

# Just what did that “dicho” mean?

By Patricia Juana Merrill Márquez

I meet with my blacksmith to make changes on a very complicated winding staircase that is being re-used. He takes one look at it and says “*Arqui ¡está de la tostada!*” Perhaps you hear this and think he is inviting me to have a bite to eat, since you know that tostadas are delicious. The literal translation is “Arqui (architect)...this is like the tostada.”

*Estar de la tostada* means to be messed up or beyond help. As we say in English, “It’s toast!” A tostada is a hardened tortilla, prepared either by toasting it on the griddle or in the oven or, more commonly, by deep frying. It is enjoyed with garnishes, of which the most common are refried beans, shredded lettuce, tomato, chicken or ham, cream and farmer’s cheese, and some sort of salsa or chiles. The expression is based on the rhyming of *chingada* and *tostada*. The common phrase, *estar de la chingada* (To be f...ed up) is, of course, too coarse for most circles. A tostada is rather messy and difficult to eat since the garnishes often fall off as one bites into the crisp tostada, sometimes putting one in a difficult position.

But what if you are beginning to catch a cold and your maid says to have a shot of mezcal, adding “*Ya sabe, Señora ¡para todo mal, mezcal!*”

The most famous of Mexican drinks is undoubtedly tequila from Jalisco, made from *agave tequilana*. With the popularity of mixed drinks, many non-Mexicans have come to identify margaritas as the Mexican drink, although most Mexicans do not drink them. Mezcal is a common, and less refined, liquor from certain classes of *maguey (agave)* that has given rise to the following saying:

*¡Para todo mal, mezcal; para todo bien también!* For everything wrong, mezcal; for everything right, also!

These expressions, “*dichos*,” give insight into Mexican culture, its playfulness, advice, warnings, jealousy, irony, criticism, joy and pain. Throw in some proverbs and *alburas* (double entendres), as well as *refranes* (rhymes), all related to food and eating, add historical facts, anecdotes, recipes, and illustrations, and you have *The Buen Provecho Book*.

Our Mexican culture makes reference to our food, since

for us our food is as colorful, delicious and spicy as our life itself. Mexican cuisine is about joy, about friends and *compadres*, and about festivities. We think of the baby chewing on boiled chicken feet because they massage his gums, the grandmother sipping on her *atolito* to warm up and soothe her tummy. On our birthdays we want *mole* and mariachi music; during Lent we want *capirotada*, bread pudding; on Independence Day, September 16, we want *chiles en nogada*: — meat-stuffed poblano chiles covered with a cream nut sauce and sprinkled with pomegranate seeds.

We’ve serenaded *Mamá* on Mother’s Day, and we pull out the tamales and atole to share with the musicians. It’s Day of the Dead and we place our dearly departed loved ones’ favorite foods on our altars. We have a hangover and menudo, a spicy broth with cow stomach for substance, is the cure.

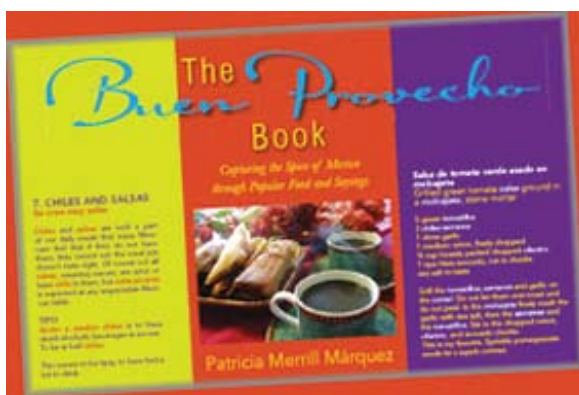
Oh, the power of food and feeding. When we Mexicans are angry and feeling under the power of someone, the immediate thought is *¿Y qué me da de comer?* So what does he feed me? It’s all about life. It’s all about tradition.

Perhaps the most commonly used phrase in Mexico in reference to food is *¡Buen provecho!* “May it

be good for your health! I hope you enjoy your meal and that it sits well with you.” It is good manners to say it. Not to give this greeting leaves diners embarrassed for eating in one’s presence, and for not sharing their food since there could be envy about the food. *¡Aguas!* To not give the greeting is tantamount to cursing someone or at the very least sending out bad vibes.

The *Buen Provecho Book* is about the psyche of the Mexicans, and about understanding that psyche a bit more through our food. What is presented comes from the voice of the people, and is offered as light reading for the purpose of amusement, as well as for learning.

*The Buen Provecho Book: Capturing the Spice of Mexico through Popular Food and Sayings* by Patricia Merrill Márquez will be presented by La Deriva bookstore at Fábrica La Aurora on Friday, August 27, at 5:30pm. Books cost \$750 pesos.



**Book Presentation**  
**The Buen Provecho Book**  
 Patricia Merrill  
 Fri, Aug 27, 5pm  
 La Deriva  
 Fábrica La Aurora

## Tostadas compuestas

Prepared tostadas, fried crisp tortillas. A whole crisp fried tortilla makes the bottom layer. Spread with refried beans, add shredded chicken, ham or other meat, and garnish with finely sliced lettuce, crumbled fresh farmer’s cheese, slices of tomato and onion, salsa or chiles jalapeños and fresh cream. There is a contrast of soft and crisp in this messy delight.



San Pablo - 46, Clavellinas - 275, Cuadrilla - 142, Emil. Zapata - 158, Estancia de San Antonio - 127, Flores de Begonia - 177, Galvanes - 186, Jalpa - 150, La Campana - 111, almita - 130, Palo Colorado - 253, Peñon de Los Baños - 98, Plan Juarez - 39, Pozo de Balderas - 172, Rancho Viejo - 180, S. Miguel Viejo - 64, San Cristobal -

Operating 25 Kitchens: Alcoer - 128, Centro Infantil Los Ricos - 60, Marroquin de Abajo - 60, P

alimentar al que tiene hambre  
**feed the hungry**  
 san miguel de allende

Every Peso Counts...

Your donations feed 4,000 children every school day!

[www.feedthehungrysma.org](http://www.feedthehungrysma.org) • [contact@feedthehungrysma.org](mailto:contact@feedthehungrysma.org) • 415-152-2402

Supplying 9 Charities: ALMA - 40, C/Crecimiento - 15, D. B. S. Julia - 44, D. B. Sollano - 30, H de L Angeles - 93, IREE - 20, Las Monjas - 41, Mexiquito - 43, San Antonio - 74



La Parrilla - 75, Las Cañas - 200, Loma de Cocha - 112, 103, San Francisco - 110, San Luis Rey - 135