



# FOOD- ON APPETITES, DIETS, AND RITUALS

## EPISODE 8

## POPULAR CULTURE IN THE AMERICAS

Latino food is now considered the third most popular food in the U.S. after American and Italian, with 15% of main meal items featured on menus being Mexican-inspired. CHD Expert, the Chicago-based foodservice database and analytics firm, reported on the Mexican Restaurant Industry Landscape that Mexican food is heavily consumed by Americans and is among the top three menu items in the USA.



### Mexican influenced regional cuisine



Latin America's cultural diversity is reflected in the gastronomy that includes ingredients from the coast, highland and jungle areas.

- Corn, potatoes, and manioc (cassava) staple foods found throughout South America.
- African cooks introduced bananas, yams, coconuts, and dendê oil into Brazilian cuisine
- Food plays an important part in Identity, this is true, but it helps to understand how people label themselves and see their own identities as being.

"[w]e eat the foods we choose for a variety of reasons, including the accident of where we are born and how foods come to have the social meanings they do within the specific culture we inhabit. Often our identities through food remain after migration for two or sometimes three generations, and often we our identities as constructed through food are in opposition to other groups' foodways. Always, these choices are meaningful, and they are never obvious or sole set of choices that can be made."-Professor Susan. D. Blum

**Did You Know?**



- Foods from Latinx/Caribbean/Latin American cultures are the historical product of encounters between peoples from many lands. Some of these meetings took place in the distant past.
- EXAMPLE-Spanish settlers and missionaries exchanged foodstuffs and recipes with Native women in New Mexico and Florida decades before the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving at Plymouth.
- Other encounters have been more recent, as with the arrival of Afro-Caribbean and Chinese-Cuban migrants to New York City, who imparted Latino influences to the "soul food" of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s.