IT STAINS THE TABLECLOTH:
THE PERSISTENCE AND EVOLUTION OF MANCHAMANTELES

by

S. Tiernan Alexander

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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It is so sappy in here right now. You might want to look away.

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My husband, Tim asked that I only thank him for eating all the mole. He does indeed have that skill.

I planned to write a thesis on textiles, but then a truly terrible thing happened. My dad (also my best friend, my mentor, my part-time therapist, and cooking idol) died early on Christmas morning 2012. Everything in the world stopped working for me. Nothing I did meant anything in the face of such a bewildering and horrific loss. In the weeks that followed I walked through my life, but I couldn’t feel it. Everyone at Winterthur pulled around me as an insulating barrier to help me through that time as did my friends in family back home. I am stunned at the outpouring of support and love that I received last year and continue to receive every day.

Somewhere in those awful months I found something that had a small meaning for me—cooking. I learned from my father that cooking is essentially love made real. It is a gift we give each other every day. It is the chance to be an alchemist turning humble ingredients into passionate sensory experiences. Above all it is how we are

¹ Seriously y’all I am not naming every single one of you, but thanks to all the Eads, Alexanders, Turners, Taylors, and Giles.

² Nope – if my family didn’t get called out by name then y’all don’t either. This thing is already so long no one’s gonna make it past the intro.
nourished and how we nourish one another. I love my dad. I miss him every day. This paper and all of the work this past year is for him. And it is for you.
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ABSTRACT

The oldest recipe for the Mexican mole dish manchamanteles was written down about 350 years ago. It is still served at festivals and in cafes throughout Mexico today. This paper investigates how the recipe developed historically, what tastes and cooking traditions it evolved out of, and why it has persisted for so long. I examine the dish through the social and historical context of mole, the national dish of Mexico, illuminating why mole retains an aura of cultural significance as a symbol of the hybridity inherent in Mexican culture.

Manchamanteles, like mole, has both Aztec and Spanish roots. I trace these antecedents by analyzing the texts of numerous historic cookbooks as well as cooking tools and traditions from both cultures. This paper outlines the results of cooking experiments that I conducted as part of my research. By working through several versions of the recipe and using historic cooking techniques, I gained a greater understanding of the cooking process and the consistency of the dish over time. The recipes reveal a web of connections between Nahuatl, Spanish, and Persian cooking traditions. This thesis outlines my conclusions about what elements in manchamanteles come from Europe versus the New World, why the traditional cooking techniques (like the recipe itself) have persisted for so long, and why this dish remained popular despite many changes in food fashions over the centuries.
INTRODUCTION

The flavors of my heritage were passed through my parents, grandmothers, great aunt and great grandmother. Our families’ cultural backgrounds were transmitted through flavors, recipes, and cooking techniques. The only proper way to make my grandmother’s mint salad dressing is in an olive wood bowl with a large pestle used to crush the mint and garlic together directly against the bottom of the salad bowl. After making the dressing the lettuce is added to the dressing. The bowl my grandmother used for that salad was never used for anything else.

Most people I know have stories about food from their family that in some way embodies their culture or their idea of themselves. My family has carried on a minor tradition with a handful of recipes from Lebanon and Sicily, passed from one generation to another. All other parts of those cultures have faded from our lives. No one speaks Lebanese or Italian, we rejected most of the cultural, political and spiritual beliefs of our forefathers, but these dishes remain constant. When members of the family talk about being Italian we talk about food. We repeat the same conversations: ‘where can you get a good Italian sausage in this town’, what do you put in your pasta sauce’, ‘great meals I have known and loved’. When we talk about our heritage or our ethnicity, we talk about food.

When I lived in Oaxaca, Mexico the dish I most often heard about from individuals was their mother’s mole. This was the dish that communicated the story of who that family was, what region of Mexico they were from, what tribe of indigenous
people they shared history with, and how they celebrated their fiestas. Restaurants, guidebooks and websites all refer to mole as the national dish of Mexico and the various creation myths about the invention of mole are used to attract tourists, sell cookbooks, and fill restaurants. Despite the hype, everyone I asked had a family mole story, a favorite restaurant for mole, and an opinion about how it originated.

Mole is a dish with thousands of variations, just as pasta sauce or curry or noodles can represent wide ranges of meals from Italy or India or Asia. To talk about mole is to immediately define what kind you are discussing, with chocolate or without, from Puebla or Oaxaca, green, black, red, yellow, and on and on. I often ate a dish in Oaxaca called manchamanteles which translates to ‘it stains the tablecloth’. I heard it referenced often as one of the seven moles of Oaxaca and I loved its smoky, sweet, sourness. I talked to people about their own moles, techniques, and recipes. I read cookbooks and shopped in markets with huge sacks of dried chiles and jars full of spices.

Looking through a cookbook from the 1600s, I came across a recipe for mole and another for manchamanteles and was inspired by the longevity of these dishes in Mexican daily life. Having experienced the importance of these foods socially in 21st century Mexico, I want to understand where these dishes came from, how elements of the Spanish and Aztec diets mixed in their making. How does a food persist for 400 years? What makes a flavor survive transformations of diet, technology, and ethnicity? In this essay I am looking at how one particular recipe evolved over centuries, how its flavor has endured developments in cooking technology and techniques, and how the written recipes reflect the various influences from the old and new worlds that created it.
In the following chapters I will look at the history of mole documentation starting with the Aztec cooking practices captured by Bernadino de Sahagún, the dietary changes brought by the Spanish, and how these combined to form the basic cooking traditions of New Spain. I will examine recipes from nine manuscript cookbooks written between 1650 and 1900, six published cookbooks from the nineteenth century, and four modern collections of historic recipes. These 19 sources contain more than 100 recipes for the many types of mole and 20 recipes for manchamanteles. In order to create a clear picture of development I have focused my recipe analysis and cooking attentions on manchamanteles. I have cooked many of these recipes in my own kitchen and in my backyard on an open fire in an effort to understand the techniques and tastes described in these sources. And I have focused on a few specific tools and techniques that are essential to these recipes and that, like the dish itself, survive the many cultural and political developments in Mexico over the past three centuries.

My interest in this dish is threefold: what is its history, why was it adopted by the Spanish and later by the Mexicans, and what parts of its construction are essential to its production? Which parts of it derive from Spanish, Middle Eastern, or Nahuatl traditions and why has it survived so many centuries of social, economic, and technological upheavals? Mole scholar Paco Ignacio Taibo wrote in his *El Libro de Todos los Moles* (The Book of All the Moles) that "you can't understand mole if you don't understand its epoch." He sees mole as the great dish of the baroque era in New Spain. But I see mole as a dish of many eras, from pre-conquest to the present, with

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3 Appendix A lists the recipes I cooked as part of the experiment.
4 Taibo, *El Libro de Todos los Moles*, 103.
meanings and associations from all of them. From Nahuatl to nuns, pre-Columbian to post-industrial, countryside to cultural center and back again—this dish has embodied the feeling of home, the idea of Mexicanness for generations.
Chapter 1

THE HISTORY OF MOLE

Mole combines chiles, spices, and nuts into a paste thinned with broth, enhanced with fruits or vegetables, and served over meat. Dozens of types of moles have evolved over the past five centuries from the earliest documented pre-Columbian version of this dish. Today, mole still contains ingredients and techniques present in the cooking of the Nahuatl people combined with European and Islamic food traditions brought from Spain. In this chapter I will describe the development of mole from Aztec cuisine, the changes in the dish that resulted from Spanish conquest including that culture’s North African influences, and how the cuisine of New Spain was enhanced by expanded trade throughout the old and new worlds. I will also discuss the importance of convents in recording this and many other recipes and in the blending of high and low culinary trends.

Cuisine is a critical element of every culture; when cultures clash, foodways can embody the political, economic, and material results of that encounter. The politics of cuisines as fashionable status indicators amongst the wealthy and

5 Stuart Schwartz notes in his work *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico* that “Aztecs are better referred to as Nahua since they are speakers of Nahuatl.” He also notes that they referred to themselves as Mexica. I use Nahuatl, Aztec, and Mexica to refer to the pre-Columbian inhabitants of what is now Mexico as well as to their culture.


7 Pilcher, "Tamales or Timbales," 193.
indigenous vehicles of cultural resistance and assimilation are at play in this dish over the centuries. The recipes for mole in general and manchamanteles in particular reveal an increasing availability of ingredients from around the world such as cloves and cinnamon. They link back to common flavors in medieval Spain while incorporating a wider range of ingredients indicative of greater wealth and availability of foods. This speaks to the centrality of Mexico City as an international trading hub in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with ties to Africa and the Far East.

While we can’t know what food tasted like to people in the past, by examining the combinations of ingredients enjoyed by locals and immigrants to New Spain we can explore a microcosm of the enormous cultural changes experienced under Spanish colonialism.

The Mythology of Mole

Many articles and books have been written about the history of mole and what it means in Mexican culture. One important element in all mole histories is the mythology surrounding its origins. Miguel Guzman Peredo created an anthology of mole origin stories in his book *Crónicas gastronomicas* (Gastronomic Chronicles). They mostly revolve around a convent kitchen in the city of Puebla in the late 1600s attempting to honor the Viceroy or to entertain a distinguished visitor. The invention myth involves either an inspirational moment of adding chocolate to an existing chile-based dish, or an accidental spilling of a spice tray into a stew.

This mythology pervades Mexican culinary writing, in cookbooks, guidebooks, restaurants, and websites. Despite the lack of documentations surrounding

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these stories, they were accepted long before the publication of Sor Juana’s cookbook—coincidentally written around the same time this invention was said to have happened. But Sor Juana did not include chocolate in her recipes for mole. In the written record of manuscript cookbooks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries chocolate is not the ingredient that finally, magically transformed a chile sauce into a mole. While chocolate is an ingredient with a lot of cultural meaning and history, the fact is that the majority of moles do not use it and it did not appear in a written recipe until the mid-nineteenth century so it shouldn’t be considered the defining ingredient.

Mexican culture and food historian Jeffrey Pilcher notes that “the authors of these tales, although relying on vivid imagination rather than historical research, correctly perceived the importance of mole, and of cuisine, in the blending of cultures that forged modern Mexico.”9 The path that Pilcher and many other writers trace for mole wanders through the many political and social evolutions and revolutions in Mexico as a bellwether of cultural change. Paco Ignacio Taibo, Octavio Paz, Alfonso Reyes, Victor and Mary Lau Valle, Luis Alberto Vargas and many, many others10 have examined how mole rose and fell in the public consciousness from its probable invention in the colonial convent kitchens, its early life as lower class food of the people, its evolution to symbolic dish of the mestizo Mexican revolution and on through a cultural ambivalence to the symbolic meanings heaped upon it by the end of the nineteenth century.

9 Pilcher, Que Vivan los Tamales, 26.

10 Pilcher also lists Carlos de Gante, Artemio del Valle Arizpe, Salvador Novo, Amando Farga, Mayo Sánchez and Alfredo Espinoza as having written about the cultural symbolism of mole in Que Vivan los Tamales on page 25. I was not able to read these texts myself.
This mythology does not line up with the actual history of mole as an Aztec creation that gradually becomes a mainstay of the diet of colonial New Spain without any magical moment of invention.

**The Food of the Aztecs**

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the Nahua diet consisted of corn, beans, vegetables, fruit, meat, and chiles. But cooking in central Mexico also incorporated ingredients from North and South America. These ingredients were available in the capital city, Tenochtitlan, as a result of tribute relations as well as cross-continental trade. Meat was an important but not critical part of the daily diet. There were a few domesticated food animals like turkeys and small dogs, but without large livestock, meat could be scarce and so the dietary staples of corn and beans provided the necessary protein and were supplemented by those small domestic animals, fish, fowl, and wild game. But while corn, beans, and squash could have sustained the Aztecs, the most distinctive element of their daily diet was their consumption of chiles.

Joy Adapon explains the cultural importance of chile in the Mexican diet in her book *Culinary Art and Anthropology*. “Complemented with beans, chile and corn (most often in the form of tortillas) are the main ingredients of Mexican cuisine. The most culturally meaningful of the three is chile.” Chiles were eaten raw, cooked,


12 The Mendoza Codex is a Mesoamerican codex written by unknown indigenous people (the painter is supposed to be Francisco Gualpuyogualcal) between 1541 and 1542 for Antonio de Mendoza, viceroy of New Spain, who may have commissioned it. It documents, primarily in pictures, what items were required in tribute during the Aztec empire.

pickled, smoked, dried and powdered, and dried and reconstituted. Each treatment of each variety of chile produced a different flavor. Chiles were so abundant in number and variety that they could form the main component of a dish or meal or merely add the final flavor. Chile peppers added much needed variety to what could otherwise have been a bland diet as well as being a strong source of vitamin C. Because they could be stored for long periods they provided stability in diet as well.

Sophie Coe points out that while many Europeans characterized chile as a condiment, in Mesoamerican cuisine it was so critical that eating food without chiles was considered a form of penance.\(^\text{14}\) Chile peppers were eaten by all levels of society both before and after conquest.

By 5000 B.C., the most important foods in the Mexican diet, namely corn, beans, squash, tomatillos, and chile peppers, had been domesticated and were being cultivated by Mesoamerican farmers. \(\cdots\) After five centuries, the diet is still being adhered to by a large part of the population.\(^\text{15}\)

Cooking and food preparation was well documented by Spanish conquerors, visitors, and ethnographers like Bernadino de Sahagún, Bernal Diáz del Castillo, Cortés, and even Columbus. Many travelers to New Spain documented what they ate and how it was prepared. Figure 1.1 shows a European illustration of natives cooking chocolate from the John Ogilby translation of the Dutch book of the New World.\(^\text{16}\)

The primary staple of the Nahua diet was masa—corn or maize that had been processed and ground so that it could be stored for long periods and later cooked into

\(^{15}\) Long-Solis, *Food Culture in Mexico*, xiii.
\(^{16}\) Ogilby, *America: being an accurate description of the New World*, 241.
tortillas and tamales. Maize that had been through this process was not only easily stored but much higher in protein content than regular corn.\textsuperscript{17} Chile may have provided the flavor to the Nahua diet but masa was a foodstuff of such importance that it figured in the religion of Aztecs and Maya. In the \textit{Popul Vuh} creation myth:

\begin{quote}
After the earth was created, the gods populated it with animals, but the animals were unable to speak and therefore could not worship the gods. For this reason the gods created humans and relegated the animal to be food for humans. The first generation of humans was made out of mud; they were weak and were soon destroyed.

The gods then created men from wood and women from reeds. These men populated the world and procreated, but they soon forgot their gods and were punished with a flood. The few who survived were transformed into monkeys. Finally, the gods decided to mold mankind from maize. This generation, which includes the present human race, is able to worship and nourish the gods.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Maize and masa also figure highly in the Aztec religion. For the Nahua people corn products were the primary carbohydrate staple of the diet with as powerful a connection to religion as bread has for Catholics. But there was a connection between the gods and all foods that grew out of the ground. Aztec mythology detailed how the gods had sacrificed themselves to make the world, using their bodies to make food grow.

Kay Read describes the relationship between divine sacrifice and food consumption in Aztec mythology in her essay “The Fleeting Moment: Cosmogony, Eschatology, and Ethics in Aztec Religion and Society.” She outlines “the mortal nature of divine nourishment” and “the divine source of mortal nourishment,” in

\textsuperscript{17} Coe. \textit{America’s First Cuisines}, 30.
\textsuperscript{18} Tedlock, Dennis. \textit{Popol Vuh}.  

10
which the bodies of the gods live in the maize itself and all that it produces. To eat any food is to eat god. And for the gods who gave themselves to the earth to survive they must eat as well.

Foods were cooked over an open fire, on a flat griddle, in liquid in a pot, or wrapped in leaves or corn husks and steamed. Meats, vegetables, or sauces were stuffed into tamales or eaten in a tortilla. Roasts, stews and tamales played an important part in religious ceremonies, royal dinners, and descriptions of daily meals although, as mentioned above, meat was often a luxury good seen much more on the tables of the wealthy. Many of these cooking techniques are still practiced today using similar tools as pictured in Figure 1.2.

**Bernadino de Sahagún’s Documentation of the Nahua**

After the conquest of the Aztecs in 1521 many religious men went to the new colony in order to convert and minister to the indigenous people of Mexico. One such missionary was the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún. Believing that the people of Mexico could not be converted properly without a true understanding of Catholicism he set out to learn and document the Aztec language, Nahuatl, so he could communicate truly with the people. Sahagún began by working with Nahuatl scribes who already had training in the transcribing and illustrating traditions of their own people. Scribes who learned Spanish and were converted to Catholicism worked with him on a 50-year project documenting the lives and beliefs of the Aztec people prior to conquest.

The resulting text was compiled between 1529 and 1579 and today is known as the Florentine Codex, though the actual title of the work is *Historia Generál de las Cosas de Nueva España* or A General History of the Things of New Spain. Aided by
numerous students and scribes, Sahagún researched and documented the daily lives, gods, religious practices, economics, professions, cosmology, history, and wars of the Nahuatl people in central Mexico. The final book was entirely devoted to the conquest of the new world by Spain. He and his team continued to correct and rewrite the 12 volumes from 1545 until Sahagún’s death in 1590.

The Sahagún text contains a description of an Aztec dish called *azcatl-mulli* which was also called *azcamolli*.

Dark red ants make their nests in the ground and the larvae and pupae which are found there may be eaten.

To create this mole of ants prepare a broth of chilies to which you have previously added a piece of meat; add some chopped nopales [cactus pads] and a bunch of epazote [a Mexican herb]. Wash the ‘escamoles’ [ant larvae] well and then add them to the broth. Boil the broth until it thickens slightly. Add salt.¹⁹

This recipe is the first documented use of the words *molli* and *mulli* for a main course meat dish containing the core elements of what came to be mole: chiles, herbs or spices, vegetables or fruits, cooked in a broth and served with meat. The word *molli* means ‘to grind’ and can be found in other recipe names such as *ahuacamolli*—a combination of the word for avocado – *ahuacatl* and *molli*. This is the etymology for the largely unchanged Aztec dish guacamole.

Sahagún observed and documented the grinding processes used often in creating Nahuatl foods. The main tools for grinding were the molcajete and the metate. I will discuss the history and use of both tools in a later section on technology, but it is important to note the importance of grinding dried chiles as a way to make them

palatable and digestible. All recipes with the word *molli* use one of these grinding tools in the preparation of the dish.

Sahagún’s text also describes the lives of the Nahua lords and kings at the time of the conquest. When describing the many dishes each day that were prepared for lords he lists a number of meat dishes such as “venison with red chili, tomatoes, and ground squash seeds.” There are seven dishes in this section that combine meat, chiles, herbs, and seeds. In the Nahuatl version these are written as “citli molli,” “tochli molli” or rabbit mole, “chilcozmolli” or light orange mole, “chilchomolli” or green mole. This list of dishes that contain the basic elements of what comes to be the national dish are shown here to be far from the low class food of the poor, a regular part of the diet of the highest men in the land.

**Dietary Changes Brought by the Spanish**

The Spanish brought with them a host of ingredients, cooking tools, and techniques that were immediately adopted by those who lived within their enclaves. It is difficult to estimate how long it took for Spanish foods to diffuse into Aztec cuisine. But apart from a few documents like Sahagún’s, records of daily life are almost exclusively those of Spanish settlers. The majority of food documentation is found in the large religious institutions established throughout New Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The biggest change in both diet and cooking was the abundance of meat and animal fat due to the arrival of domesticated pigs and cows. In 1493 Columbus brought 17 ships loaded with livestock including horses, dogs, pigs, cattle, chickens,

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sheep, and goats.\textsuperscript{21} Of all the animals brought from the Old World, the pig was the quickest to adapt and reproduced in vast numbers.\textsuperscript{22} Prior to the arrival of pigs the Nahuatl diet had been almost devoid of fats that could be used in the cooking process. While animals like turkeys had some fat and nuts and seeds were eaten in abundance, there was no source of cooking oil such as olives or lard. Without oil there can be no frying and not much in the way of sautéing. Instead the primary cooking methods had been cooking somewhat dry ingredients like tortillas on a \textit{comal} or flat griddle and boiling meat and vegetables into stews. Animal fat increased the caloric content of foods and added flavor. In all of the mole recipes written down after the arrival of the Spanish frying takes an important role and pork is cited as the main meat more often than the traditional turkey.

Janet Long-Solís and Luis Alberto Vargas’ book \textit{Food Culture in Mexico} consolidates a lot of their prior research on the history of Mexican cuisine. Long-Solís has written a history of chiles, and compiled a series of essays about the effect of the conquest on the history of Mexican food.\textsuperscript{23} Vargas and Long-Solís note that there

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{21}] Sokolov, \textit{Why We Eat What We Eat}, 28.
  \item[\textsuperscript{22}] Crosby, \textit{The Columbian Exchange}, 75-77.
  \item[\textsuperscript{23}] Long-Solís’ books include \textit{Food Culture in Mexico} with Luis Alberto Vargas (2005), \textit{Conquista y comida: consecuencias del encuentro de dos mundos} (2003), \textit{El Sabor de la Nueva España} (1995), and \textit{Capsicum y cultura: la historia del chilli} (1986), as well as numerous essays on food history. The scholarship that I am citing from this section of \textit{Food Culture in Mexico} is based on scientific agricultural and anthropological studies along with the following primary sources: Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s \textit{Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nuevo España} (mid-16\textsuperscript{th} century), the post-conquest Aztec document, the Codex Chimalpopoca, \textit{Relación de las cosas de Yucatán} by Diego de Landa Calderón circa 1566, Thomas Gage’s \textit{The English-American: A New Survey of the West Indies}, 1648, \textit{Diario de sucesos notables}: 1665-1703 by Antonio de Robles. The authors
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
were six major influences on local cuisine brought in by the Spanish—meat, wheat, eggs and dairy, sugar, citrus fruit, and vegetables.\textsuperscript{24} The importation of cattle and pigs meant more than just the ability to fry food, it was an abundant meat source that allowed for more of the population to eat meat more regularly. Wheat bread was very important to the Spanish and their descendants. But meat and bread were not immediately adopted by all of the population. “Despite the abundance and variety of new foods on the market, the Indian population continued eating their traditional diet, based on corn, beans and chile peppers. Urban Indians slowly began incorporating some European products in their diets, such as wheat bread and meat, but refused to give up their traditional food habits.”\textsuperscript{25} The vegetables that had the widest impact were onions, garlic, parsley and coriander which became common within 100 years of their introduction as were citrus fruits.

**Changing Technologies**

In addition to new ingredients the Spanish brought new technologies and cooking techniques to the urban settlements. Changes that significantly affected mole cooking traditions were the spread of metal cooking tools and the introduction of the indoor kitchen with its raised cooking surfaces. Examples of early colonial kitchens can be found in numerous surviving convents which have built-in ovens, or \textit{fogón}, shaped out of stucco, and occasionally tiled, with cooking surfaces above the fire.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Long-Solis, \textit{Food Culture in Mexico}, 13.
\item Long-Solis, \textit{Food Culture in Mexico}, 22.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Figure 1.3 shows the kitchen of the Ex-Convento de Santa Mónica in Puebla built in 1688. Multiple fogóns were set into a long kitchen counter or a wall with a window above or a hole in the ceiling to let out cooking smoke. While outdoor cooking remained common in small households, the idea of permanent cooking structures built from adobe that could be tended while standing took hold throughout the culture.

In the sixteenth century Spanish ingredients and techniques disseminated slowly through New Spain. There was no typical kitchen or diet because of the huge differences in class and income. While a large estate for a Spanish landowner might have Spanish cooking facilities, a mestizo kitchen would probably contain a mix of metal Spanish implements like kettles and cauldrons with more traditional stone and clay tools used over an open fire. A number of large kitchens survive in convents that were built in the 16th and 17th centuries. Marie-Pierre Colle has documented some of the older convent kitchens that feature multiple fogóns, bake ovens, sinks, and tiled counters.²⁷

Few (if any) middle-class or Amerindian homes survive with their original kitchens, but many Mexicans today still use hybrid kitchens that take advantage of modern metal tools while still cooking over an open fire. This type of kitchen is also documented in paintings made throughout the 18th century meant to document the various castes and how they lived. Ilona Katzew’s book Casta Painting contains numerous images of middle and lower class women and families cooking both indoors

²⁶ There are numerous images of convent kitchens pictured in the book Houses of Puebla by Marie-Pierre Colle and photographer Ignacio Urquiza.

²⁷ Colle, Houses of Puebla, 86-93.
and out. In some cases the paintings show spacious kitchens with tiled ovens and counter, shelves filled with ceramics, and a range of cooking tools hanging on the wall.\textsuperscript{28} Other images portraying members of lower castes show women cooking outside on an open fire or in cramped spaces\textsuperscript{29} with little air or light.\textsuperscript{30}

The food culture the conquistadors brought with them was essentially medieval cuisine with a strong Islamic influence due to the number of conquistadors from Southern Spain. Muslim rule of parts of the Iberian Peninsula from 711 to 1492 had an overwhelming influence on Spanish culture and cuisine. Arabic elements in the diet included the popularity of rice, candied fruits, and an abundant use of spices all of which were imported and flourished in the new hybrid Mexican cuisine. Sweets and candied fruit became an important part of Mexican convent life\textsuperscript{31} and dozens of dishes using cinnamon, cloves, and sugar proliferate in the cooking of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{32} The Moorish influence on the Mexican diet is still visible today in the Arabic names of foods like meatballs—\textit{albondigas}—and candies like \textit{alfajores}. The

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\textsuperscript{28} Katzew, \textit{Casta Painting}, 138. Casta painting is a genre of documentary-type depictions of the different castes that resulted from unions between Spanish, Nahua, and African people. For more than 100 years paintings of many sizes and styles were created to illustrate what the various castes looked like and how they lived. Katzew discusses in this and her other book about casta painting how they served to document clothing, architecture, activities, and lifestyles of people from a huge range of economic and social classes.

\textsuperscript{29} Katzew, \textit{Casta Painting}, 25.

\textsuperscript{30} Katzew, \textit{Casta Painting}, 85.

\textsuperscript{31} Lavin, \textit{Sor Juana en la Cocina}, 15.

\textsuperscript{32} The cookbook section of the bibliography details the 17\textsuperscript{th}, 18\textsuperscript{th}, 19\textsuperscript{th}, and 20\textsuperscript{th} century cookbooks I used in my research.
practice of creating sauces thickened with ground almonds traveled from the Middle East to be used widely in Catalonia by the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite these new influences available in the capital city in fact the blending of Spanish and Nahuatl cuisine happened very slowly. The Nahua recipe documented by Sahagún probably predates the conquest, but is certainly no later than the late 1500s. The first recorded hybrid mole recipe that contains pork and other European ingredients was written in a convent in Mexico City by Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz in the late 1600s\textsuperscript{34} showing that some crossover of ingredients and recipes was taking place in the first two centuries of conquest. But Jeffrey Pilcher posits that in fact the two cuisines continued to exist side by side, only incorporating selective elements at the periphery.\textsuperscript{35} James Lockhart documents the contents of markets in Coyoacan, Mexico City, and Tlaxcala in the mid-sixteenth century and finds that “in all the main departments, including food, clothing, and hardware, goods were overwhelmingly indigenous in type” with only isolated Spanish foodstuffs, like bread and chickens, becoming regular commodities.\textsuperscript{36}

As the colony of New Spain became more established, trade expanded the variety of ingredients available to include eastern spices such as cinnamon and cloves to those who had access to the centers of trade. All of these new influences—livestock, oil for cooking, new tools, spices, vegetables, and more—took years to disseminate throughout the culture with some areas holding fast to pre-Columbian

\textsuperscript{33} Santanach, \textit{The Book of Sent Sovi}, 13.
\textsuperscript{34} Lavin, \textit{Sor Juana en la Cocina}, 52.
\textsuperscript{35} Pilcher, “Tamales or Timbales,” 197.
\textsuperscript{36} Lockhart, \textit{The Nahuas After the Conquest}, 187-188.
traditions and others privileging Spanish culture. By the sixteenth century an abundance of ingredients from all over the world were available in Mexico City. Once all these influences were in place there was little change for some time.

The diet of New Spain showed little variation during the three hundred years of Spanish domination, because food novelties had to come directly from or by way of Spain. Spain attempted to limit entrance into Spanish America to Hispanic subjects on the pretext that people from other countries might contaminate Indian cultures.37

Cooking and Traditions in New Spain

New Spain in the seventeenth century was culturally very stable with a well-defined system of rule, complex trade systems, and enormous export economies. Thousands, if not millions, of Native Americans had already died of disease or slavery or starvation. Starvation became more of an issue once the Aztec systems of farming and tribute had been dismantled by plague in the mid-1500s. New Spanish agricultural and distributional systems were often not able to meet the needs of such a large population. In the 1600s, lack of food security was one of the largest issues in the colony leading to the revolt of 1692.38

During this time the society of New Spain was divided into a complex caste system with Spanish-born at the top and wholly native at the very bottom. The three ‘pure’ races were considered to be Spanish, Native, and Black. Natives were legally minors although intermarriage and money afforded some the opportunity to rise in status. Blacks were also very low caste based on their association with slavery.39 In

37 Long-Solís. *Food Culture in Mexico*. Xiii.
order to replenish the work force African slaves had been imported in moderate numbers. Concrete population numbers are difficult to come by considering the lack of census data, but the best estimate of the numbers and types of people living in Mexico in 1650 comes from the past work of Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and current research by Bobby Vaughn. Spaniards made up less than one percent of the population, at their peak numbering about 10,000. 35,000 Africans, mostly slaves, were another small portion of the population. More than 1.5 million Amerindians made up the majority of the inhabitants of Mexico although mestizos were a growing segment measuring more than a quarter of the inhabitants of Mexico by 1650. By 1810 mestizos, a caste blended from Amerindian and White, made up 40 percent of the population.

Cities grew all over the colony; each with a church, a convent, a governor’s mansion, and a public square. Much of the land was divided into encomiendas—land

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40 According to Aguirre Beltrán in Regions of Refuge and Vaughn on his websites www.afromexico.com and www.mexconnect.com
Black population in Colonial Mexico
1570 - 20,569;
1646 - 35,089;
1742 - 15,980.
“The black population in the early colony was by far larger than that of the Spanish. In 1570 the black population is about 3 times that of the Spanish. In 1646, it is about 2.5 times as large, and in 1742, blacks still outnumber the Spanish. It is not until 1810 that Spaniards are more numerous.” Bobby Vaughn

41 Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1908-1996) was a Mexican anthropologist who studied Afro-Mexican populations while he was director of the National Indigenous Institute. His books on marginal populations in Mexico include La población negra de México, 1519-1810: estudio etnohistórico (México: Ediciones Fuente Cultural, 1946) and Cuijla: esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958).
and labor grants that allowed Spanish lords to rule over groups of natives in virtual slavery.

Like the caste system for the people, cuisine could be divided into haute, mestizo, convent, and native. The haute cuisine—exemplified by state dinners, entertainments of the viceroyalty, and other elites—followed the fashions of Spain and of Europe in general. This kind of food was only prepared for the highest ranking castes. Mestizo cooking encompassed some melding of more common Spanish cooking and Nahuatl traditions. One great example of this blending was in the growth of sweet making in convents of the era. Mónica Lanvin and Ana Benítez Muro’s book Sor Juana en la Cocina contains a lengthy analysis of the development of dulcerias or sweet-making shops in convent kitchens and how it blended traditions using sugar from Spain and Europe with the abundance of new fruits available in Mexico. ⁴²

There were two main areas of overlap between old and new world cooking—in the kitchens of the wealthy Spaniards and Criollos and in the monasteries and convents. From the earliest days of conquest native women were pressed into service as cooks and sometimes as wives of the Conquistadores. Often these women were of noble Aztec heritage and might come with their own retinue of Nahua servants. Although many wealthy women migrated to the colony from Spain, not every colonist could afford to import a bride so intermarriage became the norm although it led to the complex caste system mentioned above. Cooking remained the domain of native women as most of the Spanish brides were wealthy enough to have servants. ⁴³ This may be one of the reasons that so many of the cooking traditions of the Nahuatl

⁴² Lanvin, Sor Juana en la Cocina, 13-48.
⁴³ Valle, Recipe of Memory, 40.
survive. Although elite dinners and entertainments rarely served what was considered low-class food the hybrid recipes that combined Nahua and Spanish styles can be found in manuscripts cookbooks written by educated women who could have been introduced to these dishes by their cooks or their childhood caretakers. The fact that such recipes as mole appear in all of the manuscript cookbooks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries demonstrates how important they were to the class of women who had the educations to write their own recipes down.

Convent Cooking and the First Mole Recipe

Convents provided an important social and practical way of life for women in the colony. There were hierarchies of culture within convent life and rich and poor had options for living and working within the convent system. While for many years indigenous women were not allowed to become full nuns, they did join convent life in large numbers. Those with the financial means went to be educated, while those in search of work were admitted into monastic life to cook, clean, and maintain the large institutions. “Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Indian women found in convents formed the bulk of the servant population in New Spain’s nunneries.”

There were many examples of wealthy and well-educated women of questionable birth choosing to become nuns as a path towards intellectual freedom.

44 Long-Solis, *Food Culture in Mexico*, 74.
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1697) is the most famous example of the scholar-nun with a wealthy but illegitimate background. But women from all classes could choose the religious life for a variety of reasons. For a woman with limited prospects or family money it was a respectable life. 47

The convents and monasteries became important centers for education and cultural transmission. The size of the institutions led to the building of large kitchens often with numerous fogóns, roasting ovens, dairies, storage areas, and preparation spaces. Several large convent kitchens from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries survive, showing by their size the immense output that was expected of them on a regular basis. One example is the kitchen of the convent of Santa Rosa de Lima built in the 17th century with enormous arched ceilings and more than ten fireboxes, seen in Figures 1.4 and 1.5. The Archbishop of Guadalajara, Juan Cruz Ruiz de Cabañas decreed the regular menu for his Jesuits in 1801 would include a breakfast of chocolate, bread and corn gruel. Lunch consisted of a soup including lamb, beans, vegetables or ham followed by a light stew or roast and dessert. Supper included a cooked salad, a mole, beans and bread. And in the late afternoon bread and fruit were available to all who requested it. The cena, another supper eaten around ten at night, was in the monastic ‘austerity’ a light meal of sweet corn tamales and a mug of chocolate. 48 A number of manuscript cookbooks were written by nuns and friars

48 Valle, Recipe of Memory, 61.
during this era, recording the types and varieties of foods that were eaten in religious institutions.\textsuperscript{49}

It is in one such book that the oldest known recipe for mole is written. The afore-mentioned Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz wrote at least 39 recipes while she was in the Convent of Santa Paula of the Hieronymite\textsuperscript{50} outside Mexico City in the last part of the 17th century. A nun and intellectual, she wrote plays, poems, and essays that were read and respected in her lifetime and continue to be studied today. Her book was a manual for the education of the youths and novitiates that came to live in the San Gerónimo convent;\textsuperscript{51} it was not published until 1979 after a resurgence of interest in her history as a feminist created a demand for more of her writings.\textsuperscript{52} It contains what appear to be everyday dishes made in the convent where she spent most of her life. They were cooked and eaten by the nuns and workers who lived there.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{49} The three convent cookbooks that I have examined are Sor Juana’s \textit{Libro de Cocina}, the \textit{Colección de Recetas} of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and the \textit{Libro de Cocina} of Fray Gerónimo. In addition to these there are menus, inventories and other records in numerous institutions in Mexico, some of which were compiled for the work \textit{Rebellious Nuns}, by Margaret Chowning.

\textsuperscript{50} Also known as the Order of St. Jerome or St. Gerónimo

\textsuperscript{51} Lavin, \textit{Sor Juana en la Cocina}, 52.

\textsuperscript{52} There is little information about the transcription process completed in 1979. After comparing a number of recipes in Sor Juana’s cookbook to those in the other manuscripts of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century that were transcribed more recently there is a strong similarity in vocabulary and idiom. The only manuscript I was able to examine in person was the Colección de Recetas from the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in the manuscript collection of the New York City Public Library. There were also similarities in the format of recipes and in language choices between that work and Sor Juana’s.

\textsuperscript{53} Lavin, \textit{Sor Juana En La Cocina}, 28.
Sor Juana’s fame does not extend to her cookbook, but she remarked often on the importance of cooking as a way of learning about nature, science, and society. "But, Madam, what is there for us women to know, if not bits of kitchen philosophy? As Lupercio Leonardo said: One can perfectly well philosophize while cooking supper. And I am always saying, when I observe these small details: If Aristotle had been a cook, he would have written much more." 54

Her wealth afforded Sor Juana separate quarters in San Gerónimo and she may well have had servants as most wealthy nuns of her era did. 55 Her cookbook and other writings about the science of cooking illustrate her personal interest in the subject, and by recording the recipes being made there she did a service to the convent in providing a guide for later cooks.

Sor Juana’s book contains 29 recipes for sweets and desserts and only 10 for savory dishes. This ratio of sweets to entrees is similar in the convent cookbook of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception recorded in 1839. Obviously there was a focus on candies, crèmes and sweets in the production of the convents. They were often sold at festivals to raise funds and were given as gifts to wealthy donors as a way of thanking them and enticing ongoing donations. 56 While Sor Juana herself did not need to raise funds, she was dependent on the goodwill of the Viceroy and his wife, she entertained lavishly in her quarters, and so her culinary skills, or those of her mini-household, would be of great use to her socially and politically.

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54 March 1, 1691 Reply to Sor Filothea. Lines 240-450.
55 Chowning, Rebellious Nuns, 4.
56 Lavín, Sor Juana en la Cocina, 31-32.
The 10 recipes for meat and vegetable dishes are of more interest to me. I cannot say if the small number of them indicates that they were more or less important to the author. But the two recipes for mole—Clemole de Oaxaca and Manchamanteles—are the oldest known recipes for these dishes which have survived cultural upheaval, revolution, and time. In the next chapter I focus on what these dishes are, how they are made, and how they have changed since the seventeenth century.
Figure 1.1  Illustration of several Nahua making chocolate. Some of the tools are being handled incorrectly.

Figure 1.2  Woman cooking over a fire in a traditional home in Chiapas, Mexico. Photo by Reina Saganaki.
Figure 1.3  Kitchen in the Ex-Convento de Santa Mónica in Puebla built in 1688. Center tiled island is the stove top with the square holes opening onto fireboxes. Each firebox corresponds to an opening in the stove top. The openings are all covered by pots in the image above. On the right a lower area has been built in to the stove counter to hold the grinding stone at an appropriate height.

Picture by mksfca, https://www.flickr.com/photos/mksfca/
Figure 1.4  View of the kitchen in the 17th century Convent of Santa Rosa reported to be the birthplace of mole.  
Photo by Author.
Figure 1.5 View of the kitchen in the 17th century Convent of Santa Rosa reported to be the birthplace of mole. Photo by Author.
Chapter 2
MANCHAMATELES

Few professional cookbooks were written in the seventeenth century and none were published in Mexico until after the revolution in 1821. Prior to that, people used manuscripts of recipes created by individuals, families, or institutions. Recipes were often short lists of ingredients with no measurements or ratios and few, if any, instructions on how to prepare a dish. In New Spain cooking was a skill that was taught mainly to girls in their childhood. Activities like boiling, stewing, roasting, and grinding were practiced over and over by younger cooks until they could handle them unsupervised. This kind of training was not only seen in Spanish or Criollo society; Figure 2.1 shows an illustration of an older Nahua woman teaching a younger one how to grind corn in the Mendoza Codex.

A cook using an early cooking manuscript would not need to be instructed on how to chop or build a fire or roast chiles because all of those skills would have been part of their training. They might need a reminder of the specific ingredients in a particular dish. While some of the women in a convent may have been literate, likely most of the women in the kitchen were not. So how were the recipes used? A senior woman in a convent or household who could read might use them when instructing the kitchen staff on meal preparation.

The family cook and servants were called into the kitchen to get their orders. Homemakers like Catalina or Trinidad usually read their recipes aloud to the cook, going over each ingredient, each procedure. This system wasn’t as impractical as it sounds. Since mestizo and Indian
girls were virtually indentured to a lifetime of cooking for one family, they were trained to memorize the household’s favorite recipes. A quick review was all an experienced cook needed to refresh her memory.⁵⁷

Ken Albala makes a striking distinction between French haute cuisine, which became popular amongst the elite of New Spain, and the less regulated Mexican cuisine:

Unlike French haute cuisine, professional chefs never codified rigorously the basic repertoire of Italian, Chinese, and Mexican cuisines. These are procedures that were developed in home kitchens over generations. They necessarily change over time and may vary widely from region to region and from household to household. That is, they are living, constantly evolving traditions. It would be preposterous to claim that any of these directions constitutes the single correct way to cook a particular dish. Such a claim would inevitably meet with objection.⁵⁸

These descriptions help make sense of the utility of early recipes which might mention only a single action or technique. In trying to use these recipes to understand the cooking process, this creates a challenge in identifying the actual cooking practices that accompanied these ingredients.

What is Mole?

Before focusing on manchamanteles, it is important to explore mole as a recipe and a cultural touchstone. Today there are numerous of types of mole using varied ingredients and techniques; predominant types include black mole, mole of Oaxaca, mole poblano (or mole of Puebla), coloradito, yellow mole, green mole, red mole, almendrado, chichile, pepian, and manchamanteles. The specific recipes vary by

⁵⁷ Valle, Recipe of Memory, 42.
⁵⁸ Albala, Three World Cuisines, xxi.
region and by family, but each type usually has a set of ingredients that differentiates it from the others. These types have evolved and developed over the past 400 years from the simple formula for an Aztec *mulli* discussed above.

This is Sor Juana’s mole recipe introduced in Chapter 1.

*Clemole de Oaxaca*  
Clemole de Oaxaca  
– Para una cazuela de a medium un pono de culantro tostada, quatro dientes de ajo asados, cinco clavos, seis granitos de pimiento, como claco de canela, chiles anchos o passillas, como quisiere, todo lo dicho molido muy bien y puesto a freie, luego se echa, la carne de Puerco, chorizos y gallina.

Los chiles van tostados en la manteca y luego echa ajonjoli tostado.

Mole of Oaxaca – In a medium-sized cazuella (clay pot) put some toasted cilantro, four cloves of roasted garlic, five cloves, six peppercorns, some cinnamon, ancho or pasilla chiles, as you like, grind all of this together well and fry it, then add to it pork, chorizo sausage, and chicken.

The chiles were toasted in lard and later add toasted sesame seeds.

This recipe includes most of the basic ingredients for all moles – toasted, ground chiles, spices or herbs, fruit or vegetables, nuts or seeds, and meat. In this case the only vegetable is garlic and no mention is made of the broth. There are some directions and some amounts, but if this recipe is followed exactly as written it is highly variable and barely edible. But it provides some important clues to the process of making mole and to the development of the recipe from Aztec to Mexican.

5959 The words ‘clemole’ and ‘mole’ appear interchangeably in numerous recipe books up to 1900. I have not found any linguistic explanation for why this extra syllable doesn’t seem to affect the meaning or to designate a variation on the recipe.

60 Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Libro De Cocina*, 37.

61 My translation
In order to decipher the steps involved in the making of this dish, I looked at numerous recipes in cookbooks that spanned several centuries and compared them to find the most common processes used. Sor Juana mentions that the chiles were fried in lard which is consistent with most recipes. She does not mention how much meat to add nor does she even let on that this is a stew since there is nothing about water or broth. Since this is the oldest recipe that includes Spanish ingredients, it is possible that mole of the late 1600s was not a stew. But after looking at later recipes of the same name, reading the Aztec recipes which it is based on, and also comparing it to a different type of mole in the same book, manchamanteles, which does use water, I argue that Sor Juana’s Clemole de Oaxaca is a stew like most moles.

Dozens of published and manuscript mole recipes were recorded after Sor Juana wrote down recipes from her convent in a journal finally published in 1979. Seven manuscripts, six from the 1700s, have been collected, transcribed, and published by Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes in Mexico City. Together these books contain more than 40 mole recipes in a range of styles. Manuscript 62

62 The manuscripts I have been working from include—

Dos Manuscritos Mexicanos De Cocina: Siglo XVIII (Two Mexican manuscripts of cooking: 18th century)
Libro De Cocina Del Hermano Fray Gerónimo De San Pelayo: Siglo XVIII (Cookbook of Brother Fray Gerónimo De San Pelayo: 18th century)
Recetario Mexiquense: Siglo XVIII (Mexican Recipes: 18th century)
Gastronomica Mexicana del sieglo XVIII, Manuscrito Avila Blancas (Mexican gastronomy of the 18th century)
Recetario De Mascota, Jalisco, De Hildelisa Martínez De Quintero: Fines Del Siglo XIX (Recipes from Mascota, Jalisco by Hildelisa Martínez De Quintero: end of the 19th century)
Libro de esquisitos para el us de Maria-Ana Arrieta (Exquisite book for the use of María-Anna Arrieta.)
cookbooks also survived in families where each generation added recipes, notes, or variations to popular dishes. Two family manuscripts that were passed through several generations have been transcribed and used as the source material for books on the history of cooking in Mexico. These books contain recipes written down in the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. Two family cookbooks published in Mexico in the 1800s were passed, with notations, into the hands of Frieda Kahlo from her mother and mother-in-law. Her step-daughter Guadalupe Rivera compiled several recipes from these annotated cookbooks into a book about famous dinners in the Kahlo-Rivera home entitled *Frieda’s Fiestas*. These three texts contain an additional 25 mole variations.

A nineteenth-century source of information on mole recipes are the many cookbooks published in Mexico after the 1821 revolution. The *Diccionario de Cocina, Antigua Cocina Mexicana e Internacional, Recetas Practicas Para la Señora de Casa, Libro de Cosina, La Cocinera del Todo el Mundo*, and *Nuevo Cocinera Mexicana* were all published between 1835 and 1893 for the growing number of middle class housewives who would not have servants to cook their food and needed to master traditional dishes for themselves.

Another important historical recipe collection assembled in the 1950s is *El Libro de Todos los Moles* or The Book of all the Moles. True to its name, the author has written as many mole recipes as he could find in historical sources, family texts, letters, and cookbooks of all eras. While some overlap with texts that I had found,

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63 Multi-generational manuscripts

Recipe of Memory

El cocinero español, Encarnacion’s Kitchen
there were many others that I did not have access to that attest to the amazing variety of this dish.

Reading this array of recipes helped me identify the techniques that were elemental to the majority of moles—toast

ing and grinding chilies, roasting certain fruits or vegetables, making a paste of the spices, chiles, and seeds or nuts, frying the paste in lard, thinning it with broth, and boiling the meat prior to adding it to the sauce. While not all of these tasks is mentioned in every recipe they are all documented in either pre-colonial cooking practices or appear in various recipes as common treatments for certain ingredients. Some of these treatments are taken for granted as the prerequisite to adding particular ingredients to a dish. But while there are a number of common techniques, there are also more differences, exceptions, and outliers than can be reasonably analyzed as a single dish.

Moles vary by season, region, and event from a thick, black, smoky gravy poured over chicken to a light, yellow vegetable soup. While they are all redolent with histories of their own, taken as a group there is too much to look at even just in the most famous types, the seven moles, much less all the variations.

**Manchamanteles**

When I first read Sor Juana’s recipe for mole I was excited about the possibility of studying how this recipe had evolved over 100 years from the Nahuatl chile sauce for ant larva into a pork, sausage, and chicken stew with exotic spices. But I also noticed another recipe a few pages further in – manchamanteles. I was surprised to see it there because while I had eaten it many times in Mexico and had heard of it as one of the seven moles of Oaxaca, I had no idea that the recipe went back to the
1600s. As I continued to look at moles through the centuries, I kept coming across this particular dish in almost every source book.

After the integration of new ingredients, cooking techniques and tastes from Europe into the culture of New Spain in the 1600s, a number of different mole hybrids were developed. The Nahuatl *mulli* which combined native chiles, nuts, spices, and vegetables with broth that was served over meat or insects\(^\text{64}\) had evolved with the introduction of pork, chicken, sausage, spices, nuts, onions, garlic, and frying in lard. Squash and pumpkin seeds were supplemented with a variety of nuts and spices that inspired their own types of moles such as Almendrado, an almond-based dish reminiscent of the Middle Eastern dishes common in the south of Spain. Heriberto García Rivas notes in his book *Cocina Prehispánica Mexicana* that:

> With the passage of time, other sauces were invented and cooked alongside the pre-Hispanic sauces, that took names now in disuse: angaripola, pebre or pebrada, chanfaina, salmorejos, jigote, venason, morisqueta, and above all these Manchamanteles.\(^\text{65}\)

The Spanish language names for the sauces indicate the effects of a growing cultural hybridity in the development of new cuisines. Until the Bourbon reforms in the mid-eighteenth century Nahuatl communities tended to keep their own language and customs. Nahuatl was even taught in some schools and the Colegió of Tepotzotlan was specifically established by the Jesuits to study New World Languages.\(^\text{66}\) So the fact that so many moles were developed and given Spanish names reflects the reach of the sauce across class lines. Purely Aztec dishes that had no appeal outside of

\(^{64}\) García Rivas, *Cocina Prehispánica Mexicana*, 100.

\(^{65}\) García Rivas, *Cocina Prehispánica Mexicana*, 96. My translation

\(^{66}\) Lozano, "Aztec Traces in Modern Spanish," 415.
indigenous enclaves were not renamed in Spanish as can be seen with the survival of so many drinks and foods like tamales, pulque, guacamole, and atole. These foods retain their Aztec nomenclature to this day, as does mole, but the newer types of mole that were documented in Spanish-speaking homes and institutions were developed with Spanish names.

These new hybrid sauces had interesting and idiomatic names. Angaripola is translated as ‘calico’ or ‘gaudy ornaments on clothes’. Pebre or pebrada mean something that is peppery, which fits, or a blend of garlic, chile and cloves. Chanfaina can mean a ‘trifling, worthless thing’, a ‘cheap stew’, or a mess. A salmorejo today translates as a sauce for rabbit, but in the eighteenth century was a sauce that might have meant to disguise a less desirable meat. Jigote means minced meat. Venason has no translation. It could be a misspelling of venison or the meaning could just be lost to time. A morisqueta is a ‘fraud’ or a ‘dirty trick’ or a ‘Moorish trick’. Rivas also lists “above all these” manchamanteles: ‘it stains the tablecloth’. Dismissing those that refer to food items—venison and pebre, the remaining names all have negative connotation—gaudy, worthless, cheap, trifling, messy, and fraud. Coming from a country that had endured a 700-year occupation by Moorish people, a Moorish trick hardly sounds like a good thing.

Even though this food was being adopted by Spanish-speakers and being recorded by people well-off enough to be literate, it carried a very low-class nomenclature. While it is accurate to call it messy or to point out that it stains, the reality is that mole was neither cheap, trifling to make, or intended to deceive the eater.

In eighteenth-century Spain the term Moor could be used to refer to Berbers, North African Arabs, Muslim Iberians, and Sub-Saharan Africans.
into thinking she was consuming something else. This repeated negativity in the
majority of new moles may have been an allusion to its roots as a dish created by
people of the lower castes.

Convents and monasteries were excellent locations for the developing,
recording, and keeping of recipes because they were institutions of learning with
access to writing materials and ability and because they each had a resident population
to feed.

Orders of nuns in the new convents established throughout the colonies
beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, not only instructed the niñas bien—that is, the creole and at times, mestiza, daughters of the colonial elite in the culinary arts—but also invented dishes of mixed European and native ingredients such as chiles in salsa nogada or mole poblano, both to become the quintessential mestizo dishes of present-day Mexican cuisine. 68

Sor Juana recorded the recipes of the Convent of San Jerónimo in the late 1600s. 69 Fray Gerónimo’s culinary record of the monastery of San Pelayo dates to the eighteenth century 70 and the sisters of Nuestra Madre de la Purísima Concepción recorded their convent’s cooking history in the nineteenth century. 71 And as mentioned above, people of all backgrounds and castes joined the monasteries, bringing in their own cooking traditions and techniques.

69 Juana Inez de la Cruz became a nun in 1667 and died in 1695. Though there is no date on her book of recipes they were written during her time at San Jerónimo. For more on her life and writings see Octavio Paz’s biography, Sor Juana or the Traps of Faith.
70 Gerónimo, Libro de cocina del hermano fray Gerónimo de San Pelayo.
71 Colección de Recetas, 1839.
In many cookbooks of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a recipe for basic mole is augmented by additional types of mole like those mentioned by Rivas above. In the *Arte Novísimo de Cocina* (reprinted in 1872 as the *Antigua Cocina Mexicana*) there are the following mole recipes: two manchamanteles, mole gallego, almendrado, clemole castellano, morisqueta, salmorejo, angaripola, mole caraqueño, and clemole de palacio. But García Rivas names manchamanteles as standing above all the others. He does not indicate why he assigns it that status although one reason may be that unlike the others in his list, manchamanteles survives the period. In fact it is the only named mole that is as long-lived and well-documented apart from the basic mole.

Manchamanteles continues to appear in nearly every manuscript cookbook that survives from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. No other named mole is as ubiquitous. Every cookbook has a basic recipe for mole (or clemole), but these have no consistency from one to the next. In addition to all the types of moles with unique names or descriptors, even the source dish can run the gamut from dark to light sauces, thick to thin, and rich with dried fruits and peppers to light and fresh with seasonal ingredients. Unlike the many variations encompassed under the name ‘mole’, the recipes called ‘manchamanteles’ retain a semi-consistent combination of sweetness and sourness with a mild chile pepper base.

In Sor Juana's recipe, chiles, sesame seeds, lard, plantains, sweet potatoes, apples, and salt, combine to form a sauce that is served over poultry:

Manchamanteles – Chiles desvenados y remojados de un día para otro, molidos con ajonjoli tostado, y frito todo en Manteca, echaras el agua
Manchamanteles – devein chiles and soak them from one day to the next, grind with toasted sesame seeds, and fry all of it in lard, add water as needed, the hen, sliced plantain, sweet potato, and apple, and salt as needed.\textsuperscript{73}

In a manuscript written by an unknown woman 100 years after Sor Juana’s, Manchamanteles includes the same soaked chiles ground together with toasted sesame seeds. The chiles are specified as anchos in this recipe. The mixture of chiles and seeds is also ground together with tomatoes. The similarity ends with plantains. The apples and sweet potatoes are replaced with pineapple, the spices added are cloves and pepper, and instead of a hen it uses sausage.\textsuperscript{74} From the same decade, another anonymous cookbook includes pears and cinnamon, but no longer uses plantains.\textsuperscript{75} Despite these minor fluctuations, Manchamanteles retains certain characteristics into the 19th and 20th centuries even while the ingredient list is continually updated with substitutions and newly accessible items.

\textbf{Analysis of the Recipe by Ingredients and Change over Time}

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how manchamanteles evolved, I collected all of the recipes from the cookbooks listed above and compared their ingredient lists in a database to try to understand if there were patterns in how it developed.\textsuperscript{76} The sample consists of 20 recipes from manuscripts and published

\textsuperscript{72} Juana Inés de la Cruz, \textit{Libro De Cocina}, 48.
\textsuperscript{73} My translation.
\textsuperscript{74} Asensio Ortega, \textit{Dos Manuscritos Mexicanos}, 24.
\textsuperscript{75} Asensio Ortega, \textit{Dos Manuscritos Mexicanos}, 79.
\textsuperscript{76} Appendix B shows the spreadsheet of ingredients from 20 recipes.
cookbooks. The biggest surprise was the lack of consistency from one dish to another – the only item that is in every version is chile. Even the type of chile varies: twelve specify ancho, two mulato, one pasilla, and seven just say chile, leaving the choice of chile to the cook’s discretion.

Different types of chile have different flavors and vary significantly in piquancy of the chiles mentioned for manchamanteles are on the mild side of the spectrum. The scoville scale is used to express the amount of capsaicin in hot peppers.\textsuperscript{77} Ancho, mulato, and pasilla chiles all rate below 2500 scoville units. Other chiles that were common in New Spain like the jalapeño, guajillo, chipotle, and chile de arbol could be up to 20 times hotter.

The recipe’s base is a medium-strength chile pepper that is fried or toasted, soaked and ground into a paste. How is this augmented by the other ingredients? The second most consistent element is spice. All of the recipes include spices. From most common to least these are salt, sugar, cloves, black pepper, cinnamon, cumin, oregano, and chocolate. Bay leaf, marjoram, achiote, epazote, thyme, and the generic ‘spices’ each appear in only one recipe from my sample. Setting aside salt and sugar for the moment the spices tell an interesting story about the variability of the dish and about the availability of ingredients at different times.

In Sor Juana’s recipe there are no imported spices, but those from the 1700s call for cloves, black pepper, and cinnamon. Cloves, indigenous to the Spice Islands, were traded by the Portuguese in the 1500s and the Dutch East India Company controlled the spice until the nineteenth century. The Chinese and Romans both

\textsuperscript{77} http://homecooking.about.com/library/weekly/blhotchiles.htm
imported the spice and throughout the Middle Ages it was one of the main oriental spices traded in Europe.\textsuperscript{78} Cinnamon is one of the oldest spices known to humans, mentioned often in the bible, and was one of the spices that drove the Columbian expedition in order to improve trade routes between Europe and Ceylon.\textsuperscript{79} Black pepper, the world’s most commonly used spice, is referenced in Sanskrit writings more than 3,000 years ago and was one of the earliest items of trade between Europe and Asia.\textsuperscript{80}

The presence of these three cornerstones of European medieval cuisine and commerce in what had been a native dish demonstrates how the tastes of the two cultures were blending. In the nineteenth century these spices continued to be common to the dish while other spices from both sides of the ocean, like oregano and cumin, became more evident. Chocolate is mentioned in two recipes for manchamanteles, but it is more common as an ingredient in black mole or mole of Oaxaca. Outside of Mexico mole is known for having chocolate as a major flavor component of the dish, but in fact many recipes do not add any chocolate. Historically chocolate was a drink of ceremonial and religious import, usually served unsweetened and often flavored with chile. There are no recipes for mole with chocolate prior to the 1800s though the mythology of mole has placed its invention (using chocolate) in a convent in Puebla in 1690. Sophie and Michael Coe speculated in their book \textit{The True History of Chocolate} that adding chocolate to tomato sauces (and hence to mole) was a European invention that was first tried in Italy after the adoption of both the tomato and chocolate and the

\textsuperscript{78} Rosengarten, \textit{The Book of Spices}, 207.
\textsuperscript{79} Rosengarten, \textit{The Book of Spices}, 190.
\textsuperscript{80} Rosengarten, \textit{The Book of Spices}, 355.
combination was exported back to Mexico.\textsuperscript{81} Still, it is not a common element of manchamanteles so we will leave this exciting drama for other scholars.

\textbf{The Sweet and the Sour}

Having eaten the recipe many times in Mexico and after reading numerous recipes, I always thought one of the dominant elements was fruit. Sometimes manchamanteles is described in cookbooks as a pork and fruit stew.\textsuperscript{82} But looking at the spreadsheet I was surprised to find that only half of the recipes contained fruit. Those 10 recipes use various combinations of plantain, pear, pineapple, apple, quince, and peaches. Adding in the recipes that included tomatoes raised the number with fruit to 80 percent.

In addition to the fruit a number of recipes also have sweet potatoes though remarkably none have regular potatoes. Both vegetables are indigenous to the Americas and were staples of the Nahuatl diet. Potatoes are used in many stews and in some of the hotter moles, but if manchamanteles is to have a starchy element it is usually sweet potato, pumpkin, or plantain all of which can become sweeter with cooking.

In the nineteenth century sugar becomes a regular ingredient in the dish. Prior to 1800 no recipe calls for sugar which may be a reflection of changing tastes or of changing availability. Sugar was not known in the Americas before the conquest although honey and other sweeteners were prized. Janet Long-Solis counts sugar as

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{\textsuperscript{81} Coe, The True History of Chocolate, 214-217.} \\
\textit{\textsuperscript{82} Kennedy, Recipes from the Regional Cooks of Mexico, 81.}
\end{flushleft}
one of the six major influences of the Spanish on the diet of Mexico and it becomes a major component of this mole although it is not as common in others. Only three out of the 20 recipes have no sugar or fruit and two of those are in the 1700s indicating that it becomes one of the major flavor elements of the dish.

To try and untangle the Mexican and European elements of the dish I researched cooking in Spain. Few cookbooks were written and circulated in fourteenth-century Spain, but one does survive. The *Book of Sent Sovi* is a manuscript cookbook by an unknown Spanish author who claims to have cooked for the King of England. The book is a guide for the finest dining and is suggested to any cook no matter how mighty his master. It contains more than 20 sauces that are meant to be served with meat and among them 16 call for sugar, honey, or raisins to sweeten them.

As I counted the use of sweeteners in these Spanish sauces, I noticed numerous mentions of vinegar, lemon, or verjuice additions. Verjuice is an acidic juice made from tart fruit or unripe grapes that is not as sharp as vinegar. Sixteen of the 20 sauces had one of these sour ingredients and most of the sauces had both the sweet and the sour combined. Half of my manchamanteles recipes also contain vinegar and seven have pickled olives or chiles added to the dish. The fruit could also add to the tartness or acidity of the dish depending on ripeness. Both dishes with apples specify that they be tart. And tomatoes, despite the sugariness added by roasting them have a high acid content, especially when not fully ripe.

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83 Long-Solís, *Food and Culture in Mexico*, 13.

84 Santanach, *The Book of Sent Sovi*. 
How this Dish Relates to Old Spanish Recipes and Persian Cooking

I discussed the influence of Islamic cooking traditions on the Spanish and Mexican diets briefly in chapter one. The influence of Persian cooking has been enormous in foods all over the world as Ken Albala notes in his analysis of world cuisines:

Persian cuisine also spread with trade routes, specifically through the export of spices, so that items such as cinnamon and cloves and nutmeg, hailing all the way from the Moluccas, could be found in medieval European cookery. Along with these there were sauces made from ground nuts such as almonds and walnuts, dried fruits, and most importantly sugar, even in savory dishes, and often in tandem with acidic bases. The basic flavor combinations and textures were exported as a culinary system along with these ingredients themselves.  

The combination described above of cinnamon and cloves, sugar, and an acidic base captures a large part of what makes manchamanteles distinct among moles and among other Mexican guisados or stews.

Food historian Jeffrey Pilcher describes the effects of Moorish cooking and agriculture in Al-Andalus or southern Spain. Their love of citrus fruits, which they imported to Spain, sugar, spices, almonds, dates and honey all infiltrated the more Roman style of cooking that prevailed prior to the 700s. “Banquets from Baghdad to Granada featured dishes perfumed with pepper, ginger, cinnamon, clove, cardamom, mace, nutmeg, saffron, and sugar.”

Manchamanteles starts with the very intense flavor of chiles that is ubiquitous in Nahuatl cooking. This flavor is so strong that the addition of cloves, cinnamon, cumin, and pepper can be added without overpowering the essential note of chile. It is ____________

85 Albala, Three World Cuisines, 5.
86 Pilcher, Que Vivan los Tamales, 29.
strong enough to hold up to being sweetened and soured with fruits, vinegars, and sugars. It has so much in common with the sauces of medieval Spain and the description of Persian techniques that it is tempting to say it is merely an importation of the flavors of Europe. But the cooking techniques and flavors of the chile are strictly New World, as are the tomatoes, pineapples, plantains, and sweet potatoes that make such regular appearances in this dish. And the frying of ingredients in fat repeatedly to burnish the flavor is a technique that seems to have evolved with this very dish. So after all it is truly a hybrid.

But, how does it taste?
Figure 2.1  Mendoza Codex – illustration of cooking techniques showing tortillas, comal, olla, and a young woman using a metate to grind masa. She is being instructed by an older woman who kneels behind her.
‘How does it taste?’ is the first question I get when talking about my research. Working with food as material culture differs from the way we approach objects since we are unable to examine historic meals using the same criteria we can use when examining art or furniture. To really study the object itself, you have to create it. In order to investigate this object—manchamanteles—I researched the traditional cooking techniques it uses, cooked numerous versions of it, and examined how certain processes affected the texture and flavor of the product. To discover what meaning this dish holds as a marker of cultural hybridity, it was necessary to investigate the cultural meanings inherent in the process of making it.

Watching women cook this dish in Mexico and researching the methods that cooks have used for making it led to some basic observations. For centuries Mexican cooks have used what appear to be cumbersome grinding tools and have failed to incorporate modern cooking tools that would save great time and effort. Cooks grind the ingredients with a heavy stone rather than chopping them with knives, they cook on a single large dish rather than using individual skillets or pans, and they cook many of the ingredients individually rather than adding them all at once as for a stew. To understand why the more difficult techniques are used, rather than simpler short-cuts, I decided to prepare several versions of manchamanteles myself comparing the different techniques. In addition to tool use, I wanted to examine how it was put together, what steps are documented in the various recipes, and most important, what survives from the past and why.
The most interesting thing about this recipe is its longevity and ubiquity. This dish and other moles have been referred to as the national dish of Mexico or as a symbol of the cultural melding between Mexican and Spanish. Most of this rhetoric dates to the period of nationalism that takes root after the 1910 revolution. American food historian Sophie Coe discounts this romantic idealization of mole by citing its high number of European ingredients as evidence that it is in actuality a European dish with chiles added. She goes so far as to say that the dish has no Aztec foundations.

Jeffrey Pilcher analyzes how *mole poblano* fit into eighteenth century society by comparing it to the medieval dishes of Europe:

Notwithstanding the New World chiles lurking inside, *mole* would have seemed completely appropriate for any medieval banquet. Cookbooks preserved from European courts include fantastic but nevertheless familiar dishes. Their lavish use of expensive Asian spices served as a mark of conspicuous wealth, and a single recipe would include combinations of ingredients such as cinnamon, cloves, peppercorns, garlic, and sugar. Cooks based their sauces on meat broths, often mixed with wine, and added ground almonds for taste and texture. In short, these court recipes bore a striking resemblance to the foods of New Spain. To Creole tastes, *mole poblano* represented a New World version of medieval cooking.

I agree with Pilcher’s argument about the similarity between these cuisines. But I am not convinced that the only part of this dish that reflects New World cooking are some chiles “lurking inside.” The chiles are, in fact, the foundation of the dish—not just a substitution for Asian spices in an otherwise Old World receipt. The

89 Pilcher, *Que Vivan los Tamales*, 42.
centrality of chile to the dish and the importance of Nahuatl culture to its development can be demonstrated by cooking it and eating it.

Learning the Process

I started my investigation into historic cooking techniques with the Aztecs and the Spanish prior to the conquest. The earliest resources that detail cooking practices in the Aztec culture are the Mendoza Codex and Florentine Codex, two documents produced in sixteenth century Mexico to record daily life and culture amongst the Aztecs. Both books include illustrations made by Nahuatl people working as scribes, with the Franciscan monks leading these efforts. Examining these historic illustrations of cooking in pre-and post-conquest Mexico, I found a number of tools appeared consistently over the centuries that were very similar to tools that I observed and used while living in Mexico in 2003 and 2004. Figure 3.1, taken from the Mendoza Codex, shows a woman instructing another in how to use a metate or flat grinding stone to make the paste for tortillas, chocolate, or mole.

The objects labeled in the drawing include bowl and pot forms that are still used in Mexican cooking today. Mole requires the following equipment pictured in that image: a metate or large grinding stone, a comal or flat cooking surface, and an olla or cazuella—two styles of clay cooking vessel. Ollas are round clay pots that have a wide belly and a smaller neck. They are used for stews and soups as well as steaming tamales. Cazuellas are more bowl-shaped, having an open mouth. They can have rounded or flat bottoms and sometimes stand on tripod feet. Examples of ollas and cazuellas from the Mendoza and Florentine codices appear in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

In my cooking process I used a metate to grind the chilies, flat cooking surfaces like the comal for toasting and grinding, and pots like the cazuella (an open
clay cooking pot) for simmering and boiling. The cazuela varies in shape from shallow to deep and wide-mouth to wider-mouth. The Nahua made them out of clay later in cast iron as that technology spread. I found little difference between cooking in cast iron versus clay or wide mouth versus narrower despite the insistence of some cooks about the importance of the shape, size and construction of the pot.

**Comal, Metate, and Fire**

Like the wide-mouthed cazuela, numerous tools play parts in every cooking experience, but might not be instructive or illuminating in understanding processes. As I worked my way through the cooking project, I found using the comal and metate to be particularly informative as was cooking over charcoal and wood. I created an outdoor cooking area using bricks and steel that allowed me to make large or small fires and to create a *fogón*-like cooking area inspired by kitchens I had seen and worked in while in Mexico like the one pictured in Figure 3.4. Next to this I added a table to hold the heavy, stone metate. My cooking set up can be seen in Figures 3.5 – 3.7.

Mole is cooked in steps. Different ingredients are toasted, roasted, boiled, and fried. All of this work can be done on the comal or cazuela. The comal is a round flattened griddle made of ceramic or cast iron. One of the many technologies the Spanish brought to New Spain was casting metals and cast iron comals had the advantage of holding onto heat longer and being much less fragile than their clay predecessors. Both types of comal are still in contemporary use in large round-bottom versions good for cooking tortillas, as well as flat-bottom, cast iron versions that closely resemble skillets. These are the ancestors of the shallow-edged cast iron
skillets used throughout the US for serving sizzling platters of fajitas in chain restaurants.

In practice, a comal acts as an extension of the fire, distributing and concentrating the heat as needed for the cook—providing multiple temperature areas that can be used simultaneously. When used for making tortillas or toasting chiles they are used dry, as they were prior to the arrival of lard. But they can also be used as frying surfaces. Depending on the flatness and size a comal can have another pot on top of it (as though it were a large heat diffuser.) Figures 3.8 – 3.11 show a variety of comals from the past and in contemporary use.

The process of using a metate to grind (illustrated in Figure 3.1) is remarkably similar to the way this tool is used today. Figures 3.12 – 3.15 through show people using metates in illustrations, paintings and photos from the 1780s to the present. Figure 3.16 shows different styles of metate. This grinding tool has much in common with a mortar and pestle (another cooking tool with a long and consistent history of use.) It differs in shape—wide and flat with a gentle curve from front to back—and in practice. Traditionally users kneel in front of it and use the weight of the upper body to push down and forward with the long, cylindrical mano against the material being ground. The corn or chocolate on the metate is then ground between the two stones while the user rotates their wrists to effect as much shearing as possible.90

The sieve is a simple tool that adds greatly to the smoothness of the sauce. Below I will describe the process of rehydrating and cooking the chiles prior to

90 I have observed wrist rotation in contemporary use and have experienced the effect of this technique in grinding, but have not seen a specific illustration of it or read of it in a historic source.
grinding them on the metate. After this has been accomplished the resulting sauce is sieved to remove any remaining seeds or particles of spices.

In order to understand how it might affect technique, I compared cooking over an open fire, cooking on a fogón-like brick enclosure and cooking over a gas stove to determine if the cooking environment affected the process or outcome of making the recipe. I also wondered if the smoke of outdoor cooking would make a difference in the finished flavor. Charcoal and wood are both mentioned as cooking materials available in New Spain although I have seen more images and photographs of cooking over wood so I have used small logs and kindling branches more often than not. This can be seen in Figures 3.8 – 3.11.

I have cooked manchamanteles 20 times in this project using contemporary tools and ingredients as well as using historic tools and techniques. Each description of past cooking technique that I read brought me closer to understanding the steps and techniques in the process. Each time I cook, I think I am getting closer to understanding the experiences of women and men cooking in the past.

**Failed Experiments and Discoveries**

First I cooked manchamanteles from Sor Juana’s *Libro de Cocino*—Chilies, deveined and soaked overnight, ground together with toasted sesame seeds, and all fried in lard. Add the necessary water, the hen, slices of plantain, sweet potato, apple, and salt. 91 I took the most basic approach I could, following the recipe as written with no additional steps and trying it several times with varying amounts of the ingredients. This resulted in a grainy, unpalatable mush. The big questions with this early recipe

were how much of each ingredient? How much water is ‘necessary’? Should the hen, plantain, or sweet potato be cooked or prepared prior to adding them to the stew? It was this failure that pushed me to develop a methodology that incorporates cooking techniques and measurements from later recipes as well as those used by modern scholars and chefs while taking into account what would have been possible, and plausible, at the time of the recipe.

As outlined in Chapter 1, recipes were read to servants by their masters as a reminder of what elements went in a certain dish, but all the remaining tasks would have been the craft of the cook, learned from their master or parent and applied as needed. This system changed over time from the use of recipes as a tool of a servant to an instruction manual for an untrained housewife who hoped to learn a lifetime of techniques just by reading the recipe. As recipes changed in function so did the level of instruction. The recipes from the late nineteenth century contain more information about how to cook and how much to use of each ingredient than the earlier ones do.

I reverse engineered my cooking techniques by compiling techniques from the later manchamanteles recipes and comparing them to modern recipes for mole using the work of Zarela Martínez, Diana Kennedy, Ken Albala, and Dan Strehl as a starting point to understand how to cook in the past. Martinez and Kennedy have done extensive research in Mexico trying to understand and document cooking techniques. 

92 The recipes used in this paper are listed in full in Appendix A.

93 The books I am referencing in this section are Zarela Martinez’ *The Food and Life of Oaxaca*; Diana Kennedy’s *Oaxaca al Gusto, My Mexican Kitchen—Techniques and Ingredients*, and *Recipes from the Regional Cooks of Mexico*; Dan Strehl’s *Encarnation’s Kitchen*; Raymond Sokolov’s *Why We Eat What We Eat*, Heriberto García Rivas’ *Cocina Prehispánica Mexicana*, and Ken Albala’s *Three World Cuisines: Italian, Mexican, Chinese*, and *Food: A Cultural Culinary History*. 
Both have interviewed home and professional cooks and taken oral histories about cooking in various regions with special attention to traditional methods. I also based my work on that of food historians Ken Albala and Dan Strehl who have done extensive work understanding the history of Mexican cooking and cookbooks.

The work of these cooks and scholars helped identify common cooking processes that are currently used (Kennedy and Martínez), were used in previous generations (Martínez and Strehl), and those techniques that have left archaeological and documentary evidence that goes back centuries (Albala).

By applying their work to specific recipes I could better recreate the dish with confidence in the process. One example of this is processing the dried chiles—a step that has been done since before the conquest. Sor Juana relates the basics of soaking and grinding them but left out the step of toasting the chiles first which is mentioned in García Rivas’ *Prehispanic Mexican Cooking* as well as in the 1872 recipe from the *Arte Novísimo de Cocina*. By comparing the works of early and later recipes, the evidence of food historians, and the practice of modern chefs like Kennedy and Martínez, who both require the toasting of chiles prior to soaking, I have determined that this is a step that would have been commonly practiced by cooks throughout the period I am studying.

The processes I have researched are toasting, soaking, grinding and frying the chiles, the use of the molcajete as the main grinding tool, sieving the paste after its ground and prior to cooking it, cooking the plantains and tomatoes prior to adding them to the stew, and cooking the meat prior to adding it to the stew. All of these

94 García Rivas, *Cocina Prehispánica Mexicana*, 97.
processes are, like the chile toasting directions, mentioned intermittently in the recipes and supported by modern food scholars. My contribution is in applying the methods and findings of these scholars to a particular group of recipes that span several hundred years in order to find a greater understanding of how the recipe was actually produced, what tools were used in the making of it, and what that process contributes to knowledge of this food as a relic of Aztec culture and as a symbol of cultural hybridity.

The chefs I am looking at take for granted that moles represent the pinnacle of mestizo cooking blending the best of Spanish ingredients and Aztec traditions. As mentioned above Pilcher and Coe question the depth of the Aztec contribution to mole. The myth of its invention by a Spanish nun in a Catholic convent in a colonial town, as expressed by food historian Raymond Sokolov, removes the development of this dish from any context. What gets left out are the specific Nahuatl tools and techniques used in making moles for centuries before the particular moment of purported invention.95 Most scholars today interpret this dish as a seventeenth-century invention by a primarily Spanish elite who simply merged their traditional cooking with New World ingredients. The act of making the dish tells a different story—the practices of making it are so rooted in Aztec traditions and tools that it is a truly hybrid dish. Where I differ from the chefs is in my take on what exactly are the Spanish, Nahuatl, and Persian components. This distinction matters in understanding the profound influence Aztec cooking and traditions had on the cultural development of cuisine in Mexico.

95 Sokolov, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 36.
Cooking

As mentioned above I began my cooking for this project with a literal interpretation of Sor Juana’s manchamanteles as it was the oldest. Over the course of the past year I have cooked manchamanteles 18 times, experimenting with various recipes, techniques, ingredients, and proportions. In this section I will discuss three particular recipes, how I approached making them, and what I learned from the process. In addition to Sor Juana’s (recipe above) I made the second of three manchamanteles in *Dos manuscritos mexicanos de cocina siglo XVIII* (Two Manuscripts of Mexican Cooking from the Eighteenth Century.)

El Manchamanteles – chiles anchos remojados y unos jitomates molidos, un pedacito de achiote, clavo, canela y pimienta, aquí se echarán los pollos o gallinas, carne de puerco, piña en pedacitos y pera.

The Manchamanteles – soaked ancho chiles and tomatoes ground together with a small piece of achiote, cloves, cinnamon and black pepper, add the chickens or hens here, pork, chunks of pineapple and pears. 96

The other recipe I will review here was from the 1844 cookbook, *La Cocinera de Todo el Mundo* (The Cookbook of All the World):

Manchamanteles – Se les quitan las pepitas á los jitomates crudos maduros, se muelen con chile seco remojado, canela, clavo y pimiento: esto se pone à freir en manteca; se le echa una poca de agua tibia, los pollos ó carne de Puerco, chorizos cocidos, aceitunas, tornachiles, vinagre, sal, un terron de azucar, camote, plátano largo, cacaguates y Calabaza de Castilla.

Manchamanteles – Remove the seeds from raw, ripe tomatoes, grind them with dry chiles that have been soaked, cinnamon, cloves and black pepper: fry all of this in lard; add a little tepid water, the chickens or pork, cooked sausages, olives, picked chiles, vinegar, salt, a lump of

96 Dos manuscritos, 79. My translation.
sugar, sweet potato, a large plantain, peanuts and a Castilian pumpkin. 97

My understanding of mole cooking techniques starts with the simple instruction in all recipes (and in the name itself) to grind the chiles. Chiles can be ground dry and used in powdered form to add heat to many dishes, but in the case of mole they are ground after soaking. In order to reconstitute the dried chilies they are first toasted, then soaked, and then ground on the metate in a method similar to that used for corn masa or chocolate. Toasting the chilies can be as simple as resting them dry on the comal over a low fire. Other cooks advocate toasting the dried peppers in lard until the body softens and puffs out, regaining some of its elasticity. 98 Toasting them in oil also allows the peppers to cook some without burning the surface. None of these three recipes called for toasting the peppers so I tried it both ways. I found that toasting the peppers before soaking them made them rehydrate better, there were fewer dry patches that would not plump back up. Just laying each chile on the griddle for a few minutes prior to soaking meant they yielded more pulp.

Once toasted they are then soaked “from one day to the next” in the words of Sor Juana. Current cooks soak them in boiling water for 20 minutes, but this is one of the steps affected by the ready availability of boiling water. I tried both the boiling water and soaking overnight methods which both resulted in a similar consistency. After soaking, the peppers are soft enough to pull apart and remove the stems and veins inside the chili that add no flavor and have remained desiccated. Keeping or discarding the seeds is not mentioned in older recipes although many modern ones say

97 Cocinero de Todo el Mundo, 73-74. My translation.

98 Martinéz, The Food and Life of Oaxaca, 17.
to discard them. The seeds add both a strong flavor and are difficult to completely grind, but to some the extra flavor they impart makes it worth keeping them.

What resulted from this process in all three cases was a slick pile of concentrated pepper meat. The next step in each recipe is to grind it on a metate. Sor Juana calls for grinding it together with toasted sesame seeds. Dos Manuscritos calls for grinding the chiles with tomatoes, a small amount of achiote, cloves, cinnamon and black pepper. Todo el Mundo grinds the chiles with seeded raw tomatoes, cinnamon, cloves, and pepper. There are several opportunities for additional steps here. Contemporary chefs recommend toasting the spices, and nuts prior to grinding them, but the historic recipes are inconsistent on this point.

I cannot say when the toasting process for spices, nuts and peppers changed from being a dry process (as it must have been in the Aztec era due to the lack of cooking oils) to the current process of frying the dry ingredients in lard prior to grinding them. But it makes a significant difference in the taste of the dish. Frying so many of the ingredients adds an unctuous mouth-feel—a richer, smoother blending of the very strong flavors represented in most recipes. One of the techniques mentioned with regularity in the recipes is that the tomatoes should be roasted prior to grinding. The 1844 recipe from Todo el Mundo is unique in requiring raw, seeded tomatoes.

I used the metate to grind the chiles for the Sor Juana recipe, starting with the chiles alone, then adding the toasted sesame seeds, and occasionally adding a small amount of the water the chiles soaked in to thin the paste. The full process is illustrated in Figures 3.17 – 3.22. It took about 25 minutes of steady grinding to blend the skins and seeds into a paste. For the second recipe I added roasted tomatoes and the spices listed to the metate. The spices were much harder to integrate into the paste,
but the tomatoes added enough liquid to make adding extra unnecessary. I had a similar experience with the tomatoes from the third recipe which were added raw. Each of the three pastes was ground in less than 40 minutes. In contrast modern cooks often use a blender for this step. The blender uses a chopping blade rather than actually grinding the ingredients and so the paste tends to have more unground bits than with the metate. The process of grinding was difficult on my arms and back as the grinding stone is very heavy and grinding the toughest elements requires downward pressure. Still the process was very rhythmic and became easier the more I did it.

Using the metate also allowed for very fine control over the texture of the paste. When using a blender a certain amount of liquid is required to make the mechanism function, but on a grinding stone there is no moisture required, it can be used to grind dry or wet ingredients. The balance between thickeners like nuts or toast, the dry spices, and the wet ingredients can be determined by the person grinding who may prefer a specific consistency for frying.

Once ground, this blend of spices, nuts, and chiles becomes the thick base for the sauce. This is then fried in lard again—a process that Zarela Martinez calls “burnishing the flavor.” 99 Out of the 20 recipes I looked at for manchamanteles 17 mention frying the ground chile and spice mixture in lard. It is the most common instruction behind grinding and is of interest in part because it does not figure in any of the antecedents for these recipes in Aztec, Spanish or Moorish cuisine. I saw nothing like it in the Book of Sent Soví (the fourteenth century Spanish cookbook discussed in Chapter 2) or in the late nineteenth century cookbook La cocina española

99 Martinéz, The Food and Life of Oaxaca, 168.
antigua (Ancient Spanish Cooking) by Emilia Pardo Bazán. Both featured many types of meant sauces that had features in common with mole and manchamanteles, but this particular step, which appears in more than half of all the mole recipes I looked at, has no history I could find in other cuisines.

Once the lard is absorbed into the paste it is thinned with broth or water and simmered until the flavors meld. This is the time when the parts of the mole come together to become more than they were alone. During the simmering phase the fruit, vegetables, and meats are added along with any additional flavorings like vinegar or sugar.

The meats have usually been boiled in advance and the remaining broth is often used as the thinning agent for the sauce. Some of the fruits and vegetables may also have been roasted on the comal prior to adding into the sauce. The roasting is done on an area of the comal not directly over the heat so that the fruits or vegetables can cook very slowly without burning or sticking. Slow roasting of tomatoes brings out their fruitiness as it allows the sugars to caramelize and results in a sweet and sour flavor that is closer to pineapple and quince than it is to peas and onions. In addition to tomatoes, onions and garlic are often roasted prior to grinding them into the paste or adding them in chunks to the sauce. Fruits and vegetables aside from tomatoes are almost added in slices or chunks at the last stage.

Sor Juana’s mole combines the very simple paste of chiles and sesame seeds into the sauce for chunks of chicken, plantain, sweet potatoes, and apples. The ripe plantain is very sweet, the apple provides a tart note, and the chicken and sweet potatoes add differing textures and subtle flavors under the sauce.
The manchamanteles of Dos manuscritos blends the powerful chile base with the strongest of the Asian spices—clove, cinnamon, and pepper. These flavors which can be so overpowering on their own are hard to identify individually once ground into the chile paste. As the sauce simmers, chicken or pork is added along with chunks of pineapple and pears. These fruits are much sweeter than the starchy plantain and sweet potato in Sor Juana’s. The pineapple also retains its flavor despite being cooked in such a heavily spiced sauce. Each piece of pineapple bursts in the mouth with sweet tartness while the pear retains its texture and juiciness.

Jumping ahead to the 1844 recipe from Todo el Mundo, even more flavors have been added. This recipe has 17 ingredients compared to 8 in Sor Juana’s and 10 in Dos manuscritos. The paste contains chiles, peanuts, raw tomatoes, cinnamon, clove, and pepper. The peanuts are another strong flavor up against the other spices. Cooked chorizo sausage (a Spanish favorite) is added to the sauce with chicken or pork, sweet plantains, chunks of pumpkin, and sweet potatoes. This large assortment of tastes and textures is further enhanced by a lump of sugar, vinegar, pickled chiles, and olives.

Every bite of this dish has competing flavors. The vinegar adds a sour note that is enhanced by pickled chiles and olives. These elements create small sour moments each time they are eaten just as the plantain fills the mouth with a rich sweetness at each encounter. This is the baroque dish praised by Paco Ignacio Taibo when he says “every mole is a fiesta.” With the exception of chorizo in the third recipe the meats barely hold up to the sauces with very little of their own flavor coming through. But the texture and bite of the meat adds a savory depth. If made with wild game or aged

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100 Taibo, El Libro de Todo los Moles, 175. My translation.
meats that might more strongly resemble historic meat flavors the pairing might be even better.

These three recipes represent the transition from an innovative sauce combining elements of the local and Spanish cuisines to a baroque concoction that blends the strongest spices, powerful chiles, sweet fruits, sugar, vinegar—literally engaging every area of the palate. This is not to say that all the moles of the nineteenth century are this complex. The published cookbooks of the era often have multiple version of the same recipe simply titled ‘otro’ (other). In *La Cocinera de Todo el Mundo* there are three recipes for manchamanteles with 18, 17, and 8 ingredients. *Recetas practicas para la señora de la casa* (Practical Recipes for Housewives) has four manchamanteles with 16, 15, 11, and 7 ingredients. I think it is safe to say that the one with 7 ingredients is more practical than the one with 16. So while the trend over time is for the recipes to become more complex integrating exotic flavors, seasonal fruits, and various meats, there is also an effort to create versions that are less onerous for every day.

**What I Learned**

In the process of cooking these recipes I have had to make guesses at every step, creating a very unscientific experiment. The number of chiles is rarely mentioned in the recipes prior to 1900, and when they are the amount varies from four to a pound (about 20). I have questions about how long to simmer the sauce, how thick or thin it should be, the ratio of meat and vegetables to sauce. Even current recipes are not uniform on these points and the many versions of Manchamanteles that I have eaten in Mexico and Texas are my only real guides.
Cooking the dish requires numerous decisions of taste, but very few of the steps are difficult.

Apart from the grinding technique, none of the skills used are particularly specialized. Making mole does not resemble the complexities of making pastry, the temperature control needed in baking, the dexterity of sugar sculpting. One thing I have learned from making mole is that no single step requires expertise; there are just a lot of them. I believe that this is one of the sources of its ubiquity. The lack of complexity makes it a dish open to almost any level of cook. Once exposed to the basics almost anyone can complete the various steps. The artistry is not in the technique but in the chemistry – the amounts and combinations that can be infinitely varied by individuals.

The idea of mole, and by extension manchamanteles, is that these are family recipes, secrets, passed through generations and unique to each region, season, or culture. A basic formula that can be varied in almost infinite ways and within the rubric of mole—a blend of chile, herbs or spices, nuts or seeds, fruits or vegetable, in broth, over meat—manchamanteles is a version that emphasizes sweet and sour elements and generally uses fewer nuts and imported spices than other moles. One recipe may call for peaches and quince, but it may also be adjusted to use sweet potatoes and plantains should the others not be in season or at the market. The flexibility gives the cook freedom of purchase, to use what is ready to hand, to substitute, and to invent.

Recipes from manuscript cookbooks like those of Fray Geronimo, Hildelisa Martinez, or the anonymous cooks of Dos manuscritos, document a particular combination favored by a family or convent. Cookbooks of the nineteenth century
offered official versions of the recipe that ranged from 7 to 21 ingredients fit for Sunday dinners or holy fiestas, but all claim to be the same thing. And they are. The more I cooked the various concoctions, the more I experimented, the stronger the similarities appeared.

**Tool Use**

The most complicated technique in making mole is grinding using the metate and mano. The metate had been used for centuries before the conquest as a tool for grinding corn into masa—a paste that can be baked into tortillas or steamed with filings into tamales or blended into the drink atole. Corn and its products had religious significance for the Aztecs figuring in many ceremonies and sacrifices to their gods. The process that was used to convert corn or maize into masa involved extensive grinding. It was estimated that to feed an average household someone had to grind corn for three to four hours per day.\(^{101}\)

Grinding with a metate requires strength, stamina, and technique and every household had women who used the tool daily considering the amount of corn consumed. But the difference between grinding masa and chiles is tremendous. I could achieve a smooth chile paste including toasted nuts and spices within an hour and the strength required was much less than it took to grind corn. I surmise that while the grinding of the chile paste for mole is a specialized skill today, it was not at the time. Anyone who could convert a day’s worth of corn into masa could do the same to a batch of mole with little effort.

\(^{101}\) For a larger estate the demand was much higher. In his 1550 tribute lists Don Juan de Gúzman, the governor of Coyoacán, received a tribute of eight women a day to grind maize for his compound. From Coe’s *America’s First Cuisines*, 48.
Further understanding of the cooking process came while cooking the recipe over an open fire using a flat comal-like surface. In a contemporary kitchen the stove provides various heat zones – one for each burner and another in the oven or broiler. One burner holds a pot of water boiling with meat or broth. Another has a low fire for roasting tomatoes, onions or garlic. A third burner is used for toasting or frying nuts and spices in batches. A fourth heats water to soak the chiles after they are toasted.

When translated onto an outdoor cooking space, it required managing multiple small fires in order to set several different heat levels for each dish. While in Mexico I had often seen women cooking multiple items on various parts of the comal, even placing another pot on the comal’s surface to take advantage of the heat spread throughout its wide expanse.

By building a single fire under one area of the comal and using the various heat zones that resulted from diffusion, it was quite simple to fry, boil, toast, and roast all using a single cooking area and fire. Concentrating the steps created an economy of movement, fewer pans to wash, and used less fuel in the cooking process. While the heat for frying needed to be quite hot, I found that the other components did not require the same level of control. The broth could simmer slowly or quickly, tomatoes could be moved to cooler areas when they began to overcook. In many ways the dish became much easier once I began making it in a more traditional manner.

So What Did I Find?

My experiments led me to better understand techniques and their advantages. Using a metate to blend ingredients creates a drier paste than blending with water or broth. This thicker mole paste is better for using in tamales, and keeps longer in storage. It also releases more flavor from the ingredients than is achieved by chopping
with a knife or even with a modern blender. The process of cooking mole works better when using the correct tools in the context of Mexican traditional cooking. By working over a fire with a griddle I found a more efficient cooking rhythm, blending with a metate became more controlled and produced better results than a knife or a blender.

I also learned about the essential taste of the dish and that all manchamanteles are the same in how they combine varied ingredients to consistently bring out this particular flavor profile. It is astounding to me how much similarity exists among recipes with so many variations. With or without fruit the sauces are all tart. With or without sugar, all are sweet. The flavor of the chiles may be enhanced by additional spices but it stays solid at the core of the flavor profile. When the ingredients are fried in lard and then simmered together they always become more than the sum of their parts. There is an acrid sharpness to the dish when the myriad ingredients are brought together to start to simmer. The spices jump out. Almost every time I made it, this was the point at which I lost heart. It tasted terrible. But then the flavors would bind together becoming harmonious and balanced.

Every manchamanteles I made had something in common with every other. And every recipe was intriguingly different, blending the familiar notes into a similar combination but with a particular flair. That difference is what makes each person cling to the manchamanteles of their hometown, their grandmother, their favorite café.
Figure 3.1 Mendoza Codex – illustration of cooking techniques showing tortillas, comal, olla, and a young woman using a metate to grind masa. She is being instructed by an older woman who kneels behind her.
Figure 3.2 Florentine Codex, Book 2, page 175.
Figure 3.3  Codex Mendoza – Folio 61 recto

Figure 3.4  Outdoor kitchen in Oaxaca with two cooking areas, metate, olla, comal, and cazuelas.
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.5  Stone metate and mano in the foreground and adjustable fire stand to the right. I used bricks to create cooking areas that could be open or more insulated like the stucco fogóns used in New Spain. Photo by Author.
Figure 3.6  Cooking broth over the fire.
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.7  Cooking broth over the fire.
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.8  Mendoza Codex, Book 3, page 452.
Figure 3.9  Margarita Nabor cooking at Na Bolom, San Cristobal de la Casas 1958. Photo by Gertrudis Duby.
Figure 3.10  Mayan woman preparing tortillas. Photo by villagedept.

Figure 3.11  Woman preparing tortillas in Zinacantan, Chiapas. Photo by Author.
Figure 3.12  *Storia antica del Messico* 1781 by Francisco Saverio Clavigero (1731-1787) Spanish illustration of native women (1) cooking in a cazuella and olla, (2) grinding with a metate, and (3) cooking tortillas on a comal.
https://archive.org/details/storiaanticadelm12clav
Figure 3.13  Unknown Artist, “A Man Scraping Chocolate” circa 1780
North Carolina Museum of Art
http://artnc.org/works-of-art/man-scraping-chocolate
Figure 3.14  Postcard of a woman grinding corn from the early 20th century.
Figure 3.15  Woman grinding chiles for mole in Oaxaca, Mexico. 
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.16  Various styles of metate outside a home in Oaxaca.
Photo by My Eye Sees.
Figure 3.17  Toasted and soaked chiles ready to be ground.  
Photo by Author.

Figure 3.18  Chiles being ground in the metate.  
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.19  Grinding chiles.
Photo by Author.

Figure 3.20  Adding sesame seeds.
Photo by Author.
Figure 3.21  Adding broth to the paste.
Photo by Author.

Figure 3.22  Finished mole paste.
Photo by Author.
CONCLUSION

One of my goals in writing this thesis was to understand what caused a recipe to survive in a culture for hundreds of years. What I have found are moments when mole and manchamanteles appear in history: Sahagún’s description of the daily fare of Aztec lords prior to the arrival of the Spanish, three manuscripts from colonial religious institutions, multiple appearances in the first Mexican cookbook to be written after the war for independence and again in every published book of Mexican recipes before 1900. Both Aztec and Catholic calendars are ruled by feasting and fasting. There is an inherent link between religious rituals and eating in Mexico that has roots in both religions and in modern Mexico certain moles are linked to specific saint’s day fiestas.\footnote{Taibo, El Libro de Todo los Moles, 275}

Despite mole’s reputation as food of the poor, it has crossed class lines back and forth since before the conquest. Women from the highest Nahua families married Conquistadors and brought with them the haute cuisine of their time. Convent banquets and celebrations were attended by the highest castes in New Spain, catering to visiting lords and viceroy\textsuperscript{s}.\footnote{Bauer, Goods, Power, History, 101} Suppressed as too low class during the time of the Bourbon fascination with all things French, it returned to sight once the idea of creating a Mexican cuisine became important. And it rose to prominence again as the food of the people during the nationalistic movement of the early twentieth century.
Mole has long been the Mexican symbol of cultural blending, of the greatness that can result from the physical mix of European and Amerindian elements. Based on the long struggles for identity in Mexico, the oppression of those with non-European blood, the destruction of one civilization by another, the growth of the remains of those societies into something new, it is cathartic to find an origin story of these cultures coming together that is beautiful and delicious. It is a story of the best from each side being made better by the other. It is understandable that this would become the national dish, that it would take on this emblematic stance. But in my reading of it my questions kept wandering back to the facts of the recipes. Where did it really come from? How much of the history of mole was truly a story of blending? Was it half Spanish and half Nahuatl!? Or less balanced than that—more messy?

While several writers mentioned the possible Persian roots for mole, I found no evidence of a direct relationship between these cuisines. Nonetheless, comparisons of Moorish cuisines, the effects those tastes had on Spanish cooking, and the specifics of one recipe in the pantheon of moles, have led me to make these connections. Persian flavors of cinnamon and cloves in savory dishes, ground almonds as a thickening element for an otherwise brothy sauce, and the repeated pairing of acidic or vinegary bases with sweeteners all come together often in manchamanteles and seem to be what separates it from all other moles. The use of pork and lard is purely Spanish. And the Moorish elements are Spanish too. By the time of the conquest the Spanish had been incorporating these elements into their cuisine for centuries.

Chiles have always stood as the most Mexican element in mole. But the chile alone is not the critical element of mole-making; it is preparation of the chile—the toasting, soaking, and grinding—that develops the flavor properly. That grinding
process is essential to Nahuatl cuisine for making masa, the most holy of foods in their culture. The Nahuatl chile paste is fried in the Spanish lard, ground with the Mexican tomatoes that give the dish a Moorish tartness. Persian spices enhancing the chile, Caribbean fruits adding sweetness, American nuts and seeds acting as a thickener (or occasionally a piece of very European bread)—the story of this dish as a cultural integration is not wrong.

I propose that the persistence of this dish across hundreds of years of cultural upheavals is also a story about affinities between foreigners, about finding something familiar in an alien offering. Conquistadors recognized tortillas as analogous to bread. They recognized the many meat stews offered by the natives at early banquets even though the ingredients were different. Even the name ‘peppers’ for chiles comes from a basic resemblance in taste between the spice of a black peppercorn and that of an elongated green or red vegetable. The similarities in cuisine extended to each culture making sauces for meat that used ground nuts and spices as a base despite the inherent difference between the spices and nuts in each. It is an easy dish to adapt. But at heart there are elements that have been traveling with this particular sauce for hundreds of years, for each generation of cooks representing something familiar, something particular, that just tastes like home.
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Appendix A

THE RECIPES

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Libro de cocina, late 1600s, page 48.
Manchamantelles – chiles desvenados y remojados de un dia para otro, molidos con ajonjoli tostado, y frito todo en manteca, echaras el agua necesaria, la gallina, rebanadas de platano, de camote, manzana y su sal necesaria.
Chiles deveined and soaked overnight, ground together with toasted sesame seeds, and all fried in lard. Add the necessary water, the hen, slices of plantain, sweet potato, apple, and salt.

Dos manuscritos mexicanos de cocina, 1700s, page 24.
Version 1
Manchamantels – chiles anchos remojadas se muelen con jitomates, sus especies, un pedazo de piña, plátano, ajonjolí tostado y molido con los chiles y jitomate; clavo, pimienta, chorizón.
Ancho chiles soaked and ground with tomatoes and the like, chunks of pineapple, plantain, grind some toasted sesame seeds with the chiles and tomatoes; cloves, black pepper, chorizo.

Dos manuscritos mexicanos de cocina, 1700s, page 79.
Version 2
El Manchamanteles – chiles anchos remojados y unos jitomates molidos, un pedacito de achiote, clavo, canela y pimienta, aquí se echarán los pollos o gallinas, carne de puerco, piña en pedacitos y pera.

Soaked ancho chiles and tomatoes ground together with a small piece of achiote, cloves, cinnamon and black pepper, add the chickens or hens here, pork, chunks of pineapple and pears.

Dos manuscritos mexicanos de cocina, 1700s, page 95.

Version 3

Otro manchamanteles – se cogen chiles anchos colorados, se remojan, el pan remojado se muele, las aves estarán cocidas con su sal y se echa el chile, después se espesa con el pan como está dicho y se le echa vino y vinagre; para servirlo se echan unas limas en rebanadas, orégano, alcaparras, aceitunas y tornachiles.

Other manchamanteles – take some red ancho chiles, soak them and grind with soaked bread, cook the birds with some salt and add a chile, after it is thickened by the bread add some wine and vinegar; serve with some lime slices, oregano, capers, olives and tornachiles (pickled hot peppers).

Fray Gerónimo, Libro de cocina del hermano Fray Gerónimo de San Pelayo, 1700s, page 62.

Mancha manteles – en manteca dora el pan, échale el chile molido, remojado, y los jitomates los asas o cueces y les quitas el pellejo y los mueles para freírlos, y estando
echas caldo y sazónalo con sal, epazote, comino y ajonjolí, si quieres, aunque no es necesario dicho ajojolí. Aceite.

Toast the bread in lard, add the ground chiles, which were soaked, and roast or cook the tomatoes, remove their skins and grind them before frying, add this all to the stock and season with salt, epazote, cumin and sesame seeds, although the sesame seeds are not necessary. Oil.

**Dominga de Guzmán, Recetario mexiquense, 1700s, page 67.**
Manchamanteles – buscarás unos chiles que hay amarillos que llaman chilcoscle, los molerás con ajojolí y unas nueces tostadas, pimienta y clavo; frito este caldillo echarás allí la carne o gallina y cocida, todo frito.

Take some yellow chiles called chilcoscle, grind them together with sesame seeds and toasted nuts, pepper and cloves; fry this mix and add into it meat or a hen and cook, all fried.

**Hildelisa Martínez, Recetario de Mascota, Jalisco, 1800s, page 53**
Mancha mantel o mole poblano – se asan y muelen unos jitomates con un chile pasilla o de teñir dorado en la manteca, una cebollita, un cuateroncito de chocolate, unas pimientas, un pedacito de pan y un diente de ajo; se fríe la carne de puerco y ya cocido para servirse se le pone el chile y también vinagrito y dulcecito.

Mancha mantel or mole poblano – roast and grind tomatoes and a pasilla chile in lard until they become golden, an onion a quarter pound of chocolate, some pepper, a piece
of bread and a clove of garlic. Fry together with the pork and the cooked meat and to serve add chiles, vinegar and something sweet.

**La cocinera de todo el mundo, 1844, page 47.**

Version 1

Manchamanteles de gallina – se desvena un chile ancho y se tuesta; luego se pone en remojo y se muele con ajos, cominos y jitomates; esto se medio frie en poca manteca y se le ponen cebollas cocidas, piña, plátano largo, camote, durazno y cacague en tajadas; orégano y chicharos cocidos, se hace pedazos la gallina despues de cocida, o la carne de puerco, y se le pone sal y un terron de azucar, y para servirlo se le añaden aceitunas y tornachiles.

Devein an ancho chile and toast; then soak it and grind with garlic, cumin, and tomatoes; then fry it in a little lard and add some cooked onions, pineapple, large plantain, sweet potato, peach, and chopped peanuts; oregano and cooked peas, add the chicken in pieces after cooking, or pork, and add salt, a lump of sugar, and to serve add olives and tornachiles.

**La cocinera de todo el mundo, 1844, pages 73-74.**

Version 2

Manchamanteles – Se les quitan las pepitas á los jitomates crudos maduros, se muelen con chile seco remojado, canela, clavo y pimiento: esto se pone à freir en manteca; se le echa una poca de agua tibia, los pollos ó carne de Puerco, chorizos cocidos, aceitunas, tornachiles, vinagre, sal, un terron de azucar, camote, plátano largo, cacaguates y Calabaza de Castilla.
Manchamanteles – Remove the seeds from raw, ripe tomatoes, grind them with dry chiles that have been soaked, cinnamon, cloves and black pepper: fry all of this in lard; add a little tepid water, the chickens or pork, cooked sausages, olives, picked chiles, vinegar, salt, a lump of sugar, sweet potato, a large plantain, peanuts and a Castilian pumpkin.

La cocinera de todo el mundo, 1844, pages 82.
Version 3
Manchamanteles – se dora pan en manteca, se le pone chile molido, jitomates asados idem, y fritos; estando esto hecho, se le echa caldo y se sazona con sal, cominos y ayocotes.

Toast bread in lard, and grind with chile, roasted tomatoes, and fry; in the standard way, add broth and season with salt, cumin and kidney beans. (Ayocote translates as kidney beans, but this seems an odd place in the recipe to be adding beans so it might have had another meaning.)

Nuevo cocinero mexicano en forma de diccionario, 1845, page 167.
Cerdo (carne de) en Manchemanteles – se desvenan chiles anchos, se medio tuestan en la lumbre, cuidándose de que no se queman nada: se echan á remojar y se muelen con xitomates cocidos: se frie esto en manteca, y ya frito, se le echa el caldo de la carne de puerco; se sazona con la sal necesaria y un poco de clavo, canela y cominos molidos, una cebolla en cuartos y un poco de orégano espolvoreado; se echa la carne de puerco, y despues de hervir un poco, se la echa azúcar para que quede dulecito; despues se le
echan rebandas de camote, manzana, piña y plátano, dejándose hervir hasta que haya
tomado una regular consistencia.

Pork in Manchamanteles – devein ancho chiles and toast them in the fire, be careful
not to burn them; soak them and grind with cooked tomatoes: fry all this in lard and
once it is fried add it to the pork broth; season with salt as needed and a little cloves,
cinnamon, and ground cumin, an onion in quarters and a little sprinkle of powdered
oregano; add the pork and after boiling a little add sugar to make it a bit sweet; later
add sliced sweet potatoes, apple, pineapple, and plantain, allowing it to boil until you
have a regular consistency.

Antigua cocina mexicana e internacional, 1872, page

Version 1

Manchamanteles: se desvena chiles anchos y mulatos y se tuesta; se pone en remojo y
se muele con ajos, cominos y jitomates; se medio frie esto en poca manteca o aciete y
se le agregan cebollas cocidas, piña, plátano largo, camote, durazno en tajadas,
cacahuates, orégano y chícharos cocidos. Después de cocida el ave, o la carne de
puerco, al gusto, y se le pone sal y un terrán de azúcar. Para servir este mole, se le
agregan aceitunas y tornachiles.

Devein ancho and mulato chiles and toast, then soak and grind them with garlic,
cumin, and tomatoes. Fry this mixture in a little lard or oil and add cooked onions,
pineapple, a large plantain, sweet potato, sliced peaches, peanuts, oregano and cooked
peas (chícharos). After cooking the pork to taste add a lump of sugar and salt. To serve
this mole, add olives and tornachiles (pickled green peppers).
Antigua cocina mexicana e internacional, 1872, page 58.

Version 2

Se les quitan las pepitas a los jitomates crudos maduros, se muelen con chile seco remojado, canela, clavo y pimienta; esto se pone a freír en manteca; se le echa una poca de agua tibia, los pollos y carne de puerco, chorizos cocidos, aceitunas, tornachiles rajados, sal, un terrón de azúcar, camotes, plátano largo, cacahuates y calabaza de Castilla.

Remove the seeds from raw, ripe tomatoes, grind them with dry chiles that have been soaked, cinnamon, cloves and black pepper: fry all of this in lard; add a little tepid water, chickens and pork, cooked sausages, olives, picked chiles, salt, a lump of sugar, sweet potato, a large plantain, peanuts and a Castilian pumpkin.

Recetas practicas para la señora de casa, 1892, page 44.

Version 1

Lomo de Puerco en Mancha Manteles - chiles anchos desvenados y molidos con piñones, nuez, jitomates cocidos, pan frito, clavo y canela; se freirá en manteca con sal para ponerle luego el lomo rebanando y cocido con el caldo en que se coció, jamón en tiras, pera rebanada, cebollas cocidas y deshojadas, azucar y vinagre.

Pork Loin in Mancha Manteles – ancho chiles deveined and grind together with pine nuts, hazelnuts, cooked tomatoes, toasted bread, cloves and cinnamon; Fry this in lard with salt and add it and the sliced pork loin to the broth it was cooked in, ham in slices, pieces of pear, cooked onions broken into layers, sugar and vinegar.
Recetas practicas para la señora de casa, 1892, page 44.

Version 2

Otra - se tuestan almendras, semillas de calabaza, pepitas de chile, ajonjoli y se muelen con jitomates asados y chiles anchos remojados; después se frié todo en manteca con sal, para ponerle el lomo después de cocido, longaniza y calabacitas también cocidas, vinagre, azucar y caldo; se adorna con aceitunas y chilitos en vinagre.

Other – toast almonds, pumpkin seeds, chile seeds, sesame seeds, and grind them with roasted tomatoes and rehydrated ancho chiles; after fry it all in lard with salt, add the pork after it is cooked, longaniza (a type of sausage) and cooked courgettes, vinegar, sugar and broth; serve with olives and little chiles in vinegar.

Recetas practicas para la señora de casa, 1892, page 45.

Version 3

Otra – se molerán chiles anchos tostados y desvenados, con pan frito, ajos y clavos; después de frito ésto en manteca se le pone el lomo con el caldo en que se coció, orégano, vinagre, azúcar y un poco de chocolate molido; luego que espese se aparta de la lumbre.

Other – grind toasted and deveined ancho chiles, with fried bread, garlic and cloves; after frying this in lard add to the pork with broth to cook, oregano, vinegar, sugar and a little ground chocolate; let it thicken away from the fire.
Recetas practicas para la señora de casa, 1892, page 45.

Version 4

Otro con Chícharos – se molerán chiles anchos remojados, ajos y cominos; estando frito ésto se le pone vinagre, el lomo, chorizo y los chicharos, todo cocido: éste no ha de quedar espeso.

Other with Peas – grind ancho chiles that have been soaked, garlic and cumin; once fried add vinegar, pork, chorizo, and the peas, all cooked: this one does not have to be thick.

The last two recipes I cooked were from Dan Strehl’s great book, Encarnacion's Kitchen, and in the fascinating Frida's Fiestas, a memoir about the cooking and life of Frida Kahlo by her step-daughter, Guadalupe Rivera and Marie Pierre Colle. The authors of these two books transcribed them from older cookbooks that were in the possession of their subjects.

Encarnación Pinedo’s El Cocinero Español, page 108.

Translated by Dan Strehl

Manchamanteles - Stew that stains the tablecloth

Take some ripe tomatoes and remove the seeds. Grind them with soaked, toasted dry chiles, cinnamon, and pepper. After they are ground, fry in lard, mix with warm water, and add chickens or pork, cooked sausages, olives, vinegar, salt, a lump of sugar, yams, or peanuts.
Tablecloth Stainer

Puree the chiles with the onion and tomatoes. Drain the puree and sauté it in hot lard. Add the pork broth and simmer it for 10 to 15 minutes to blend the flavors. Add the meat, apple, pear, quince, peaches, and pineapple. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the plantain, sugar and vinegar. Simmer for 2 minutes, correct the seasoning and serve very hot.
Appendix B

INGREDIENT ANALYSIS

Percent in Manchamanteles Recipes

Chilis  Spices  Fruit or Vegetable  Sour or Fruit  Meat  Sweet or Fruit  Tomatoes  Sweets
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Chiles</th>
<th>Meat</th>
<th>Chicken</th>
<th>Pork</th>
<th>Chorizo</th>
<th>Lard</th>
<th>Instruction to fry paste</th>
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