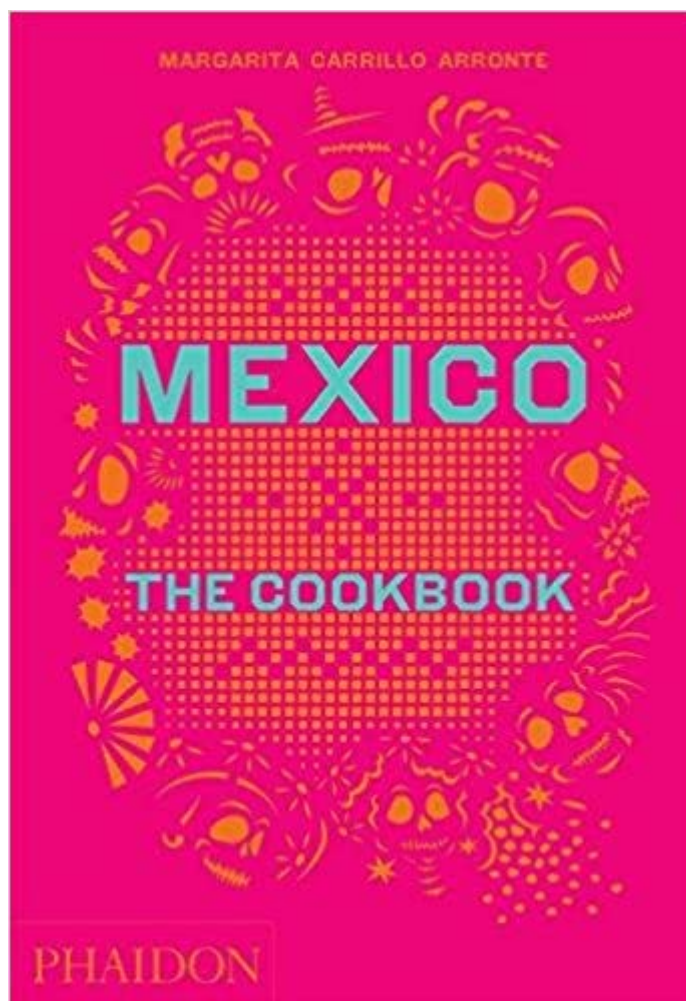


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# Mexico: The Cookbook



## Synopsis

A New York Times Best Seller A Publishers Weekly Top Ten Cookbook (Fall 2014) "All my life I have wanted to travel through Mexico to learn authentic recipes from each region and now I don't have to - Margarita has done it for me!" - Eva Longoria The first truly comprehensive bible of authentic Mexican home cooking, written by a living culinary legend, Mexico: The Cookbook features an unprecedented 700 recipes from across the entire country, showcasing the rich diversity and flavors of Mexican cuisine. Author Margarita Carrillo Arronte has dedicated 30 years to researching, teaching, and cooking Mexican food, resulting in this impressive collection of Snacks and Street Food, Starters and Salads, Eggs, Soups, Fish, Meat, Vegetables, Accompaniments, Rice and Beans, Breads and Pastries, and Drinks and Desserts. Beautifully illustrated with 200 full-color photographs, the book includes dishes such as Acapulco-style ceviche, Barbacoa de Pollo from Hidalgo, classic Salsa Ranchera, and the ultimate Pastel Tres Leches, each with notes on recipe origins, ingredients, and techniques, along with contributions from top chefs such as Enrique Olvera and Hugo Ortega.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"For those interested in learning how to make authentic Mexican cuisine, Arronte has provided the definitive guide." - Publishers Weekly Top Ten Cookbook (Fall 2014) "All my life I have wanted to travel through Mexico to learn authentic recipes from each region and now I don't have to - Margarita has done it for me!" - Eva Longoria "Absolutely wonderful. I wish I could close my door

and read it all day."â "Nancy Wall Hopkins, Senior Deputy Editor-Food & Entertaining"Hasta La Vista, Tex Mex."â "Better Homes and Gardens"Mexico: The Cookbook may kill your taste for supermarket salsa for good."â "Elle Magazine"Mexico: The Cookbook promises to introduce even the biggest fans of tortas and tamales to something new about Mexican cuisine and aims to prove that it can be as refined as it is accessible."â "Time.com"Exquisitely beautiful and encyclopedic."â "T Magazine Essential"Your go-to guide to Mexican home cooking."â "Tasting Table"I have long been an admirer of Margarita Carrillo's work. In her new book, her warm and expert voice shines and proves to be a most delightful guide through the fascinating labyrinth of Mexican cuisine. Every cook, be it expert or beginner, will benefit and savor from this splendid Mexican cookbook with hundreds of tried and true recipes: a must for any Mexican food lover."â "Pati Jinich"Margarita is the embodiment of everything that I love about Mexico and her food is delicious. A definite hero."â "Thomasina Miers"A mammoth 700 page collection of Mexican recipes... A 'food bible'."â "Publishers Weekly" Might just be the most comprehensive cookbook on the country's cuisine ever published."â "The Sunday Times Travel"Definitive... Even the most learned Mexican food expert would be pushed to think of a dish not already listed. A beautiful book in both design and substance... Can't be faulted."â "The Culture Trip"...With its laser-cut hot pink cover, I can only tell you the recipes beneath it are just as divine."â "sfgirlbybay"The Mexican home-cooking bible (and the most beautiful book)."â "DomesticSluttery"This weighty book includes more than 600 recipes for home-style Mexican dishes, and its vibrant cutwork cover adds spice, energy, and cheer to any cookbook shelf."â "Allrecipes

Chef and restaurateur Margarita Carrillo Arronte was born into a large family who respected their deep cultural and culinary roots, and has devoted nearly 35 years to help traditional Mexican cuisine find its way to every corner of the world. She has lectured about Mexican food at schools including The Culinary Institute of America and Le Cordon Bleu; served as Vice&hyphen;President of the Mexican Conservatory of Gastronomical Culture; and acted as an official representative of Mexico for the G&hyphen;20 summit in Los Cabos. She is also a published author who has hosted several food shows for the El Gourmet channel in Mexico. Chef Margarita currently lives with her family and four dogs in Mexico City.

I would like to make clear from the outset that this is not a slam against the author; it is, however, an honest and detailed critique of the editors of Phaidon Press, who seem to have been absent from work on the day this book passed through the department. Diana Kennedy's negative comments

about this book seen elsewhere in this column of reviews have nothing to do with any sort of vendetta or "sour grapes." She is upset, as am I, because of the great disservice this book does to the understanding of regional Mexican cuisine beyond the country, an understanding that Diana has worked hard to build since the 1950s. The book is full of egregious errors, cover to cover, in fact on almost every page. Phaidon seems to have spent more money paying "star chefs" and trendy consumer magazines like Vogue to provide blurbs that rev up the excitement for this mess of a cookbook than they did on the real work of production. First, some full disclosure: I am the author of *Yucatán: Recipes from a Culinary Expedition* (The William and Bettye Nowlin Series in Art, History, and Culture of the Western Hemisphere). In this critique, I will address some of the glaring errors found throughout *Mexico: The Cookbook*, but will mostly confine my comments to my area of expertise, which is the gastronomic traditions of the Yucatán Peninsula. I am a friend and colleague of Diana Kennedy. While I do not know Margarita Carrillo Arronte well, we did meet in early October 2014, when we both served as judges for an event of traditional gastronomy in Morelia, Michoacán. I found Margarita to be a charming and affable lady, very bright, pleasant to be around, and I have nothing against her whatsoever. In fact, all of the grave errors I will highlight in this critique (and all the rest that don't fit) I suspect are the fault of the editors of the publication; I have even pondered if perhaps the book were ghost-written, since obviously the text was not written by anyone who knows the regional cuisines of Mexico to any degree. And to be sure, the recipes were not thoroughly tested. If you keep reading this, you will find details on many rather serious errors in recipes: some of these errors have to do with quantities, instructions, etc.; others have to do with more lamentable mistakes about the canon of Mexican gastronomy. A few reviewers in this column have written to me with their opinions and have said basically "Hey, dude, relax, don't take it that seriously. I just use the recipes as a base, then make modifications to taste." That's fine if you are making something for which you have some taste experience (maybe meatloaf?) - but for so many more exotic dishes, including Papadzules (below), if you don't know what it is to begin with, how could you possibly make these modifications? You will simply wind up with something on your plate that is anything but "authentic regional Mexican cuisine." It would be like making coq au vin from a vague recipe that specifies chicken and something alcoholic, and thinking to yourself, "Gee, I think I'll use ground chicken instead of cock, and beer instead of wine." It just won't be right - or French. Those who wish to understand authentic Mexican cuisine should be just as precise in their approach as they would be to Italian, French, Thai, or any other international cuisine. As one quick example to satisfy your curiosity, many people know how to make guacamole; maybe they have even done it so many times they don't need to follow a recipe. Check out this author's recipe for

guacamole on page 40. Maybe you will like this nice, fattening version. The ingredient list specifies "1 avocado, diced". Is the author (or editorial team) aware that avocados come in a wide range of sizes and weights? Any clues for us home cooks? This recipe is supposed to serve four. In my experience, you should plan on at least one-half medium avocado per person, unless each diner is going to be satisfied with about 1 tablespoon of guacamole. A bizarre instruction tells the cook to "gently fold in the avocado" (which you will recall was diced). No mention of mashing it? Did you ever have guacamole served tableside and watch how the waiters mash everything in the molcajete? The author-slash-editorial team instructs the cook to add 4 tablespoons of olive oil at the end of the recipe. That is one-quarter cup! Eighty-five percent of the calories in avocados come from fat, so I hardly think more is necessary, or even desired. And remember that lonely little single avocado? It has been diced, "folded in" (to 1/2 chopped red onion of indeterminate size) and now the cubes are apparently swimming in a quarter cup of olive oil! Some pop chefs like Tyler Florence may use olive oil in their guacamole, but I can aver that it is not traditional, nor even necessary, unless you want to increase your fat intake. The recipes for Yucatán are equally messy, and quite simply incorrect. The recipe for "Turkey with black stuffing" (Pavo en relleno negro) on page 341 bears absolutely no resemblance to the dish as it is prepared in Yucatán. Putting any notions of "authenticity" aside for the moment, I pity the poor home cook who tries to make this recipe. Visualize these instructions along with me: First, the author specifies in the ingredient list an 8-pound turkey. In 2005, the USDA reported that the weight of the average turkey was 28.2 pounds. The author's recipe supposedly serves 10. Martha Stewart (if I may refer to her) says that you should purchase 1 1/2 to 2 pounds of turkey per diner. So at the very least, this recipe should call for a turkey weighing about 15 pounds. Therefore, on both counts, I'm not sure where the notion of an 8-pound turkey came from. Now, back to this bird. We are supposed to stuff this 8-pound bird with 6 lbs. 10 oz. (almost 7 pounds) of ground pork! Do we really think there's room in there, since with those quantities the stuffing would be a full 87.5% of the volume of the turkey itself? In the middle of the recipe is this peculiar instruction: "Stuff the turkey with the pork mixture and the hard-boiled egg yolks and sew up with trussing thread." OK. So I have a turkey full to the rim with ground pork; where exactly are the 5 egg yolks supposed to go? Do I shove them into the opening of the bird, forcing them deep into the ground meat? Or just cluster them together at the opening? So when I serve, do I scoop out some of the pork and get all these yolks in one serving? Do I cut the yolks in half in order to give one-half to each diner? None of these details are mentioned. At the beginning of the recipe we are told to use 2 oz. of red chiles. Any kind preferred? Dried? Fresh? (And remember that chiles can vary widely in heat intensity, so the type of chile would seem to be

an important detail.) Further, as another reader expressed here, no Mexican cookbook of any merit would specify something as vague as "red" or "green" chiles. Mexican cooks take chiles very seriously, and are quite specific about which to use, and when. What's more, each region of Mexico boasts its own unique chile varieties that local cooks put to good use. And I thought this was supposed to be THE definitive "regional Mexican cookbook." In another place in the recipe, the author also specifies Tabasco chiles: not only are Tabasco chiles not used in Yucatán, they are not even available. Next, we are told to put the "red chiles" along with two heads of ROASTED garlic and 25 tomatoes into a roasting pan and roast for 15 minutes at 350°F. (The garlic should be roasted two times?) Twenty-five tomatoes are going to exude lots of juice; how are the chiles and garlic supposed to roast in all that liquid? And what, may I ask, are you going to do with those 25 tomatoes? Ah, at the end of the recipe, we slice 10 of them to use in a sauce. Did you ever try to slice a roasted tomato? Not to mention the mystery of slicing tomatoes that are going to be puréed. And let's not leave out the most peculiar instruction of all: in order to cook the 8-pound bird (filled with almost 7 pounds of ground pork) we are supposed to place the stuffed turkey in a "large saucepan or flameproof casserole." Even my largest saucepan won't hold a whole chicken of any size, let alone a turkey (albeit a dwarf one.) Most perplexing of all, this recipe for Pavo en relleno negro bears no resemblance to the dish as it is known in Yucatán. For that classic dish, cooks use a pitch black paste made of charred, ground chiles, known as "recado negro." It is readily available commercially beyond Mexico, so I can't imagine why the author didn't specify it. Note the name of the dish: "Turkey with black stuffing." There is not one step or ingredient in the recipe that will yield a black stuffing. Only the recado negro can do that. Further, in Yucatán cooks do not stuff the turkey with ground meat; instead, they form several large meatballs, each with an egg yolk in the center; the meatballs cook along with the turkey in a piquant black sauce; to serve, you cut the meatballs in half and give one half to each diner; the little hard-boiled egg yolk peeks out from the center, surrounded by graphite-colored meat. All of the rest of the instructions and ingredients are incomprehensible, and will yield, as far as I can tell, a turkey cooked in tomato sauce; Yucatecans would look at such a dish as though it had been served from outer space since there are no "turkey-in-tomato-sauce" dishes in Yucatán whatsoever. On page 81 you will find a recipe for a classic Yucatecan tamal: Brazo de Reina (or "queen's arm"). As the name humorously suggests, this is a large, long log- (or arm)-shaped tamal, rolled jelly-roll-style and sliced. It is not - as the recipe instructs - prepared as several individual tamales (we are not told how many). Further, to serve with the tamales, we are supposed to make Chiltomate, a charred tomato sauce mashed in a molcajete that in Yucatán is only served with a couple of dishes including grilled pork cutlets and a

local sausage - never with tamales. But that is not where the strangeness ends. To prepare this sauce, we have an ingredient list of "4 ripe tomatoes, 1/2 onion, chopped, 1 habanero chile . . . 1 sprig epazote leaves, sea salt." The first paragraph of the instructions reads: "For the Chiltomate, combine the tomatoes, onion, chile, and epazote leaves in a saucepan and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes. Season to taste, discard the epazote, and process the mixture in a food processor or blender." OK. Whole, dry tomatoes go into a saucepan with no liquid? I guess they are resting on a bed of chopped onions? How do you pick out wilted leaves of cooked epazote? What is the "mixture" we are supposed to pour into the blender since nothing has actually been "mixed"? A final bizarre touch is to add "habanero or Morita chiles" to the tamal when you roll it up. Not only would heat-loving Yucatecans be shocked to find bits of fiery hot chile in their tamales, but also Yucatecans never use the Morita chile, nor is it even available here to any extent. Wrong region. And to add insult to injury, the instructions have you sprinkle cheese onto the tamal before serving! DiÃ s mÃ- o - cheese is only rarely used in YucatÃ;n (think of all that tropical heat) and it is NEVER used on tamales. I think it might be considered a punishable offense. Some more Yucatecan messes: First, there is no dish in YucatÃ;n called "YucatÃ;n-style quail in vinegar." If you wish to remain true to the regions of Mexico (as all the media hype promises, even Eva Langoria), then the author or editors should alert readers that this is an invention and not "authentic regional Mexican cuisine". Now let's follow some of the instructions: "When the charcoal is red, cover it with avocado leaves. Top with the quails and cook . . ." So, if I put the dried avocado leaves directly on the hot coals, won't they start to burn? Am I supposed to "top" the burning leaves with the quail? There is also considerable confusion about onions. Two are specified in the ingredient list: one is "large", one is just . . . regular, I guess; both are "thinly sliced." After preparing the marinade, we are instructed to "cover each bird with sliced onion." While the coals are pre-heating, we are told to cook the onions over medium-low heat. Which onions? The "large" one or the regular-sized one? Am I supposed to pick the onions off the quails that have marinated overnight and cook those in the skillet? Or should I leave them on the quails (secure with a toothpick?) before I "top" the burning leaves with the quails? (What indeed do I do with those darn onions??) Finally, the ingredient list specifies two kinds of vinegar, pineapple or apple cider (we use neither in YucatÃ;n with any frequency) and also sugar cane vinegar (which we do use) but the instructions make no mention of which to use, and when (there are two different times when you add vinegar). The description of YucatÃ;n's underground oven, known as a p'Ã-ib, given on page 30 is basic at best: "A large fire is lit above a hole lined with stones." How do you light a fire above a hole? And it erroneously states that "pibil" means "buried." It doesn't. "Pibil" is an adjective that describes foods that were cooked in a p'Ã-ib.

The Mayan word for "buried" is "muuk." On page 493, there is a recipe for Papadzules. The "REGION" listed is "Guanajuato." Oh, my! The people of Yucatán (and Guanajuato) will be quite surprised to read that! This is a classic dish of Yucatán, which even a simple "Google" search will reveal. Worse still, the author/editor has you purée some stewed tomatoes with squash seeds (referred to as "seeds" in the recipe) to create the sauce; this is definitely not the way it is done in Yucatán. Instead, a squash seed paste is mixed with a simple infusion of salted water and epazote. The tomato sauce is cooked separately and spooned on at the end. In short, there are two sauces for Papadzules: one green, the other red. This is what makes me suspect these recipes were copy/pasted by editors who know nothing about the cuisine. They read something about tomatoes in another recipe, couldn't figure out what to do with them, so included them in the squash seed sauce. Even the photo in the book is wrong. Again, "Google" photos of Papadzules and you will see those iconic two sauces: the main sauce, which is always a pale green color (the natural color of the squash seeds and to some extent, the epazote) and the bright red tomato sauce. No tomatoes are ever included in the squash seed sauce; instead, as you will see in your "Google" photo, the tomato sauce is spooned over the light green sauce. There is a single sauce in the photo in the book and it is a kind of salmony color (thanks to those incorrect tomatoes.) I have shown the photo in the book to almost a dozen of my Yucatecan friends, and with no coaching, they all have the same immediate reaction: they gasp and say "¿QUÉ!?" (What!!!?? expletive deleted). Just one brief glimpse of the photo leaves them incredulous as to what on earth the editors (cooks, food stylists) have done with Yucatecans' treasured Papadzules, which have a very distinctive appearance due to those red and green sauces. Yucatecans take this "adaptation" as a form of culinary heresy, since Papadzules are considered to be the hallmark of Maya cooking and are therefore taken very seriously. All of the other Yucatecan recipes I found were equally careless and wrong. (The author/editorial team specifies an ingredient called "black achiote paste" on page 398; good luck finding that in your ingredient searches, since there is no such thing. Achiote, also known as "annatto", is as red as blood!) Diana Kennedy and I have jointly gone through the book cover to cover and unearthed literally scores of such errors: sloppy instructions, editorial faux pas, and worse, an apparent ignorance of traditional regional Mexican dishes - or at least an inability to describe them and explain how to make them. Now for a "short list" of editorial messes and factual errors (the fact-checker must have missed work that day, too):

**INDEX:** The index is impossible to use. If you want to look up a state (such as Yucatán) you will only find a couple of entries, although there are many more recipes from Yucatán scattered throughout the book.

**REGIONS:** Each recipe has a bold title at the top saying REGION, and then a word like "Veracruz," "Colima" "Tamaulipas".



These are STATES, not regions. Readers are already confused about Mexico; please, Phaidon, don't add to the general confusion. (In a humorous aside, REGIONS in other parts of the book have unusual descriptors. Rather than states, on pages, 471, 472 and 491 it is listed as FALTA [no, folks, "FALTA" isn't a state or a region for that matter; it means "missing" in Spanish, so someone forgot to add it]. On page 544 it says "BUSCAR QUERETARO" ["buscar" means "look it up" so someone wasn't sure which state, forgot to check, then forgot to change the text!])

PAGE 15:- The author/editorial team list indigenous herbs, and cilantro is included in the list. Cilantro was introduced to the Americas sometime around 1580; it is not indigenous. (See William Dunmire.)

PAGE 19:- Stew is the "more rustic cousin of mole"? They are simply two different things. And many forms of mole existed before the convent elaborations of the 17th century. Mole was NOT invented in the 17th century. (Unless you believe the only mole in the world is mole poblano . . . )- "Huarachas"? I believe the more common spelling is "huaraches."

PAGE 23:- "In the 1960s, Mexico's tortillerÃ- as . . . started to use machines to roll out and cook tortillas." The first commercially successful one was invented in 1947 by Fausto Celorio and they were in use almost immediately thereafter (see Jeffrey Pilcher).

PAGE 25:- "The traditional cuisine of each region of the country is not just the ingredients, preparation methods and utensils, it is (sic) the rich legacy of its history and cultural identity." Unfortunately, the author makes no mention anywhere in the rest of the book about the cultural identity or history of the cuisine, in other words, no credit for the people who invented this cuisine. (And note the grammatical error of the missing "also". These kinds of editorial errors are common throughout the book.)

PAGE 30:- YucatÃjn was ". . . heavily influenced by the European ships that stopped by for fresh water."??? Oh, dear. European ships came to YucatÃjn for extensive trade in logwood, chicle, and a host of other valuable products. Campeche on the Gulf Coast of the YucatÃjn Peninsula was a major trade port for centuries; those ships hardly just "stopped by". While the Europeans aboard those ships may have also collected fresh water, that was not their primary reason for coming here, and the statement is a great oversimplification. Also, can a place actually be "influenced by ships", European or otherwise? More editorial carelessness.- Sorry, the habanero is no longer the world's hottest chile! That title was stolen about 2 decades ago. In 1994, the Red Savina claimed the title. It has almost 1,000,000 Scoville Heat Units while the measly habanero tops out at 350,000 or so. And since 2000, a new "world's hottest chile" is released every year or two.

PAGE 36:- Measurement inconsistency. Masa dough:  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup water = 4 fl. oz. For tortillas: 1 cup water = 9 fl. oz. In truth, in the Standard US system 1 cup = 8 fl. oz. And why for masa is it  $4\frac{1}{3}$  cups masa harina to  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup water, whereas for tortillas (which also employ masa) it is 5 cups masa harina to 1 cup water? That's not proportional. Also, I beg you to try

rolling dough made from masa harina using a rolling pin. Next to impossible. It has no gluten and is impossibly fragile. Stacking rolled ones between layers of waxed paper? They would stick terribly and tear apart when you try to dislodge them. Besides, raw tortillas are not made in quantities that way; each tortilla is formed into shape and immediately cooked on the comal. The cooking (even on just one side) firms them up so that you can flip them; without the cooking (even when made from proper nixtamalized maize masa) tortillas are terribly fragile.

PAGE 37:- Tortillas de harina (wheat flour tortillas). All regions? No, we do not eat them in Yucatán, and in all my journeys throughout Mexico I have never seen them except in the north. That is, unless you go to a "northern-themed" restaurant with arrachera and that sort of thing. And why is the baking powder "optional"? Is there something I should know? To use, or not to use? Wouldn't baking powder be considered a key ingredient, and not optional? It's rather like having a recipe for French baguettes and listing yeast as "optional." (The funny reader who compared the author to Julia Child obviously never read Child, who provides completely detailed explanations and reasons for every step and ingredient.)-

Gorditas, all regions? Again we do not have anything resembling gorditas here in Yucatán. The author tells how to cook them, slit them open and "keep them warm until serving" . . . but how do you serve them? Wherever gorditas are served throughout Mexico there are a zillion different fillings and ways of finishing gorditas - none of which is even mentioned here. This recipe simply produces a thick, hollow tortilla - not a gordita.

Dear readers, I could go on and on but alas, I'm tired (and you probably are, too)! Again, I blame a lot of this on Phaidon and their editors. Look, they already have "Mexico: The Cookbook

This is a gorgeous looking cookbook. I love Mexican food and neon colors, so I thought this cookbook and I were meant to be. However, after reading through multiple recipes, I'm torn on whether I will actually keep the book. Full disclosure: I have yet to cook any recipe from the book. Yes, you can think that invalidates my review. Hear me out though, I am writing this review to alert people to the style and editing issues. As mentioned in another review, there is no intro for recipes. It is the list of ingredients, region, prep/cook time, serving size, and directions. I understood this before purchasing, but I do wish there was at least a couple sentences introducing the recipe. That would greatly add to each recipe and the overall book.

Absolutely my main issue with the book is the editing/organization. I cannot begin to comprehend the poor editing and how this made it to publication with all the issues (not just 1 or 2...). For example: pages 550 and 611 are the SAME recipe (Corn cake with eggnog sauce). Except the recipe on page 611 is only titled Corn cake, but in the directions it tells you to make the eggnog sauce. Too bad it doesn't even list the ingredients for

the sauce, so you have to turn back to page 550, which is actually the correctly edited version of the cake. The Veracruz-style fish recipe on page 253 lists the ingredients and directions to make a spice infusion. However, it never tells you when to use it. Do you use it in the sauce or to marinate the fish? If so, when and how much? Under the "To serve:" ingredients olives are listed twice (1/2 cup olives vs. 12 pitted green olives, sliced). What does that mean? Do you need two separate types of olives. If so, is the first olive listed a black olive? In addition, it annoys me when the accompanying photo doesn't match the recipe; the recipe says to use red snapper fillets, yet the photo is a whole red snapper. I mean seriously come on now...That is just two examples of numerous editing mistakes I've seen: ingredients missing yet called for in directions, different ingredients in directions than listed in the ingredients list, missing directions altogether, etc. Also the organization is just weird. Why list two separate "Day of the Dead" bread recipes with 4 recipes between them. You should list them with one right after the other. That way a reader can easily compare and contrast the difference between the two recipes. So overall like I said, I don't know if I'll keep the cookbook. I am a very experienced cook but not with Mexican cuisine. Hence me buying the book. If you are very experienced with Mexican cuisine then this could still be a great cookbook for you. Overall the recipes look and sound fantastic. Part of me wants to just keep the book and fix the mistakes as I make the cook my way through it. It's just so frustrating to spend nearly \$30 on a cookbook for it to be so poorly edited and put together. Either information needs to be published online addressing all the errors or a second (fixed) edition should be published.

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