

**Mexico
from
the Inside
Out**

Enrique Olvera

Mexico from the Inside Out

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Beyond Tradition

Enrique Olvera

I was twenty-four when I opened Pujol in Mexico City. With foreign references in mind, I began by emulating what I had observed while studying in New York. The developing New American Cuisine phenomenon in the United States led me to give “Contemporary Mexican Cuisine” a shot; however, it seemed like it was more from over there than here. It replicated what I had seen abroad but with local products and, although I was well received, I soon yearned for more.

I continued searching for references overseas. I believed that if we assimilated what Michelin-starred restaurants were doing, if we appealed to the codes used by internationally renowned chefs, we would be better and would manage to stand out. I was interested in being like them, like the greats. However, I managed to do the opposite. Despite my efforts, Pujol was empty. What did I have to do? First off, I decided to delve back inside.

I had to look at Mexico and really ask myself where people ate and what they were eating. I still remember how happy it made me to find such a logical and obvious answer: people ate on the streets and they never tired of it. Why? Because in Mexico it is delicious and irresistible.

I understood I had to set aside my naïve pretensions and tell my story through my dishes, feed people what I like to eat, connect guests with their cravings, and make my heritage the best starting point so as to finally present “Contemporary Mexican Cuisine.”

Jean Cocteau was right: “A bird sings best on his family tree.” By searching within, Pujol sang better.

Within the reinterpretation of popular Mexican recipes we found a fun, enriching, and successful path. We were excited with the idea of having our feelings and knowledge be of service to tradition with the desire to improve it, if we could. We set out to have a conversation with the past so we could mutually nourish each other.

Just because our grandmothers never changed the recipes they cooked didn’t mean we had to follow suit. We could make new things out of old ones; we could bring the best of the past to the present; introduce dishes that not only represented us but also our moment in time.

Our exploration and search led us to apply contemporary techniques and notions to classic recipes, aiming to get more out of them. Fearless and with little reverence, we recreated traditional formulas in our own way. With a mole de olla,

huarache de res, esquites, quesadillas, and a robalito al pastor we gained the acceptance and complicity of our diners through the exercise of continuous experimentation. We attempted to define the qualities in the recipes that we already knew through analysis, technique, and imagination. With simple gestures, we reached unexpected results.

In 2010, while reading *Coco*, a book where ten master chefs introduce us to the 100 best chefs of the future, new questions piqued my curiosity. While I reviewed a piece on Iñaki Aizpitarte, I read that the Chateaubriand chef dismissed the reinterpretation of classics because it was too shortsighted. And then it hit me. Our search had fallen short. If so, what should the next step be? It was clear that revamping grandmother’s recipes wasn’t enough. Instead of making them better, I had to make them my own. It was not just about updates, it was about progress. It was time to establish my own style.

To make something your own, you don’t have to tackle never-before-seen territories, or work with strange flavors, or obsess over creating futuristic techniques. To make an expression authentic, there’s nothing better than digging

into your own pile of references, experiences, and palatability, those that have left their mark and largely define you.

If a recipe is okay as is, then it’s best not to overcomplicate it; however, if a dish’s concept invites us to transcend the obvious, we enjoy letting go of the reins.

In any case, tradition is now one of our many starting points, and we use it above all as a gustatory reference. Our respect and appreciation for Mexico’s culinary legacy only grows deeper with time. We want to value and share it, not like a dogma, but rather like a wealth of knowledge and inspiration in motion.



Vegetable Mole

Mole de verduras

Yellow Mole

In a pan with the oil, sauté the chiles, corn, tomatoes, garlic, and onion. Add the salt and water and cook for 25 minutes, continuously stirring. Blend, strain, and adjust seasoning. Infuse with the whole epazote.

Eggplant

Place all the ingredients on a baking sheet and roast for 25 minutes at 180°C (356°F). Separate into 4 eggplant portions, fry in a pan with the oil, and reserve.

Fig Leaf Gourd

Cut the fig leaf gourd into eighths and grill on a griddle over medium heat.

Artichoke

Clean and shape the artichoke. Immerse it in the water with lime juice and vinegar for 15 minutes. Cut into eighths. Heat a pot with the oil and salt at 65°C (150°F) and cook the artichoke for 40 minutes at this temperature. Cool and reserve.

Brussels Sprout

Remove the top brussels sprout leaves and blanch in water with salt. Cool and dress with the lime juice and sea salt.

Jerusalem Artichoke Puree

Place all the ingredients in a pot and cook until the artichoke is tender. Blend, strain, and adjust seasoning. Pour into pastry bag or pump bottle.

Plating

On the plate, place 3 tbsp of yellow mole. On top of it, place a piece of eggplant, followed by the fig leaf gourd, artichoke, and 1 brussels sprout leaf. Distribute some alfalfa leaves, guaje seeds, cilantro sprouts, chili powder and salt. finish the plate with 3 small balls of Jerusalem Artichoke Puree in the shape of a triangle.

SERVES 4

Yellow Mole

3 tbsp pumpkin seed oil
7 guajillo chiles, seeded
3 puya chiles, seeded
1 Kg fresh corn kernels
2 heirloom tomatoes
2 large Creole garlic cloves
1/2 white onion
1 tbsp fine salt
3 cups purified water
15 g purple epazote

Eggplant

1 small eggplant
5 guava leaves
5 avocado leaves
2 purple Creole garlic cloves
1 white onion, cut into fourths
1 tbsp sea salt
2 tsp corn oil
2 tsp pumpkin seed oil

Fig Leaf Gourd

1 fig leaf gourd, tender

Artichoke

1 tender artichoke
1/2 cup white vinegar
2 tbsp lime juice
1 cup purified water
1 cup olive oil
1 tbsp sea salt

Brussels Sprout

1 brussels sprout
1 cup purified water
1 tbsp fine salt
1 lime, with seeds
1 tbsp sea salt

Jerusalem Artichoke Puree

1 cup Jerusalem artichokes, peeled and diced into small cubes
150 ml heavy cream
1 tbsp fine salt

Plating

20 tender alfalfa leaves
12 guaje seeds
20 cilantro criollo sprouts
1 tsp chili powder
1 tbsp fleur de sel



Baby Corn with Chicatana Ant, Coffee, and Costeño Chile Mayonnaise

Elotitos con mayonesa de hormiga chicatana, café y chile costeño

Baby Corn

Place the ears of corn on a griddle over medium heat until the husks are burned. Remove from the heat and peel off the husks, making sure to save the last layer to use to tie around the lower part of the ears of corn. Thread each ear of corn onto each skewer.

Costeño Chile Powder

Roast the chiles, cool at room temperature, deseed, and grind.

Chicatana Ant, Coffee, and Costeño Chile Mayonnaise

In a pan, toast the ants, let cool, and grind. In a bowl, whisk together the egg yolk and mustard. Add the salt and slowly drizzle in the oils while continuously whisking. Add the lime juice and continue whisking until it becomes a smooth emulsion. Mix in the coffee, ant powder, and chile powder, and adjust seasoning to taste.

Plating

Fill the dried hollowed gourd with the corn husks. Heat the ears of corn and immerse in the mayonnaise. Place each ear inside the hollowed gourd and fill a smoking gun with corn husks. Smoke the inside of the hollowed gourd and cover.

SERVES 4

Baby Corn

4 ears of baby corn with husks
4 15 cm bamboo skewers

Costeño Chile Powder

3 dried Costeño chiles

Chicatana Ant, Coffee, and Costeño Chile Mayonnaise

1/4 cup chicatana ants, clean
1 egg yolk
1 tsp fine salt
1 cup safflower oil
30 ml grapeseed oil
1 tbsp lime juice
2 tbsp espresso coffee
1 tbsp Costeño Chile Powder

Plating

1 lek (round dried hollowed gourd)
Corn husks

Burrata in Green Salsa with Quelites

Burrata en salsa verde con quelites

Herbs

Wash all of the herbs well, choose the leaves, and throw away the thick sprigs. Mix the clean herbs and reserve.

Green Salsa

Slowly cook the garlic in olive oil over very low heat until they turn a light brown. Grill the tomatillos, onion, serrano pepper in a pan. Blend all the ingredients with the cilantro and season.

Burrata

Remove the burratas from the refrigerator. Temper for 1/4 hour before consuming.

Plating

In a bowl, mix the herbs and onion, dress with the olive oil, lime juice, and salt. In a deep dish, serve 3 tbsp of Green Salsa, place the burrata over it, and finish with the herbs.

SERVES 4

Herbs

2 cups quelites
1 cup cilantro criollo
1 cup dandelion leaves
1 cup watercress sprouts

Green Salsa

4 garlic clove
1/4 cup olive oil
500 g tomatillo, peeled
40 g white onion
58 g serrano pepper
1 sprig cilantro
1 tbsp fine salt

Burrata

4 balls burrata (120 g each)

Plating

1/4 white onion, julienned
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
4 limes
1 tbsp fine salt



Corn Husk Meringue and Corn Mousse

Merengue de totomoxtle y mousse de maíz

Corn Husk Meringue

On a sheet pan, place the corn husk leaves and cook in oven at 230°C (446°F) until browned. Let cool and grind until obtaining a fine powder. Strain and reserve. In a mixer, add the egg whites and whisk until obtaining soft peaks. Add the sugar in 3 parts and continue whisking until reaching medium peaks. Add the corn husk powder, whisk until all is well mixed, and place the mixture in a pastry bag with a medium smooth nozzle. Make meringues with 8 cm diameters in a sheet pan with a silicone cover and let dry at room temperature in a dry place for 2 hours. Bake at 90°C (194°F) for 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

Cream of Corn

Sauté the corn kernel in a pan with the milk. Add the cream, sugar, and salt. Cook until soft. Blend until it reaches a puree consistency, strain, and reserve.

Corn Mousse

Whisk the cream until reaching medium peaks. Stir the Cream of Corn and mascarpone cheese. Slowly mix in the whipped cream and reserve.

Plating

On a plate, place a large ball of Corn Mousse and add the meringue on top.

SERVES 4

Corn Husk Meringue

3 egg whites, at room temperature
180 g refined sugar
15 g corn husk powder

Cream of Corn

200 g corn kernels
180 g thick cream
10 g refined sugar
5 g fine salt

Corn Mousse

25 g whipping cream
100 g Cream of Corn
50 g mascarpone cheese



The debut English-language cookbook from one of the world's best chefs, Enrique Olvera, pioneer of contemporary Mexican food

Enrique Olvera is the most famous and celebrated Mexican chef today. His restaurant Pujol was ranked #1 in Mexico and #20 in the world at the World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards. This is the first high-end chef cookbook in English on Mexican cuisine. It captures and presents a new and contemporary Mexican style of food, rooted in tradition but forward-thinking in its modern approach. This book goes beyond stereotypes to reveal new possibilities of Mexican cuisine, which is now an essential part of the international conversation about gastronomy.

Olvera has pioneered and defined this new way of cooking and belongs to a global group of gourmet influencers that includes Noma's Rene Redzepi, Dom's Alex Attala, Osteria Francescana's Massimo Bottura and elBulli's legendary Ferran Adria. His book is the latest addition to Phaidon's bestselling and influential collection of cookbooks by the world's most exciting chefs.

Mexico from the Inside Out will be published on the 15th anniversary of Olvera's internationally celebrated restaurant Pujol. He has newly landed in New York City with his more casual, but sophisticated restaurant Cosme. Within its first few months, Cosme has received a three-star review in the New York Times and many accolades, plus nonstop media attention.

In Mexico from the Inside Out, Olvera delves into Mexican cuisine—"from the inside out." Twenty-five of the sixty-five recipes in the book will feature smaller tipped-in pages to give him the opportunity share his creative mind in the kitchen with readers, to explain his philosophy, vision, and process. 185 photos—atmospheric, process, and finished food—complete the book.

ENRIQUE OLVERA graduated from The Culinary Institute of America in 1999. In 2000, at the age of 24, he opened Pujol in Mexico City. Food & Wine named him one of the "10 Next Chef Superstars" and Star Chef's Congress named him in the "Top 10 International Figures in World Gastronomy." He also owns three outposts of Eno, a casual eatery in Mexico City; Maiz de Mar in Playa del Carmen; and Cosme in New York. He is the founder and force behind Mesamerica, the annual international food symposium. He also publishes Boomerang, a Spanish-language culinary magazine. Olvera lives in Mexico City and New York.



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