

IN PRAISE OF TAMALES

Texans love tacos – we’ve grown to think of them as an American food. But there’s another delicious dish with Mexican roots that deserves a place at the table.



By Joy Diaz | November 23, 2017 11:00 am

Did you know that salsa overtook ketchup as the nation’s most popular condiment, and that it happened more than 20 years ago? That was just the start. Tortillas now outsell hamburger and hot dog buns. An AP report says most Americans think of tacos simply as American food.

Texas Standard’s Joy Diaz asked Austin-based Mexican Consul General [Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez](#) whether he was surprised to see how much tacos have taken over on this side of the border.

“I was incredibly amazed and excited because – we call it *pueblo mui taquero* – taco town,” Gonzalez Gutierrez says. “You find tacos everywhere,

and you find new interpretations and new readings about the traditional way of eating Mexican food through tacos here in Texas.”

Could the same happen for tamales? Gonzalez Gutierrez isn’t sure.

“You have several problems there,” he says. “One, every region in Mexico has its own interpretation of tamales... Secondly, tamales are pretty difficult.”

Gonzalez Gutierrez says it takes a lot of artisanal skill to make tamales, along with top-quality corn.

Tamales offer at least two portability advantages over tacos, though. You can freeze them, and they can be handled without fear of spilling their insides on your clothes.

Tamales, unlike tacos, are also special occasion food.

“In Mexico, very rarely do you say ‘I’m going to celebrate your birthday with tacos,’” Gonzalez Gutierrez says.

Diaz offers another reason why tamales should have a more prominent place in Texas and it goes back to the difficulty of preparing them – assembling and eating tamales is usually a community effort. Gonzalez Gutierrez agrees.

“It’s part of a cultural tradition, a cultural way of sharing time and sharing interest,” he says. “Every birthday in my home, there was tamales. Always there was tamales.”

Written by Shelly Brisbin.