them), in restaurants, or in the plaza. For me, (a white North American woman who grew up in a small town and now lives in a city), Acuitzio was much less home-like than Anchorage (Anchorage as a North American city in many ways is like other North American cities, whereas a small Mexican town is not), and just walking down the street stopping at *tortillerías* (tortilla makers), *panaderías* (bakeries), *mole* vendors, *carnecerías* (butcher shops), and *abarrotes* (general stores) to see how and where one buys, prepares or eats food in that town was very insightful, because the way one shops for food, where food is made, etc. are quite different there. Being in this place gave me the chance to understand what moving from Mexico to the USA might mean in terms of food and cooking. As in Anchorage, I wrote very frequently about my experiences, about what I saw, heard, and felt while in Acuitzio; I ended up with nearly two notebooks full of information. While in Mexico I followed connections I had established in Alaska, working with families of participants from Alaska as well as with migrants I had not met while in Anchorage. Truly emphasizing the transnationality of it

all, I also continued to work with many of the same individuals and families I had met in Anchorage, people who had also travelled back to Mexico for a period of time ranging from a couple of weeks to many months. While following the connections made between persons, I also tried to trace the food-related connections, trying to find foods that people had mentioned in Anchorage, getting a sense of the foodscape that connects Anchorage to Acuitzio del Canje and the people in both of those places. With many multi-sited research projects or in research with mobile participants, it seems to be difficult to immerse oneself in a social setting with very itinerant research participants and a fleeting site of research, I felt in this project I was able to gain the necessary closeness, at least to the people, who travel between Anchorage and Acuitzio. In both Anchorage and Mexico, I spent time with many of the same people and their families so that the two became strongly overlapping social spaces.

In Acuitzio, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with migrant workers who had temporarily returned to the town. All of these were with men who had worked in Alaska. Two had wives and children who remained in Mexico while they went away to work. One of these men was young and single and lived with his parents in Acuitzio. I also worked with, and got to know, family members who remained in Mexico full time and others who had never migrated, although I did not do any formal interviews with these individuals. I did, however, carry out a few cooking interviews, where I participated in the preparation of *uchepos* and *corundas* (two of the well-known dishes of the region) as well as both flour and corn tortillas. I also spent considerable time in the kitchen of the home where I was living, asking questions and having conversations about food and eating. Again, I wrote notes before, during, and after each interview about the setting, the interviewee, and myself.

Despite referring to Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage as my "fieldsites", I remained aware and kept in mind that "'fieldwork' and the 'field' are not just normative terms, disciplinary conventions, or just a shorthand for what anthropologists do or work in. Rather, they embody a set of theoretical concepts and ideological practices" (Berger 1993:181). In other words, there are very strong preconceived notions in anthropology about what fieldwork is or should be, and what a fieldsite is and is not. However, I tried

to stay as far away as possible from a notion of the field as a separate, bounded and exotic location, something encouraged by my theoretical and methodological viewpoint (in that I am focused on the spaces in-between as much as the places themselves, on connections, interconnections, and processes that move across space and time) as well as because of my own experiences while in the field. I felt it would be more productive to consider Anchorage and Acuitzio as overlapping social spaces that in turn were connected with my home in Canada. For instance, in both Alaska and Mexico I communicated easily and frequently with friends, family members, and professors by telephone, email, mail and fax. As well, my boyfriend, my father, and my advisor and his wife accompanied me (or I them) at different and sometimes overlapping times. These experiences emphasized that the field is neither bounded nor separate as I carried on essentially living in more than one place at once, a kind of transnational subject myself, feeling neither at home nor totally away.

Further, I remained connected to both places upon my return to Canada, a connection that continues. Through email, regular mail, and greetings sent with individuals, I keep up to date on my research participants in both places. A contact in Acuitzio regularly sends me an electronic copy of the newspaper of the municipal government, *El Canje*. As well, becoming interested in how Alaska is different from its representation in the tourist literature as a direction for further research, I also continued collecting secondary materials, sending away for tourist pamphlets and booklets and the *Guide to Alaska's Cultures 2006-2007* (Bibbs 2006).

Focusing ethnographically on food and food practices was something that was easily accessible but also had unique difficulties. Food is something that is easy to talk about and it was relatively easy to express my interest in food and in learning about Mexican food. In that way I was invited to participant's homes to eat or to cook or both. However, food is something that is often taken for granted in the lives of many and doesn't often provoke deep thought and reflection. For some, food just is not important much beyond removal of hunger. For others, food holds deep meaning and symbolism. For many, food falls somewhere in between. There is not much methodological literature about food epistemologies, and I had considered having people keep a form of food

diaries. I had thought about going through a cookbook with people, but neither of these procedures seemed like they would answer the questions I was asking. Consequently, I tried to put myself where food and Mexicanness might meet, to keep an eye open for travelling foods, to ask how to make anything and everything (and where the recipe came from and where can one get the ingredients, etc), and to make notes about tastes, smells, and other sensuous characteristics of foods. A friend and colleague of mine wrote from her own fieldsite in Bangladesh,

> lots of sweet cakes (we called *pitha*) and spicy curries! Mandi honey with wet rice cake! Even though I am not gaining access, I am gaining weight for sure! So researchers, add a new question in your checklist: What is the role of the ethnographer in the field full of lots of good foods? (Gulrukh-Kamal 2005, personal communication)

Food is part of social life in any human society, and I think that for ethnographers, eating or learning to cook with our research participants is something that can provide insight and strengthen relationships in the field.

Data analysis and writing up

Upon my return to Winnipeg, I began data analysis work and writing simultaneously. While writing parts of the theory/literature review, methodology, and introductory chapters, I reviewed and organized my field notes. First I took notes on my field notes and then organized those notes into subject areas or themes more or less pertaining to my ideas for chapters in my thesis, highlighting parts of the data that were particularly interesting. I also made jot notes about the media that I had collected, such as the *Paginas Amarillas* (a Spanish language business directory), numerous copies of *Nuevas Fronteras* (the Alaskan Spanish language newspaper directed at all Spanish speakers in the state), articles from other newspapers such as the *Anchorage Daily News* and *La Diligencia Michoacana*, flyers, posters, print advertisements, photographs, and websites. I continue to receive copies of the newspaper of the municipal government in Acuitzio, *El Canje*, and I am able to read news from Anchorage on-line (both *Nuevas Fronteras* and the *Anchorage Daily News*). Like my notes on my field notes, I organized these into themes as well.

I began this project with a good knowledge of Spanish due to four years of formal language training at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, which culminated in a beginner-level certificate in Spanish as a foreign language. During my time in Anchorage and Acuitzio, where the majority of my communication with my research participants was in Spanish, my ability to converse in and understand Spanish greatly improved. Because most of my interviews were in Spanish, in consultation with my thesis committee I initially elected not to transcribe them. I relocated to Edmonton to finish data analysis and writing; with some time and perseverance I was eventually able to transcribe all of the interviews – whether they were in Spanish or English or a combination of the two. For parts of Spanish language interviews that were to be included in the text of my thesis, I translated those portions myself and included the original Spanish-language transcriptions in the appendix of the thesis. I hope very much that even through the filters of transcription and translation, the participants in this project remain able to speak in their own words, to have a voice.

I began writing before my data were fully analyzed, beginning with parts of my theory and method chapters and then moving on to the substantive chapters. Throughout the process, I moved back and forth to add or subtract from chapters until the process was complete. From February until July 2006 my life was consumed with transcribing interviews and writing my thesis. At times this felt like a very long process. I wrote in ways that were new to me, combining the usual academic voice with more of a story-telling voice as well as with my field-note, reflexive voice. My voices also combine with those of the research participants.

Ethics and challenges

All of the participants in my project were clearly informed of the purpose of the research. From first introductions, I made it known that I was a student working on a project about Mexican migration and food, something which often led to further questions about my project or about anthropology itself. It sometimes gave people the opportunity to express their interest in participating in my project or to recommend someone who might. Their willingness to participate voluntarily and free of coercion of any kind was ensured through the use of informed consent. The difficulty with informed

consent, however, is that often the formality of going through an informed consent form may be inappropriate or unnecessary. For example, in every-day kinds of situations, such as going to someone's house for dinner or learning to cook a particular dish, I made it well known that I was working on a project and that I was interested to talk about food and migration and about 'being Mexican' for that reason. As well, I often took notes on recipes, food preparation, etc., and taking notes very much signals that what is being said and done is being recorded for the purposes of a research project. Undoubtedly, there were grey areas, and where I felt uncertain about something, if I felt that someone was telling me something off-the-record, I did not include it in my field notes.

I also did my best to get permission from the business owners where I was conducting some of my research. Where possible, the business owner or a suitable representative signed a formal permission form. In other cases, I did my best to make it known that I was working on a research project. However, at times I did not get permission, such as when I was doing my regular grocery shopping at Carrs-Safeway or Fred Meyer and happened to notice something pertinent, or if I was in a restaurant as a customer I took notes on the physical surroundings, the food, etc.

Before an interview, both the research participant and myself reviewed and signed consent forms (see Appendix 3), forms that outlined my project and the rights and obligations of both the researcher and the participant. These forms were available in both Spanish and English, depending on the preference of the interviewee. I felt that the introduction of a consent form also made a very real interview setting, setting up a time and space for a formal interview where there was no ambiguity about whether or not someone was participating in my project. Interviews were recorded upon explicit agreement of participants and as long as taping did not interfere with the interviewing process itself. In order to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity that I promised on my informed consent forms, I used pseudonyms in my notes, transcriptions, and in the final thesis, with the exception of the names of those who shared their recipes with me. I did not gain explicit permission to use names in conjunction with recipes, but recipes bring up the issue of ownership. Recipes are often copyrighted as a form of intellectual property, and I think it is appropriate to give credit to the individual who shared each

recipe. These recipes appear at the beginning of each chapter. As well, identifying characteristics of the research participants were altered to protect their anonymity. In some cases, composite characters were created for stories and vignettes in my thesis. The names of my advisor, Dr. Raymond Wiest, and my colleague from his project, Erin Jonasson, are not pseudonyms, and I have gained permission to use their actual names. The Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) at the University of Manitoba approved my research and I also kept in mind the ethics guidelines put forth by the Tri-Council Policy Statement of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (1998). I also considered the guidelines contributed by the American Anthropological Association. However, in addition to following formal ethical guidelines, I also adhered to more informal ones, to "everyday ethics" (Silverman 2003), which are about

> crafting a persona and an identity that will mutually engage both the researcher and the people, without doing damage to either. Then, it is about the continual need for choices, each day. It is about ambiguity, conflicting interests, fine lines, judgment calls, and therefore, about awkward decisions. This means that every research site is different, as is the personal style which every anthropologist brings to the field (Silverman 2003:127-128).

As such, I did my very best to be responsible to my research participants by being respectful and honest, by following my own ethical and moral codes, by negotiating informed consent and by assuring confidentiality and anonymity (and by being honest about the level of confidentiality/anonymity provided). I had hoped to create a working relationship with the community where I can give back (by working as a volunteer, for instance) in exchange for the opportunity to do research and learn about the research process with them. In this way, it was hoped that both the research participants and I could benefit from this process. While there were no opportunities to volunteer within the community, I did my best to create a relationship that was mutually beneficial, something that I continue to work at. I keep in regular contact via email and letters with some of my research participants and hope to complete a report of my finished project (in Spanish) for distribution to participants in Anchorage and in Mexico.

For me, the most difficult part was negotiating the line between friendship and research. Some of the participants in my project did become friends, individuals I continue to correspond with. More than anything, though, these friendships made me even more conscious of the responsibility that I have to my research participants to be respectful and honest while in the field and afterwards at home writing up.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how the research for this thesis was conducted and how this methodology fits with the theoretical orientation and overall aims of the project. In my study of the relationship between food and transnational identity, a multi-sited project was especially appropriate, and I followed the people and the food from Anchorage back to Acuitzio del Canje. Through interviews focused on food and through participant observation at sites in Anchorage and Acuitzio where food and Mexicanness met, I gathered data that spoke to the place of food in the lives of transnational migrant workers in Anchorage.

In Chapter 4, "Mexican Migration to Anchorage", I write about the migration of Acuitzences to Anchorage. An important background to later chapters more specifically about the place of food in the transnational lives of my participants, Chapter 4 provides a brief and incomplete history of migration to Anchorage by Acuitzences, describing who goes to Alaska, why they go there, and when people started migrating from Acuitzio to the far north.

Chapter 4

Mexican Migration to Anchorage: Who, Why and When?

Chiles Rellenos (Lupe and Mariano's recipe)
Ingredients:

Poblano peppers (or pasilla peppers, the dried version), one for each person
Salt
Cotijo cheese
Flour
Oil
Onions, garlic, tomatoes, oil, and salt for the sauce

Instructions:

Sprinkle the peppers with salt and leave them for a few hours. Blacken the peppers on all sides on a comal and put them in a plastic bag. After a while, take them out and peel off the tough outer membrane. Open up each pepper and clean out the seeds (it might be a good idea to wear gloves), fill them with the cheese, then dust the outsides with flour. Meanwhile, separate the egg whites from the yolks and beat the whites until stiff. Fold in the yolks. Coat each chile with the eggs and fry them in an inch or two of hot oil. Serve with a tomato sauce. To make the sauce, sauté the onion and garlic in oil until browned, then add the tomatoes (canned or fresh). Mash up the tomatoes and then add salt to taste. Add tomato juice or water if necessary so that it is quite thin. Simmer.

Introduction

In this chapter I will briefly outline the information available about Mexican migration to Alaska, and from Acuitzio to Anchorage in particular. This is important since it provides a background to the more recent migration to Alaska and to the lives of my research participants. There is not yet much published information about Mexican migration to Alaska available, however, in a 1973 article about labour migration from Acuitzio, it states "some Acuitzenses also find work in construction or in bakeries in Alaska" (Wiest 1973:185).

I was able to draw upon interviews, personal conversations, US census data, monographs, the *Guide to Alaska's Cultures* (Bibbs 2006), and unpublished conference papers (Wiest 2006b, 2006c; Komarnisky 2006a, 2006b) to piece together this brief and incomplete background of Mexican migration to Alaska. I will begin by writing more generally about the recent and relevant history of Alaska and of Mexican migration to Alaska as I see it before moving on to tell some individual stories, stories told by my research participants that speak directly to migration from Acuitzio del Canje to Alaska. Finally, I will talk about the current state of migration from Mexico to Alaska as well as about the near future. The reader should note that, due to the lack of specific published data and histories about Mexican migration to Alaska aside from what I collected myself, and the sources mentioned above, this chapter is meant to be only a glimpse at the history and background of Mexican migration to Alaska. While partial, it is meant to inform the following chapters, to answer questions relevant to the understanding of this thesis, such as: Who migrated from Mexico to Alaska? Why did they migrate? And when did they migrate?

Good work and high wages

The first migrants from Acuitzio to Alaska, as far as I can tell, were lured to the far north by the prospect of high-paying but difficult work on the Trans-Alaska pipeline system (Wiest, personal communication 2004). When oil was discovered on the remote North Slope of Alaska in the mid 1960's, drilling began soon afterwards and contentious plans were made to build a pipeline "from Prudhoe Bay south roughly 800 miles to the ice-free port of Valdez" (Borneman 2003:473). Construction began in 1974, and "job seekers descended on Alaska after reading articles that quoted $1200 weekly wages for pipeline workers" (Tower 1999:158). Work was available for both skilled and unskilled workers, from heavy equipment operators, pipe fitters, welders, truck drivers and surveyors to labourers, cooks, bakers, housekeepers, and assorted camp followers (Borneman 2003). By the time of the pipeline's completion in 1977, more than 70, 000 men and women had worked on its construction (Borneman 2003), some of whom were from Acuizio del Canje, Mexico. Word of possible pipeline work, or the need for workers in the service industry during the oil boom, likely brought people from Mexico slightly

earlier, as participants repeatedly stated that they knew individuals who had been there in the 1960's, some who had been there as early as 1964 to experience the devastating earthquake that happened in April of that year. Miguel told me part of his own story about how he went to Alaska:

> Miguel- Anyway, for this I had a friend that I grew up with in Morelia; his mom was my godmother at my baptism and when I had the opportunity to go to the *secundaria* she paid my fees, my godmother Liliana. And she only had one son. And my godfather, he lived, he went, he was one of the first, the first who came here, to Alaska. When they made the pipeline. The first pipeline that they made. He had a brother who was the father of Luis and Paulino. Don Luis. And they went together with…
> Sara- They both went, right?
> Miguel- Yeah, you know Don Oscar's sons? They were the fathers, Don Oscar, Don Ricardo, my godfather Rafael, Don Luis, and many more were the first, the first who came to Alaska. See, because everyone was going to California, yeah? Like I said, the *braceros*. So most went to California. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish).

In my fieldnotes from September 26, I wrote about a visit with Maria who currently lives in Anchorage,

> We talked while we ate and Maria told about how Luis came to Alaska with his brother and his dad. His dad had been here for many years, working on the pipeline – he was here for the '64 earthquake and remembers when none of the roads were paved, really and things were very different (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 26).

After another visit with Maria, I wrote that,

> Maria told about how Luis's dad was here working on the pipeline and that he and Don Oscar are *cuñados* they both worked on the pipeline together. He has a good pension from his work on the pipeline. I guess he brought his sons up to visit and they decided to stay and keep working. (Fieldnotes Book 3, October 22)

These men (and they were all men) who were some of the first to travel from Acuitzio to Alaska to work spent many years far away from their home and families, unable to travel back often. The distance must have seemed much greater back then, with the cost of air travel and phone calls much higher than they are now. However, they did make a lot of money, and some continue to, receiving pensions in US dollars while living as retirees in Mexico. As I wrote in my fieldnotes after talking to Cesar, who works at an upscale restaurant in Anchorage,

> The thing is, the guys who came first got paid really well to build the pipeline and were able to build big houses and stuff in town. So people got an idea about Alaska. He says now it's more difficult. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 1).

A *más sano* way of life

Estimates about the number of people from Acuitzio currently living and working in Alaska vary, but of the roughly 11,000 individuals living in Anchorage who are of Mexican origin according to the 2004 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2004), my participants estimate that about 1,000 men, women, and children in Anchorage are from Acuitzio, a number that fluctuates depending on the season, with the most people there in the summer.

As the *Guide to Alaska's Cultures* states, "today, Hispanics and Latinos travel to Alaska in search of employment...and to be with family members. Alaska's history is rooted in a few Spanish explorers, and the state will continue to grow culturally as the Hispanic community becomes larger" (Bibbs 2006:83). With the economy in Alaska driven by oil, tourism, and commercial fishing (and likely in that order), the jobs that are available for migrant workers are tied to the steady economic growth in those three industries that make up the "core triangle of Alaska's economy" (Borneman 2003:528). As Elizabeth Tower (1999:195-196) writes,

> Anchorage continues to be the urban centre of Alaska's oil industry...tourism is replacing mining and fishing as Alaska's next most important industry [and]...the population in Anchorage has changed; it is the largest "Native village" in Alaska. Immigrants are from Latin America, Korea, Russia, and Samoa rather than Scandinavia, the birthplace of many pioneer Anchorage residents.

Most of my participants work in the food service industry, whether as waiters or waitresses, cooks, dishwashers, bakers in chain stores like Costco or in small businesses like the French Oven bakery. Some are even restaurant owners. Other participants work in landscaping, something that can be convenient due to the seasonal nature of the work where people can work for the summer, then go to Mexico for the winter with the promise of a full-time job again the following summer. Still others work in construction (for which English is a necessity), in painting, or cleaning houses, and some have been employed outside Anchorage in salmon canneries or other seafood processing, where

75% of all workers in that industry were non-residents of Alaska in 2004 (Hadland et al. 2006). Other Mexican migrants, although not from Acuitzio as far as I know, work in Alaska's vast and isolated backcountry picking morel mushrooms for sale on the global gourmet food market (LeVaux 2005).

Within the wider context of transnational subjects, my research population fits in somewhere between immigrants and guest workers, between relatively permanent to more or less temporary residence in Anchorage. By Alaskan standards, my participants are middle class. Of those who live most of the time with their families in Anchorage, nearly all have homes in both Acuitzio and Anchorage, more than one vehicle, televisions, computers, and cell phones. Some own and operate their own businesses. Most take annual vacations to Mexico and some take additional trips elsewhere: Florida, Niagara Falls, Vancouver, California. Of those participants whose families live in Mexico while they live and work in Anchorage, they, too, have comfortable and modern homes in Acuitzio and well-maintained rental accommodations in Alaska, as well as a car or, more often, a truck.

While some of my research participants were "illegal" migrants to Alaska at first, nearly all of my participants did have some legal documentation and right to work in Alaska, with many holding both Mexican and American citizenship. For these legal migrant-immigrants especially, mobility is a fact of life, and while they are not as wealthy as Ong's (1999) very rich and extremely mobile Chinese elite, my participants can and do travel regularly and flexibly between Mexico and the United States.

Nevertheless, Mexican migrants are marginalized somewhat in Alaska. In my mind, this is primarily due to popular perceptions about migrant workers (especially those from Mexico) in American society, that all are "illegal" and "poor". Jokes are frequently made about unhygienic kitchens in Mexican restaurants. Lack of ability in English also marginalizes many of my participants, blocking their access to certain jobs (construction, for example), some services, and even citizenship. One of my participants, Ivan, who has light skin and hair (he "doesn't look Mexican", according to his wife, Victoria) and speaks English without an accent, told me that he often hears derogatory comments about Mexicans in his work as a construction foreman. This marginalization in

Alaskan society, as well as the middle-class, migrant-immigrant standing of my research participants, has something to do with how and why they eat and act as consuming subjects and transnational subjects.

In each interview with research participants in both Acuitzio and Anchorage, I asked how, when, and why each individual went to Alaska. As with migration to other sites by Acuitzenses (Wiest 1973, 1979, 1980), the reason was generally to find work or to join a loved one (usually a spouse) who was already working in Alaska, something echoed by the Guide to Alaska's Cultures (Bibbs 2006). This is applicable to Mexican migrants more generally. The specifics of each story varied, however, with some people as second-generation or even third-generation migrants, following their fathers and grandfathers who had worked on the pipeline or in related industries in the 1960's and 1970's. Others came looking for better work and a more tranquil environment than was available in the lower 48 states, including some who had spent time in other parts of the United States, like California and Texas, and others who had not. Still others came with their families to reunite with loved ones after living as long-distance families for years under circumstances that differed for each family. Some migrants spend part of the year working in Anchorage, then the remainder of the year with their families in Mexico, a cycle that repeats each year. Other migrants live in Anchorage most of the time with their families, going back to Acuitzio once or twice a year to attend funerals, baptisms, weddings, the annual town celebration, and to be with family, especially around the holidays. What is the same, however, is that everyone, in one way or another, was coming to find work in Alaska, whether to raise money for a wedding, to build a house in Acuitzio, to put children through school, or in relocating to Alaska to raise their children. As well, everyone that I spoke to and got to know maintained a connection to their hometown, both through telephone conversations and regular travel back. The maintenance of this connection is the basis of the use of the term "transnational" to describe these people's lives and identities. I was surprised by how mobile some of these people are, how often they travel back and forth between Mexico and Alaska, and how major life events such as weddings, funerals, baptisms and *quinceañeras*[6] continue to

[6] Celebration of a young woman's fifteenth birthday marking her transition to womanhood

take place in Acuitzio. Phone calls ranging in frequency from daily to weekly also connect very strongly the people in these two places. Video recorders and cameras taken back and forth between the two places allow family members and friends to "experience" aspects of the lives of those who are far away. As well, the Internet is starting to become more useful for migrant workers in Alaska and elsewhere to keep connected. The town of Acuitzio now has a website directed at those who are away[7], and as I wrote in my fieldnotes, one woman says that her husband uses the internet to read *La Voz Michoacana*, one of the major newspapers based in Morelia, the state capital of Michoacán (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 8)

With regards to who travels to Alaska and why, consider the Garcia family, one of the families that I spent a lot of time with in Anchorage and later in Acuitzio. Of the original migrants from Acuitzio to Alaska who came to work on the pipeline, two of them now have sons and daughters living and working in Alaska. The Garcia family is an example of this. As I mentioned, Luis first went to Alaska with his brother and his dad (who had worked on the pipeline) when he was 18 years old. He's in his 40's now. Luis has three siblings, two of whom currently live in Anchorage. The other lives in Acuitzio, as does his retired father and his mother. Luis' wife, Maria, and their three children joined him in Anchorage a few years after their marriage, and the family has been living there together for nine years. Luis works in the kitchen at Pancho's Villa, a restaurant co-owned by his brother Paulino and another man from Acuitzio. Luis and Maria and their kids live in a townhouse in Anchorage and they also own a two-story house near the edge of town in Acuitzio where they stay every year when they visit friends and family. Maria says, "[It's] more like when I go to Mexico, I feel like I'm just going on vacation, to visit." (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish). She even calls the house in Acuitzio their "vacation house". I wrote in my fieldnotes after a visit with Maria that,

> Maria didn't want to go without papers, though, so Luis got his citizenship and the whole family moved to Alaska. Maria grew up in Mexico City but her parents were from Acuitzio and they moved back there when Maria was 21 or so. Maria got her American citizenship in April 2005 and the kids got theirs in February. She told about taking the test, how it's in English and there's a written part and an oral part and how you have to

[7] www.acuitzio.com.mx

> study all about the history of the US and how the government works. She told me about coming to Alaska, how much easier it is to buy consumer goods than in Mexico and how, when she first came here, hardly anybody spoke Spanish and it was more difficult. She said that sometimes she thinks about moving back to Mexico because her parents are there but life is so different there (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 26).

After another visit with Maria, I wrote that,

> When they first came to Anchorage they lived in a little apartment building owned by Acuitzenses (and it still is). At the time, Acuitzenses rented 4 of the 6 apartments. Immigration came one time and asked for her papers. Meanwhile, the landlady told the 6 men from Acuitzio without papers who were sharing an apartment to stay quiet, not to say anything, not to answer the door. And so they didn't get caught. But she said immigration would always go along 28th street because many Mexican people lived (and still live) in that area. (Fieldnotes Book 3, October 22)

Another one of the first to travel from Acuitzio to Alaska to work on the pipeline, Don Oscar Ramirez, currently lives in Morelia, the state capital located about thirty kilometres from Acuitzio. Now, all of his children and grandchildren live in Anchorage. 25-year-old Victoria Ramirez, Don Oscar's granddaughter, was born in Morelia and grew up in Acuitzio. She first came to Alaska with her mother and her sisters and brother when she was in second grade. They came to join her father, Oscar Ramirez, Jr. who was working in Anchorage at the time. That first time, they were in Anchorage for four years, then they went back to Acuitzio. Victoria's mom, Alina, and her younger brothers and sisters moved back to Anchorage in 2001 and Victoria and her husband, Ivan, joined them a year later. I interviewed Victoria in Anchorage and asked her about how she decided to return to Alaska as an adult:

> Sara- Okay, so did you know anyone here before you moved up again this last time?
> Victoria- Well, yeah, all my uncles and, um, yeah cause they, they live here.
> Sara- Oh, that's right. They were all here before.
> Victoria- Before, uh huh. They live here, I dunno, my dad has been here like, I dunno, fifteen or more years.
> Sara- Yeah, he's been here a long time.
> Victoria- A long time, so probably my uncles have the same time here.
> Sara- Yeah, so how did you and Ivan decide to come up here? Just family with…

> Victoria- Um, I guess for, 'cause my dad was in the company, in K & D Construction so, he's like, well, we're gonna go to California 'cause he had a job there in the stadium, um...baseball. So, he had a job there and we're like, well we could go to California and live in an apartment or rent or whatever but I didn't know the city, I was kinda like...scared. And...my dad said, well, Alaska has better jobs, you can, you can be better over there, there's more opportunities over there, there's not, uh, people. And...Ivan said, okay. And we just came. (Interview 10, October 13, English)

Both the Garcia family and the Ramirez family came to Alaska following family members who had been some of the first to migrate to Alaska to work on the pipeline. These strong familial connections to Alaska were important for later generations when choosing to leave Mexico to find work. As Victoria said,

> Yeah, there's a lotta people from Acuitzio here, and I'm like, I don't, well, I was here because my grandpa was here and you, probably you can see why. But there's people here, they're, they didn't have any relatives here and they're here now. (Interview 10, October 13, English).

She feels that her decision to move to Alaska was based on her connection to her family, most of whom live in Anchorage now.

Maria and Victoria also provide insight about where "home" is for them and their families. For them, as well as some other participants, all of whom had a long familial history in Alaska, Mexico remains a home, but not their primary home. Talking about travel to Mexico as "vacation" and describing the life there as "different" lead me to believe that for Maria, as well as others like her, "home" has become Alaska, at least in part. While this may be true, they still make annual trips to Acuitzio as a family, baptisms, *quinceañeras*, and weddings are celebrated there, and Luis (Maria's husband) speaks of returning to Acuitzio for good someday. Similarly, I asked Victoria, another participant with long familial connections to Alaska about her ideas about home during an interview in Anchorage:

> Sara- Um, so do you, does Anchorage feel like home to you?
> Victoria- Now it does. Before I was like, well I wanna go back home to Mexico but now I think Anchorage is my home...cause when I go there I'm happy, I'm, I mean I'm happy that I'm home, I'm happy about the food that I can eat, I'm happy 'cause I'm with my...grandmas, grandpas and everything like that but I, I feel the necessity to come home. When

> I'm home I'm like, well I'm home now. Uh huh. I feel now that this is my home. [hear the teapot whistling].
> Sara- um, what kinds of food make you think of home?
> Victoria- Uh, the kinds of food that we cannot make here. It's the same, like, um...my grandma's, um, *uchepos*, my grandma's *pozole*, my grandma's *menudo*. Things that we can make here but they don't taste the same, no, they don't taste the same. (Interview 10, October 13, English)

For migrant workers, "home" becomes a complex and contradictory category. The relationship between food and home is also complex, as Victoria's statements emphasize. Home, too, becomes something that depends on the condition of interconnectedness and mobility across space (Ong 1999), of transnationality. Home becomes something that stretches across borders and boundaries; it is in Mexico, in Alaska and in the space in between.

However, not all migrants to Alaska have a strong familial connection to the first few who ventured north to work on the pipeline, nor do they feel that Alaska has become home to them. As Victoria said,

> Victoria- Well, I'm from Acuitzio. Um, there's a lotta people here from Acuitzio. The thing is that I dunno why there's so much people here from Acuitzio.
> Sara- Yeah, yeah that's true. There's a couple different, like, um, there's the Garcia family and their father was here, so, like, you know, it's almost, like, like they've been here a long time. Other people just came. I don't know, why do you think...what is it?
> Victoria- I don't know, I dunno if they hear about it and just want to come. Or if they have friends here and they tell, well just come and work here, it's better. But I think, well, it's not that much, not that much of a difference. If it were me...I would've liked to be in California 'cause of the food. You're in Mexico over there, you have all the food, you have all the tacos, you have all the everything there...And you can find a good job over there. But I dunno why people...come over here. Now, I wouldn't leave Alaska. Because I think it's a good place to have my kid. But before, if I didn't have any children or anything, I would try to live in California for a time. For the food [laughs]. (Interview 10, October 13, English)

Many came to Alaska hoping to earn the high wages that had allowed the first few to prosper while others came seeking better work and a more tranquil place to live. Connections to friends and family members who had established themselves and formed relationships in Anchorage was very important in making the decision to go to Alaska and to find work once arriving there. Also, there is a discourse about "adventure" with

regards to migration to Alaska. And while it certainly is not all about adventure and more about hard work, this sentiment is common, both in Mexico and in my own case, as a researcher.

Antonio, aged 57, has been migrating to the United States for work off and on for about thirty years. He first went to Los Angeles for a few months when he was recently married, and then didn't go again until much later, in 1992. He worked in Salinas and in San Jose, eventually gaining status as a resident, which made travel between Mexico and the United States much easier. When I interviewed him in Mexico, he said:

> Like I've never spent much time in the United States, just on and off. And later, well, for example, I worked more here, in Mexico. And like that I was in both sides; when things got tight here, I switched to the United States, and, and...worked a while there and...and I went on like that, uh huh. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

After working in California, he worked in Texas for a while but found the heat difficult. Antonio refers to his experience in 2003:

> Antonio- I came here and I started working here and I had a godson who was in Alaska. And he said, "let's go there, godfather". There was, there is lots of work. I said, "okay, let's go" and we went with him. He said, "look, they're going to build something here, a huge gas pipeline, I don't know where." He said, "we're going to try to find work there." Ah, okay. Yeah, he had plans that, that we would find work there.
> Sara- So at that time there was talk about this new pipeline?
> Antonio- Um hm. Anyway, he said to me, "look, everything there is really good godfather, and there we, there I have contacts" and yeah, he had lots of contacts, my godson knew lots of people. For instance, he knew, like Paulino, he was always with Paulino, of Pancho's Villa [a Mexican Restaurant in Anchorage]. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish).

Antonio's family, his wife and five children, only one of whom still lives at home, remain in Mexico while he goes to work for a part of the year in Alaska. He works both at Pancho's Villa as well as at French Oven Bakery, a bakery opened by a man from Acuitzio who has since moved to Seattle. He said that things are different in Alaska, that people help each other to find jobs. Antonio feels that there is more of a community in Alaska. He said that,

> It's that, in Alaska and stuff, it's a nice thing because everyone...someone from our country arrives and between everyone we help them to find work. Everyone helps us. And...for example, they say, "listen, do you

> know of any work? I have a friend, or something or X." Well then, one dies and...find and...I've helped lots of people. I've helped lots of people to find work in Alaska. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish).

He points out that this is different than in other states:

> Antonio- To find work in, in...in other states where I've been, well, generally you get the newspaper and you start looking, and...because, well, for example, if someone arrives in San Jose. I know people there but they have their work, they're involved in that anyway, and they won't leave their work to...to help me, right? Anyway, well, it's very different. So one finds something in the newspaper, and...
> Sara- Everyone for themselves.
> Antonio- Um hmm, yeah. And there, no. For instance, someone arrives and they tell you...you find someone to give them a job. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Word of mouth is something that is very important in someone choosing to go to Alaska. In my interview with Cesar, a 40-or-so-year-old man who works at an upscale restaurant in Anchorage, Southside Bistro. He said that,

> Cesar- Uh, I come from...a town called Acuitzio del Canje. It's in Michoacán, in Mexico. Um, I'm in...I came here, to Alaska, for, uh, because of what I'd heard from other friends also from the same town. Uh...for me it's really interesting to be here but the, the distance [to Mexico], unfortunately, [is so long]. A person can be...in the most wilderness that...that, that is here. You can, in 15 minutes you are fishing, you're hunting, you're...All of the life that there is here is...
> Sara- Very different.
> Cesar- Yeah, or like, you wouldn't find it in Mexico, or if you came across one in Mexico...in Mexico you'd have to go four, five hours to be in a place like that. Here in...ten minutes. (Interview 6, September 30, Spanish)

He said that he came to Alaska in 1996 on the word of other friends who are also from Acuitzio. He lives in a house with other men from Acuitzio, a house they call the "Big Brother House" (after the TV show, not the Orson Welles character). His brother also worked in Anchorage, at the same restaurant for a time, and even helped him to get a job there five years ago. He said more about this later in the interview:

> Cesar- I went, I came the first time, but, but from my, ah...influenced by, um, various friends that were here. And so I arrived at the house of some friends. Or like, not exactly that I arrived alone and then was, who, what am I going to do?
> Sara- And what did they say about Alaska?

> Cesar- Oh…that it was, that it's more well paying. There's uh…more job opportunities. Because if, if you don't suffer much finding work, and they pay you well [it doesn't matter] whether it's cold or not cold.
> Sara- And also if you have friends with a house, with a place, with connections…
> Cesar- Yeah, and like, if it's more…many of those who came here were the same way. Because, well, and it wasn't that, no, well, it's that my, my family and friends somehow already arrived, I arrived with them. And it's better, not that I stay…always with them, but somehow you take your bed where you have to take it…that is, and it's too much the…
> Sara- And in Anchorage, do you feel at home? Or not?
> Cesar- Of course not. But we go…somehow one finds…logically, those from…their town. So that somehow one doesn't feel so… (Interview 6, September 30, Spanish)

The presence of friends and acquaintances from home and the promise of good work for a good wage is important for Cesar, as well as for many others like him. Indeed, connections and social networks are extremely important for Mexican migrant workers more generally, both in deciding where to migrate to, in finding work, accommodation and in coping with life in a new place. These social networks are also important in building and maintaining membership in a transnational community (Cohen 2001, 2004; Kearney 2004; Mountz and Wright 1996; Rouse 1992, 2002; Wiest 1973, 2002), such as that which connects Anchorage and Acuitzio through regular communication, remittance (economic and social), travel, and memory.

While Cesar dreams of going back to Mexico for good one day, hoping to save up enough to buy a *combi* (a privately owned combination of a taxi and a bus) to operate in Morelia, Cesar also values the way of life in Alaska, the nature and beauty of the city of Anchorage, as well as the more tranquil and relaxed way of life. I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> He also said that people come to Anchorage to work because there is less to spend money on – not like in Los Angeles, for instance, where there is live music for *Mexicanos* practically every night. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 1)

The way of life in Anchorage as more relaxed and tranquil, *más sano*, is something I heard repeated often by my participants. Not only is there the promise of good, high paying work, then, but also the promise of a more relaxed lifestyle.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, "Food for Thought", migration in general is gendered, with men and women relating to migration in different ways. Among my

research participants, men migrated to Alaska to find work while their wives either remained in Mexico or relocated to Anchorage to be with their husbands and families. However, I did meet one woman who migrated to Anchorage alone to find work. Claudia, who is in her early 30's, is from Veracruz, but is married to a man from Acuitzio and they live together in a mobile home in Anchorage. They have no children. She came to Alaska for the first time in 1992, staying until 1998. After spending 3 years in Mexico, she came back to Alaska in 2001. In an interview, I asked her why she came to Alaska the first time,

> Well, the first time, I have a background in, in wildlife and fisheries biology, so the first time I was doing my thesis in Mexico and some friend...ah, was telling me that here in Alaska there are a lot of opportunities about hatcheries, and working with fish and things like that, so my friend and I decide to come here to explore, to see if we can get a job. But it's hard because we don't have enough English and we don't have the papers to be working, so we start working in different kind of jobs [laughs]. (Interview 4, September 27, English)

Before she came to Alaska, she didn't know anyone in Anchorage. She said that,

> No, when I came here the first time I just have a phone number for somebody that is from Nicaragua. She was in Mexico when she was coming to Alaska, she was in Mexico and, and...my friend uncle helped her during the time that she was in, in Mexico. So when he knows that we want to come to Alaska, he give us her phone number...and, and my friend decide to go to California because her brother is, um, is, is in the navy. So she says: no, I'm going to...to California with my brother so I just came here and I called this lady and I say: you know my name is Claudia and I'm here and I don't know anybody, so she, she went to the airport for me and she, I, I stay in her house, she was helping me...during six months and then my friend call me from California and she decide to come here so I went looking for an apartment and...when she came here we moved together. And we start working. (Interview 4, September 27, English)

She said that, since she got married, she knows many more people in Anchorage. She noticed that people from the same town or state often band together and spend their time together. As Claudia puts it,

> Yeah, but I notice the difference. I notice even in the same Mexican people, because they are, most of the people are from the north of Mexico or for Michoacán that they have, uh, many people here from those places. Is like: oh, yeah I know Maria but Maria is from Durango. You know? It's

> like, she is different. And they can talk to Maria but it's not really like: oh yeah, she's Mexican, that's it. No it's like she's from Durango. So like she's from...other place, you know. And that is what is strange and is different for me. Because the way that we are at least in Veracruz is like...we have a lot of people from different places and, and I dunno is different when you are here and you can see even in the same community that it's different, that they are: yeah, I talk to you, I know you, but when they have to do something, is like: Michoacán here, Durango here, Zacatecas here, you know. So is, like, everybody's looking a different. (Interview 4, September 27, English)

It seems, then, that when choosing to migrate to Alaska people depend on the promise of good work for a high wage, the presence of people from one's home community or state, the presence of a *más sano* (more tranquil and relaxed) way of life, and the ability to maintain connections with their friends and family in Acuitzio. In some cases there may be a long family history in the state, with close family members having spent most of their lives living and working in Alaska. An additional draw may be the annual permanent fund cheques issued to Alaska residents each November since 1982, even to those without American citizenship. Tied to resource revenues in the state, these dividend cheques are issued to "all adults and children who could prove residence in Alaska" (Tower 1999:182) and range in value from $800 to $1500. However, the option to migrate to Alaska is not open to everyone. Expensive air travel is a must and the cost of living in Anchorage, while comparable to that in other American cities, is definitely higher. The great distance and the prospect of being so far away from home is likely discouraging as well. Furthermore, migrating without proper documentation is as difficult when migrating to Alaska as it is when migrating to somewhere in the lower 48 states, something that I found as well after being refused entry to the United States on my first attempt to travel to Alaska.

Conclusion

The 2004 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2004) reports that Anchorage, with a population of just over 265, 000, is home to about 18, 250 (6.9%) people of Latino or Hispanic origin. State-wide, "census projections show the Hispanic/Latino population increasing from 4.1% of the Alaskan population to 6.7% of the population in 2025. In addition, the Hispanic projected growth rate from the years

1995 to 2025 is the 11th largest growth rate among the 50 states (Guía Telefonica 2005:8). The majority of those people, or about 11, 000 (4.2% of Anchorage population), are of Mexican origin, a number that is expected to increase.

Indeed, I expect the number of migrants from Mexico to Alaska and, more specifically, from Acuitzio to Anchorage to increase as connections between the two places grow, as well as due to the need for labour. Travel between the two places has become cheaper and easier, as have long distance telephone calls. The network of connections, of friends and acquaintances who live and work in Anchorage, or who have been to Anchorage, has grown for those living in Acuitzio. As well, large projects such as a new oil pipeline, a boom in house construction and a multi-million dollar bridge over Knik Arm being built to shorten driving times to surrounding communities of Palmer and Wasilla, will bring workers from all over the world, including Mexico. Friends and family will continue to join loved ones who are working in Alaska. Eventually, some will return to Acuitzio to retire, but others will remain in Anchorage, having settled permanently there. For instance, Cesar hopes that his son will join him in Alaska for the summer to work, visit, and see Alaska and where his father has been working. At the end of the summer, Cesar hopes that they will both return to Mexico. However, as I wrote in my fieldnotes, Cesar said the danger is that if his son comes and likes it in Alaska, he might want to stay. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 1)

In this chapter I have presented some of the background information about migration from Acuitzio to Alaska, starting with the first migrants who worked on the oil pipeline and who my participants repeatedly stated were the first. I then moved on to talk about the reasons why some of my participants migrated to Alaska, finding out that the promise of good, well-paying work, the presence of friends and acquaintances from Acuitzio, and the comparably tranquil and *sano* way of life, were important factors. Finally, I argued that migration between Acuitzio and Anchorage will continue into the future. In the next chapter I will begin to talk more specifically about food, and how food serves to connect Acuitzio and Anchorage and the people in these places, and how food may be seen as a marker and material reality of transnational migration.

Chapter 5

Suitcases Full of Mole: Connections/Interconnections

Mole con pollo[8]

Ingredients:

Chicken, in pieces
Seeded chiles mulatos, chiles pasilla, chiles anchos
Pork lard
Garlic
Chopped onions
Fried tortillas, in pieces
Bread
Raisins
Almonds
Anise
Cloves
Cinnamon
Sesame seeds
Black pepper
Chocolate
Peeled and chopped tomatoes
Salt and sugar to taste

Instructions:

In a copper saucepan, brown the chiles in heated lard, then immerse them in a pot with hot water and leave them to soften. In the same lard, fry the garlic, the onion, the tortillas, the bread, the raisins, the almonds, half of the sesame seeds, the anise, the cloves, the cinnamon, the pepper, the chocolate and the tomatoes. Add the chiles and fry them again. Blend everything together with some broth. In another pot with the rest of the lard, add the sauce and bring to a boil. Season with salt and sugar and boil for 20 to 25 minutes at low heat. Meanwhile, cook the chicken pieces in water with parsley, carrot, celery, garlic, and onion. Serve the chicken coated with the mole. To save time, bring some pre-prepared mole with you from Mexico, combine it with broth, heat, and serve.

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[8] From www.univision.com, with help from Violeta

Introduction

In this chapter I will re-introduce the concept of the 'foodscape' and begin to describe the foodscape that arches over and connects Alaska and Mexico. By talking about the kinds of foods, ideas about food, and food practices that are travelling and the people who are sometimes travelling with them, I hope to begin to show how food and the movement of food and food-related things and ideas are wrapped up in configurations of power and the movement of people, commodities, technology, ideas, finance capital, and the media in extremely complex ways. Law aptly speaks of the "entangling of foodways in webs of culture, economics, and politics which enable the presence of some foods and not others in shops, restaurants or households" (Law 2001:276-277). It is important to remember that these travelling foods and ideas about foods are a real part – a material reality – of people's daily lives, as well as a symbol, a marker of transnationality.

Food does more than connect places and people; it "provides a medium through which stories and histories are told and remembered, places described, identities formed and community imagined" (Choo 2004:206) so that the "embodied experience" (2004:206) of eating Mexican food can"[bring] back and [reconnect] memories from homes departed, as well as sounds, textures, and flavours from the past, which are then relived and experienced in the present" (2004:206). The kinds of foods and food-related things and ideas that connect Mexico and Alaska also reflect – in their smells, tastes, and sounds – memories and movement, or "historical moments and transnational movements of people, things, and stories" (Choo 2004:212). This kind of "home cooking" (Law 2001), or the dislocation of place and the creation of a sense of home through cooking and eating, connects Anchorage and Acuitzio.

In this thesis I am writing about transnational identity, by which I mean the creation and attribution of fluid and complex identities grounded in both Mexico and Alaska. The negotiation of such an identity depends on the crossing of borders and boundaries and the exchange of information implied in these movements. Food, as something that is related to transnational identity, is part of the exchange of information and the crossing of borders and boundaries. It is partially though food that places and the

people in them are – and become – connected. In this chapter I hope to illustrate these complex interconnections with stories, tastes, images and analysis.

Travelling foods: Suitcases full of mole

She said they use the chiminea, the old style kitchen, for certain things, those dishes that are cooked in a big pot or that benefit from being cooked over an open flame. Inside, blackened walls, the smell of burning wood, and a rectangle of light that shines in from the doorway. I watch as Rosa toasts each ingredient for the mole, a rich sauce made of chocolate, chiles, and many spices – there are a lot of ingredients so it takes a while. She says, "I don't use preservatives, lots of people do, but I don't. It's more natural but it doesn't last as long". Then later she says, "I learned to make mole when I was twelve. I used to sell it. I still sell some, I just package it up and put it in the freezer and if someone wants to buy some or we want to eat some it's there".

Everything gets mixed together into a thick brown sweetly spicy-bitter paste, and then it sits to cool. Later, she puts it into bags – two sizes: small and large. I buy a small one to take back home with me. "Does Ana take mole back with her to Alaska, or does Tomás when he goes back to Alaska?" I ask. Ana and Tomás are two of her nine brothers and sisters, the majority of whom live in the United States. "Yes, yes they do, but only a bit of the mole that I make because it doesn't last as long with no preservatives, but they take some powdered mole too. Well, that's why I'm so busy today, Mama's going to California tomorrow to visit my brother and sister and their families (relatives I haven't met) – of course I have to make mole for her to take to them."

I think about what Ana, Rosa's sister, said two months ago while we were in her kitchen eating and talking. I asked her if "authentic" Mexican recipes and ingredients were important to her. She said, "Yes, yes, because, well, it's not what one eats every day. But, for example, I bring my mole, mole already prepared there, in Mexico, the way they prepare it in Mexico. And if I bought it here in Alaska? It's very different. It's very different, the taste." "Why is it important? Is it the taste?" I ask. "Ah hah, yes, it's the taste more than anything. But, anyway, we are so far away that...even though it's not the same we like it."

In the previous story, or vignette, I talked about one instance of travelling food, one example of how food connects places (how mole literally moves, is packed in suitcases and taken from one place to another), and how food is connected to place (how Ana said that it just is not the same if you buy it in Anchorage). But this is only one example. While food often travels long distances from field to table along grocery store and restaurant distribution chains, people also carry foods with them when they travel. Before going to Alaska, I had heard about bread from a bakery in Acuitzio that people were taking with them (and sometimes in large quantities) to destinations in the United

States as well as to Alaska (Wiest 2005, personal communication). While it may seem unusual to travel such long distances with bread, the particular kind of bread in this instance is one that can last for months.

In my conversations with my research participants in Alaska, I found that people travelled from Acuitzio to Alaska carrying not only mole and bread but also things like cheese, candy, and dried and crushed chile. For the most part, these are foods that travel well and are permitted to travel across international borders. The first time I was invited over to Maria and Luis's place (or to anyone's house in Alaska for that matter), it was for a dinner party that was attended by others from Acuitzio, Ana (from the story above) and Ivonne and Fernando. I wrote in my fieldnotes that

> The food was ready so we all went into the kitchen. Maria told us to sit and we all did, except Maria and Ana who served us at the table. We had mole from Acuitzio – Maria and Ivonne each had a bit left and they mixed it together, chicken, rice, beans, salsa, cheese (cheese also from Acuitzio) and tortillas. For dessert we had flan from Costco that Fernando himself actually made. Ana told about how she and her family just got back from Acuitzio and they brought from there the cheese we had, and I guess they brought back bread and some other things – eight suitcases worth! She says she loves the bread from a woman named Mercedes – it's home-made and she said she especially loves the *conchas*. Her parents live on the last street in town and I understand the bakery is near there. (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 6).

Indeed, this kind of thing is not uncommon for people from Acuitzio who live and work in Alaska. In each interview, and in some of my informal conversations with research participants in both Anchorage and Acuitzio, I asked whether or not that person travels with food when they go to Alaska to work or return to Alaska after a visit to Mexico. Most of my participants do travel with food regularly or have at some point, while the few who do not carry food with them know many others who do. In fact, of the sixteen research participants that I interviewed formally, thirteen of them said that they had travelled with food from Mexico to Alaska at least once. Of those, eleven travel with food on a regular basis. As Victor, a young man who had just returned to Acuitzio from his first time working in Anchorage, said,

> More than anything food is what I see that...that relatives bring their family members when they go there. More than anything, food. Bread,

> whatever you want, *mole*, bread, meat, cheese, spices. (Interview 15, November 28, Spanish)

An interview with Maria made similar points:

> Maria- Here, um…food, well no more than that that they allow us to cross with, which is like, cheese and *mole*…I also bring this chile, we call it, with lime. Yes, because here there isn't any, or like there is chile but it's crushed. Normally one uses chile for, for fruit, uh huh. But it isn't with lime and I bring that.
> Sara- I think there's some in Mexico Lindo [a small Mexican grocery store in Anchorage].
> Maria- Yes, but it isn't the same.
> Sara- Ah, it's not the same.
> Maria- [laughs] No, no. And that, I bring it. Also, you know what? I bring sherry flavoured gelatin mix because here there isn't any sherry flavoured ones and I really like gelatin. Ah, I've brought Japanese peanuts, they call them, but [the ones that are] *enchilados*. *Enchilados*, uh huh. With chile. And also…in Mexico, in Mexico City they sell, uh…gummies. They're pineapple flavour and they have chile [laughs]! Yeah, and I brought a kilo! [laughs]…and anyway, I also bring candies. Candies that they don't have here because here there's more variety of Mexican candies. But there are some that aren't here and my kids like them so, well, I bring them and it's that…*pinole*.
> Sara- What's *pinole*?
> Maria- *Pinole* is um…corn, the red corn that's toasted. And then when it's well toasted. Or like, they have, they have to know you, you don't toast it yourself but you take it to the mill and it's like a powder. And they combine this with sugar and it's kind of sweet. You can eat it just like that or you can make *atole* out of it. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

As Maria says, she brings food with her when she returns to Alaska from Mexico because those foods are not available in Alaska. Sometimes they are not available at all and other times the exact brand, taste, or level of quality is not available. Food is something important, something about Mexico worth bringing along to a new place.

Ivonne, a Mexican-American from California who is married to Fernando, a man from Acuitzio, echoes Maria when she talks about the food that she brings and the reasons why she brings food to Alaska with her,

> Ivonne- We always bring bread, cheese…
> Fernando- *Mole*.
> Ivonne- …Cheese, powdered mole. Uh, we bring *chile perón*. It's a yellow chile, small, they also call it *chile manzano*. But here there aren't any, there aren't any. Sometimes you can find them so you don't have to order

> something special from one of the, the local produce carriers [grocers] But you can't find them regularly. Anyway, we bring those, we bring foods that the family makes for us, my mother-in-law always makes tamales before we go. We bring a lot of *tamales*. And, um…
> Sara- Oh, great. How do you bring them? In suitcases?
> Ivonne- We put them like in a, um, Rubbermaid container. Because if we don't, they [the airline baggage handlers] throw them and break some of the things. (Interview 4, September 28, Spanish and English)

Among the people who regularly bring food with them from Mexico, mole, bread, and cheese were definitely the most common items. In Anchorage, the basic ingredients and foods necessary for Mexican cooking are available, both at specialty shops like Mexico Lindo, Taco Loco, Red Apple, and New Sagaya Market, as well as at large, mainstream grocery stores like Carrs-Safeway, Fred Meyer, and Costco. There is a *tortillería* in town that makes both flour and corn tortillas that are later sold frozen. While *lo basico* (the basics) are available now in Anchorage, they were not always. Even five years ago, it was much more difficult to find the necessary ingredients; people used to bring even more than they do now. Anchorage is changing; more products are available, different stores are opening up. More of nearly everything, and not only Mexican ingredients, is available now, whereas it was not in the recent past. Miguel and Inez make this point in an interview:

> Miguel- And look, around what you're talking about, that, that, yeah, we brought, before…we brought more things before because there weren't…
> Inez- There weren't many things here. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Specialized or unusual ingredients are still unavailable or are available only sporadically and often at a high price.

Bringing food is really important to people. As Lisa Law (2001:277) writes, "The absence of familiar material culture and its subtle evocations of home, is surely one of the most profound dislocations of transnational migration". Perhaps, then, it becomes important to travel with a piece of home, a piece of Mexico to alleviate this dislocation, so much so that, as Alina's husband said, "when she came here her suitcase was all food, hardly any clothes!" (Fieldnotes Book 2, October 5) According to Miguel, who works at a Mexican restaurant in Anchorage, people bring things and food with them because,

> Maybe we bring a part of ourselves. We want to bring a little piece of Mexico with us. Look, and even though, even though one has their US

> citizenship, no? But I always feel that your heart is always in Mexico...Sometimes I think more than anything food, and more than anything I feel that [some think that we have] disgraced our country because we have been given the opportunity to live peacefully with our kids. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

People are also willing to take risks, as Alina notes:

> Alina- I always bring...food that I shouldn't bring, Sarita! [laughs]
> Sara- Like what?
> Alina- Like I've brought some chiles, *chiles perones*. It's like a chile, like smaller than this orange. But, uh, yellow and it's red and really hot! And you know that one can't bring fresh things here. But I've brought some, Sarita! I've brought chiles, all the food that, no, no [laughs]...I've brought *carnitas*, meat, *carnitas*, one can't bring pork. But they [US Customs] didn't look through my bag! They didn't look through it! I've also brought bread...
> Sara- *Pan dulce*?
> Alina- Yes, *pan dulce*. What else have I brought? The *cazo* [saucepan]. Well, but it isn't an ingredient. But the saucepan where we make the *atole*.
> Sara- Oh, so things to cook with too?
> Alina- Um hmm.
> Sara- Okay. How, how do they say, but what else?
> Alina- The saucepan, this...I brought chiles, those that I have here for making *mole*. (Interview 8, October 5, 2005, Spanish).

Government regulations on the movement of meats, seeds, roots, and fresh fruits and vegetables restrict the movement of some foods, restrictions that people are very aware of. My research participants know full well what kinds of things are not allowed and what kinds of things are, as well as how to get around the regulations by, for instance, putting chiles in a bit of vinegar. Airlines only allow a certain amount of luggage, which also restricts the amount of food and food-related things that travel.

It seems that it is mostly women who travel with food. Many of the men I talked to were uninterested in bringing anything with them besides perhaps a few candies or a certain type of chile that they like. In an interview with Miguel and Inez, it seems that they would agree:

> Miguel- Yeah, there. But sometimes how people say, I bring things, I don't. To bring my suitcase with everything I brought with me I would be happy. No, no, no, I don't like it.
> Inez- That's a man, but a woman always brings a lot of things [laughs], lots of food, decorations.

> Miguel- No, it's going through Los Angeles and having to carry those damn suitcases, no, no, no, no!
> Inez- No, but it's that you're a man.
> Miguel- I never liked it. And for that reason I, never bother my fellow Mexicans from my, from there, to bring me something. I, yes, enough…one, something, but I just bring my bag and…
> Inez- It's much easier [not to carry things].
> Miguel- It's much easier [not to carry things]. And of course, like I told you, before people came loaded with stuff because…
> Inez- Because there weren't a lot of things here. But now there are lots of things here. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

The majority of my participants who regularly travel with food are women whose immediate families live in Anchorage. In fact, of the ten families who live in Anchorage and travel frequently to Mexico, in interviews with a family member, eight said that they always carry food with them. On the other hand, of the six single men who I met and interviewed, only two said they always travel with food, while two others said they sometimes carry food with them when they travel, or that they have in the past. In a society like Mexico where women are associated with food and cooking, men often do not have access to (or interest in) this information and may not know how to cook at all upon their arrival in the United States. While it has changed somewhat, in Acuitzio it is generally considered inappropriate for a man to do female domestic chores (such as cooking or cleaning) or to attempt to raise children himself (Wiest 1973). Furthermore, many households in Acuitzio employ domestic workers to do the bulk of the domestic chores. This is not the case in Alaska, however. In Alaska, men who have migrated alone do learn to cook at the very least out of necessity or because they enjoy it. It is also something that is considered appropriate. The change in attitude towards cooking by (some) migrant men is likely due to gender role shifts that have resulted out of necessity when men migrate alone as well as larger society-wide changes in the roles of men and women. As a result, some men do travel with food. Consider Antonio, for instance, who I interviewed in Acuitzio:

> Antonio- Uh huh, there. That's where they make the bread, those guys, um hmm. And it's delicious. They only need some butter, that's what they [the men who bake the bread] tell me [laughs].
> Sara- And you bring these to Alaska?

> Antonio- To Alaska, yeah. They really like the bread, that bread from there.
> Sara- The people from French Oven?
> Antonio- No, for friends that I have there, I brought them a piece of here, here in my…two, three pieces. I took something like, like seventy pieces. I took *corundas*, I took this [laughs]…yeah, what else…*uchepos*, cheese, and…yeah, mole, and…as a paste I brought it, um hmm. And, and I brought these sweets. And what else did I bring? Something else I brought. Or like, I brought two suitcases full of…of bread and that, yeah [laughs]…they [the airline] didn't charge me, I didn't pay anything, no. It's, but yeah, they [the suitcases] were really heavy. One, that I had on my back, in that one I had the *corundas*. But it was so heavy, right? [laughs], yeah.
> Sara- That's funny. But [was the food] more for yourself or for friends that you have there?
> Antonio- Yeah, for friends, yeah. Yeah, this time I took enough and…I arrived and well, later, later divided it up to Luisa, to everyone.
> Sara- And before you didn't bring anything, or?
> Antonio- Before, before…very little. Or like, I took to, for example, when I was in Texas there, yeah, for example twice I, well, even meat I brought sometimes. But we crossed by car and there wasn't a problem, no. Now, no, no you can't. I took *chorizo*, I took dried meat but right now, no. Now, no. And anyway, well, *chorizo*, that they won't let you pass with. Nor chiles that have seeds. We, for instance, we've also brought chiles but in vinegar. We make this with those yellow ones, those…
> Sara- The *manzanos*.
> Antonio- Yeah, the *manzanos*, um hmm. And in vinegar in a jar with the lid put on tightly.
> Sara- Oh, so you can take them in vinegar but not…
> Antonio- A little bit of vinegar so that it won't spill because, ah…in the airport opening the bags, ooh! And all the way to Alaska [laughs]. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

In Acuitzio, too, I met people who prepared the foods that people travel to Alaska with. For instance, I wrote in my fieldnotes that,

> Rosa told me later that she's been making *mole en pasta* (mole paste) since she was age twelve. She sells it. Her sister Ana takes some back to Alaska with her, she says, but takes more *en polvo (powdered)* because Rosa doesn't use preservatives, so it doesn't last as long nor travel as well. (Fieldnotes book 4, November 26)

I also met a woman selling bread in the plaza who said that she has sold bread to people on their way to Alaska. As I wrote in my fieldnotes that day,

> She has a table in the plaza with bread stacked up on a flowered tablecloth. There are about four or five kinds of rather colourful bread. She said that the bread with the *atole* in the middle is the most popular. A customer can call her and she'll make the bread and pack it up so it'll be ready when people leave to go back to wherever they work in the US. She said that her bread has been all the way to Alaska. (Fieldnotes Book 4, December 5)

As I found and discussed above, food travels regularly and in fairly high quantities between Mexico and Alaska, connecting those places and the people in them. This travelling food becomes both a marker and a material reality of the transnational connection between places, and the transnational lives that people live. Food is deeply symbolic of place in this case of Acuitzio, and it is a place that travels alongside people in their suitcases and Rubbermaid containers on their way back to Anchorage. In this way, people are sometimes "eating transnationally" in Anchorage in that they are eating food that is a "condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space" (Ong 1999:4) anchored in particular places and homes, in this case Acuitzio and Anchorage.

Many of my research participants not only bring foods from Mexico. According to some, California, where the friends and family of many of my research participants live, is like Mexico with regards to the foods that are available. In Alaska, really only the basics for Mexican cooking are available (and this is quite recent), so when people visit family elsewhere in the US they also travel back to Alaska with food. For instance, Victoria has an aunt who lives in California. When she visits her aunt, Victoria says it is like Mexico with regards to the food and the people. She said that,

> ...in California the bread is, tastes the same as in Mexico. When I came from California I brought a big box of bread and, uh, they ate, it does taste the same. But here, I don't know why they don't do it the same. (Interview 10, October 13, English).

Victoria's mother, Alina, also brings food from California when she goes to visit her sister. She said that,

> I brought...I went to bring food! I went to California to see my sister and to bring food! In San Jose, California. It's been 15 years since she went to Mexico, um hmm. Anyway, I brought *requesón* [cottage cheese or cheese curd], cheese, *menudo*. Victoria, my daughter went in May, too, and she brought *nisparos* [loquats]. Do you know what *nisparos* are? It's a fruit that's small and the colour of orange juice....and in California there are

> some and Victoria brought them in a bag. And me, when I brought for myself, I brought myself *uchepos* from California, chiles, these [showing chiles to me]. I brought *carnitas*, *tamales*, these things in cans…chiles in vinegar, I brought various things in cans. And I brought a suitcase full of food! The girl asked me, the one at the ticket counter, if I had a restaurant. I said, no, it's staying in my house! [laughs] and I passed with a suitcase with some chiles, a can of chiles that is this big [gestures] I put in my bag. But anyway, they [US Customs] didn't charge me. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

Alina's brother-in-law, who also lives in Alaska, talks about the things that his family brings with them from California when they go to visit his brother-in-law:

> Sara- and what, what do you bring from California?
> Jorge- Uy! Almost the whole pantry sometimes! Because…there [food] is really cheap. Me, when I went there with 50 dollars I bought what I could have bought here [in Alaska] with 400 dollars. I brought my whole pantry [laughs]. One time with a box I went to the airport and bought all of my groceries and said let's go!
> Sara- Oh, yeah?
> Jorge- Yeah, yeah, to buy like that, everything. Everything one needs. (Interview 12, October 19, Spanish)

Not only is the same food available with the same taste as in Mexico, it is also available in California in much larger quantities for a lower price than in Alaska. As well, the regulations on travelling with food across state borders are less stringent than those for travelling with food across international borders, so that things like meat and chiles may legally exit California and enter Alaska. Many of my research participants have friends and family (mostly family) that they visit in California. Thus, trips to California become an important part of the foodscape for Acuitzenses in Alaska, where people are strategically carrying the foods they need and desire from the places they visit, visits that depend on networks of friends and family members. Again, food connects places and the people in them, becoming a marker and a material reality of the transnational and, in the case of California, trans-statal connections, interconnections, and mobility across spaces that exist in the lives of my participants.

Buñuelos and Atole Blanco: Eating and imagining

However, it is not only food that is travelling; food-related things and ideas also travel between Mexico and Alaska, and places in-between. Recipes and ideas, customs

such as what time of day one should eat and what kinds of foods are appropriate, and memories about certain foods and times or places where they should be eaten, also travel between places.

Daily meal times are quite different in Mexico, with a mid-morning meal and the main meal of the day around 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, supplemented by a snack or *cena* later on in the evening. In North America, however, social convention and work schedules are arranged around an earlier breakfast, midday lunch, and evening main meal. This is something that many of my research participants said was difficult to adjust to. For instance, in an interview with Ernesto in Acuitzio, who works for a landscaping company in Alaska, he said,

> Normally, here in Mexico, [one goes] to work in the morning. At 8:00 in the morning or at 7:00 in the morning is breakfast. And so during...breakfast, between the time of breakfast and *la comida* [the main meal of the day] is work. Anyway, here in Mexico we are not accustomed to interrupting the workday with breakfast or lunch. Lunch. Because here one has lunch at 3:00 in the afternoon, which is *la comida, si*? And so, yes, it's really difficult from here to there. It's really difficult because. for example...there, one leaves for work and it's a coffee for the morning. At noon...it's lunch. Here [it is] breakfast. Anyway, one can't eat a lot because they have to be put to work with a full stomach. Anyway, it's, yeah, it's difficult because it breaks, it breaks this, schedule, it breaks...the clock. Of meal times. Or like, we can't say, "when is lunch?" and I don't take anything in the morning. Because...I don't like to [eat] in the morning. Here we have breakfast but at 10:00 in the morning. When I'm here in Mexico. There [in Anchorage], well no. Because I leave at 7:00 in the morning from my house and it's...a coffee sometimes. And if not, well nothing. I just go... until lunch hour, and a sandwich or a burrito, that's it. And until 8:00 or 9:00 at night....it's supper. Or it's a better meal. Anyway, yeah, it's difficult. Really tough. Or like, one gets accustomed to it. For me, for me neither the change in schedule from here to there isn't...I'm pretty indifferent. Or like, I take it there and have to not...I don't have anything for breakfast until lunch hour. And I'm not going to eat anything during the day until suppertime. And I bring it here and I get used to it here. Bring it here and get used to it...the first days, a little. But I go on getting accustomed to it, that one has to breakfast in the morning, eat at midday and have supper at night. Yeah, and I take it [the schedule of meals] there [Alaska]. Like here, there are three meals. In Alaska there will be no more than two, at midday and at night. (Interview 14, November 27, Spanish).

The times that one ought to eat at and what or how much should be eaten are ideas that people bring with them when they move between Mexico and Alaska and back again. As will be elaborated upon in Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", it is not only about adjusting to new eating schedules. Those eating schedules are part of the way of life in the United States, part of entering a wage labour economy. Adjustment to a new eating schedule also represents an adjustment to a new way of life. Food and ideas about food thus become directly tied into economic processes and features of wage labour in the United States.

Recipes and other forms of knowledge about food and eating are also things that travel. Many of my participants learned to cook from their mothers and grandmothers in Mexico. One of my participants, Ivonne, who is originally from California, married a man from Acuitzio and they now live in a new home with their three sons in Anchorage. When she married her husband, Fernando, she decided that it was important for her to learn to cook in the regional style, in the style of Michoacán. She makes this point in an interview:

> Ivonne- Um, where Fernando's from, like even the *mole*. The *mole* in the north of Mexico tends to be sweet. And the *mole* [the] kind from where Fernando, the region Fernando is from, is bitter, it's different. And, um, to the south it's sweet too. So that central region, the *mole*'s more bitter. Um, but, even the way that, like, *atole* is prepared or *menudo*, um, or even the way *enchiladas* are eaten is, it's different region to region and it's just probably availability of ingredients, I would say. Just what's more available.
> Sara- And how was it for you to learn recipes from your mother in law?
> Ivonne- It was interesting because she has so much patience. She has a lot of patience and, and...it was easy because they're not very difficult recipes.
> Sara- and you wanted to learn...?
> Ivonne- Yeah, I wanted to learn.
> Sara- For Fernando or for yourself?
> Ivonne- For me, because I liked it. And for them [her husband and sons] too, because the food is really good and there are things that Fernando likes. The foods, they're different. For example, the first time that I made lentils, I learned from my grandmother. And when my grandmother makes lentils, she puts cilantro. And Fernando's mom doesn't put cilantro. Anyway, they're...
> Sara- And the recipes are written down or memorized?

> and my mom, I make *menudo*, just come and eat it. And that is the way that we get together. Want it or not but we do get together, 'cause food bring us together. Um hmm. (Interview 10, October 13, English)

Food is something that represents home, that evokes memories of home or nostalgia for a different place and time. One evening I went to Maria's house to make *buñuelos*, a crispy, sweet snack traditionally served with *atole blanco* in the plaza (at least in Acuitzio).

> *While we chatted, Maria put flour, some water, some baking powder and some salt and some butter into a big bowl (she said in Mexico they use lard but the kids aren't accustomed to lard). She mixed all of that together to make dough. Then she showed her youngest daughter and me how to make it into balls by putting oil on our hands, pinching off a ball of dough, and rolling it until it is smooth and soft. We put those balls of dough on a pan. Meanwhile, Maria made atole blanco with Maseca flour [masa mix] and water and later added milk and sugar. Maria called Claudia and Claudia's husband, Tomás, who were really excited to come over and have buñuelos and atole blanco. Maria also called Fernando and Ivonne and they came with their kids.*
>
> *Next, Maria showed us how we needed to roll the dough-balls until they are very thin, almost transparent. She said that, in Mexico, women sit and put a cloth over their knee and stretch the dough out that way, or you could stretch the dough out over an upside-down bowl instead. But her daughter (who was covered in flour) and I just used rolling pins. The dough was soft and tore easily.*
>
> *Maria melted piloncillo in water to make syrup and heated a pan of oil. She put the thinly rolled-out dough into the oil and it cooked and got brown and bubbly and crispy. To eat it, you put the syrup on top and drink cups of atole blanco with it.*
>
> *Everyone [Claudia, Tomás, Fernando, Ivonne and their kids] came over and we chatted and they talked about getting buñuelos and atole blanco in the plaza and how ours were just as good, maybe better, and how, when I go, I should get buñuelos and atole blanco in the plaza, describing the lady that sells it. Claudia said that as soon as Tomás heard that we had made buñuelos and atole blanco he wanted to come over immediately.*

What is interesting is that getting together to make and eat *buñuelos* evoked memories and discussion about Acuitzio. This is something that contributes to the creation of a transnational social field that connects Anchorage and Acuitzio through imagination. Eating *buñuelos* and drinking *atole blanco* allows for the enjoyment of the taste, aroma, and texture of home (Law 2001), connecting Anchorage to Acuitzio through the senses. The opposite happened for me later on, however. For me, eating *buñuelos* made me reminisce about Anchorage. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> Ivonne- Some are written down, the more difficult that have more ingredients, or is by measurement, you know, you take, there's measurements involved. But normally, I remember them. Because they're simple. They're simple. And if I don't remember, I could always call her. I call her on the phone: "*Suegra*, how do I make this?" (Interview 5, September 28, Spanish and English)

As Ivonne shows, when she asks her *suegra* (mother-in-law) for help with recipes, connections between people are also built and maintained through food. This also helps in building the transnational social field that connects Anchorage and Acuitzio. Memories and recollections are also an important part of the foodscape that connects Acuitzio and Anchorage. As Simon Choo (2004:209) writes,

> the strong connections between the senses and memory facilitates the ability of foods to provide for an imagination of place, community, identity, and time – a connection to childhoods, homelands, reminiscences and nostalgic outpourings – but they also provide a means through which people… connect or reconnect with self and place.

This kind of "home cooking" (Law 2001) – the connection to home created through cooking – is something that was important to my research participants. Indeed, as Miguel said in an interview,

> It's something that doesn't end around that which is ours. For that reason I said that one…unfortunately sometimes a person doesn't value our culture, that which is our, each country…each place has their own, the things they always said, yeah. Because within what we are talking about, about food, well they never go to buy it. Although now we have access to many things, that we are preoccupied with making our, our own too. The *antojitos*, *los tamales*, *el pozole*. It's that which identifies Mexico, in particular and in general. Because for sure, wherever you want, in all of Mexico I feel that…one can, they're well known, tamales and *pozole*, *si*? Although the *pozole* [can be found] almost wherever [in Mexico]…and there are different kinds of *pozole*. Only that sometimes, ... you focus yourself on what you're used to, or how your mother made it in your home. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

And as Victoria says, food brings people together, connecting family to each other:

> But I dunno, I guess that the food does bring us comfort somehow…somehow to us. Well, like if we're, I dunno, if like we're gonna make a party we always cook Mexican food and it does bring family together. It does bring comfort, I dunno, on us. I don't know why, but it does bring family together, the food…we, or, I dunno, for me, yeah it's like, I'm just, I'm gonna make *menudo* and I'm just calling my dad

> Sitting in the plaza eating *buñuelos* and drinking *atole blanco* made me think about when we made them in Alaska. The Acuitzio ones are really thin, melt in your mouth and tasty, especially together with *atole blanco*. It was so much fun when we got together to make them [in Alaska]. (Fieldnotes Book 4, December 7).

While I ate *buñuelos* in the plaza in Acuitzio I thought about Anchorage, something that at first, seems contradictory. For me, *buñuelos* evoke an evening in Anchorage, while for my research participants, *buñuelos* evoke a variety of evenings in the plaza in Acuitzio. These contradictions connect Anchorage and Acuitzio through memory and imagination and as social practice, these imaginings also *create* Anchorage and Acuitzio for us. What I mean by that is that by making and eating *buñuelos* in Anchorage while thinking about Acuitzio (or vice-versa in my case), my participants create an Acuitzio, an imagined Acuitzio, or an imagined community (Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1996) of Acuitzenses in which they live their lives. In a way, you can be in more than one place and time while eating *buñuelos*, you are at once in Maria's kitchen in Anchorage while also in the plaza in Acuitzio (or vice versa), with memory and imagination negotiating between the two.

People also travel with food-related things. Copper *cazuelas*, *tamale* steaming pots, *comales*, and clay pots are some of the things that people bring. Clay pots, which are used for cooking beans in Mexico and said to give a special, and delicious, flavour to them, are an interesting case. Upon arrival in the United States, people are told by others in the community that they are unhealthy to cook in due to the possibility of lead poisoning from the glaze (still known as *greta* in Michoacán)[9]. Victoria provides one interesting example of food-related things that travel. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> In Victoria's kitchen there is a clock and some pots and other things hanging on the wall from Santa Clara del Cobre. She says that her kitchen is too small [in Anchorage], that in Mexico her grandpa ground corn so there were always lots of people in the kitchen there. She also has shelves with little miniature pots on them. She said that in Mexico her grandma has shelves all around her kitchen with little pots on them. Victoria said she wants to do that too. (Fieldnotes Book 2, October 8)

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[9] While the original Spanish glaze, also known as *greta*, did contain harmful lead oxide, most glazed pottery today either "contains no lead or is fired at sufficiently high temperatures to neutralize any noxious effects" (Balch 1999). The idea that the glazes are harmful persists among the Mexican community in Anchorage but not in Mexico.

For Victoria, the idea of what a kitchen should look like is one that comes from her grandmother's kitchen in Mexico, and so do the pots and other decorations that she adorns it with.

While food doesn't really travel in the opposite direction, from Alaska to Acuitzio, ideas about food definitely do. My research participants generally carry many consumer goods back to Acuitzio, things like t-shirts and shoes and souvenirs of Alaska as gifts to family members – sometimes up to thirteen suitcases worth! – but they do not bring food from Alaska to Mexico. Typically "Alaskan" foods such as smoked salmon, king crab, halibut, and blueberries often have a very short shelf-life, need to be frozen for travel, may not be permitted to cross the Mexico-US border, and are quite expensive. Nevertheless, ideas about food, for example, that food using lard is unhealthy, that sushi is tasty, or that pottery is dangerous due to the threat of lead poisoning, are all ideas that travel.

Connections/Interconnections

These kinds of food-related connections and interconnections make up the foodscape that arches over and connects Alaska and Mexico. The idea of a foodscape, following Arjun Appadurai (1996) and later Theodore Bestor (1999; 2005) and Sylvia Ferrero (2002), is an analytical concept that draws attention to the global flow of food culture and its relationship to global capitalism. The idea of a foodscape also highlights how movements of food are intertwined with the movements of groups, financial capital, and business, hence with different configurations of power. By talking about the kinds of foods, ideas about food, and food practices that are travelling and the people who are sometimes travelling with them, I can show how food and the movement of food and food-related things and ideas are wrapped up in configurations of power and the movement of people.

The presence of "Mexican" foods, ingredients, and recipes in Anchorage is wrapped up with the movement of Mexican people to Alaska, which in turn is wrapped up with the conditions of global capitalism because these conditions leave few work opportunities in Mexico while creating many stable and high-paying positions in booming Alaska. As well, Mexican foods in Alaska are also there because they have

become popular with the American population at large, a style of food and cooking that Alaskans love to eat as much as those in the lower 48 US states. That there are enough customers who will purchase Mexican food and ingredients in Alaskan stores and restaurants ties food to business. Many of my research participants also work in the food service industry, whether as cooks, dishwashers, bakers, or restaurant owners, and they become part of the political economy of food. To put it another way, food is part of the political economy of their lives. The business of food and eating is part of how they make a living and put food on their own table. As a man in Chicago at a march for migrant and immigrant rights quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* said: "Most people don't realize how much work we [Mexican migrants] do, but it's part of their daily lives...We are putting up all the buildings and cooking all the food. Today, they'll understand." (Avila and Olivo 2006). Through working in the food-service industry many of my participants are connected with political economy, the labour market, and the circulation of capital.

It is partially though food that places are connected and become connected. Food represents the connection between Anchorage and Acuitzio and it also comes to symbolize those places through its travel. Food and food-related things and ideas also literally (i.e, physically, emotionally, socially, economically and politically) connect the places through its travel. In this way, Alaska and Mexico are social spaces that overlap one another, and the evidence can be found on food plates and in fridges and in memories. In Alaska, people are sometimes "eating transnationally" since what is on their plate and in their cupboards and refrigerators is a result of interconnection and mobility across space (Ong 1999), i.e., as a feature of transnationality.

That food is travelling, that there is a foodscape at all is important because it highlights how transnational migration and globalization become part of people's lives, right down to the food that they eat. Travelling food demonstrates that when people feel that something is important about their home, about Mexico, they do what they can to carry it with them whether actually or in memory. It also speaks to the connection between food and imagination, where memories and imaginings about food not only connect places, but create them, allowing migrant workers to be in more than one place. In this way, they eat and live transnationally. The fact that many of my participants spoke

about missing the food in Mexico, and described their town as a place where there is delicious food to eat, highlights the importance of food in the lives of those who have left Acuitzio to find work or to follow family members who are working in Alaska. Ana, who has lived in Anchorage for thirteen years since following her husband, Paulino, there, said when describing her town,

> Ah, well, it's a pretty town and the people are really good people, the food is really delicious. And I like the climate a lot. It's nice because it isn't very hot, the climate, nor is it really cold like in Alaska. It's comfortable in the, in the winter. Uh, there they have food that's really good [laughs], really delicious food. (Interview 7, October 4, Spanish)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have re-introduced the idea of the foodscape and have begun to show what kinds of food and food-related things and ideas travel between Acuitzio and Anchorage as well as places in-between, such as California. I also have begun to explain how and why they travel. Food connects places and the people in them and is a marker of the transnational lives and identities of my research participants in that what is on their plates is often dependent on mobility and interconnection across space, of relationships between places, of transnationality. Food is also a material reality of transnationality in that it too travels across borders and boundaries alongside people. The global flow of food and food culture is tied up with other flows, such as those of people, capital, media, and ideas.

However, this flow of food culture is not the simple importation of one set of foods and ideas about foods from one place to another. It is much more complicated than that. As I heard over and over again, the food in Anchorage is not the same as in Mexico; it doesn't taste the same. It is not the same. In Chapter 6, I will introduce the kinds of food-related hybrids, disconnects, and unexpected consequences that stem from the flow of foods and ideas across borders.

Chapter 6

Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole: Hybrids, Disjunctures, and Other Unexpectededs, *or* New Ways of Being Mexican

Salmon with Salsa de Nopal (Lupe's recipe)
Ingredients:
Fresh Alaskan salmon fillets (even better if you catch it yourself)
Jar of nopales
Onions
Cilantro
Tomatoes (optional)
Instructions:
Grill the salmon with some chile and some salt as seasoning. Meanwhile, drain and rinse the nopales. Chop the nopales, the onion, the cilantro, and the tomato (if using) and mix together. Serve the salmon with the salsa.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the foodscape that connects Mexico and Alaska and the kinds of food and food-related connections and interconnections of which it is composed. I argued that food is one of the ways in which places are materially and symbolically connected and become connected. In this way, Alaska and Mexico can be seen as social spaces that overlap one another, and the evidence can be found on plates, in fridges, in memories, and in conversations about food and eating. In this chapter, I show the foodscape and the global flow of food culture as something uneven, creating unexpected situations, contradictions, and things that do not seem to go together. "Globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even localizing process" (Appadurai 1996:17, emphasis removed) so that it is more than just connection and interconnection; there is the unevenness and contradiction that stems from the kinds of

dislocations that people feel when permanently away. These are the kinds of hybrids, disjunctures (Appadurai 1996), disconnections, and instances of travelling culture (Clifford 1997) that result from the movement of people, ideas, and things around the globe, emphasizing how global processes become part of daily lives, examples of how food comes to articulate "both place and movement and through those identity and identifications" (Law 2001:280, from Bell and Valentine 1997:191).

The foodscape more than simply connects places and peoples in a symbolic and material way; it is also about creating new forms of being Mexican in Alaska. Cooking and eating in Anchorage is not the simple re-creation or importation of Mexican foods and forms of cooking and eating, it is a selective picking-and-choosing of what is important about Mexican foods and what is available or desired in Alaska (including foods native to the area as well as imports of foods and cuisines from all over the world). It is thus a creative act. Cooking and eating are creative and cultural acts.

In this chapter, I will begin by describing and evoking different kinds of food or food-related hybrids, de-territorialized and re-territorialized foods, disjunctures, disconnects, or "unexpecteds". Through stories and reflections drawn from fieldnotes and interview transcriptions, I will show that eating in Alaska can be creative and ironic, creating new ways to be Mexican and putting the notion of "authenticity" into question[10]. I will then go on to analyze what these food and food-related hybrids bring to the understanding of life for a Mexican person in Alaska and about being Mexican in a globalizing world. Taste, flavour, *sabor* becomes important in exploring the relationship between food and transnational identity and about lives lived in more than one place.

Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole

i. Disconnect

When Maria lived in Mexico, and after she got married, she lived in the two-story red and white house near the edge of town and kitty-corner from her cousin. It is much bigger than her townhouse in Alaska.

When Maria first met her husband, he was already travelling back and forth, to and from Alaska to work, like his father had before him. They spent a lot of difficult time apart before she and her three young children moved to Anchorage to join him in 1996. They still have their house near the edge of town that, as

[10] Authenticity measures more or less how foods ought to be (Appadurai 1986).

Maria says, they use mainly for a place to stay when they go on vacation once a year.

When Maria married, she did not know much about cooking. Later she learned to cook but, as she told me one day as we sat together in her kitchen in Anchorage with airplanes and traffic rumbling outside, "por ejemplo, los tamales, el pozole...yo ah...no los hacia. Y cuando vine aqui, aqui me ensene hacerlos" ("for example, tamales, pozole...I, uh...I never made them. And when I came here, here I learned to make them.") You can't buy these foods from vendors in Alaska, plus they are much easier to make in Anchorage, things come in a can or are pre-prepared, eliminating hours of soaking, grinding, preparing. She said, "el mole, para mi es mas facil porque me lo mandan de Mexico ya preparado. Nada mas yo lo disuelvo en caldo" ("mole, for me is easier because I bring it from Mexico already prepared. I just have to dissolve it in broth.")

Maria learned to make tamales, pozole, and mole over the telephone with her mother in Mexico or with her cousin and sister-in-law who lived in Anchorage. Her sister-in-law still lives there. Also, her husband, who has worked in restaurants for many years and now works in a Mexican restaurant owned by his brother, occasionally brings home prepared tamale masa, or dough, which makes it even easier. And so in Anchorage, of all places, Maria learned to make Mexican food.

Cooking and eating are creative and cultural acts, a selective picking and choosing of what is important about Mexican foods and what is desired about Alaskan foods, which includes imports from all over the world. And so, cooking and eating can speak to new ways of being Mexican in a globalizing world. In my interviews with research participants in Anchorage, the majority of whom are from Acuitzio, some compelling food-related ironies and hybrids came up that I did not really know how to interpret at first. For instance, I got to know the woman who works at the Mexican grocery store in town, Mexico Lindo. She is from Zacatecas and she and her husband own and operate the store with her brother-in-law and his wife. One day I was in the store and wrote the following in my fieldnotes:

> I mentioned that someone had said that her husband runs a restaurant too and Lucha said, "yes, a Greek restaurant". Then she said, "this is my husband", motioning towards a man standing nearby. I introduced myself and what I was doing, and I asked about the restaurant. It's called Greek Corner and it's on Fireweed. Jokingly, I asked if he was Greek. He said no, that he's Mexican and that he opened a Greek restaurant because there are so many Mexican restaurants in Anchorage and not many Greek ones. (Fieldnotes Book 1, August 28).

There is something intriguing about the idea of a Mexican man opening and running a Greek restaurant in Anchorage, Alaska. Never mind the fact that it has a big sign on the side that says "Authentic Greek and Italian Cuisine". One of my research participants also found it interesting and we talked about it in an interview:

> Victoria- But it was, it's weird, a Mexican doing Greek food. When, well I used to work in a sushi bar and I made the sushi and most people were, were like, are you Japanese or something like that? Nooo, I'm Mexican. And most people were like, what's a Mexican doing sushi!! And I'm like, well, just…I mean I went there because a friend of mine, well a friend of my sister's was the owner. So he needed some help and I'm like, oh, I can, I can, I can use the money, it'll be cool to learn. So I'm like, okay. And I went there to work for, I dunno, a half a year or something like that…because I mean the sushi's just seaweed, rice, and then they put avocado, cucumbers in there, whatever. You could put anything in there, whatever, I don't know if you want meat or not. But yeah, you could put anything. My dad loves to eat sushi and my little sister, she dies for sushi.
> Sara- Really?
> Victoria- Yeah, she's like, well, dad, take me to the sushi, I want sushi. And she eats that raw fish! I'm like, how could you eat that?!! I don't eat that one.
> Sara- You never tried it when you were there?
> Victoria- I tried it but I'm, it's not something that I was like, oh I'm dying to go to eat it, and my dad does. I eat the rolls, the California roll and things like that but not just the raw fish like salmon or tuna or something like that…'cause the rolls you have, like, at least the rice and the seaweed and whatever they put in there, it's just simple, I mean…the first time that I ate, I didn't know how to like put the wasabi in the, I mean, do the thing for the, dipping the sushi in. And I liked it because I learned stuff that I didn't know. I learned how to eat sushi and I learned how to use that, um, the chopsticks and my sister, the little one knows almost how to use them. (Interview 10, October 13, English).

These kinds of things made me deconstruct and later re-construct my idea of what Mexicanness and Mexican food is, and I think in Victoria's case above, it also made her think about what it means that a Mexican man runs a Greek restaurant, or that she was mistaken for a Japanese woman while working at a sushi restaurant. But she likes it because she learned something new, to eat sushi and use chopsticks, to experiment with food.

Maria made a similar point. In an interview, Maria said that she does not only like or eat Mexican food and she continues to eat and make new foods.

> Maria- Uh huh, although there are also other recipes that are not only Mexican food that I have learned here and that I like as well.
> Sara- Like what?
> Maria- There's a chicken that I learned to make that has...various seasonings, various spices, pepper, clove, cumin, eh...it has soya sauce, this vinegar, lemon and you leave it marinating. Or like, it gives it flavour and later you can put it in the oven or you can fry it and it ends up really delicious. It ends up like, like, with a flavour, it gives the flavour of the vinegar and the lemon and it turns out really, really well.
> Sara- Oh, good. And how did you learn to make it?
> Maria- A... a friend taught me. Yeah, he taught me this recipe. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish).

In the first story – about how Maria did not learn to cook Mexican food until she came to Alaska – she also seems to have re-thought the importance of those foods and their contribution to her identity in the far north. In the second story, experiences like finding ingredients from home, or from Mexico, in a "Chinese" store contribute to the maintenance of an identity somewhere between places, combining knowledge, values, and tastes from home with new experiences in Anchorage, or even with more "global" food experiences.

Claudia talked about working in a Thai restaurant in downtown Anchorage. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> She said she was like a cook's helper, cutting vegetables and preparing other ingredients. Two other people from Mexico worked there, everyone else was Thai. She said that she'd ask how they make certain dishes or how they say things in Thai, but they wouldn't say. Claudia said that at first she thought steamed rice was strange but that she likes the food but only some of it; lots of the flavours are too strong. But she really liked the Mongolian beef and ate that every day at the restaurant, every day for a year. And she always ate it with bread. She said that her Thai co-workers always asked her why she ate bread with everything. She told them that it's because they did not have any tortillas, and explained how tortillas are a complement; you have a bite of tortilla with a bite of your food. Anyway, she had bread instead of tortilla. (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 27)

Claudia's experiences say speak to the re-working of knowledge and values from home with new tastes and experiences away, eating bread in the place of a tortilla as an accompaniment to Thai food. She experiences new things and adapts to new tastes at the same time that she is adapting to a new way of life.

Another disconnect comes up at Mexican restaurants in Anchorage. Many of my research participants said that the food served there is really not very much like that at home at all; it is Mexican food for American people. Miguel and Inez made this point in my interview with them:

> Miguel- To preserve us, yeah. Now also there are lots of Mexican restaurants that we go to. But it never tastes the same.
> Inez- It's never the same. Including the Mexican food; the food here isn't our food. It isn't Mexican food.
> Miguel- Look here, for instance…I, I see in my line of work, I realize that here the people think Mexican food is only *burritos*, *enchiladas*, and *tacos*.
> Inez- That isn't our food.
> Miguel- And for us, and for us *enchiladas* and *tacos* are *antojitos*; [that's what] we call them. They are... they're street foods. They're... when people go to the market, it's the food that they make there, but…there it's the way in the countryside, you will know all about it there. In Acuitzio more than anything, and in Patzcuaro, there you go to the centre of town and there is a market and they're selling in stalls *enchiladas*, *corundas* ... and the *enchiladas* are very different. Here, like you go to the restaurant, talk to the people there, *enchiladas* with rice and beans, well how crazy! Why?!
> Sara- Yeah, the thing that I don't understand is how people…probably they would like authentic Mexican food but no one here in Anchorage has this kind of restaurant. And why?
> Inez- Um, maybe because Americans ask for that kind of food more. I think it's Tex-Mex.
> Miguel- It was my question that I've made, or like, for example, for example in a restaurant many, well, Mexicans had arrived. With respect to the restaurant where I work, there aren't many Mexican people, if you've noticed.
> Inez- There aren't many Mexican customers, not many Mexican customers.
> Miguel- The majority are Mexican restaurants, but for Americans.
> Inez- A restaurant with customers, a Mexican restaurant of 90% American and 10% Hispanic.
> Miguel- It's minimal, it's minimal, those that go, si? And, and we, not all, those that are already here, but the great majority have an image, that, that gives us this notoriety. We are more demanding.
> Inez- They're [Mexican customers] very demanding.
> Miguel- And do you know why? Because we know there, because we have seen what there really is and demand more.
> Inez-The authentic Mexican food, and one goes and wants to ask for that and can't ask for it.

> Miguel- And the American, give him whatever [dish] and he says, "Oh, delicious! Mmm, it's delicious, *oh it's so good!*"
> Inez- And they like the food, they like the food.
> Miguel- And they pay! (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

As Miguel and Inez say, the food in Mexican restaurants is very different from that in Mexico. While not especially surprising, the fact that there is a disconnect for them between food in Mexico and food in a Mexican restaurant brings up perceived differences between Mexican people and American people. While this is an idea that will be revisited in Chapter 7, "We Put Chile on Everything", suffice it to say at this point that there is an idea that Americans do not, or even cannot, eat chile, that they would not like "authentic" Mexican food, and that it would not sell. As such, what ends up being made in Mexican restaurants is some kind of hybrid cuisine, a mix of different flavours from different regions in Mexico, deliberately made sweeter and cheesier to appeal to percieved American tastes. Miguel appears disillusioned and sarcastic about this, especially when he says "and they pay!"

ii. Hybridization

> *After my interview with Alina we sat in the living room of their very new home in a new development where all of the houses look pretty much the same. Her husband's entire family has worked in Alaska at one time or another, beginning with his father. Later he and his brothers and now all of the brothers and sisters and all their children live in Anchorage, although the patriarch, the first one to come, was the first to go back to Mexico. Alina's family live in Acuitzio, with the exception of a sister in California. Anyway, after the interview she showed me all of the different kinds of dried chiles that she had, carefully explaining to me the name, their flavour, where they came from. Some she bought at the grocery store, others she had been permitted to bring from Mexico, and still others she had found in ethnic grocery stores around town. She said, "look at these, these little red ones. We have these in Mexico. My mom has them growing in her backyard and I found them in the Chinese store. I buy quite a few things there that I can't find anywhere else. Can you believe it? They're the same ones. The same as the ones from Mexico. 'Cause Chinese people use similar stuff to us, like they use this, um, we have these little fishes that are called, um...charales. The little ones that you just put them in, uh, pass them through the flour and then fry them. And then you eat them with, like salsa, like that. Like with a beer or something like that. So, they have...I found those in the Chinese store and then I found these little, um, peppers, really hot peppers that we use in Mexico too."*
>
> *Her husband, Oscar, came home shortly from his job as a construction worker and asked about the interview, about my project. We started to talk about food again, and he said, "what is really special, I think, is when people bring foods*

from Mexico, then, well, add them to things here. Like salmon with chile. We put chile on everything," he laughs. "But other things too, like halibut tacos or atole with blueberry. That's what I think is really special."

This brings up the creation of hybrid forms of cooking and eating, often described as "making do", as something arising out of necessity but in other cases as something genuinely creative. It can also be very indicative of how people see themselves, a marker of their identity. Families mentioned Thanksgiving as a time where they prepare a traditional American dinner with some special-occasion Mexican foods. As Inez told me in an interview in Anchorage,

> The kids already know the folklore, also something that we have is like, for example, on Thanksgiving. We make a turkey but on the side we make a Mexican dish. We make a turkey with gravy, mashed potato, and moreover, on the side we make *pozole*, *tamales*, *atole*. Or like, we make a mix. So that they [the kids] can learn that it is a really important day here. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

As she says, they make a mix, a mix of traditional foods from Mexico and the United States to celebrate a day that is very important in the US. As well, with seafood, especially salmon and halibut, fish that are very plentiful and affordable in Alaska, some of my research participants use them in their cooking, combining Mexican flavour with Alaskan products. While salmon and halibut are available in Mexico, they are not exactly traditional fare. As can be noted in the story, what Oscar finds really special is when people bring foods from Mexico, then add them to foods in Alaska, like salmon with chile or halibut tacos.

In Mexico, too, interesting combinations result from the movement of food and food-related things and ideas across borders and boundaries. For instance, I visited a restaurant and hotel owned by a man who had spent quite a few years in Aspen, Colorado. A friend, Ava, who is the cook in the house where I was staying in Acuitzio, had also been the cook at that restaurant both before and after the owner had gone to live in Aspen. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> We went inside the restaurant and it looks like a mountain hunting lodge in Patzcuaro. Tablecloths and carved wooden chairs from Patzcuaro and various examples of taxidermy – a deer, a duck, a peacock – from friends in Aspen. We had quail, not with *chipotle*, as ordered, but *a la mexicana.* The food seemed quite Mexican to me, but Ava tells me again that he

> changed it when he got back from Aspen. She can't really explain how, she says, but it changed. (Fieldnotes Book 4, November 21)

These hybrid forms, where there is a direct combination of foods or food-related things or ideas generally considered "Mexican" with those more "Alaskan" (or in the case of the restaurant, "American", or even more generally "North American"), are one example of how food and ideas about food do not travel unaltered from one place to another. Another example has to do with place, taste, and authenticity.

iii. It's not that easy, or the importance of taste

> *I sat in the plaza in Acuitzio talking to Victor, who had recently returned from his first trip to the United States, to Alaska. We were talking about how foods don't taste the same there, about how flavour seems to dissipate across the miles. With trucks rumbling past and people walking by, Victor describes how, in Anchorage, when he makes his favourite dish, mole con pollo (with mole brought from home), the ingredients aren't as fresh. It doesn't taste like home; it doesn't taste the same.*
>
> *It reminds me about something that Victoria said in Anchorage. She told me that Anchorage feels like home to her but then when I asked her what foods remind her of home, she said "uh, the kinds of food that we cannot make here. It's the same, like, um...my grandma's, um, uchepos, my grandma's pozole, my grandma's menudo. Things that we can make here but they don't taste the same, no, they don't taste the same."*

There seems to be an intimate relationship between taste and place so that something strongly connected one place does not taste the same in another even when the necessary ingredients are available. Taste and flavour are also of the body, especially corporeal. Taste is an embodied experience, very much part of the person as a material being, as a body that experiences, feels, and tastes. As Victor said in an interview in Acuitzio shortly after he returned from his first trip north,

> Yeah, the same for me because I, I didn't get used to the food there. Or like, and there [are]... more ... other things that, for example, when we bought chicken to make mole, we bought the chicken and it didn't, it didn't taste like chicken, it had no flavour. Really white and flavourless, no? And the vegetables and the fruits...nothing had flavour. (Interview 15, November 28, Spanish)

While it's true that a frozen, mass-produced chicken does not taste the same as a fresh one, and fruits and vegetables picked and packed in a refrigerator trailer to be transported thousands of miles on trucks and ships tend to lack flavour, it seems that there is

something else missing too. I heard many times that it was the taste, *el sabor*, that was the missing ingredient in things, *un sabor* that seems to dissipate in freezers and in cans, and in other markers of the industrial food system. Claudia expresses this idea in an interview:

> Claudia- Yeah, I still, I'm telling you my mom never cook for something from the can and, or something that, so for me was hard to start cooking and…sometimes I ask people: Is this good? because if, if I can see a can of soup that you just put water or milk or something like that…I don't easily buy whatever I see and try because sometimes I don't like, I don't like. So I prefer to do my things, you know, from scratch. But, like the tomato, if I don't have tomatoes or the tomato sometimes is too expensive, I buy a can of tomato and, and make it. But the flavour is different. The flavour is different. But I start using, like, like the pancakes, I just buy the, the flour, just mix with water or eggs or. But sometimes I used to put eggs and milk even that the box don't say nothing, because if I just do the way that the box says, like, I don't feel the flavour, I don't taste nothing. Is like, is okay but there's no flavour. So, I used to add whatever I want, you know. Or like the spaghetti, my mom used to cook the pasta and boil the pasta, you know, and then she mix, uh, tomato with onion and, uh, oregano and salt and garlic and then she mix the, the…tomato with the, the spaghetti. And then she put some butter in the bottom in the pan and then she put, uh, some spaghetti with the tomato already and then she cut the ham in a little pieces and she put ham and cheese and then put more spaghetti, more ham and cheese, more spaghetti, like that. And then she put it in the oven. So, that's the way I like. And here, all the people just boil, boil the spaghetti and then just got the Ragu salsa or something like that and then just put it on and…and is okay, I mean, I like, and I eat that, no? Or sometimes they, they cook the salsa with the meat or something…but…tastes different. Tastes different, so for me is okay, I eat that and I say, yeah I like, but I prefer the one that I used to eat all the time.
>
> Sara- Do you make it like that here? With the ham and the cheese?
>
> Claudia- Yes, yeah. If I have time. Sometimes if I don't have time, I just cook the, the meat with the salsa and put it on the top and that's it [laughs]. But if I have time, yes, I, I like to do it. I like to do it.
>
> Sara- And it's almost the same?
>
> Claudia- No, no and also the flavour is different because when you are doing your own salsa, your tomato, is with fresh, well, natural tomato and you put the onion and you put the garlic and the oregano and whatever and those salsas that you are buying taste different already. You know, so, is different. (Interview 4, September 27, English)

Ernesto also talks about how, at home in Anchorage where he lives with his brother and his sister-in-law and their family, they generally eat food that resembles Mexican food, but it is not. In an interview with him in Anchorage, he said,

> There in the house where we live, I live with my brother and my sister-in-law, my nephews...they try to arrive at a *semejanza*, something similar to Mexican food in the house. Or like, we're talking about there in the house they cook rice, beans, steak with chile, or...meat with chile. To try to arrive at, to simulate, Mexican food a bit more. That's how we handle it. (Interview 14, November 27, Spanish)

My participants said time and time again that the food is different, that there is a *semejanza* (similarity) but it is different. The ingredients might be more or less the same, but the process might be different, for instance. Finding and using "authentic" ingredients becomes very important in order to get the right *sabor*. This concern with authenticity and taste is most prevalent with very traditional and symbolically "Mexican" or "*Michoacano*" foods, such as *tamales*, *pozole*, *mole*, *uchepos*, *corundas*, or *carnitas*. People say that some foods, like *uchepos* or *corundas*, are rarely made in Anchorage, that it would not be possible even though all of the ingredients could be found in Alaska except for the particular kind of leaf[11] that each is wrapped in before steaming. In these cases, it seems that substitution is out of the question.

There is also discussion about the notion of "time" in many of my conversations with participants about cooking and eating. First of all, there seem to be compromises made because of limited time for preparation in Alaska. In some cases, this is considered positive by participants, as in Maria's case where making traditional foods became easier for her since she need only open a can instead of spending hours processing corn. For others, though, this compromises authenticity and is not as good as food that is laboured over in the traditional way. There is less time for meal preparation, as a feature of labour in the (North) American economy, with life in rural Acuitzio described as the opposite, as a life *más sana, más calma* (more tranquil, calmer). Another part of the discussion about

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[11] According to my participants, green corn husks should be used for *uchepos*. For *corundas*, fresh green corn leaves from the stalk should be used. While preparing *corundas* in Morelia, however, we used a longer, slimmer leaf that is not from the corn plant. There are likely some familial and regional differences, but suffice it to say that my participants felt that the leaves required were not available in Alaska.

"time" is also the idea that tastes change over time. In this sense, my participants speak of not only getting used to different tastes, but also to getting used to a different way of life.

Authenticity is part of the discourse about food, measuring more or less how things ought to be (Appadurai 1986). As Arjun Appadurai (1986:25) writes, "Authenticity is typically not the concern of the native participants in a culinary tradition, except when they (and the food) are far from home." Alina explains this to me in an interview:

> Sara- Um, are authentic Mexican ingredients and recipes important to you?
> Alina- Yes.
> Sara- Can you say something about that, like why are they important? And is it difficult to buy the authentic ingredients here, or not?
> Alina- Because they haven't been brought here, I think. In California there is everything. In California, yeah, but here, no.
> Sara- Is it difficult to buy the ingredients you need? Do you have to change your recipes when you can't find authentic ingredients?
> Alina- Uh huh, yeah.
> Sara- And how do they change?
> Alina- The flavour. Si, the *sabor*.
> Sara- So, the *atole* and what else?
> Alina- The *atole*...everything. The *pozole*, yes, because it's in a can. The dough, the *masa,* because it's flour. There, there, no, there the dough is...different. You'll see [laughs]. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

When the right ingredients are not available, modifications are made. As Ivonne says in an interview,

> Sometimes, because of the ingredients, we have to make modifications but, um, but we use the most authentic things possible when we make Mexican food. For example, um, let me see...for, for *arroz con leche* normally they use um, sticks of cinnamon, the long ones. And sometimes you can find them but they are really small and they don't have very much flavour, so, um, you need to modify the recipe. Vanilla also, sometimes it's not authentic and so you buy the imitation. The tortillas are not authentic. We modify the tortillas. Um, some of the vegetables aren't those that they typically use. For instance, when you make a chicken soup sometimes you can find *chayote*, but sometimes you can't. So, sometimes you don't put certain things. [pause]. Cheeses, um...things and...sometimes, yes, *pero* [but] now it's much easier because there is more. But sometimes there are...but, for example, if there aren't any in Fred Meyer, they have them at Mexico Lindo and Mexico Lindo is closed or is far away and there isn't time to go all the way there. So, they're not

> readily available everywhere. Sometimes they are available, but you have to look for them. Um, you have to go to Mexico Lindo, you have to go to red apple. So it, it takes, it's not like, you know, when you're in Mexico you go to the corner store and you pick up that thing, that missing ingredient. It's not that way. Most, and, and, you especially see that around the holidays when you're trying to prepare, like, the holiday meals, como un *ponche mexicano*, a Mexican punch (interview 5, September 28, Spanish and English).

In this way, my research participants in Alaska adapt their recipes, changing them to accommodate ingredients that are available in Anchorage and to replace those that are not. The food, the flavour adapts, much as the people say that they themselves do. I heard the phrase "*uno se adapta*" (one adapts), with reference to both recipes, and people's lives, many times in conversations in kitchens and around dining room tables in Anchorage. This is a process that depends on the connection between places, between Alaska and Mexico and on the connections with friends and family within those places. As Inez said in an interview,

> We have adapted. Without leaving our customs and without leaving our lives…we have adapted all the way here, without leaving our values and our customs. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Hybrids, Disjunctures, and other Unexpecteds

The vignettes, situations and excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes that I introduced above are undoubtedly a part of the foodscape that connects Mexico with Alaska, and Acuitzio del Canje with Anchorage. They are creative and ironic parts of that flow of food culture, emphasizing the non-linearity of it all and the unexpectedness that results from the movement of people, things, ideas, and, in this case, food and food culture across borders and boundaries around the world. Indeed, as Arjun Appadurai (1996:37) writes,

> "…people, machinery, money, images, and ideas [and food] now follow increasingly nonisomorphic paths; of course, at all periods in human history, there have been some disjunctures in the flows of these things, but the sheer speed, scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture" (Appadurai 1996:37).

Even more importantly though, I think stories like these speak to "being Mexican in Anchorage", or more broadly, to being Mexican in a globalizing world. This again is complex. On the one hand, the "traditionally Mexican" becomes important, as in the first story where Mexican foods became more important once arriving in Anchorage. The circumstances here, the connection to place, the fact that this happened in Anchorage and not somewhere else is telling, as these foods are not as readily available for purchase as they might be in California, for instance. Here it is about nostalgia, memory, imagining home, creating a sense of belonging. But the re-creation of "traditionally Mexican foods" in Alaska is also deeply ironic and compelling. This irony, along with the creativity and experimentation that is a part of food and eating for many, speaks to the ways in which eating for Mexican migrant workers is a creative act. It is also something that depends on movement, on mobility. That movement and mobility is something that articulates with identity. James Clifford (1997) writes about "ex-centric natives" and "travelling culture makers", using the example of a group of performers who play Hawaiian guitar, sing, and dance[12]. This group spent over fifty years on the road before returning to Hawaii to perform versions of Hawaiian traditional music from the early 20th century. Clifford asks, "How did they compartmentalize their Hawaiianness in constant interaction with different cultures, musics, and dance traditions – influences they worked into their act, as needed? How, for fifty-six years in transient, hybrid, environments, did they preserve and invent a sense of Hawaiian "home"? And how, currently, is their music being recycled in the continuing invention of Hawaiian authenticity?" (Clifford 1997:26). While this is a more extreme example of "dwelling-in-travel" (Clifford 1997), does it not recall how Maria learned to cook Mexican food in Anchorage? That Maria learned to cook Mexican food in Anchorage is something that can only be understood in terms of "travel relations" (Clifford 1997:25), in terms of movement and connection between places and people, much like the story of the Hawaiian musicians.

As the second vignette, "Hybridization", hints, Anchorage is much more multicultural, cosmopolitan, and global than popular imagination has us believe. Alaska

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[12] Thank you to Dr. Susan Heald for alerting me to a striking similarity between Maria's story and that of the Hawaiian musicians.

is a major hub for imports and exports for North America (especially from Asia), with major courier companies such as FedEx and UPS occupying huge warehouse facilities at the surprisingly large airport in Anchorage. As a destination for people from all over the world who value the high wages available and the comparatively tranquil and laid back style of living, together with stunning scenery, Anchorage truly is a global city considering that in 2000, 8.2% of its population was foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2006) and that more than 92 languages other than English are spoken in its public schools (Bibbs 2006:8). There is a surprisingly large variety of cuisines available for such a small and remote city, with these so-called ethnic foods available in grocery stores, specialty stores such as Mexico Lindo, and restaurants. However, not everything is available. As I already noted, eating in Alaska, as in many places, is more of a selective picking and choosing, experiencing new foods and food experiences, for example, finding "Mexican chiles" in a Chinese store, as in one of the vignettes above, and actively experimenting and trying new ones, as in the case of halibut tacos and blueberry atole. With Alaska being famous for its halibut, and tacos evoking thoughts of Mexico, these creative combinations come for good reason. A halibut taco, or salmon with chile, or salsa de nopal then, are hybrid foods, symbolic of these places and the connections between them. Halibut is a part of what Alaska is and what one does when they go there, and tacos are something quintessentially Mexican. A similar case can be made for blueberry atole, as well as salmon with chile, or other cultural forms such as the Alaska Mexican Folkloric Dance Academy and Art and Culture Group Xochiquetzal-Tiqun, whose name and philosophy bring Alaska and Mexicanness together to create something new, and where, as the instructor told me, the music they dance to – traditional Mexican songs – is only available in European catalogues, mostly from France and Germany. Indeed, I spoke with the dance instructor one day and, as I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> We talked about how when she was researching different Mexican dances, she found the song for the *tortuga* (tortoise) dance after lots of searching on a German or French website where they are storing or archiving music. We also talked about how the steps for the *norteño* (northern) dance come from polkas. She learned in Germany that they dance a polka called the Mexican Polka, which is a polka, but to Mexican music. She said that is how people innovate. (Fieldnotes Book 3, October 22)

The combination of cultural forms to create something new is indeed one of the ways in which innovation occurs. As I am arguing in this chapter, it is one of the ways of bringing Alaska and Mexicanness together to create something new with regards to food and eating, which also introduces new ways to understand both Mexicanness and Alaska. In other words, the combination of cultural forms to create something new speaks to new ways of being Mexican. And, of course, being Mexican in Alaska is different than being Mexican in some other place or space. Being in a different place or space changes something. In the third vignette, "It's not that easy" and in my accompanying argument, with regards to food, something is missing from the foods in Anchorage. While people say it is the taste, *el sabor*, that is different, I think it has more to do with being in a different place and all that that entails.

All of this being said, while I do see food and eating by many of my participants in Anchorage as something creative and interesting, I consider it important to point out that I am not speaking necessarily of a "liberating creativity" where all is positive. To the contrary, it is important to realize that many of these people, if given the chance, would not have left Mexico in the first place and would go back if possible.

And so, in talking about transnational identity, it is not only about the connection and interconnection between places, but the active and creative maintenance of an identity within and between places, not quite one, not quite the other, yet deeply connected in complex and often conflicting ways. I see the food related connections and interconnections as something that connects Anchorage and Acuitzio and the people in them, but I also see them as creative and symbolic acts, as indicative of lives lived in more than one place. The result produces ironies, hybrids, disconnects, and disjunctures, some of which I have talked about in this chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have gone into greater detail about the foodscape that connects Mexico and Alaska, showing it as something more complicated than the simple importation of unchanged goods and ideas from Mexico to Alaska. The foods and food-related ideas in Anchorage are there as a result of the movement of people, things, and ideas around the globe. As a result, they have been changed, as have the people who

bring those foods and food-related ideas and knowledge with them to Anchorage. In this change, there is something missing, but there is also creativity and innovation that results from new experiences and new identifications. In the next chapter, "We Put Chile on Everything", I will write more about the connection between food and identity. More specifically, I will look at eating, shopping for, and talking about food as performances or enactments of identity.

Chapter 7

"We Put Chile on Everything": Identity Performance and the Case of Chile

Tamales (Cirila's Recipe)
Ingredients:

1 bag of Maseca tamale flour (the tamale flour is different from Maseca flour for tortillas; the correct one is very important)
5-6 spoonfuls of baking powder
1 small container of lard (or you can use margarine or vegetable shortening if you are not accustomed to eating lard)
Corn husks, dried
Filling (pork with chile rojo, chicken with chile verde, cranberries and sugar or whatever you prefer)

Instructions:

Heat the lard until it is liquid. Once it has cooled a bit, mix everything together. You need to beat the dough until it is really light and airy. The more you beat it, the better the tamales will be. After that, if you are making sweet tamales, mix in the dried fruit and sugar and spread on corn husks. Fold and steam. If you are making savoury tamales, spread the filling on the corn husk, put a spoonful of filling in the middle, fold both sides together and fold the end up. Everyone has their own way of folding them, but I found this way the easiest. Steam for about an hour. Be sure not to get upset while you are making them since they say that the tamales will get upset too and they will not turn out well. If you do not get upset and they turn out right, your tamales would be very tasty with Everyday Salsa (see Chapter 3).

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the relationship between food and identity. More specifically, it is about how identity is enacted or performed through acts of cooking, shopping, and/or eating. The connection between food and performance was not one I went into my research looking for, but I found that, as Lisa Law (2001:280) writes, "everyday experience can become a performative politics of ethnic identity". While in

Alaska, learning to eat with a tortilla, eating chile, and hearing people talk about what is the proper way to prepare or eat something, what is and is not Mexican food, and what is "Mexican" about it, made me think about eating as a performance and about what food has to do with identity and the creation of difference (i.e., Us and Them), and about the production of locality and the importance of place. As Arjun Appadurai (1996:180) writes, in the production of locality "space and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action."

Keeping in mind previous chapters about connections and disconnections, this chapter begins by briefly discussing what I mean by identity performance. I then move on to supply specific examples and stories of food performances, of enactments of identity. My particular focus is on chile, the peppers so commonly used in Mexican food. I also use my own experience of learning to eat and to cook Mexican food in Alaska to add additional understanding to the place of chile and tortillas in transnational identity politics and performance. Before concluding, I discuss and analyze these performances as public performances of Mexican transnational identity politics. In other words, I explore the question: How does food play into "acting Mexican" in Alaska?

Identity performance

Performance theory as related to food and eating as I use it here draws on Judith Butler's theory of performativity (1999), which deals particularly with gender as a key part of identity. In her book, *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler "troubles" gender and deconstructs it, dislodging it from a "natural", ascribed category to something that is fluid, enacted, and performed. As she puts it, "gender is an identity tenuously constructed in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1999:179, emphasis removed). In her (re)conceptualization, identity is an *effect*, something *produced* or *generated* (Butler 1999). There is no doer behind the deed; the doer *is* the deed (Butler 1999). If that is the case, and identity is an effect, produced through a repetition of acts, so would such acts not include those related to food and eating?

In this thesis, performance theory highlights how identity, and in this case "Mexican identity", is produced through discourse, repetitive language and action, and rhetoric, particularly through cooking, eating, shopping for, and talking about food. Like gender, Mexicanness is not an innate characteristic; it is something that is made, that becomes naturalized through acting and enacting in concordance with social conventions. Realizing this also helps to deconstruct and denaturalize Mexicanness, helping to show how being Mexican in Alaska is something made, something created. Being Mexican in Alaska is something made in part by cooking, eating, shopping for, and talking about food in ways that fit with social conventions about Mexicanness. These are also transnational performances in that they depend on interconnectedness and mobility across space, on the food-related connections between Mexico and Alaska.

While eating and cooking are not commonly considered performances in the same way as, say, a musical performance or something like that, these days the prevalence and popularity of cooking/eating shows and of channels like Food TV and the Food Network make it even more obvious that eating and cooking are performances, or even spectacles. As we eat or cook we *show* something about ourselves, something that is not always, but certainly is sometimes, a "public" performance. One instance of cooking and eating being a public performance is me as anthropologist with notebook and audio recorder in hand, visiting a research participant to find out about food. In this case, the participant shows, teaches, and *performs*, knowing full well that the anthropologist is representative of (and will be "writing up" for) a wider audience. Similarly, the anthropologist's desire to somehow fit in with a new social group means that she observes, mimics, and learns how to perform at the table as well, to act in relation to food in the appropriate ways.

As I wrote in Chapter 2, "Food for Thought", I follow Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999), who writes that food and performance converge conceptually at three junctures: to perform is to do, to perform is to behave, and to perform is to show. For my purposes, especially important are the first two junctures. If perform is to do, "to perform in this sense is to make food, to serve food. It is about materials, tools, techniques, procedures, actions." (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999:1). It is about recipes. Demonstrating and sharing recipes thus are forms of performance. If to perform is to behave,

> this is what Erving Goffman (1959) calls the performance in everyday life. Whether a matter of habit, custom, or law, the divine etiquette of ritual, codifications of social grace, the laws governing cabarets and liquor licenses, or the health and sanitation codes, performance encompasses the social practices that are part and parcel of what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) calls *habitus*. To perform in this sense is to behave appropriately in relation to food at any point in its production, consumption, or disposal, each of which may be subject to precise protocols or taboos (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999:2, emphasis in original).

In this chapter I am interested specifically in the performance of transnational identity, an enactment of identity that would depend on the connection between places and on the "condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space" (Ong 1999:4). Through cooking, eating, talking about food, and shopping for food, people do, behave, and show something about themselves in relation to food. That is, we perform; we enact our identities in relation to food, at least in part. Since identity is such a complex and contingent process, the relationship between identity and food is only one of the many relationships and processes that make up identity.

"We Put Chile on Everything"

> *I had been invited to a baptism in Acuitzio. Luisa, who works at the house where I was staying in Acuitzio, invited me to the baptism of her son. No one else from the house could attend, so I went alone to the Santuario for the ceremony. They were having a comida at 2:00, so later on that day I made my way over to a part of town I didn't know very well, to a half-finished sala (hall) where the comida was to be served. Walking in, I didn't recognize anyone and I sat down at a table where I could feel relatively out-of-the-way. Three women were sitting near me. They spoke very quickly and made lots of jokes, some of which were at my expense. But they made some interesting points, like how they see food in the United States as less natural, mostly based on the fact that one of their husbands worked in the fields in New Jersey and saw how many chemicals are used. They see food in Mexico as much fresher and more natural.*
>
> *The food was served and we ate homemade corundas and chicken barbacoa, rice, and beans with tortillas and salsa verde. There was a really big cake made by Miguel's sister for afterwards. One of the women said, "we eat a lot of chile here", and all three of them were certain that the salsa would be too spicy or hot*[13] *for me, that I would not be able to eat it. I asked them why they thought I*

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[13] I use the term spicy or hot to replace *lo que pica* or *picante* in Spanish. Chiles are both spicy and hot in Mexico, and to varying degrees, depending on the type of chile, whether or not it is dried or fresh, and how it is prepared. Chiles have many attributes, and each have their own taste, colour, and even texture. Among

would not be able to eat it and one said, "well, people in North America don't really eat chile; they can't".

I realized later that this was something I had heard before, and it was something that came up often.

This idea, that "we" (i.e., Mexican people) eat chile and "they" (everybody else, specifically Americans[14]) don't is something that I heard over and over again in Anchorage and in Mexico. Another time, after an interview with Alina at her home in Anchorage, her husband came home and asked me about my project. As I first discussed in Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", he said that what he considers to be really special is when Mexican people come to Alaska and combine Mexican ingredients or styles of cooking with typically Alaskan foods, like salmon with chile. As I noted earlier, he said, laughing, "we put chile on everything!" The "we" evokes a collective, even the nation as a whole. It comes up again at the end of my interview with Alina in Anchorage:

> Alina- Do you want an apple? [cutting up a granny smith apple]. This apple tastes like a *perón* apple from Mexico. In my house my dad has a row of *perón* apple trees and this apple tastes like, like *perón*. It's like sweet and sour.
> Sara- Yeah, Granny smith. That's the name here.
> Alina- Oh. And I like it because it tastes like those from Mexico.
> Sara- My mom always puts salt on her apple.
> Alina- We put salt and chile. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

What is interesting is that both Alina and my mother put salt on their apples, but it is chile that becomes significant, that creates difference. And indeed, chile is very important in Mexican cooking, to Mexican people, and it would seem, to their identities, especially while away. As Jeffrey Pilcher (1998:163) writes, "Chiles now form part of the [Mexican] national identity, captured in the...refrain: '*Yo soy como el chile verde, picante pero sabroso*' (I am like the green chile, hot but tasty)." That chile, symbolic of Mexican national identity, is combined with quintessentially Alaskan foods, such as salmon, is something that speaks to the enactment of an identity that is neither here nor there, neither Mexican or Alaskan, or to an identity that is a combination of both.

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my research participants, the "hot" attribute of chile is emphasized over so many other qualities when chile is used as an identity marker.

[14] I am using "American" here as my participants do, to refer specifically to someone from the United States.

With chiles as part of the Mexican national identity, they are something that my research participants eat, know about, and talk about to express their Mexicanness in opposition to the American (or North American more generally) who does not, or cannot, eat chile. Chile thus becomes a convenient identity marker for my research participants. In Mexican restaurants in Anchorage, my participants often said that the food served is not really Mexican, that it is not authentic. After all, Americans do not eat chile, and if they were to serve "real" Mexican food at a restaurant, it would not do very well since the food would not sell. Americans would not like it. This is an idea first introduced in Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", but it is one that deserves further exploration. For instance, in an interview at his home in Acuitzio, Antonio made some subtle observations:

> Antonio- Yes, yes…me, when I arrived there they told me that there was a…that there was Mexican food. Well I expected to see Mexican food. Well, I started to try it, and, well, no…it's something different. It's a little bit sweeter…
> Sara- Yeah, like the food there is sweeter in the restaurants, right?
> Antonio- Yeah, enough, it doesn't, it doesn't give the flavour that it should have.
> Sara- And why do you think they don't make the food like here?
> Antonio- Well, they, almost all of them think that, that Americans don't like hot and spicy food, and for that reason they make this…to make it a bit sweeter, and it loses the flavour. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

My participants seem to set up a duality between eating chile and not eating chile, between Mexican and American. For my participants, eating chile is a way to perform, to enact their identities as Mexicans in Alaska. So many times in both Anchorage and in Mexico I heard people say that "we eat chile", "we put chile on everything", "we use this chile in our mole". For me, this shows that eating chile is not just eating, it is about being part of a larger group, a larger group that eats chile – the Mexican people. Chile becomes highly symbolic of Mexican identity, an identity that is performed through eating or cooking with chile, and through behaving appropriately in relation to its use. It is true that eating is never just eating, and cooking is never just cooking, especially when there is an outsider in the room. In other words, it serves to mark difference and create boundaries between groups.

Certainly, by making and eating Mexican foods with my research participants I was able to see how they do, behave, and show their relationship to food and to Mexicanness in Alaska. I was able to appreciate how food and performance are related and what that has to do with identity. I spent a lot of time with Maria in her Anchorage kitchen, talking and learning how to cook. When making something, she would often break her explanation of what she was doing with how they do it in Mexico, how it ought to be done, how "we" make it. It is about performance as doing, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999) says, it is about making and serving food as well as about materials, tools, techniques, procedures, and actions. It is about recipes and instructions and all of the other specifics of cooking. I made *tamales* and *buñuelos* and many other things with her and each time she demonstrated to me how to make them, how to serve them, what substitutions she had to make due to the lack of correct ingredients or something similar. Each time I learned to cook something in both Anchorage and Acuitzio, I felt I was being shown a process, even a ritual. I was being shown something that differs each time but, in the repetition of performance, retains the necessary characteristics to persist over time and carry meaning with it. Miguel and Inez made these points in an interview in Anchorage:

> Miguel- And there is, and listen, within [Mexico], look, in Puebla *mole* is very common.
> Inez- Sweet *mole*, the food there is very sweet.
> Miguel- In Jalisco, what do you have?
> Inez- *Barbacoa*. Goat, eh…with salsa. Very tasty.
> Miguel- And the *barbacoa* has to be made with goat. Or lamb. And this, how am I going to tell you, all of these things for example, have their, their, how can I say this? It's a ritual to make that food. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Describing the preparation of these traditional foods as ritual undoubtedly connects food to performance. Miguel goes on to talk about Pátzcuaro (a nearby town known for its significance to the culture and history of the region) and how the enchiladas are there; he describes the process:

> Miguel- Look, the *enchiladas* there, it's a, it's a big *comal* that one works at, and with lard. And the tortillas, very different. And later, there, fried and golden, are carrots and potatoes that are rested on top and besides they make, some, some *chiles en escabeche*. In, in, with vinegar, um hmm.

> Those you put and, and your chicken already cooked, but fried...And that...
> Inez- In lard.
> Miguel- And your, your cheese in the middle. That is an enchilada. There is no other. Anyway, sadly, here you ask, *enchiladas con frijoles y arroz* [enchiladas with rice and beans]? (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Those are enchiladas, prepared in a certain way and served with fried chicken and *chiles en escabeche*. Making and serving enchiladas like that, or even talking about it, I think is an enactment of the relationship between food and identity. And the fact that we are talking about it or – on other occasions – eating *enchiladas* prepared and served that way in Alaska, not in Pátzcuaro, is something that depends on transnational connection and interconnection. Thus, it is transnational identity that is performed here.

On another occasion, I made tamales with Alina and her daughters for a family birthday party. One of her daughters, Aimara, married an American man, Mike (but he likes chile, Alina pointed out), and it was their son's first birthday that we were celebrating. Many of the guests were friends and family members from Acuitzio, and some were friends of Aimara's husband. It was an interesting situation since it was difficult for the Mexican side of the family to communicate with Mike's American friends, and vice versa, since few on either side could speak the other language. Alina, Victoria, Aimara, and I had spent the day making *tamales*.

> *Alina and Victoria had already started working to get things ready to make tamales. Alina had prepared most of the ingredients beforehand. She had cooked the pork with chile rojo and cooked and shredded the chicken. She had also made the dough ahead of time. After Victoria made the chile verde for the chicken, she asked me to come and learn how to make the tamales. Alina gave me the recipe and made sure I wrote it down correctly. I asked how much dough to put on each corn husk and they said just to eyeball it, depending on the size of the leaf. You put the masa on the leaf, smooth it out and leave room on all sides. Then you add a spoonful of filling in the middle before folding the whole thing in half and folding the bottom up. The tops stay open. Alina had a big pot with a wire rack on the bottom, to steam them in. She brought that pot from Mexico. Guests started arriving, members of the Ramirez family and friends of Mike's. We had cake and then tamales with salsa and cream. There were also sweet ones with cranberries in them that we had dyed pink.*
>
> *It was interesting because the two little American girls would not try the tamales. They said they didn't like anything and they ended up eating jam sandwiches. Their father and brother pretended the food wasn't spicy and made jokes about it, but you could see that they really did find it spicy since their faces*

were red and they kept refilling their glasses. The mother told stories about her aunt who made tamales at Christmastime when they lived in Texas.

While we were eating the tamales, Alina mentioned that it's very different if you order them in a restaurant in Alaska. If you did, they would come with lettuce, sour cream, and all kinds of other toppings. But in Mexico, she said, you just eat them plain or maybe with a little bit of salsa. At the party, we ate them plain with salsa and cream. They were so delicious, not too doughy, and so flavourful, especially with a bit of salsa.

While making tamales and serving them at the party, Alina and Victoria were performing by doing, which is about making and serving food (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999). They spoke about how they should be made, how they are made in Mexico, what modifications are made, and so on, to underscore how to behave. We also behaved appropriately in relation to the food by serving the tamales with salsa, as is customary in Mexico, rather than with sour cream, lettuce, sauce, and cheese as in the Alaskan restaurants. Interestingly, too, the American guests also behaved appropriately (for them) in relation to the food by finding it too spicy, even to the point of the food being inedible for the little girls. As Jeffrey Pilcher (1999:143-144) writes,

> ...tamales convey many levels of identity. Individual quirks of taste and texture allow Mexican families to distinguish the neighbours' tamales from their own by particular blends of chiles and herbs or by subtle flourishes in spreading corn dough on the wrapper. Basic ingredients locate tamales on a regional level...and at other times point to a more precise *patria chica*. Tamales even range beyond the national borders...Nevertheless, with the creation of a Mexican national cuisine, tamales have also been identified with *lo mexicano*."

And so, by making tamales, one performs these identities or, conversely, those identities that do not include the tamale.

Demonstrating knowledge about chile is also part of the performance of Mexican identity, I think. Sharing or showing that knowledge to an outsider is something that marks difference. In Mexico, there are a very large number of different kinds of chiles, each with differences based on flavour, appearance, and regional distinctions. These chiles are also differentiated on the basis of whether or not they are dried or fresh. Furthermore, in addition to chile, the vegetable or dried vegetable, there is chile sauce, chile seasoning for fruit, and a variety of other products that add a particular *sabor* (taste) to foods. Even most of the candy sold in Mexico has a chile flavour, whether chile-sweet,

chile-salty, chile-bitter, chile-sour or some combination. During my interview with Alina at her Anchorage home, we began talking about chiles and she brought out each kind to show to me, describing where she purchased them, what they taste like and what they are used for.

> Alina- These chiles aren't here Sarita. They're called *mulato*. [sound of a bag opening] There are no more than these, but red. And this is another kind of chile. This is called *mulato*, to make *mole*. And this one looks the same but it is not the same. [bag crinkling] You think it's the same, right?
> Sara- Yes.
> Alina- It's not the same! It's not the same. When you boil them, this one turns black and this one turns red. And this one I brought from Mexico and I don't have to bring this. It's illegal…to bring chiles.
> Sara- What do you use those chiles for?
> Alina- This is for *mole*.
> Sara- And those?
> Alina- Look, in Mexico [bag crinkling] they say that one has to use four or five varieties of chile for *mole*. But to me, I like mole with no more than this chile. Yeah, because this one turns red and to me, I don't like red mole. To me, I like it black, really dark. And it has a different flavour, this one from that one. This one I use for *enchiladas*. And that one for *mole*.
> Sara- There are many, many, many kinds of chile.
> Alina- Yes, and there's this one and there's another black one. Just a second, let me show you the other black one.
> Sara- Oh, there are so many!
> Alina- [bag crinkling] This is chile…*chile guajillo*. *Chile guajillo*. This is *chile adobado*. And this is *chile negro* but it isn't black the same as this one. This one is skinny, look. And this is *chile negro*. And this is *chile mulato*…In Mexico lots of people put…
> Sara- All of them in *mole*.
> Alina- Uh huh, but I don't like all of them in mole. Because it turns out black, the chile.
> Sara- And all of them are from Mexico?
> Alina- This one I bought in Mexico Lindo, but this one, yes, it's from Mexico. And this one is from California, I think,…yes. Los Angeles, California. Um hmm. There are so many chiles in Mexico, Sarita.
> Sara- Um hmm, of all colours…
> Alina- And flavours…um hmm. The, the one that I told you that I brought is, is called chile *perón*. It's this one, it has a nice flavour. And it doesn't upset the stomach. Yeah, it's hot, but it doesn't upset. And there are others that do, the vinegar, the chiles in vinegar, those, yeah, those upset your stomach. Look, here I have those, those in vinegar. They're the ones that upset the stomach sometimes. And this is *chile de arbol*. *Chile de arbol*. These I found in the Chinese store! This is another chile. This is *chile cola*

> *de rata*. It's a skinny chile, like this. I just grind it when I want to spice up my food and I only add a little bit, I put a little bit. These ones my daughter brought from Korea. Yeah…[from the other side of the room] another chile more. And these I bought there at the Chinese store, look Sarita. These Chinese chiles…there aren't any in Mexico. There aren't any of these in Mexico.
> Sara- No?
> Alina- No, you can only find these in Asian stores.
> Sara- But it's tasty?
> Alina- Yes, it's chile. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

Alina showed each chile to me, described what they are used for, their connections to her life, and their relationships to place, to Mexico or not to Mexico. By knowing what each is for, their names, their flavours, Alina is demonstrating that performance is doing, about making and serving food. By showing me, she is teaching me about how to do and how to behave in relation to chile so that I am able to act a little more "Mexican", more same but different, at least in relation to the performance field. As well, Alina speaks about performance as behaving. That is, in the end, all that matters is that it is chile. It doesn't matter if it is a Mexican chile or an Asian one, Alina behaves towards it as towards any other chile. As well, chiles are important to my research participants for their daily meals and Alina talks about bringing them from Mexico. Going back to Chapter 5, "Suitcases Full of Mole", while many chiles are available in Anchorage, some are still completely unavailable or can only be found sporadically and at high prices. Chiles are one of the things that people often travel with, but they are also very difficult to bring across international borders because they contain seeds. Even dried, they are not supposed to be transported across national borders. I even heard of one migrant who taped chiles to his body underneath his clothes in order to bring that particular variety of peppers with him to Alaska. However, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, people will put them in vinegar to be able to travel across borders with them.

In an interview with Ana, who works for the School Division alongside many Filipina immigrants to Alaska, chile seems to create boundaries, to make difference. I met with her for an interview at her home in Anchorage and afterwards I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> Ana said that she had put chile on her apple at work (something that she said was *poco raro*, a little different) and all of her co-workers thought it

> was strange. Apparently they said, "those Mexicans eat weird food" or something like that. (Fieldnotes Book 2, October 4)

Chile is eaten in the Philippines too, so it is not chile itself, but how it is eaten that creates difference. Performing Mexicanness through chile is thus context-specific.

What really made me realize that eating chile was somehow an enactment of "Mexicanness" were my own experiences at the dinner tables of my research participants. People expressed a lot of surprise at me because, for one, I could speak Spanish, and secondly, that I could eat spicy food with chile in it and even enjoyed it! For me, as someone who could eat chile and who liked it, I was able to fit in, to be less of an outsider, a little bit more like a Mexican. As I wrote in my fieldnotes after a meal of enchiladas at Ivonne and Fernando's home in Anchorage,

> Maria is surprised at my tolerance for chile, for spicy food. She said that my advisor and his wife can eat spicy food because they lived in Mexico, and she asked me why I think I can handle spicy food. I said that I didn't really know, that it was probably because my mom cooked with chile sometimes. (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 30)

Oftentimes when I was invited over for dinner, my research participants would watch to see whether or not I could eat a dish with lots of chile, or they would ask me if I found it too hot, too *picante,* assuring me that it was okay if I did. I overheard Maria talking about how I could eat spicy food and she said something like, "her face got a little red but that was it". Similarly, Alina said to her husband after I had finished eating "I'm not really sure if there was too much chile, but she ate it." In Acuitzio, too, I was asked the same questions about whether or not I could really eat chile. As I wrote in my fieldnotes on my first day in Acuitzio,

> This morning, I woke up to the sound of people sweeping the street. I had breakfast in the little kitchen by the store. They say they hardly ever use the other one. Notable was Graciela asking me, "Do you eat our food? And chile too?" (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 12)

While I, a young, white, Canadian woman, could fit in more because of my liking for chile and my ability to eat it (among other things), consider Javier, a man in his late 40's who has been working seasonally in Anchorage for about six years. He works for a landscaping company in Anchorage, and spends part of the year there and the other part at home in Acuitzio with his wife, a doctor, and their two children. Quite a few of his

relatives live and work in Anchorage and that familial connection is what led him to leave and find work in Anchorage rather than someplace else. Javier is currently trying to learn English to get a better-paying job in construction. I interviewed him at Carlos Mexican Restaurant in Anchorage over dinner and he explained to me that he could not eat certain foods.

> Sara- So, you mentioned that you have a condition that affects your diet, so you cannot eat chile or other spicy foods or things like coffee…
> Javier- Irritants in general. It's, um…how can we say this…it's a diet low in fats, these…hot and spicy things, uh, I can't eat them. Very spicy…or like, something moderate, yes, yes I can. Fats, as few as possible. Coffee, no. And alcohol, a little once in a while. Almost never. (Interview 9, October 12, Spanish)

Javier had said before we began the interview that he felt he would not be helpful, that he can't really eat much Mexican food, he can't really eat chile and fats and things like that. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> I gave Javier the consent form to read and he read it and signed it but afterwards said that he wasn't sure he could be very helpful because it seems to be all about food, that he has hypertension and a limited diet as a result. Furthermore, he hates to cook! (Fieldnotes Book 3, October 12)

While eating spicy food, or eating chile, is important as an enactment of identity, it is also important to consider what happens when food is too spicy, too *picante* (or *que pica demasiado*). One day at the daily *comida* at the house where I was staying in Acuitzio, Graciela switched brands of *chiles en escabeche*. This brand was much hotter. I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> They talked about how my colleague, Erin, who lived with them before I did, could eat super-hot chiles. She told them that she had practiced all year so that she would be able to eat the food in Mexico. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 19)

What was interesting was that they described how Erin could eat such hot chiles before saying, "But we can't eat chiles that are that hot, they're too hot for us."

Certainly, in Acuitzio I found that some Mexicans really don't eat a lot of chile and certainly not many extremely hot chiles, such as *habaneros*[15]. The stereotype that Mexican people eat chile and that American people do not or cannot is exaggerated when

[15] *Habanero chiles*, known for being extremely hot, are eaten more often in the Yucatan region of Mexico, and not as much in Michoacán.

chile is used as a convenient identity marker. Especially in Alaska or other US states, where the Mexicanness of eating chile comes up against the absence of chile in American foods or interpretations of ethnic foods, chile serves to create difference. Mexicans perform their identities as Mexicans through eating, talking about, cooking with, and demonstrating knowledge about chile, and it is true that my research participants would not easily admit eating less chile than one talks about, unless due to a medical condition that hinders intake of spices or chiles (Wiest, personal communication 2006). I found that chile is a key identity marker for my research participants and through eating, talking about, and shopping for chile, they perform or enact their identity as Mexicans.

For many of my research participants, it was important to enact their identity as Mexicans and to create difference between themselves and mainstream American society. It is important to remember that many of my research participants hope to return to Mexico permanently someday and that they did not migrate to Alaska planning to stay permanently and become Americans. They speak Spanish in the home and among their friends and family members; some have very little ability in English despite years of work in Alaska. They greatly emphasize their Mexicanness, and are extremely proud of it even though, in actual fact, they spend most of their time in Alaska. I am reminded of a conversation between Fernando and his young son on the way home from a hockey game. Fernando had asked his son where he was from for some reason and his son said, "Alaska". Fernando said, "No, son. You're Mexican, you're from Mexico". For Fernando and for so many others, living, working and raising their families in Alaska does not negate their identities as Mexicans. In actuality, it likely makes the traditionally Mexican even more important.

As transnational migrants, my research participants maintain and participate in two ways of life, in the overlapping social spaces of Acuitzio and Anchorage. As such, they maintain their Mexicanness in Alaska, just as more Alaskan aspects of their identities are maintained when they travel to Mexico. As Roger Rouse (2002:163) writes about migrants from Aguililla,

> [they] have become involved in the chronic maintenance of two quite distinct ways of life...[This] reflects the fact that Aguilillans see their current lives and future possibilities as involving simultaneous

> engagements in places associated with markedly different forms of experience.

With regards to my research participants, it is through food that they are in part able to maintain more than one way of life.

There may also be some political importance to emphasizing Mexicanness in Alaska. In the United States, immigration reform is proposed or underway[16] that will make immigration and labour migration much more difficult (Avila and Olivo 2006) and remove important rights and access to essential services for illegal workers (eg., Frates 2006). However, the United States has become more multicultural than melting pot in recent years, with Mexicans and other migrant and immigrant groups resisting assimilationist practices and finding that it is possible to live and work in Spanish, to find the necessary ingredients for cooking, and to be part of a community (likely even from one's home community) in the United States.

Learning to eat with a tortilla *or* the importance of what it tastes like, how it's made and/or how and when it's eaten

Eating, cooking with, shopping for and talking about chile is not just eating, cooking, shopping or conversation. It is often about identity politics and the performance of Mexican identity in Alaska, raising questions about authenticity and the creation of difference. What something tastes like, how and where it is made, and how and when it is eaten become very important. As I wrote in my fieldnotes after a conversation with Victor in Acuitzio,

> Victor said that authentic Mexican ingredients and recipes are important to him. I asked him what "authentic Mexican food" means to him and he said it means food prepared fresh with the right ingredients. (Fieldnotes Book 4, November 28)

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[16] At the federal level, reforms are underway to limit immigration and make illegal immigration and the help of illegal immigrants a felony (Bill HR 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration control act of 2005, passed by the House of Representatives in December 2005 and currently under consideration by the US senate). With regards to the state government level, some states have proposed some kind of immigration reform, and others are well on their way to legislating it (such as Colorado, where proof of citizenship will be required to access certain services). In most other states it is neither proposed nor underway. As far as I know, the state of Alaska has not proposed any immigration reform legislation.

Chile is not the only food or ingredient that relates to the performance of identity in this way. Chile is only one example that was particularly prevalent during my time in Anchorage and in Mexico. Another would be eating with a tortilla, or eating tortillas themselves. Like chile, tortillas are also a symbol of Mexico, of Mexican food, and as something that makes up a part of nearly every meal. In addition to using them to make a taco out of nearly anything, it can be a spoon, soak up sauce like a bread, and may even serve as a napkin. Tortillas are also used to *hacer un cigarro* (literally, to make a cigar) when they are rolled up to eat with soup (Wiest 2006, personal communication). Like *tamales*, *mole*, and possibly *pozole*, they are part of the national cuisine in Mexico. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> Maria asked if I had ever tried a tortilla fresh from the *comal*. I said no, and she couldn't believe it because it's so delicious, she said. She told everyone that I had never tried one and told me that I absolutely needed to when I went to Acuitzio. (Fieldnotes Book 2, September 30)

The act of eating a tortilla fresh from the *comal* seems to be a very important one, which is strange considering that in most households, the tortillas are prepared and purchased outside the home from one of the local *tortillerías*. And certainly, in Anchorage, the tortillas are not only made in a factory, they are only available refrigerated or frozen. I did have the opportunity to make tortillas from scratch and eat them fresh while I was in Acuitzio.

> *I got to Rosa's house and her eldest son greeted me. Rosa was in the back, collecting dried corncobs for the fire. I helped her and when we had ten or so we went into the old kitchen, the chiminea, to start the fire. Then we went through the open courtyard to the dining room where Rosa replaced the plastic on the tortilla-making machine. It's an ingenious contraption that she said is almost 40 years old. After that we went back into the chiminea and I asked her how she made the dough. She explained how you put the maiz in water with cal (lime) and let it sit till it's ready. Then it needs to be washed well, and ground. I can't even remember all the steps. But she said there are many secrets to making tortillas. Her mom taught her many of them but she is still learning more.*
>
> *She added a bit of water and some Maseca flour to get the consistency right before forming balls of dough. She put these, one by one, on the machine to flatten them out. They went straight from being flattened to the comal, where they cook on each side. Rosa said that when they inflate, they're ready. She says usually she makes double the amount and it takes about an hour. Her mom used to do it but she can't anymore and so she taught Rosa "the secrets". But Rosa said that, really, they only make their own tortillas to save money more than anything else.*

> *Later, we ate them with beans and potatoes and salsa. They really are delicious, more delicious than any other tortilla I've eaten! (Fieldnotes Book 4, December 10)*

What is interesting is that Rosa uses Maseca flour to get the consistency right. This is something that might be considered "less authentic" due to the use of industrially processed flour. As a performance, then, it is an interesting combination of the nostalgic and the modern.

But it is not only this kind of relatively rare, and for many, nostalgic, performance of making tortillas at home and cooking them on the *comal* that is important here. It is the day-to-day ways in which tortillas are used. At the dinner tables of my participants in Anchorage, I watched and learned to see and eventually understand what was customary, for instance, whether or not it was appropriate to make a taco out of the food on my plate or to tear off pieces of my tortilla and use it to pick up pieces of food, or whether I should just *hacer un cigarro* (roll up my tortilla) and take bites from it every now and then. As I wrote in my fieldnotes after a meal at Maria's house,

> Maria asked whether or not I had eaten yet. I said no, and we sat down to *sopa de albondigas* (meatball soup). She said the meatballs had rice, meat, bread, and egg in them. The soup was good, and also had vermicelli noodles in it – short ones. Maria showed me the bag, and it was a Mexican brand. She said you can make tacos with the *albondigas* and eat the soup or you can just roll up the tortilla and eat it as an accompaniment. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 4)

Furthermore, your tortilla must be hot. In the house where I stayed in Acuitzio, tortillas were constantly being heated and reheated so that they were never cool when someone decided to take one. After a meal in Acuitzio, I wrote,

> Something that is really important is that the tortilla be hot. Everyone is always asking me if I want a new tortilla, if mine is too *duro*, too tough or hard. (Fieldnotes Book 3, November 15)

To me, all of this speaks to mealtime as performance, as the enactment of identity. It is not only that "you are what you eat", as the saying goes, but you are how, when, and where you eat it and how you have prepared it. As an outsider, I learned to eat with a tortilla, learned about different flavours of chile and what some of them look like and even their names. I learned how to make different kinds of foods and where to shop for certain ingredients. I learned how to do and to make, and how to behave appropriately in

relation to foods. From my point of view, I was learning how to act a little bit more Mexican. For my research participants, preparing, serving, and eating Mexican food can be seen as performance of their identity as Mexicans in Alaska, or more accurately, as Michoacanos in Alaska since there are many food-related regional differences. As Victoria said,

> So it was kinda like hard when I was, when I got married [to my husband] 'cause we lived in his parents' home like for a half a year. And they eat totally different as me. They do things totally different that I have never tasted in my life. And I was like, well, I don't wanna eat that, or I can try it or something like that. But yeah, they, even though we're Mexicans, we eat totally different. And we're the, from the same, I mean, country but we eat totally, totally different. (Interview 10, October 13, English)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the idea of cooking, eating, and talking about food as performances or enactments of identity for Mexicans in Alaska. Focussing particularly on chile, I explored how chile plays into acting Mexican in Alaska. Through my own personal experiences at the dinner tables of my research participants, I found that chile was something that was strongly equated with Mexicanness and, by eating it, cooking with it, demonstrating knowledge about it, and behaving properly towards it, one could perform or enact their identity as a Mexican while in Alaska. For the anthropologist, learning how to eat and to cook meant acting a bit more Mexican, fitting in a bit more. The "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1999:179), having to do with chile and with other Mexican foods and ingredients, speaks to the performance of identity. By cooking, eating, serving, and talking about food, my participants were performing, enacting part of their identities. That the key foods here are Mexican (i.e., chiles and tortillas) and that they become especially important in Alaska in contrast to mainstream American society, speaks to a condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space (Ong 1999), or the performance of a transnational identity. This performance of a transnational Mexican identity is particularly important while away in order to resist assimilation and maintain a more "Mexican" way of life in Alaska, to maintain two distinct ways of life simultaneously (Rouse 2002).

In Chapter 8, "Conclusion: Food and Mexicanness in Alaska", I will revisit my

research questions and summarize the substantive findings of the thesis about the place of food in the lives and identities of transnational Mexican migrant workers and their families in Alaska. Following that, I will move on to suggest some directions for further research, particularly about how commonly held ideas about Alaska as an untouched wilderness and last frontier can be reconciled with ideas about Mexicans and Mexicanness.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Food and Mexicanness in Alaska

Nieve de pasta, a traditional ice cream (Jerónima's recipe)
Ingredients:
5 litres of milk (at least)
1kg. sugar
1-2 sticks of cinnamon
10 eggs
A handful of laurel (bay leaves)
A handful of lime leaves
Ice and salt
Instructions:
Put the milk to boil with the sugar, the cinnamon, the laurel, and the lime leaves. When it has been boiling for half an hour, beat the egg yolks in a bowl with cold milk (about a cup). Add the yolks to the mixture and mix really well. When the mixture starts to boil again, remove it from heat. Stir in a cold bowl. Leave it to refrigerate until it is really cold. Fill a large pail or tub with ice and salt, with a smaller container in the centre. Wrap a blanket around the pail. Pour your ice cream mixture into the container in the centre and with a paddle, mix from top to bottom until it has the right consistency.
Jerónima sells ice cream in the plaza each Sunday or for special occasions. She learned to make it from her mother-in-law who also sold ice cream in the plaza and who was famous for her antojitos.

Introduction

In this chapter, I will begin by summarizing the major findings of this thesis. Following a discussion of the findings of the thesis in general, and how they together make a case for "eating transnationally", I move on to some suggestions for further research. During my work on this project, I began to think about what an understanding of the relationship between food and identity for Mexican migrant workers in Alaska can bring to a re-thinking of Alaska and a re-consideration of Mexicanness. Indeed, the popular imagination about Alaska and the North does not typically include Mexicans,

despite their long history in the area. I say "Alaska" and not "Anchorage", since workers from Mexico in general, and from Acuitzio in particular, can be found throughout the state, in remote salmon canneries, in restaurants in isolated Barrow or Nome, and in other towns throughout the state. Similarly, the popular imagination about Mexicans and Mexicanness does not usually include Alaska. As such, I will outline some of the ways in which this project can contribute to new considerations and imaginations about both Alaska and Mexicanness.

Eating transnationally

In this thesis, I have written about how transnational lives and identities are lived out as much through what people eat – or say they eat – as through other global cultural flows. This is what I call "eating transnationally" – meals that connect places and the people in them or foods that depend on interconnectedness and mobility across space (Ong 1999). The foodscape, and the food and food-related things and ideas of which it is made, connects my participants to more than one nation-state simultaneously. Thus, they are eating transnationally by cooking, eating, travelling with, shopping for, talking about, or even reminiscing about foods that connect Mexico and Alaska. Food symbolizes this transnationality, while also literally providing an example of it by travelling between Mexico and Alaska alongside migrant workers and their families. Transnational identity, like the food people carry, depends on these kinds of connections between places and people, on connections to homelands, imagined communities created but also transformed by new places and spaces.

In Chapter 5, "Suitcases Full of Mole", I explored what kinds of food and food related things and ideas travel, who travels with them, as well as how and why they travel. I found that travelling with food is very common and that it is mainly specialty or regional foods that are brought to Alaska, where the basics of Mexican cooking are now available. Government restrictions limit the travel of some foods, while others travel commonly and relatively freely. There is also a gender dimension to the foodscape so that women generally carry more food more often. Finally, many foods and ideas about food travel for nostalgic reasons, for "home cooking" (Law 2001) and the creation of a sense of home in Anchorage. "Home cooking" and the creation of a sense of home through

cooking and eating is something that allows my research participants to maintain a "Mexican" way of life in Alaska, to maintain and exist in more than one way of life simultaneously (Rouse 2002).

I also found that the travel of food is tied into the conditions of global capitalism and that the flow food and food-related things and ideas is related to other global cultural flows. For example, the fact that food moves from Mexico to Alaska at all is tied into international trade agreements, the setting of exchange rates, and the growth of a service-based economy in the US, among other conditions of global capitalism, so that there are far more stable and high-paying (relatively speaking) positions in Alaska and other parts of the United States than in Mexico. Other examples of this connection between the flow of food and other cultural flows or "scapes" (Appadurai 1996) are possible.

However, the flow of food culture that connects Acuitzio and Anchorage is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Food, and especially food-related ideas, do not simply travel unaltered between Mexico and Alaska. Something changes along the way so that the connection is uneven: a source of creativity, disconnection, disjuncture, and unexpectedness. In Chapter 6, "Halibut Tacos and Blueberry Atole", I wrote about the foodscape that connects Acuitzio and Anchorage as something uneven, contradictory and complex. Through discussion of hybrid foods, ironies, disconnections, and authenticity, I found that eating for Mexican migrant workers can be a creative act. Cooking and eating in Alaska is something that depends on movement and mobility, on transnationality. For my participants, cooking and eating in Alaska is about selective picking and choosing, experiencing new foods and food experiences and actively experimenting and trying new ones. In this way, I found that the hybrid, ironic and disjunctive food and food-related things and ideas made, eaten, and talked about by my research participants contribute to an understanding of Mexicanness in Alaska that depends on the connections between Mexico and Alaska. It is about a transnational identity that depends on the active and creative maintenance of an identity situated somewhere between Mexico and Alaska, connecting them in conflicting and complex ways. Moreover, cooking, eating, and talking about hybrid foods or food-related ironies and disconnections can be seen as creative and symbolic acts, acts that are indicative of lives lived in more than one place.

My participants, then, are not only maintaining a more traditionally "Mexican" way of life, they are also actively participating in the creation of new ways to be Mexican in Alaska.

In Chapter 7, "We Put Chile on Everything", I continued to investigate the idea that cooking, eating, shopping, and talking about food are cultural acts. I explored how food, particularly chile, is related to the performance of identity for Mexican migrant workers and their families. Through discussions with my research participants, as well as my own experiences learning to "eat Mexican", I found that chile is a very symbolic ingredient in Mexican foods and identities, contributing to ideas about the self and the nation, and creating difference between Mexican people and American people in Anchorage. Eating chile is about performing or enacting Mexicanness in relation to Mexican ideas about Mexican food as well as ideas about Americans and American food. By eating, cooking with, demonstrating knowledge about, and behaving properly towards chile, one could perform or enact their identity as a Mexican while in Alaska. The anthropologist can also act a bit more Mexican and fit in a bit more. In this way, chile and performance are also tied into transnationality and transnational identity as we are talking about enactments that draw both from ideas about Mexico and Mexicanness as well as those about the United States and its citizens. Other foods, like tortillas, provide similar examples.

That Mexican identity is performed in Alaska demonstrates that my participants are actively engaging in asserting their Mexicanness, their difference from mainstream Alaskan society. This is important in maintaining a different way of life in Alaska and also in marking themselves out as "Mexican", not "American", yet no longer "traditionally Mexican" either. Chile becomes an important identity marker, something that stands in for Mexicanness, Through food-related performances, particularly eating, shopping for, cooking with, and talking about chile (at least in my experience), the transnational Mexicanness of my research participants is made, and remade in Alaska. Since Mexicanness is not an innate characteristic, it is enacted, created, and *performed* in Alaska by my research participants in order to assert their Mexicanness and non-Americanness while away.

In this thesis, I have put food front and centre. This is something that draws on and relates to Latin American literature, where food often holds a special evocative power. In the works of several Latina writers, "food – its preparation, consumption, sensuality and power – carries more than the memory of home; food is not only the message but the medium of love, the spirit, survival, even art itself" (Zeff 2002:94). As well, wider discourses about the sensuousness of Latino culture also have something to do with food, especially the sensual aspects of food: taste, touch, and smell. I am thinking especially about popular phrases – like "Latin flavour", for instance – used to describe anything from music to home décor as well as the way in which Latina women and Latino men are described as sensual, sexual beings (i.e., the idea of the "Latin lover"). Connections between food and sexuality can also be made. Certainly, the bravado about eating chile (described in Chapter 7) may be seen as similar to the *machismo* bravado[17] surrounding Mexican men's sexual conquests (Wiest 2006, personal communication). Similarly, connections between food and sexuality abound in rural Mexican culture, such as in Acuitzio, where you can buy *zoricua* (pig's blood) tacos that are rumoured to increase one's sexual potency and stamina.

Eating transnationally for Mexican migrant workers and their families in Alaska is, then, about the connections and interconnections between places and the people in them, between Anchorage and Acuitzio, between Acuitzences in Alaska and those in Mexico and elsewhere. Cooking, eating, shopping for, and talking about food can be seen as performances of a transnational Mexicanness, hybrid foods can be seen as symbolizing that Mexicanness in Alaska, and travelling foods can be seen as material instances of transnational identity; things that actually travel and connect Acuitzio and Anchorage and the people in them.

As a whole, my objective in this thesis has been the exploration of the transnational foodscape, or flow of food culture between Mexico and Alaska as well as the place of this foodscape in the lives and identities of Mexican migrant workers and their families in Anchorage, Alaska. While working on this project, my exploration of food and food-related things and ideas that travel between Mexico and Alaska and make

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[17] Emphasized, excessive masculinity; macho-ness.

up a part of the identities of my research participants led me to deconstruct my own ideas about Mexicanness and especially those about Alaska.

Directions for further research

> *I had recently returned to Canada from Mexico. It was Christmastime and so there were a lot of dinners, parties, and get-togethers with friends and family in and around Edmonton. My time in the field was still very recent and thoughts of Mexico and Alaska occupied my mind. One night I ran into a friend I hadn't seen in a while. She asked, "Sara, Hi. How are you! What have you been up to?" I explained about my research in Alaska and in Mexico and how I had just gotten back from a month in Mexico. I also told her about how my project was generally about Mexican migration to Alaska. Not surprisingly, she said, "What? Really? There are Mexicans in Alaska? What are they doing there? I never would have imagined that there are Mexican people living in Alaska, of all places." I was not at all surprised by her disbelief and questioning since this was a common reaction to my research topic by friends, family, colleagues, and even US Customs!*

Certainly, the idea that Mexican people live in Anchorage is one that is difficult to reconcile. It was one that I personally found challenging. That so many people have trouble putting Mexicanness and Alaska together led me to question how Alaska is constructed in the popular imagination as well as how Mexicanness is imagined and constructed. Why are the two constructions so difficult to reconcile?

My work on this project has encouraged me to think about Mexicanness in Alaska through the lens of food, with food as something "good to think with" to paraphrase Lévi-Strauss (1966, 1969). In this project, food also serves to reconcile the two ideas, to help the reader think about Alaska in new ways – still as the land of stunning natural beauty and seemingly untouched wilderness, of rich native culture but *also* as a more vibrant cosmopolitan and multicultural place, home to many different people from many different parts of the world who bring their foods and ideas about foods with them.

In history books about Alaska as a state and Anchorage as a city (e.g., Borneman 2003; Tower 1999), little mention is made, really, of the many migrants and emigrants to Alaska, whether Mexican, Hmong, Korean, Japanese, or Samoan. The Alaska Conservation Foundation provides an important start with the Guide to Alaska's Cultures (Bibbs 2006), now in its second edition. However, this guide is directed more at Alaskans themselves rather than those outside the state. As Bibbs writes in the Guide, "My hope is that this guide helps create a climate that allows children growing up in Alaska to

embrace their culture and understand that they make Alaska special and unique" (Bibbs 2006:5). Using US Census data and interviews, Bibbs and the Alaska Conservation foundation have produced a published guide that does, however, provide valuable insight into the variety of cultural groups in Alaska including their histories, their current ways of life in Alaska, appropriate ways to address members of that group, and directories of community groups, services, stores and restaurants. Interestingly, the guide also provides recipes in a section on cuisine for each cultural group: African American/Black soul food, Alaska Native fry bread and dried and fermented fish, Asian American *sukiyaki* (a Japanese dish), Hawaiian and Pacific Islander *haupia* (a Polynesian dessert), and Latin American *guacamole* (a Mexican avocado sauce).

In travel literature directed at potential tourists from outside the state (eg, Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau 2006; Alaska Travel Industry Association 2006; Freedman 2000) there is little indication of Alaska's cultural diversity. There are stunning photos of mountains and wildlife and descriptions of the kinds of "typically Alaskan" activities to be experienced, none of which have anything to do with the multiculturalism of the area apart from the possibility of experiencing Alaskan Native culture first hand. Interestingly, the cultural diversity of the city of Anchorage is really only highlighted in one Visitor's Guide under a section called "Anchorage Cuisine" where it says,

> Anchorage is an international city, with more than 95 languages spoken. As a result, there has been an explosion in small, family owned ethnic restaurants and specialty food markets tucked in neighbourhoods. Turkish, Indian, Vietnamese, Argentinean, Japanese, Mexican, Italian, Cajun, Korean, Thai, Greek, Spanish, and Chinese are among the many international restaurants found (2006:44).

In the back of the guide, there is a listing of the names and locations of some of these "international" restaurants. Donna Freedman, in her guide to Anchorage, writes briefly that the majority of the population is white, with accompanying percentages of the population of minority groups in the city including African Americans, Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders and Mexicans and "other" (Freedman 2000:7). Aside from one short paragraph, the only other indication of the cultural diversity of the city is found in the descriptions and reviews of Anchorage restaurants.

In the (North) American popular imagination, Alaska is seen and presented as a kind of "mythic frontier space", as Susan Kollin (2001) puts it. Alaska is imagined as someplace wild, majestic, untouched, and very masculine, with migrants and immigrants from places like Mexico as sort of hidden, silenced, and not discussed. Kollin writes about how the idea of Alaska as a last frontier is connected to national identity, primarily focussing on the role of nature and naturalness, or how ideas about the environment shape texts about Alaska as well as creating Alaska as a text (2001:22). She writes that, "the thinking that fetishizes Alaska as a pristine natural space connects to larger national preoccupations, making the region an important northern extension of 'nature's nation'" (Kollin 2001:22). Perhaps, then, cultural diversity in Alaska is not part of the creation of Alaska as a Last Frontier and pristine natural space, ideas that are so important to "the development of American national identity and to larger processes of nation formation" (2001:178). Cultural diversity in general, and Mexcianness in particular, are not part of the idea of Alaska, despite US Census results showing that the foreign born are very much part of Alaska, making up 5.9% of the state's population of approximately 664, 000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006b).

Within anthropology, there is growing interest in Alaska. At the Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting in Vancouver at the end of March 2006, I was part of a session about "Northern Cities and Ethnic Complexity". All of the participants in the session, including myself, focussed on Anchorage[18]. Indeed, upon our arrival at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, one professor there, Dr. Kerry Feldman, said that anthropologists "at home" in Alaska were missing something by not exploring this cultural diversity (Feldman 2006, personal communication), something that led to the creation of that session co-organized by Feldman and Wiest. I think continued study of cultural diversity in Alaska in all of its complexity is important because Anchorage in particular is destined to become even more complex, more diverse, and with more unexpected scenarios as the construction of yet another oil pipeline, a bridge across Knik

[18] The papers in the session were about the ethnic makeup of the city of Anchorage (Feldman 2006), Mexican migration to Anchorage (Komarnisky 2006a; Wiest 2006b), about Hispanic mothers' breastfeeding practices (Marin 2006), and Hmong interaction with the Alaskan medical system (Hickman 2006).

Arm to connect the city of Anchorage to the nearby communities of Palmer and Wasilla, and a boom in house construction bring workers from all over the world, just as the first pipeline did earlier on.

Thinking about food in cities could also help us to think about cities and the experience of being in a city – especially in a new city – in a different way. In her article about Filipina women and food in Hong Kong, Lisa Law (2001) writes about "sensuous geographies" which, through the tastes, textures, and aromas of food, provide new maps of people and places in the city. By understanding the routes and the process by which food is travelling, and privileging the routes that people create for themselves rather than the standard supermarket distribution chains, the kinds of foods that are eaten and cooked, and those that are not, perhaps we can get an understanding of what kind of a place Anchorage is. Through food, perhaps, emphasis can be redirected towards people in Anchorage who seem to be underrepresented in the popular imagination about Anchorage in particular and Alaska in general. Similarly, perhaps Mexicanness could also be seen to include aspects of "the north".

So far in this section I have spoken about a re-consideration of ideas about Alaska and "the north". I think that ideas about Mexicanness also require some re-thinking so that popular imagination of what a Mexican person is moves away from the stereotype in the US and in Canada of agricultural migrants or hotel cleaning ladies and domestic workers to include pipeline or construction workers in Alaska, sushi chefs or owners of Greek restaurants (as illustrated in Chapter 6), families who own homes in both Acuitzio and Anchorage, and people who fish for salmon in Ship Creek in downtown Anchorage. In Acuitzio and among the Mexican community in Alaska, however, ideas about Mexicanness do include Alaska and other places in the United States. Of course, for Mexican residents of Alaska, however temporary, Alaska becomes part of their identities. Speeches that I heard in Acuitzio and in Morelia drew specific attention to migrants in Alaska and elsewhere, while the town's website[19] and at least one newspaper, *La Diligencia Michoacana*, are explicitly directed at Michoacanos both at home and abroad. Stemming from the politicization and organization of migrant workers abroad, *Tres por*

[19] www.acuitzio.com.mx

Uno (Three for One) programs explicitly includes those who live and work away in that migrant contributions are matched by contributions from three levels of government to provide funding for community improvement projects. These are joint initiatives that see migrant contributions matched by those from Mexican municipalities, and Mexican state and federal governments for projects to be undertaken in the Mexican communities of origin of the contributing migrant workers (Wiest 2006a). During my time in Acuitzio, leaders from migrant groups from places like Chicago, as well as Mexican government leaders, came to Acuitzio for ceremonies and presentations relating to these projects which included the groundbreaking of a retirement home and the presentation of computers to schools in Acuitzio. These things make those who live and work in the United States much more a part of the community and they make the far away important in the lives and imaginings of not only individuals with family members abroad, but of the community as a whole. To date, there is no migrant group contributing to this program in Anchorage but pressures are rising within Acuitzio for Alaska migrants to form one. Other reminders of the "Alaska" in Mexicanness abound in Acuitzio. Souvenir clothing with images or locations from Alaska are seen on town residents with surprising (for me) regularity, as are licence plates from Alaska and many other American states. During my time in Acuitzio, I was almost constantly reminded of locations *por el otro lado* (on the other side) of the border.

As far as possibilities for further research, I see this thesis as a starting point for further exploration on the place of food in the lives of Mexican migrant workers in Alaska. More generally, further research about the connection between food and wider discourses about Latino culture would be productive. Much more attention could also be paid to the effect that new peoples and foods have had on more mainstream Alaskan society. For instance, I have not focussed on the place of Mexican food in the lives of non-Mexican people in Alaska, nor have I explored mainstream Alaskan perceptions of migrants from Mexico. Further research about food, identity, and political economy – particularly, how many of my participants earn a living working in restaurants – would be fruitful. As the discussion above shows, I believe there is much research possible about the popular imagination of both Mexicanness and the North, with a view towards a

rethinking of constructions such as those. Additionally, Alaska as a global space is a very interesting one indeed, with global shipping, oil dollars, tourism, and migration intersecting with ideas about untouched and unspoiled wilderness.

The last crumbs *or* final thoughts

Food is something that is an important nutritive, symbolic, and sensual part of the life of each and every person. Furthermore, it has scholarly importance as a lens through which to understand larger processes, such as globalization, as in this thesis. Food is also something that has incredible evocative power in that it can bring back memories of another place and time. And so, I close this thesis as I began it, with an excerpt from Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992):

> Throughout my childhood I had the good fortune to savour the delicious fruits and vegetables that grew on the land. Eventually my mother had a little apartment building there. My father Alex still lives in one of the apartments. Today he is going to come to my house to celebrate my birthday. That is why I am preparing Christmas Rolls, my favourite dish. My mama prepared them for me every year. My mama!...How wonderful the flavour, the aroma of her kitchen, her stories as she prepared the meal, her Christmas Rolls! I don't know why mine never turn out like hers, or why my tears flow so freely when I prepare them – perhaps I am as sensitive to onions as Tita, my great-aunt, who will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes. (From *Like Water for Chocolate*, Esquivel 1992:246)

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Appendix 1 – Sample interview schedule

Background questions/Preguntas de fondo:

1. Can you tell me about yourself? Por favor, ¿puede decir algo sobre usted mismo? Where are you from? ¿De dónde viene? What do you do for a living? ¿Dónde trabaja? How old are you? ¿Cuántos años tiene?
2. How long have you lived in Alaska? ¿Cuántos años tiene in Alaska? Why did you move to Anchorage? ¿Porqué vino a Anchorage? Did you come alone? ¿Vino solo/a o con familia? Did you know anyone who was living here before you arrived (friends/family)? Cuando vino, ¿sabía alguien aquí en Anchorage? Can you tell me about your friends and family here in Alaska? ¿Puede decir algo sobre su familia y sus amigos aquí en Anchorage? Does it feel like home to you? ¿En Anchorage, se siente como en su casa?
3. Tell me about your home in Mexico. Por favor, ¿cuentame sobre su casa en México, sobre Acuitzio? Do you have friends and family there? ¿Tiene amigos y familia allá? Do you go back to visit? ¿Regresa a México? How often? ¿Cuántas veces? Why? ¿Porqué? Do you keep in touch by mail/telephone/email? ¿Habla con amigos y familia por correo/teléfono/correo electrónico? How often? ¿ Cuántas veces? Why? ¿Porqué?

Meals/comidas:

1. What do you usually eat (for breakfast, lunch, supper, snacks)? ¿Usualmente, que come (para desayuno, almuerzo, cena, tentempie)? On a weekday? ¿Por días laborales? On a weekend? ¿Por el fin de semana? On a special occasion? ¿Por un día especial?
2. Do you have any favorite meals or recipes? ¿Tiene algunas comidas o recetas favoritas? If so, what are they? ¿Cuáles son? Why are they special to you? ¿Porqué son especiales para usted? Can you prepare them yourself? ¿Puede prepararlos? How did you learn to make them? ¿Cómo aprendía cocinarlas? Did someone teach you? ¿Quién ensenaba?
3. Since moving to Alaska, have your eating habits changed, do you think? ¿Desde vino a Alaska, piensa que su alimentación ha cambiado? Or do you eat more or less the same as you did in Mexico? ¿O piensa que usted come más o menos lo mismo que en México? Can you tell me some of the foods that are different/the same? ¿Cuáles son las diferencias/ los parecidos?
4. Do you ever eat in restaurants? ¿Come en restaurants? Which ones? ¿Cuáles restaurantes? Why? ¿Porqué? How often? ¿Cuántas veces? Can you tell me about them? ¿Puede decir algo sobre esas restaurantes? Do you ever eat in restaurants run by Acuitzenses? ¿Come en restaurants donde los duenos/trabajadores viene de Acuitzio? Do you ever go to restaurants for other reasons, besides for the food? ¿A veces, va a restaurantes para otros motivos, además de comer?

Food preparation/Preparacion de la comida:

1. Can you tell me about who usually prepares the meals in your household? ¿En su casa, quién usualmente cocina? What tools do they/you use? Why? What appliances do they/you use? Why? ¿Qué usa para cocinar? Do they/you use

recipes? ¿Usa recetas? Are the recipes written down or memorized? ¿Los recetas son escribidos o de memoria? Where/Who did these recipes come from? ¿De quién/dónde viene esas recetas? Is this the same in Anchorage as it is in Mexico? ¿Es lo mismo en Anchorage y en México?

2. Who usually does the grocery shopping for your household? ¿Quién usualmente compra comestibles para su casa? Where do they shop? ¿Dónde hace compras? What do they usually buy there? ¿Normalmente, que compra allá? Why? ¿Porqué? Are there other places they/you go to purchase food? ¿Hay otros tiendas dónde el/ella/usted compra comestibles? How often? ¿Cuántas veces? What do they/you buy? ¿Qué compra? Why? ¿Porqué? Is there a place where they/you can buy Mexican foods in Alaska? ¿Es dificil buscar comestibles mexicanas en Alaska? ¿Hey tiendas donde puede comprar comestibles mexicanas en Alaska? Can you tell me about it? ¿Cuál tiendas? ¿Puede decir algo sobre esas tiendas? Do they/you ever go there? ¿Compra cosas allá? How often? ¿Cuántas veces? What do they/you usually buy? ¿Qué compra? Why? ¿Porqué?
3. Do you grow any foods yourself? ¿Tiene un jardín dónde se cultiva comida? Go fishing/or hunting? ¿Usted pesca o caza? What do you grow/fish/hunt? ¿Que cultiva/pesca/caza? Why? ¿Porqué?
4. How has your shopping changed since you came to Alaska? Desde vino a Alaska, piensa que como hace compras ha cambiado, o no? Do you buy different kinds of foods than you did in Acuitzio? ¿Compra diferentes comestibles aquí que en México? Which ones are different? ¿Cuáles son diferentes? Are any foods the same? ¿Hay comestibles que son parecidos?
5. How important are authentic Mexican ingredients/recipes to you? ¿Son ingredientes y recetas auténticos Mexicanos importante a usted? Can you tell me about this? ¿Puede decir algo sobre eso? Why is it important to you? ¿Porqué es importante? Is it difficult to find the ingredients you need? ¿Es dificil comprar los ingredients auténticos mexicanos? Does this change how you prepare certain dishes? ¿Si es dificil comprar ingredientes auténticos, necesita cambiar como cocina algunas guisos? ¿Cómo cambia? ¿Cuál guisos?

Border crossings of food/El moviemiento de la comida:

1. Do you ever bring foods or recipes from México? ¿Cuándo va a México, trae comida o recetas cuando regresa a Alaska? If so, which foods? ¿Qué comidas o recetas? Why do you bring them? ¿Porqué los trae? How do you bring them? ¿Cómo los trae? Are there some that you cannot bring? ¿Hay algunas comidas que no puede traer? Why not? ¿Porqué no?
2. Do you ever bring foods from other U.S. cities? ¿Trae comida de otros ciudades en los Estados Unidos? If so, which foods? ¿Qué comidas? Why? ¿Porqué los trae? How do you bring them? ¿Cómo los trae? Are there some that you cannot bring? ¿Hay algunas comidas que no puede traer? Why not? ¿Porqué no?
3. Do you ever phone, email, or mail friends or family members for recipes or instructions? ¿Pregunta a amigos o familia para recetas o instrucciones de cocina? ¿Cómo – por teléfono, correo electrónico, correo? Which ones? ¿Cuál recetas? Why? ¿Porqué?
4. Do you go online for recipes or to order foods? ¿A veces, busca recetas en el red?

¿O compra comida por el red? Which ones? ¿Cuáles recetas o comidas? Why? ¿Porqué?

Restaurant work/Trabajos en restaurantes:

1. What restaurant do you work at? ¿Trabaja en cuál restaurante? How long have you worked there? ¿Cuántos anos tiene allá? What do you do? ¿Qué hace en el restaurante? Can you tell me about it? ¿Puede decir algo sobre su trabajo?
2. Can you tell me about the food that is served at the restaurant? ¿Puede decir algo sobre la comida en la restaurante? ¿Qué tipo es? ¿Ha probado la comida? ¿Cómo es?
3. Who owns the restaurant? ¿Quiénes son los duenos? How do you know them? ¿Cómo conoce? ¿Cómo busca su trabajo? Who else works at the restaurant? ¿Hay otros que trabajan allá? ¿Quién? How do you know them? ¿Cómo los conoce?
4. Can you tell me about the customers of the restaurant? ¿Puede decir algo sobre los clientes de la restaurante? What are they like? ¿Cómo son? What is the most popular dish? ¿Cuáles son los platos mas populares?

Appendix 2 – Sample informed consent form

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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Research Project Title: Eating Transnationally: Mexican Migrant Workers in Alaska
Researcher: Sara Komarnisky, BCom, MA Student (Anthropology), University of Manitoba
Sponsor: Dr. Raymond Wiest, "Negotiating Livelihood Shifts and Social Relations: A Gendered Household Analysis of Local and Transnational Labour", SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) Standard Research Grant 2003-2006.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study is about the place of food in the lives of migrant workers and their families. I intend to explore how migrants from Mexico who live and work in Alaska might eat and think about food and how food acts as a marker and material reality of a migrant identity. The crossing of borders and boundaries by migrant labourers, whether linguistic, cultural, or nation-state, encourages an exchange of information, including that relating to food. Furthermore, the fact that many migrant workers work in the restaurant industry (whether as employees or owners) indicates that food plays a role in their professional, working lives, as well as in their personal lives. With that in mind, I am investigating how transnational subjects (such as migrant workers) negotiate their identities in relation to the food and food-related connections that they make between their Mexican and Alaskan homes.

The study will involve informal interviews with you about food and eating. I will ask you questions about food in Mexico, food in Alaska, what place food and eating has and has had in your life, and what food might have to do with how you see yourself or how others see you. These interviews will generally take an hour, but may be shorter or longer, depending on your own schedule. They will take place in a location you are comfortable with, and at a time convenient for you. The first interview may be followed by at least one return visit, depending on your interest in further collaboration. This return visit would consist of going shopping for food, preparing food and eating, going to a restaurant, or looking through the recipes in a cookbook together in order to help me to better understand the place that food and eating has your life. In the event that I consider it important to consult with you later on in follow-up research, upon your approval I would contact you personally.

Participation in this study will present no risk. Your privacy will be respected and the confidence of all personal information will be maintained. The information you provide will be recorded in notes that I will hand write or enter into a computer, or that I will tape record with your full knowledge and explicit approval. You have the right to have the tape recorder turned off at any time and you have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions that I may ask. You should know that only my advisor, Dr. Raymond Wiest, and myself would be the only ones with access to the information that you provide and that this information will be kept for a long period of time. Additionally, any personal identifiers, such as your name and address, will be kept apart from the information you provide in order to assure confidentiality and anonymity.

With your permission, I may take photographs of foods that you have prepared or purchased, of food preparation techniques, of cookbooks, or of your workspace. Again, you have the right to refuse to allow me to take photographs at any time and you have the right to view any photographs that I have taken before their use in published results or before their storage. You may also disallow me to use or keep any of these photographs and

they may be destroyed at any time, upon your request. Like the information that you provide in an interview, these photographs will be kept for a long period of time.

Your opinions on what I, as a researcher, should be inquiring about will be sought and respected as I proceed. Prior to the conclusion of the research, and if you are interested, I am prepared to discuss with you the general nature of my findings by providing you with a copy of the research findings. I would also appreciate your comments on these findings. Upon conclusion of the study, I will write my Master's thesis based on my findings and I hope to publish articles and make presentations on the topic of the research. Information about the published results will be provided to any and all participants who express an interest.

Participation in this study will not involve payment, although personal expenses such as transportation costs directly associated with interviews will be reimbursed. Instead of payment, I will attempt to reciprocate for your time and cooperation in ways that I trust you will find helpful and appropriate.

Please initial all that apply:

_____ I agree to participate in an interview.

_____ I agree to the use of an audio tape-recording device to record my interview and know that I may have the tape-recorder turned off at any time during the interview.

_____ I allow the researcher to take photographs.

_____ I would like a hard copy of...

_____ the research findings
_____ any published materials

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Any information that you do provide (including photographs) can be destroyed at any time upon your request. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Contact Information: Sara Komarnisky, MA Student (Anthropology).
In Anchorage, Alaska: . Tel: ( )
In Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán: TBA
In Winnipeg, Canada: Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba. Tel: (204) 474-6328

Supervisor: Dr. Raymond Wiest, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. Tel: (204) 474-6328. Email: ..ca

The Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact either of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122, or email margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix 3 – Original Spanish transcriptions of interviews

Chapter 2

Maria, page 21
M- Um…la comida mexicana. Pues, es que también es um…yo pienso que proyectar mucho de nuestra cultura de lo que somos nosotros….Pero, sí, yo pienso que, yo pienso que para cualquier persona…la comida típica de su país es muy importante porque representa mucha de la cultura de cada, de cada país. Y tanto la comida como los vestuarios, los bailables, ah hah, es un conjunto de…
S- Sí, como en el festival latino en el centro estaba comida, baile y musica, y gente.
M- Ah hah, sí. Sí es cierto. Y yo creo, Y cada quien pues, siento orgulloso de sus tradiciones y de sus comidas, ah hah. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

Maria, page 23
Y, y casi por lo regular…la [?] la de la comida mexicana pero casi por lo regular, de la mayoría de la comida hispana se basa mucho en el maíz. Ah hah, mucho mucho en el maíz. En una occasión yo oí que, que la comida mexicana como los sopes, las quesadillas, el pozole, o sea esos son cosas que engordan mucho. Pero lo que pasa es que…como mexicanos estamos acustumbrado a comer mucho. Si no serviramos menos, raciones más pequenas…ah estaría balanciado porque dicen, por ejemplo un sope tiene la harina de maíz que son carbohidratos, tiene los frijoles que son este, es hierro, y si les pone carne ya tienes la proteina también allí. Tiene queso que es el calcio y la lechuga y la salsa que serian las, las verduras. Lo que pasa es que [?] uno o dos y no comes más, entonces por eso. Y tienen aceite que [?] grasas. Ah, una quesadilla también es similar y el pozole tiene el maíz, tiene la carne tiene chile, tiene verdura…entonces también hay, va un poco balanciado, pero es las cantidades que comemos. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

Chapter 4

Miguel, page 41
M- Entonces para esto estaba un amigo que me crí en Morelia, que su mama era mi madrina de bauptismo y que tuve la oportunidad ir yo a la secundaria ella me paga los colegiaturias, mi madrina Liliana. Y ella tenia nada más un hijo. Y mi padrino el vivía, el vino, fueron de los primeros, primeros que vinieron aquí, a Alaska. Cuando se hizo la pipa. La primera [?] ducto esa que se hizo. Era hermano, el era, del papa de Luis y de Paulino. Don Luis. y ellos fueron juntos con…
S- Los dos fueron, verdad?
M- Sí. [?] Sabes a los hijos de Don Oscar Ramirez, que acuerdas don Raymundo. Ellos son los papas, Don Oscar, don Ricardo, mi padrino Rafael, Don Luis. Y muchos más fueros los primeros, primeros que vinieron a Alaska. Sí, porque toda la gente [?] más California. Sí? [?] como te digo [?] los braceros. Este, que lo más vineieron a California. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Maria, page 44
Más bien cuando voy a México me siento nada más que voy de vacáciones, de visita. (Intervew 3, September 26, Spanish)

Antonio, page 48
O sea que nunca he estado mucho tiempo en los Estados Unidos, sino por temporadas. Y luego pues, por ejemplo más [?] dedico trabajar aquí, en México. Y así estoy en las dos partes. cuando se pone apretada aquí, me cambio a las Estados Unidos, y, y...trabajo un tiempo allá y...y sigo aquí. Ah hah. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Antonio, page 48b
A- Me vine para acá. Y empezía trabajar aquí, y tenía un eijado que estaba en Alaska. Y dice, vamonos para allá, padrino. Estaba, hay mucho trabajo. Dije, bueno, vamonos. Y nos fuimos con el. El me dice, mira, van a construir algo, un gasoducto grandissimo aquí, no sea donde. Digo, allí vamos a entrar. Ah, está bien. Sí, el tenía planes de, de que entrabamos allí a trabajar.
S- Entonces en ese tiempo fue...fue palabras sobre esa tubería del petróleo.
A- Um hmm. Entonces me diciera, mira, allí está muy bien padrino, y allí, nos...allí, yo tengo conocidos, y sí, el tenía muchos conocidos. Muchos conocidos tenía mi eijado. O sea le tenía, como Paulino, [?] casi juntos con Paulino, con el de Pancho's Villa. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Antonio, page 48-49
Es que, en Alaska y eso, es una cosa bonita porque...toda la gente...llega algun paisano de nosotros y entre todos, le ayudamos a buscar trabajo. Este, todo el mundo nos ayudamos. Y...por ejemplo dicen, oye [?] trabajo, tengo algún amigo, o algo, o X. Pues ya, uno se muere y...busca, y...yo he metido mucha gente. Les ayudaba mucha gente a conseguir trabajo en Alaska. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Antonio, page 49
A- Para buscar trabajo en, en...en otros estados como ultimamente que he ido, pues [?] general periódico, y estar buscando, y...porque pues, llega uno por ejemplo en San Jose. Tengo conocidos pero ellos están en su trabajo, metidos entonces, no dejan su trabajo para...para ayudarme, verdad. Entonces, pues, es muy diferente. Entonces uno busca en el periodico y...
S- Uno para su mismo.
A- Ah hah, sí. Y allá no, por ejemplo, llega uno y te dice...[?] darle un trabajo. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Cesar, page 49
C- Uh...yo vengo de...un pueblo que se llama Acuitzio del Canje. Es en Michoacán en México. Um, estoy en...vine aquí a Alaska por, uh, por referencias de otros amigos también del mismo pueblo. Uh...se me [?] muy, se me [?] muy interestante estar acá por el, lo lejos, de repente. Puede estar uno...lo más silvestre, que...que es, que es aquí.

Puedes, en quince minutos estas pescando, estas cazando, estas…toda la vida que es de aquí es…
S- Muy diferente.
C- Sí, o sea, no lo puedes encontrar uno en México, o si lo encuentro uno en México…en México tienes que ir 4, 5 horas para estar en una cosa así. Aquí en…diez minutos. (Interview 6, September 30, Spanish)

Cesar, page 49-50
C- Yo fui, yo vino como por primera vez, pero, pero de mi, ah…influenciado por, um, varios amigos que estaban aquí. Entonces, yo llegué a la casa de unos amigos. O sea, no precicamente que llegué solo y ahora qui, que voy a hacer. (11:46)
S- Y que decían ellos sobre Alaska?
C- Oh…era, es major pagado. Hay, uh…más opportunidades de empleo. Uh…[?] pues eso que se hace muy [?] para uno. Porque sí, sí, no sufres mucho de conseguir empleo. Y te pagan bien, [?] independientemente que es si hace frío o no hace frío.
S- Y también si tiene amigos aquí con una casa, con un lugar, con conexiones…
C- Sí, o sea, sí es más…muchos de los [que vienen aquí?], también igual. Porque [?], pues. Y eran que…no, pues, es que mi, es mis parientes, amigos, que de alguna manera ya llegan, ya llegan con ellos. Que [?] mejor, no se quedan por…siempre con ellos, pero de alguna manera lecho de llegar tener a donde llegar…que es, y es bastante los [?]
S- Y en Anchorage, se siente como en su casa? O no?
C- Lógico que no.
S- Sí, creo que sí.
C- Pero vamos…de alguna manera uno busca…lógico, a los de…su pueblo. Para que de alguna manera no sienta uno…tanto del lecho de…(Interview 6, September 30, Spanish)

Chapter 5

Victor, page 57-58
Más que nada la comida, es lo que yo vio que…que es lo que los familiares encargan sus familias cuando van allá. Más que nada comida. Pan, como quieres [?], mole, pan, carne, queso, especias. (Interview 15, November 28, Spanish)

Maria, page 58
M- Aquí, um…ah comida, pues nada más lo que nos permiten pasar que es como queso, y el mole…también traigo este chile [?] le llamemos, con limón. Sí, porque aquí no hay, o sea sí hay chile [?] pero es en polvo. Casi por lo regular se ocuparse chile para, para fruta, ah hah. Entonces, no es con limón. Y yo me traigo.
S- Creo que hay en Mexico Lindo.
M- Sí, pero no es igual.
S- Ah, no es lo mismo.
M- [laughs] No, no. Y este…yo lo [?]. También, sabes que? Ahm…me traigo gelatinas del sabor jerez [sherry] porque aquí no hay del sabor jerez y me gusta mucha las gelatinas. Ah…traigo cacáhuates estilo japones que le llaman [?] pero enchilados. Enchilados, ah hah. Enchilados. Con chile, ah hah. Y también…en México, en la ciudad

de México…venden, ah…gomitas. Son como las…gummies, gummies? Eh…con sabora piña y tienen chile [laughs]! Sí, y yo me traigo un kilo [laughs]! … y entonces, también me traigo dulces. Ah hah, dulces de los que no hay aquí porque también aquí [?] más variedad de dulces mexicanos. Pero…hay unos que no hay y que a mis hijos les gusta pues yo los traigo y es que…pinole.
S- Que es pinole?
M- Pinole es ummm…el el maíz, el rojo…que lo ponen a tostar. Y ya que está bien tostado…o sea tiene, tiene, hay que saber, no no se tostarlo pero lo le llevan al molino y es como un polvo. Y ese se combina con azucar, y es dulcecito. Lo puedes comer así, o puedes hacer atole con ese. (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish)

Ivonne, page 58-59
I- Lo que siempre traemos es pan, queso…
F- Mole
I- …Queso, mole en polvo. Uh, traemos chile perón. Es un chile amarillo, chiquito, les [?] chile manzano también. [?] aquí no lo hay. No lo hay. De vez en cuando lo puedes encontrar, pero no tienes que mandar [?] algo especial de uno del los, de *local produce carriers*. Pero no lo encuentras regularmente. Entonces, traemos eso, traemos comidas que han preparado la familia, mi suegra siempre hace tamales antes de venirnos. Traemos muchos tamales. Y, um…
S- Ah, muy bien. Um, cómo los traen? En maletas?
I- Nosotros lo ponemos como en un, um, *Rubbermaid container*. Porque si no, se [?] y rompen algunas de las cosas. (Interview 4, September 28, Spanish and English)

Miguel and Inez, page 59
M- Y mira, acerca de lo que dices, que, que sí traemos, anteriormente…traemos más cosas anteriormente porque no…
I- No había aquí muchas cosas. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Miguel, page 60
M- Quizás nos traemos una parte de nosotros. Queremos traer un pedacito de México con nosotros. Mira, y aunque, y aunque uno haga [?] la ciudadanía,no? Pero siempre siento que siempre está tu corazón en tu México, como sea, sí? Unos veces lo hace por más que nada comida, y más que nada yo siento que [?] desgraciosa nuestra país porque nos ha dado la oportunidad de vivir bien tranquilos, [?] de nuestros hijos. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Alina, page 60
A- Siempre trae…comida que no debo de traer, Sarita! [laughs].
S- Cómo cuales?
A- Como he traido unos chiles, chiles perónes. Son como un chile…como más chiquita que está la naranja. Pero, uh, amarillo y es rojo y es muy picoso. Y ya vez que uno no puede traer cosas frescas para acá. Pero unos he traido, Sarita!…He traido chiles, todo la comida [?] no, no, no [laughs]…yo me traigo carnitas, carne de, carnitas, carne de puerco no puede traer uno. Pero no me han revisado el valise! [?] que no me lo revisen! [laughs] también me traigo pan, um hmm.

S- Pan dulces.
A- Sí, pan dulces. Sí. Que más he traido? El cazo, bueno pero no es ingrediente. Pero el cazo donde hicimos el atole.
S- Oh, so cosas para cocinar también?
A- Um hmm.
S- Okay. Cómo que, cómo se dice esto, pero que más?
A- El cazo, este...me traigo chiles, de estos que tengo aquí para el mole. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish).

Miguel and Inez, page 60-61
M- Sí, allá [?]. Pero a veces que uno dice, yo [?] cosas, yo no. Inclusive [?] llevar mi maletín con lo que yo traigo sería feliz. No, no, no [?] no me gusta.
I- Que es hombre pero una que es mujer siempre trae muchas cosas. [laughs]
M- No es que cuando pasa [?] Los Angeles [?]
I- Mucha comida, adornos.
M- ...y que tiene encargar los pinches valises, no, no, no, no.
I- No pero es que ellos son hombres.
M- Nunca me gustaba. Y por eso yo ni, ni molesto mis paisanos a mis, de allá, que lleva me eso. Yo sí, alcanza....un, algo [?] no más traigo mi valecito y... [?].
I- Que es más fácil.
M- Que es más fácil. [?] claro que ti digo anteriormente,se venía uno encargando porque [?]
I- No había muchas cosas aquí. Pero ya hay muchas cosas aquí. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Antonio, page 61-62
A- Ah hah, allí. En seguida se hacen el pan, estos muchachos, um hmm. Y está riquissimo. No más llevó uno [?] la mantequilla, ya me dieron [laughs].
S- Y llevaste ese a Alaska?
A- A Alaska, sí. Les gusto mucho el pan, ese de allá.
S- Los de French Oven?
A- No. A las amistades que tengo allí, les lleve un pedacito acá, aquí en mi...dos, tres piezas. Lleve como...como sesenta piezas. Llevaba corundas, llevaba este [laughs]...sí, que más...uchepos, queso, y...sí, mole, y...en pasta lo llevaba, um hmm. Y, y llevaba este...dulces. Y que más llevaba? Algo más llevaba. O sea que llevaba dos maletas llenas de...de pan y este, sí [laughs]...no me cobraron, no pague nada, no. Está, pero sí, era bien pesado. Una, que me [?] la espalda. Esa llevaba las corundas. Pero...pesadissimo, no? [?] la espalda! [laughs], sí.
S- Chistoso. Pues más para tu mismo, o para amigos allá también?
A- Ay, para los amigos, sí...Sí, esa vez yo lleve bastante y...llegando, pues, luego, luego a repartir a dulce, a todo [?]...
R- Y aprecia mucho la gente, verdad?
S- Y, y antes no llevabas nada, o?
A- Antes...antes, muy poco. O sea, llevaba al, por ejemplo cuando estaba en Texas, allí sí, por ejemplo, dos veces me...pues hasta carne llevaba a veces. Pero pasamos en carro,

no habia problema, no. [?] está bien difícil, ya no...no, ya no se puede. Llevaba chorizo, llevaba carne seca, ahorrita, ya no. ahora, ya no. (26:56)...y entonces, ya, pues el chorizo, ese sí, no dejan pasar. Ni chiles que tengan semillas. Nosotros por ejemplo, ha también llevaba chiles, pero en vinagre. Aquí nos hicimos de ese amarillo...con...
S- Los manzanos.
A- Sí, los manzanos, um hmm. Y, en vinagre [?] en un bote bien tapado.
S- Ah, y puede en vinagre, pero no...
A- Poquito vinagre para que no se tire porque, ah...en el aeropuerto abiertan las maletas, ooh! Y por allá [laughs]. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Alina, page 63-64
Traje...yo fui a traer comida! Yo fui a California a ver a mi hermana y a traer comida! En San Jose, California. Hace quince anos que no va a México. Um hmm. Entonces me traje requesón, queso, menudo. Victoria, mi hija, fue el mayo también y trajo nisparos. Tu conoces los nisparos? Es una fruta que está chiquita como naranjada...y en California hay, y Victoria se los trajo en una bolsa. Y yo que traje para mí [talking to her daughter, asking her to settle down because we are doing an interview] Me traje...uchepos de California, chiles, este, me traje carnitas, tamales...este, cosas en lata...chiles en vinagre, traje varias cosas en lata. Y me traje un valise lleno de comida!...Me dijo la muchacha, la de los boletos, que sí yo tenia restaurante. Le dije que no, queda con mi casa! [laughs]. Um hmm. Y se me pasaba [?] la maleta [?] unas chiles, una lata de chiles que es grande así que me puse [?] entonces, [?] para que no me cobraba. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

Jorge, page 64
S- Y qué, qué trae de California?
J- Uy! Hasta el mandado a veces! Porque mand...allá es bien barrato. Yo cuando iba [?] allá con 50 dólares me compraba lo que aquí me compraba con 400 dólares. [?] me traer mi mandado [laughs]. Una vez [?] un carton [?] ir a la aeropuerto y comprar mi mandado y vamonos. [?] sí.
S- Ah, sí?
J- Sí, sí, de compra así de [?], todo. [?] se necessitan. (Interview 12, October 19, Spanish)

Ernesto, page 65
Eh...por lo normal, aquí en México, decía uno, yo salgo a trabajar en la manana. A las 8 de la manana o las 7 de la manana, es un desayuno. Entonces durante...el desayuno entre el tiempo de la desayuno y la comida es trabajo. Entonces, aquí en México no se acostumbra interrompir la hora de trabajo con el desayuno o el lonche. El lonche. Porque aquí el lonche se hace a las 3 de la tarde, [?] las 3 de la tarde que es la comida. Sí? Entonces, sí es muy pesado de aquí a allá es muy pesado porque por ejemplo...allá, salió uno de trabajar, y es un café...por la manana. A las 12 del día...es el lonche. Que vine siendo aquí el desayuno o el almuerzo. Entonces uno no puede comer mucho porque uno está puesto a trabajar con el estomago lleno. Entonces es, sí, es pesado porque se rompe. Se rompe ese, ese horario, se rompe el...la...el reloj. De, del tiempo de la comida. O sea que no podamos decir [?] el lonche [?] yo no estuvo tomar nada en la manana.

Porque...no me gusta. En la manana. Aquí [?] desayunaron pero a las 10 de la manana. Cuando estoy aquí en México. Allá, pues no. porque yo salgo a las 7 de la manana de mi casa y es...un café a veces. Y si no, pues nada. [?] voy. Hasta la hora de lonche, un sandwich o un burrito, y es todo. Y hasta las 8 o 9 de la noche...es la cena. O es comida más bien. Entonces, sí, es pesado. Muy fuerte...O sea uno se acostumbro. Para mí, para mí tampoco el cambio del horario de aquí de allá no es...[?] muy indifferente. O sea yo llevo allá y hace que [?] no, no voy a almorzar nada hasta el hora de lonche. Y no voy a comer nada durante este tiempo hasta la hora de la cena. Y llevo aquí, y [?] se acostumbre aquí. Llevo aquí y se acostumbran...los primeros días, poquito. Pero lo voy acostumbrando a [?] a que tengan que desayunar en la manana, toque comer en el medio día y [?] cenar en la noche. Sí, y llevo allá, y llevo allá, y allá lo mismo. Como acá hay tres comidas allá nada más va a ser...dos. Al mediodía y ...en la noche. (Interview 14, November 27, Spanish).

Ivonne, page 66

I- *Um, where Fernando's from, like even the mole. The mole in the north, of the, of Mexico tends to be sweet. And the mole kind of where Fernando, the region Fernando is from, is bitter, it's different. And, um, to the south it's sweet too. So that central region, the mole's more bitter. Um, but, even the way that, like, atole is prepared or menudo, um, or even the way enchiladas are eaten is, it's different region to region and it's just probably availability of ingredients, I would say. Just what's more available.*

S- Y cómo fue para usted para aprender recetas de su suegra?

I- Fue interesante porque ella tiene mucha paciencia. Ella tiene mucha paciencia y, y...fue fácil porque no son recetas muy difíciles.

S- *And you wanted to learn...*?

I- *Yeah, I wanted to learn.*

S- Para Fernando o para usted?

I- For me, porque me gustaba. Y por ellos también, porque la comida está buena y son cosas que Fernando le gustaba. Las comidas, sí son diferentes. Por ejemplo, la primera vez que yo hice lentejas, yo las aprendí de mi abuelita. Y cuando mi abuelita hace lentejas, les pone cilantro. Y la mama de Fernando no les pone cilantro. Entonces, son...[?]

S- Y las recetas son escritos o en su memoria?

I- Algunos son escritos, las más difíciles que tienen más ingredientes o es por medida, *you know, you take, there's measurements involved.* Pero por lo regular, me las recuerdan. porque son sencillas. *They're simple.* Y si no me recuerda *I could always call her.* La llamo por telefono: suegra, cómo hizo esto? (Interview 5, September 28, Spanish and English)

Miguel, page 67

...Es una cosa que no acábas acerca de lo de nuestra, por eso le digo que, un...desafortunadamente a veces no valora uno lo que es nuestra cultura, lo que es nuestra, cada país...cada lugar tiene los suyo, los [?] siempre dicho, sí. Pero dentro de lo que estámos hablando de la comida [?], pues nunca se va a comprar. Aunque ya tenemos aceso de muchas cosas, que nosotros preocupabamos por hacerlos nuestro de, de [?]

también. Sí?...es otro las que, [?] reparado, es otro de los que [?] los antojitos, los tamales, el pozole. Es [?] lo que identifica a México...en particular en todo. Porque cierto, de donde quiera, en todo México, yo siento que...puede, es bien conocido los tamales y el pozole. Sí? Aunque el pozole de donde será casi...y hay diferentes tipos de pozole...sí. Más que a veces, tu te enfocas de como te acostumbraban, o como lo hace tu mama en tu casa. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Ana, page 71-72
Ah bueno, es un pueblo bonito y la gente es muy buena, la comida es muy rica. Y me gusta mucho el clima. Es bonito porque no es muy caliente, el clima, ni es muuuuy frío como Alaska. Está agusto en el, en el invierno. Uhhh, allá hay comida bien buena. [laughs]. Muy rica comida. (Interview 7, October 4, Spanish)

Chapter 6

Maria, page 76-77
M- Ah hah, aunque también hay otras recetas que no es solo de comida mexicana que yo he aprendido aquí y que me gustan también.
S- Como que?
M- Hay un pollo que aprendía hacerlo que lleva...varios condimentos, varias especias, pimienta, clavo, cumino, eh...lleva...salsa de soya, ah hah, este vinagre, limón, y se deja...marinando. [unintelligible] O sea se da sabor y luego se puede meter al horno o se puede dorar y queda muy sabroso que. Queda así como, como...un sabor...agarra el sabor de vinagre y del limón y se queda muy, muy bueno. Ah hah.
S- Ah, muy bien. Y cómo aprendía cocinarlo?
M- Un, un amigo me ensenó. Ah hah, el me ensenó esa receta (Interview 3, September 26, Spanish).

Miguel and Inez, page 78
M- De conservar nosotros, sí. Ahora también hay ya muchos restaurantes mexicanos a los que vamos. Pero nunca sabe igual.
I- Nunca es igual. Inclusa la comida mexicana, de aquí no es nuestra comida. No es la comida mexicana.
M- Mira, aquí por ejemplo...visto dentro mi trayecto de trabajo que yo realizo. Aquí la gente piensa que la comida mexicana solo es las burritos, las enchiladas, y los tacos, esos.
I- Esos no son nuestra comida.
M- Y para nosotros, y para nosotros las enchiladas, los tacos y eso son antojitos, les llamaban nosotros. Esos son, esos son comidas placeras. Son, gente cuando vas al mercado de las están haciendo allí, pero...allá costumbran provincia, tu vas a saber todo allá, en Acuitzio más que nada ya, y en Patzcuaro, allí vas al centro y allí está un mercado, y están vendiendo los puestos de las enchiladas, corundas, y las enchiladas muy diferentes...aquí como te vas [?] allá, hablar de una gente allá, unas enchiladas con arroz y frijoles, pues tan loco! Porqué?!

S- Sí, la cosa que no entiendo es que la gente...probablamente les gustan mucho la comida que es autenticamente mexicano pero nadie aquí tiene un restaurant de este. Y porqué?
I- Um, quizás porque el Americano exige más este tipo de comida. Creo yo que es tipo tex-mex.
M- Era mi pregunta que ha hecho, o sea, por ejemplo yo por ejemplo ha llegada allá en un restaurant muchos, pues, mexicano. Yo [?] lo que respeto de de lo restaurante [?] un trabajo. No tenía mucha gente mexicana. Si tu has notado.
I- No mucho cliente mexicano, no mucho cliente mexicano.
M- La mayoria es un restaurant mexicano, pero para americanos.
I- Un restaurant con clientes, un restaurant mexicano del lo, de 90% americano y 10% hispano.
M- Es mínimo, es mínimo, el que va, sí?...Y, y nosotros, no todos, ya ahorrita están, pero la gran mayoría es una imagen que tenemos ...de que, de que tenemos esa mala fama de que [?]. Y somos más exigentes.
I- Son muy exigentes.
M- Y sabes porque? Porque conocemos lo de allá, porque nosotros ha vemos lo que realmente y exigidos más.
I- La autentica comida de México, y uno va y quiere exigir y no puedes exigir.
M- Y el americano...dale lo que tu [?] y dice, oh delicious! Mmm..es *delicious, oh it's so good*!
I- Y le gusta la comida. Se gusta la comida
M- Y paga! (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Inez, page 80
[Los ninos] ya saben el folklore, también algo que tenemos es como por ejemplo en Thanksgiving. Hacemos el turkey pero pero aparte hacemos un platillo mexicano. Hacemos el *turkey*, con el *gravy*, la *mashed potato*, y más aparte hacemos pozole, tamales, atole. O sea hacemos una mezcla. Para que ellos aprendan, o sea que es un día muy grande para aquí. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Victor, page 81
V- Sí, lo mismo para mí porque no me...no me acostumbraba la comida de allá. O sea, y allá más otras cosas que, por ejemplo, cuando compramos pollo para hacer el mole, compramos el pollo no, no sabía pollo [?] sin sabor así.
S- Um hmm. Sí, es muy blanco...
V- Muy blanco y sin sabor, no? Y las verduras ni las fruitas, ni...nada tenia sabor. (Interview 15, November 28, Spanish)

Ernesto, page 83-84
Allá en la casa donde vivímos, yo [?] con mi hermano y mi cunada, mis sobrinos...Se trata de llevar una semejanza de la comida mexicana dentro de la casa. O sea [?] hablando allí en la casa se cocina arroz, frijoles, bistek con chile, o...carne con chile.

Tratar de llegaron a semejar un poco más a la cocina mexicana. Es lo que tratamos. (Interview 14, November 27, Spanish)

Alina, page 84
S- Um, son ingredientes y recetas auténticas mexicanas importante a usted?
A- Sí.
S- Y puede decir algo sobre eso? Como, porqué son importantes? Y si es difícil comprar los ingredientes auténticos aquí, o no?
A- Porque no llegan hasta acá, yo creo. En California sí hay, todo. Um hmm. En California, sí, pero aquí no.
S- Aquí no, huh? Y porque es...creo que es importante porque del sabor, verdad?
A- Um hmm. Um hmm.
S- Es difícil comprar ingredientes que nececita? Tiene que cambiar sus recetas cuando no puede buscar ingredientes auténticos?
A- Um hmm, sí.
S- Y cómo cambia?
A- El sabor.
S- El sabor?
A- Sí, el sabor.
S- So, el atole y que más?
A- El atole...todo [?]. El pozole, sí, porque es en lata. La masa porque es en harina. Allá, allá no, allá la masa es...diferente. Tu vas a saber. [laughs] Sí. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

Ivonne, page 84
A veces, por falta de los ingredientes tenemos que hacer modificaciones pero, um, pero estamos de mantener las cosas lo más auténtico possible cuando hacemos las comidas mexicanas...por ejemplo, um, a ver, como que...para...para el arroz con leche, por lo regular se usan las, um, barras de canela, las largas. Y a veces, sí las encuentras pero están chiquitas y no tienen muy buen sabor entonces, um...a modifica la receta. También la vanilla, a veces no es auténtica y entonces compras la, la imitación, um. Las tortillas no son auténticas. Modificamos las tortillas. Um, algunas de las verduras no son las que se usan típicamente. Por ejemplo, cuando haces un caldo de pollo a veces si puedes encontrar chayote, pero a veces no. Entonces, a veces no le pones ciertas cosas. [pause] los quesos, um...cosas y... a veces sí, pero ya es mucho más fácil porque hay más. Pero a veces...a veces sí los hay. Pero por ejemplo no están aquí en Fred Meyer, están en Mexico Lindo y Mexico Lindo está cerrado o está lejos y no hay tiempo de ir hasta allá. Entonces, *they're not readily available everywhere. Sometimes they are available, but you have to look for them. Um, you have to go to Mexico Lindo, you have to go to Red Apple. So it, it takes, it's not like, you know, when you're in México you go to the corner store and you pick up that thing, that missing ingredient. It's not that way. Most, and, and, you especially see that around the holidays when you're trying to prepare, like, the holiday meals*, como un ponche mexicano (Interview 5, September 28, Spanish and English).

Inez, page 85
Nos hemos adaptado. Sin dejar nuestras costumbres y sin dejar nuestra vida...nos adaptamos hasta aquí, sin dejar nuestras valores y nuestras costumbres. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Chapter 8

Alina, page 93
A- Quieres una manzana? [chopping a granny smith apple] Esta manzana sabe como perón de Méxcio. Sí. En mi casa, mi papa tenía una vuelta que tenía perón y sabe a, a perón, a esta manzana...Es como aigre-dulce.
S- Sí. *Granny smith*, como abuelita smith. Es el nombre aquí.
A- Oh. Y me gustan porque saben como los de México.
S- Mi mama siempre pone sal por su manzana.
A- Nosotros ponemos sal y chile. (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish)

Antonio, page 93-94
A- Sí, sí...yo cuando llegué allí que me dijeron que era una...que era comida mexicana, pues yo pensaba ver comida mexicana. Pues ya empezaba probarla, y pues no...es de diferente. Es un poco más dulce...
S- Sí, como la comida allá es más dulce en las restaurantes, verdad?
A- Ay, bastante, no, no le dale el sabor que debe de ser.
S- Y porque piensas que ellos no hacen la comida como aquí?
A- Bueno, ellos, casi todos piensan que, que no le gusta el picante el americano, y por eso hacen ellos eso de ...de hacerlo un poco más dulce, y le quitan el sabor. (Interview 16, November 30, Spanish)

Miguel and Inez, page 95
M- Y hay, y fijate lo que es dentro de nosotros mismos, mira en Puebla es muy comun el mole.
I- Mole dulce, allá la comida es muy dulce.
M- En Jalisco, ustedes que tienen?
M- Barbacoa. El chivo, eh...[?] en salsa. Bien rico.
I- Y la barbacoa tiene que hacer de chivo. O borrego...y eso, cómo te voy a decir, todas esas cosas por ejemplo, tiene su, su, como puedo decirse, es un ritual para hacer esa comida. (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Miguel and Inez, page 95b
M- Mira, las enchiladas allá, es un, es un comal grande uno se laboren, [?] con manteca. Y las tortillas. Bien diferente...Y luego a pasa parte allí doradas, son zanahorias y papas se apoyo, y aparte se hacen una, una, unos chiles de las [?] en escabeche. En, en con...vinagre, um hmm. Eso le pones. Y, y tu, y tu pollo cocido ya, pero dorado. Y eso...
I- En la manteca.
M- Y tu, tu queso encima. Eso es las enchiladas! No hay de otro. Entonces de repente, aquí dices, enchiladas con frijoles y arroz? (Interview 13, October 25, Spanish)

Alina, page 97-98

A- Estas chiles no son aquí, Sarita. Se llaman mulatto. [sound of a bag opening]. No más hay de este, pero rojo. [from across the room again]. Y este es otro tipo de chile. Este se llama mulata para hacer mole. Y esto se ve igual pero no es igual. [bag crinkling] Tu piensas que es igual, verdad?

S- Sí!

A- No es igual! No es igual. Cuando uno lo hierve este se pone negro y este se pone rojo. Y este ya me la traje de México y no me lo tengo que traer esto, es ilegal…a mandar los chiles. [laughs]

S- [laughs] En que usa estos chiles?

A- Este es para mole.

S- Y esos?

A- Mira, en México [bag crinkling] dicen que tiene uno que usar cuatro, cinco variedades de chiles para el mole. Pero a mí me gusta el mole nada más con ese chile. Sí, porque este lo pone rojo y a mí no me gusta el mole rojo. A mí me gusta el negro, negrito. Y tiene otro sabor este chile que este. Ese lo uso para las enchiladas. Y esta para el mole.

S- Hay muchas, muchas, muchas tipos de chile.

A- Sí, y está ese y hay otro negro. A ver dejame [?] ensenar del otro negro. [rummaging on the other side of the room, sound of the TV]

S- Oh, hay muchas!

A- [bags crinkling] Este es chile…chile guajillo. Chile guajillo. Este es chile adobado. Y este es chile negro pero no es negro igual que este. Este es delgadito, mira. [?]…Y este es chile negro. Y este es chile mulatto…en México mucha gente le pone…

S- Todos en mole.

A- Uh huh, pero no me gustan todos en el mole. Porque queda negrito el chile.

S- Y todos estos son de México?

A- Este lo compre en Mexico Lindo pero este sí, es de México y este es de California yo creo…sí. Los Angeles, California. [bag crinkling] Um hmm. Hay muchos chiles en México, Sarita.

S- Um hmm, de todos los colores…

A- Y sabores…um hmm. El, el que te digo que me trajo que se, que se llama chile perón, ese está, tiene buen sabor. Y no te irrite el estomago…Sí, pica pero no irrita. Y hay otros que sí, el vinagre, del vinagre el chile ese sí, te…te irrita el estomago. [putting chiles away, her daughter hitting the table]. Mira, aquí tengo estos, son los de vinagre. [?] Son los que irritan el estomago a veces…y este es chile de arbol. Chile de arbol. Estos lo encontre en una tienda de los chinos! … um hmm. Está es otro chile. Este es chile cola de rata. Es un chile delgadita así. No más que lo moli cuando quiero picante mi comida no más agarrar un poquito lo pongo a…de este le manda mi hija hasta Corea. [?] Sí…[from the other side of the room] otro chile más. Y estos se lo compre allá con estos chinos, mira Sarita. Estes chiles de los…chinos…eso no es en México. Estos no hay en México.

S- No?

A- No. Solo con los orientales es esto.

S- Pero es sabroso?

A- Sí, es chile [?] (Interview 8, October 5, Spanish).

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S- So, mencionó que tiene una condición para su alimentación, que no puede comer chile o otras cosas picantes o cosas como café…

J- Irritantes en general. Es ummm…como podemos decir este…es una dieta baja en grasas, este…en picantes, uh, no puedo comer. Muy picantes, o sea una cosa moderata, sí, sí puedo. Estes grasas, lo menos que pueda. Este café, no. y…alcool, de vez en cuando. Casi no. (Interview 9, October 12, Spanish)