

Ricardo Jose Haddad Musi explores Lebanese Influence in Mexican Cuisine

Lebanese influence isn't just street food territory; it's also crashing the fine dining party.

SAN ANTONIO, TX, UNITED STATES, June 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The taco [al pastor](#), commonly eaten in Mexico, traces its roots back to the Lebanese migration of the early 1900s. By substituting achiote and using a corn tortilla, shawarma evolved into one of the notable combinations in Mexican gastronomy.

Lebanese entrepreneur [Ricardo Jose Haddad Musi](#) observes that this cross-cultural exchange has not only led to new versions of signature dishes but has also supported family-run restaurants that contribute to the broader national dining landscape.

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The al pastor taco—wolfed down by millions of Mexicans every single day—traces its roots back to the Lebanese migration.

The first Lebanese arrivals in Mexico came around the turn of the 20th century. As of 2023, census data record over 600,000 people of Lebanese descent across the country. Many engaged in trade and opened restaurants in cities such as Puebla and Mexico City. These kitchens introduced new ingredients and techniques, influencing subsequent developments in Mexican cooking.

Newcomers brought spices and methods—such as cumin and cinnamon—that, when combined with local chiles and corn, resulted in dishes reflecting both traditions.

According to Haddad Musi, this process of adaptation has contributed to a diverse food scene in which different cultural elements are combined to create innovative offerings.

How Lebanese Practices Shaped Mexican Dishes

One clear example is the transformation of shawarma into taco al pastor. Marinating meat with achiote and replacing pita with a corn tortilla produced a dish that has become widely recognized in Mexico. In Yucatán, the Lebanese kibbeh adapted into the local “kibi,” demonstrating how external influences can integrate into regional cuisine while remaining authentic to local tastes.

The restaurant sector has played a central role in disseminating these flavors. According to [INEGI](#), in 2023 the food and beverage preparation industry accounted for about 1.4% of national GDP. At the same time, ingredients like tahini and za’atar have become more available, reflecting growing interest in Middle Eastern cuisine among Mexican consumers.

Lebanese influence is not limited to casual or street food; it also appears in fine dining. Some chefs incorporate techniques or flavor profiles from Lebanese cooking, presenting dishes that blend local ingredients with methods from abroad. Ricardo Jose Haddad Musi suggests that these culinary combinations may continue to evolve and diversify Mexican cuisine.

Food festivals and events now often include dishes influenced by Lebanese traditions, giving wider audiences an opportunity to experience this fusion. By bringing together elements from both culinary heritages, such events reflect ongoing dialogue between cuisines.

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