

## The Original Nachos are Texas Mexican

*The original Nacho is not a pile of chips slathered with stuff. It's a corn masa wafer carefully layered with longhorn cheese and pickled Jalapeños.*

HOUSTON, TEXAS, US, November 12, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The original nachos are Texas Mexican and were created by culinarian, Ignacio Anaya (nickname Nacho) in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, across the river from Eagle Pass, Texas. It is a thoughtful, beautifully balanced combination of just three ingredients: corn tortillas, longhorn cheese and pickled Jalapeños.

Anaya used the culinary technique known as layering of flavors. In this case he layered three complementary ingredients that, working together, result in complexity and the flavor pops. It's elegant simplicity.

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Nachos are the deconstructed, re-configured Mexican quesadilla.”

*Adán Medrano*

Next to the more commonly served mound of chips piled up high and slathered with emulsified cheese product, the difference could not be greater. So much so that the term “Nacho’s” for a stockpile of cheesy chips is a misnomer. That’s right: a name that is wrong or not proper or appropriate.



Nachos use the culinary layering technique for flavor that pops

There are many stories written by journalists who minimize or completely discount Mr. Anaya's culinary skill and imagination. Some food writers focus on a group of Anglo women who entered a restaurant needing a snack but arrived at a time when the restaurant chef was out. Caught in a pickle, the maître d, Mr. Anaya, took it upon himself to create an appetizer of corn tortillas, cheese and jalapeños. The story recounts that the ladies loved the new creation, concocted in a moment of necessity, and ends by giving thanks to a missing chef. In truth, the thanks go to Mr. Anaya.

According to Dr. Mario Montañó, food anthropologist, scholar and expert on Texas Mexican food, the creation of Nacho's by Mr. Anaya is best understood as one chapter in a long line of culinary creativity and invention by the Mexican American community of Texas. Dr. Montañó knew Mr. Anaya and interviewed also his son and friends. Montañó's research sheds light on the historical context and helps us understand what really happened in the story about Nacho's.

Ignacio Anaya was born in 1895 and passed away in 1975. He became an orphan when very young. Anaya recalls that "this woman who raised me used to feed me quesadillas." That delicious quesadilla taste, tortillas with melted cheese, was the memory and experience that eventually guided Anaya to concoct nachos, adding the jalapeño for an adult bite. Nachos are the deconstructed, re-configured Mexican quesadilla.

All chefs face necessity in the kitchen daily, and invention happens all the time. In this instance, it was Anaya's understanding of the Texas Mexican flavor profile that led him to this new and tasty combination. Of course the ladies loved it, what's not to like about a beautifully crispy corn wafer topped with melted Longhorn cheese and garnished with a thin slice of pickled Jalapeño for a briny, zesty finish.

According to Anaya, there were four ladies, and they'd been drinking when they asked him for a snack. When they commented on how tasty it was, they also asked, "what do you call them?" Anaya (Nacho) rightfully took credit for his creation and replied, "Nacho's Special!"

Today the apostrophe is gone, and largely too is the historical link and credit to Ignacio. "They've got them as far away as Chicago and Saudi Arabia," Anaya once exclaimed. He could've included London, Tokyo and Mumbai.

Anaya once told Bill Salter, a journalist, "It's too late to make the millions...maybe not millions, but a lot of money...I might once have made." Unaware of the importance of trademark and patents, Anaya did not trademark or patent nachos, even when a lawyer friend suggested it. "I thought it would be too much trouble, but of course, then I didn't know how popular they were going to become."

When he eventually decided to do so, he was unable to because as time had passed, the snack



Bean Nachos depend on a layer of well-cooked Pinto Beans

was fabulously famous, and the name was considered to have entered into the public domain. He continues, “the only man who’s making money on Nachos is the man who’s selling cheese and jalapeños.”

Enter Frank Liberto, grandson of an Italian immigrant family who settled in San Antonio. Seeing the great restaurant success of nachos, Frank wanted to mass produce it and sell it at sporting events, like hot dogs. So he found a way to twist it and transform it into a fast food. He made three changes. First, Instead of working with individual tortilla triangles, he just threw them into a pile. Then, instead of depending on heat to keep the cheese melted, he added emulsifiers and other chemicals to the cheese, that also promoted a longer shelf life. He called it “cheese sauce.” And finally, he used a pump to quickly smother the pile of chips, after which it’s just a matter of scattering jalapeno slices on top.

He started selling the chip piles in 1976 at a Texas Rangers baseball game in Arlington, Texas. They were an instant success! Today these chips with “nacho cheese” and sliced jalapeños are the favorite snack of many a sports fan. My preference is to call these inventive snacks “chips with cheese sauce” and keep the name, “Nachos,” for the little crisped wafers. However, I don’t think that will ever happen. I can’t ever imagine a Texas sports fan sauntering to the concession stand, shouting, “I’d like some corn chips with cheese sauce!”

Restaurants have taken the term nachos to new, sometimes odd, places like Sushi Nachos, Shrimp Nachos and, of course, “Everything but the kitchen sink” nachos. Thankfully, the classic Texas Mexican restaurants continue to serve the original nachos, while still exploring and devising new, delicious twists. My favorite is [the version that has a layer of beans](#), and these are commonly served at traditional Mexican American restaurants. That layer of properly cooked beans, absolutely delicious. The recipe for the original Nachos, along with its history, is in the cookbook, “Don’t Count The Tortillas: The Art of Texas Mexican Cooking.”

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