

Newsletter – November 2005
MARCELA’S LIST OF 10

In keeping with our little structure of TENS, and to celebrate one of Marcela’s challenges – to learn how to cook (Warning: Stereotype, stereotype! Back away from your computer) because all Latinas are great cooks and enjoy spending hours in the kitchen, I will list my ten favorite Thanksgiving dishes.

1. Turkey of course.

A friend told me once that you get the juiciest, most tender turkey by placing it in a paper bag like the ones you get in the grocery store. Well, I’ve been doing this for years and it’s true, the turkey comes out tender and has a beautiful golden color. Then last year, I’m cooking a turkey and playing with my kids. All of a sudden, the smoke alarms go off and I realize my house is filled with smoke. My then five year old son is running around yelling fire, fire and telling me, “I told you so” because he didn’t believe we could put a paper bag in the oven and that it wouldn’t burn. I’m not sure what went wrong, but this proves that not all Latinas can cook – at least not traditional American dishes.

2. Cranberry bread.

My mother-in-law makes the best cranberry bread in the world. I love visiting her house for Thanksgiving and eating slices of this heavenly cranberry bread (and she doesn’t burn the turkey either).

3. Stuffing.

Okay, this I can cook. I got a recipe from a Better Homes and Garden magazine back in my early 20’s when I first got married and was willing to experiment with different stuffings. I have modified it through the years and it’s great. It has apples, and cranberries, and raisins and cinnamon. It’s sweet and totally delicious. If anyone wants the recipe, email me and I’ll gladly send it to you.

4. Squash.

Okay, again my mother-in-law makes this and it’s the best squash in the world. She credits it with the fact that the squashes come from a family garden in Maine, which I’m sure make them better than the old squashes sitting in the grocery stores, but I think it’s the way she prepares them that makes them so good.

5. Fruit salad.

I’m not sure if the pilgrims ate fruit salad – probably not. But Argentines love fruit. My mother always had fruit salad for big get-togethers, and Thanksgiving was no exception. This was just fruit marinated in it’s natural juices. It’s refreshing and light. I still love this.

6. Pumpkin pie.

I could eat an entire pumpkin pie by myself. No joke. I’d take this even over chocolate! Thanksgiving wouldn’t be Thanksgiving without pumpkin pies.

7. Rolls with butter

I've recently given up butter. I like to torture myself. I gave up coffee for three years too and for an Argentine who was served coffee for breakfast as a child by my grandmother, that was hard. Butter has been difficult too. BUT, for Thanksgiving I will eat my rolls with butter.

8. Flan with Dulce de Leche.

Again, not American, but you have not lived if you have not tasted my mother's flan. Someday, I will learn how to make it!

9. Gravy!

Yum. I'm realizing as I'm writing this article that I should have had my mother and mother-in-law write it instead, because they are the experts. I'm not sure what my mother-in-law does to make her gravy so rich and delicious, but it's amazing. You don't even need potatoes, you can just drink the gravy.

10. Cranberry sauce.

I'm not sure what's up with this. We don't make cranberry sauce. We take this jelly stuff out of a can and eat it. Argentines eat jelly (preserves actually, not jelly) on toast, not on poultry. But when in Rome . . . or in this case, in America . . .

I want to wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving with your family. I know that what I love most about Thanksgiving isn't the food (though it's a close second) but the fact that I'm able to get together with family. All the kids are together in one place for maybe the first time all year and they run and play until they are sweaty and dirty and ready to collapse, while my husband and I are able to talk and laugh with our brothers and sisters and mothers. On our drive home, we always reflect on how extremely lucky we are to have such an awesome family with so many beautiful, healthy kids and siblings. And we are thankful.

Thank YOU all for your support as readers! I'm wildly grateful to have you in my life. God Bless!

CONTEST

The winner for the October contest is Susan Lathen.

Congratulations! She has won a \$10 Blockbuster gift card!

If you didn't win this month, I encourage you to enter the November contest. You have the chance to win a wonderful coffee table size book called Salsa Cooking by Marjie Lambert. Not only does this book offer mouthwatering salsa recipes, but also lots of other delicious Mexican dishes you can try. Yum. Now I feel like eating Mexican food.

I'll share one of the author's more interesting Salsas:

Cucumber Salsa

Ingredients:

1 small or ½ large cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
2 large tomatoes, broiled and chopped
3 jalapeno chilies, seeded and chopped
1/3 cup chopped radishes
1/2 cup chopped green onion
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 to 3 tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 to 3 tbsp vegetable oil
Salt to taste

Method:

Combine all the ingredients except the salt. Let sit for about 15 minutes, then add salt to taste, and adjust the consistency by adding more lemon juice and oil of necessary.

WEBSITE UPDATES

Reviews for BECOMING LATINA have started coming in! Check them out. You can also now find the link to my NEW blog.

BECOMING LATINA IN TEN EASY STEPS

What sparked my interest in writing BECOMING LATINA IN 10 EASY STEPS were my early experiences in publishing. I didn't particularly start out writing romances with Latino characters, but when a publishing house decided to release a line of books called Encanto, with only Latino characters, I thought, "great, something I know a lot about" and fired off a query letter with an idea that they bought and CONQUEST was born and published.

But many reviews and comments about the Encanto books stated that the books were good but not Latino enough. A curious comment that first made me laugh, then made me question what the American reading audience expected from books featuring Latinos. As a group, we aren't "that" different from Americans of European descent, and I though I wanted to give my books a Latin flavor, I didn't want to write a bunch of stereotypes. And secondly, Latino is a term that has been created to encompass ALL Spanish speaking countries from South America, Central America, Mexico, and Spain! How in the world were we as authors supposed to represent such diverse people? On the one hand we are similar enough to other Americans that there isn't anything special to say; and on the other hand we are distinctly different from each other and therefore impossible to generalize about. Not surprising that Encanto failed.

However, I held on to the dilemma, wanting to continue to write about Latino characters, but with themes and issues that everyone could relate to. I'm convinced that my problems, insecurities, challenges are very similar to what other people of every nationality experience with only slight differences.

In *BECOMING LATINA IN 10 EASY STEPS*, I took all these ideas and questions and wrote about an average Latina in her late 20's who is very content just being herself and following her dream career. Only the pressure from her family not to lose her roots, sends her on this quest to "become" more Latina. She makes a list of clichés of what a Latino is supposed to be, and decides to tackle the list the way she does her job. My hope is that people will see how ridiculous most stereotypes are and how it is impossible to become anything except what you truly are in your heart.

As I promised last month, I have started a blog at lararios.blogspot.com where I will repost this piece on stereotypes. You will be able to comment and post your thoughts on various topics. I will try to post something two or three times a week and when I don't have anything original to say, I'll have either author interviews, book reviews, or I'll invite other authors to visit. That way you're not hearing just from me. I hope you'll visit and participate in the discussions!