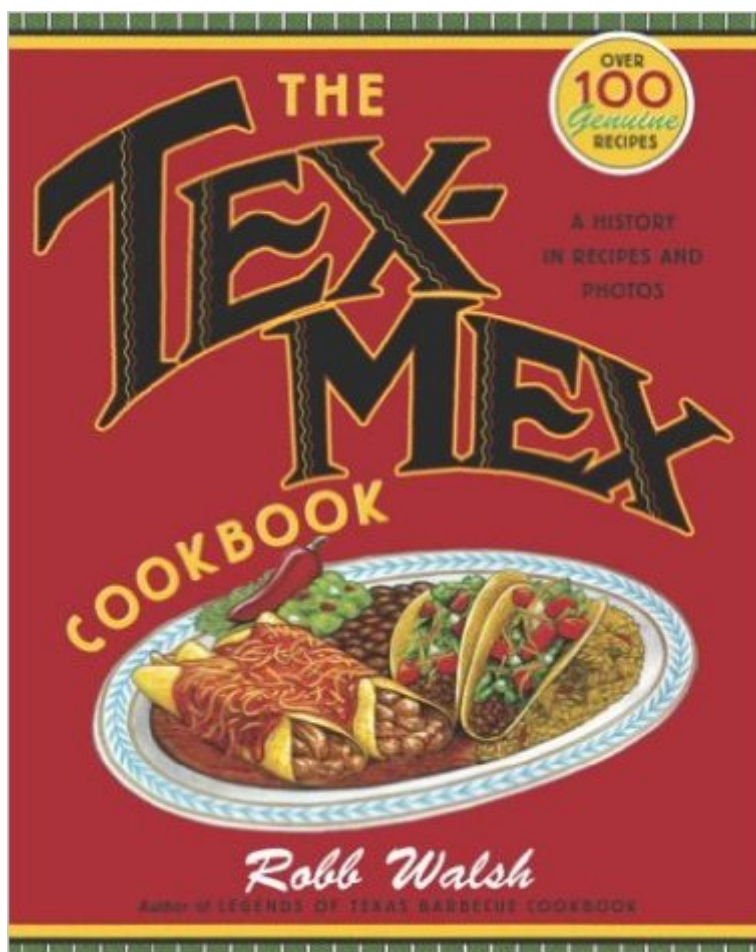


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The Tex-Mex Cookbook: A History In Recipes And Photos



Synopsis

Join Texas food writer Robb Walsh on a grand tour complete with larger-than-life characters, colorful yarns, rare archival photographs, and a savory assortment of crispy, crunchy Tex-Mex foods. From the Mexican pioneers of the sixteenth century, who first brought horses and cattle to Texas, to the Spanish mission era when cumin and garlic were introduced, to the 1890s when the Chile Queens of San Antonio sold their peppery stews to gringos like O. Henry and Ambrose Bierce, and through the chili gravy, combination plates, crispy tacos, and frozen margaritas of the twentieth century, all the way to the nuevo fried oyster nachos and vegetarian chorizo of today, here is the history of Tex-Mex in more than 100 recipes and 150 photos. Rolled, folded, and stacked enchiladas, old-fashioned puffy tacos, sizzling fajitas, truck-stop chili, frozen margaritas, Frito Pie, and much, much more, are all here in easy-to-follow recipes for home cooks. The Tex-Mex Cookbook will delight chile heads, food history buffs, Mexican food fans, and anybody who has ever woken up in the middle of the night craving cheese enchiladas.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I grew up in San Antonio and spent nearly forty years in Dallas, and I've been a devotee of Tex-Mex food all that time. This amazing, engrossing, mouth-watering volume is far more than a "cookbook," the modest title notwithstanding -- it's a history of why Texans eat the way they do, why most Mexicans south of the Sonoran desert are contemptuous of chips-and-salsa, and where chile con carne really began. There are decades of photos of the best chili joints and upscale restaurants

in the state, many of which I've eaten at over the years. The frontispiece is of the gondola at Casa Rio, where my high school senior class held parties, and there's even a picture (along with a bit of oral history) of Lucille Quiñones (whose family owned El Rancho restaurant), and whom I also knew in high school. (She went to Incarnate Word and many of the guys from my school dated girls there.) The chapter on the "chili queens" is fantastic and exceedingly well-written. The lengthy discussion of the "myth of authenticity" is spot-on, absolutely accurate, and will upset some self-righteous Texans, but who cares? The great food is the thing! And the recipes themselves, scattered among the history and the pictures, are excellent, including the classic method of making chili gravy at Molina's in Houston, and the pre-yupified cheese enchiladas at Larry's down in Richmond, and the swooningly delicious version of chiles rellenos at Darios in Austin, and the justifiably famous puffy tacos at Henry's in San Antonio (where they were invented and don't let anyone tell you different).

'The Tex-Mex Cookbook' by Robb Walsh, the Southwest's answer to Maine's John Thorne, is a truly remarkable book, in that it presents the history from the beginning, in pictures, narrative, and recipes, of a complete cuisine. The credit for this accomplishment cannot be given to Walsh alone, as part of the ability to write such a history is based on the fact that the 'Tex-Mex' cuisine is so young, with many of its defining events happening within living memory. And, no events in this history predate the colonization of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona by the Spanish in the 1500's. One critical 'defining moment' in 'Tex-Mex' cuisine occurred just thirty years ago, according to the author, when Diana Kennedy, the renowned interpreter of Mexican cuisines identified the style of cooking north of the Mexican border in 'The Cuisines of Mexico' as something distinctly not part of Mexican culinary heritage. Having been cut loose from Mexican cuisine by such a distinguished authority left this style of food to establish its own identity. While other writers may not take the 'Tex' part of the term literally, Robb Walsh wishes to define the extent of 'Tex-Mex' cuisine as truly that which is done or which originated within the boundaries of Texas, or some location very close by. This rules out several popular gringo dishes such as fish tacos so prominent in San Diego. Ground Zero for Tex-Mex cuisine appears to be San Antonio, in the shadow of the Alamo. Only fitting that the defining venue for Tex-Mex eating is the most memorable location in the battle for Texas independence from Mexico. The word 'Tex-Mex' was not invented for the cuisine and may not have been applied to the cuisine until Diana Kennedy banished it from Mexican food styles.

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