
ANCESTRAL RECIPES AND
EVERYDAY CLASSICS USING
TRADITIONAL POTTERY AND
SPICES FOR LEAD-FREE CUISINE



PURE EARTH'S KITCHEN

A Mexican and Indian gastronomic collaboration

CHEF GRACIELA MONTAÑO

with contributions from

CHEFS MÓNICA PATIÑO, PARVINDER SINGH BALI, TJ STEELE, AND MORE



CHEF AMBASSADOR

Graciela Montaño



A Mexican chef and sommelier, Graciela Montaño is the founder and owner of **Aura Cocina Mexicana**, a cooking studio in Mexico City that offers classes on the history and preparation of traditional Mexican dishes. Since 2013, Graciela has hosted *Tu Cocina*, a cooking program broadcasted by Canal Once. She is a graduate of Colegio Superior de Gastronomía and Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia where she studied the Program Cocina y Cultura Alimentaria en México. She specializes in the history of traditional Mexican gastronomy.



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Founded in 1999, Pure Earth partners with governments, communities and industry leaders in low- and middle-income countries to identify and implement solutions to stop toxic exposures, protect health, and restore environments. Pure Earth prioritizes actions that protect the developing brains and bodies of children and pregnant women living in toxic hot spots. Pure Earth believes that all people, especially children, should be able to live healthy lives and reach their full potential, free from exposure to toxic pollution.



Pure Earth's Kitchen is a cookbook of Mexican and Indian cuisine with 50 recipes that call for lead-free clay and spices. Contributors to this book spanned thirteen chefs, two cooks, one turmeric producer, and seven potters from Pure Earth's **Circle of Women** project. They come from countries as diverse as Mexico, India, France, USA, Singapore, and Germany.

Above all, this cookbook highlights the rich materials given to us by the natural world—clay in Mexico and spices in India—to honor heritage and make healthy, delicious food. It also invites us to join the global movement to stop lead pollution and poisoning. We hope that you enjoy this global effort to preserve tradition and create a healthier world.



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A LETTER FROM

Chef Graciela Montaña

I believe that passion comes from a place rooted deep within. Some express it through art, others through words. In my case, I am grateful to translate my passion for Mexican cuisine through my cooking. Mexican cuisine has always lived in my heart. There is something magnetic about its uniqueness and its extraordinary history that never ceases to amaze me. Mexican gastronomy is filled with stories, aromas, fusions, and last, but never least, profound tradition.

FAMILIES THAT COOK AND EAT TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER.

Whenever I think of Mexican food, a clear image comes to mind: people coming together to cook and share a variety of dishes, each filled with flavor and love. I would like to invite you into my thoughts. Let's picture a family gathering. The table is set, adorned with delicious dishes— guacamole, rice, tacos, and mole, each held in a beautiful clay pot. It is natural for me to imagine this scene, because that's how I grew up, surrounded by the aromas of Mexico.

I live by the philosophy that you should prepare food "from soil to plate," which is why I always use clay in my kitchen. Every clay piece comes from the soil. It is thanks to a talented potter that this soil is transformed into a functional and beautiful object, not just something to use at home, but a unique piece with a soul of its own, imbued with the emotions of its creator. This explains why, when it comes to clay, no piece is identical. Each one was created by a different person, in a particular moment of their life. Each one tells a unique story.

CLAY-DELICATE, YET STRONG

From the outside, a clay pot looks delicate, but it is actually powerful and strong. True, clay can be easily broken, but that doesn't mean it's fragile. If it were, how could it stay whole during the firing process, or last long enough for so many families to pass their clay pieces from generation to generation?

MEXICO AND INDIA

The special connection we have with clay, or barro as we call it in Mexico, is a gift from our ancestors. Being close to the past allows us to reinforce our identity. Mexico is not the only country to take pride in its rich culinary heritage. India also is known for its deep-rooted cuisine. India's diverse gastronomy has a lot in common with ours, from the spicy flavors to the pungent aromas. Like in Mexico, clay is a quintessential part of the Indian kitchen. Our ingredients may vary, but the way we use and transform them into special dishes brings us together.

In the same way that clay pieces are a sacred part of Mexican cuisine, turmeric is a sacred ingredient in South Asia. Turmeric means yellow in Bengali and is known as the "Golden Spice of India." Every time I see this root, I am moved by its brilliance and beauty. It has an earthy, peppery flavor, unlike anything else. But turmeric isn't only about food. For thousands of years, people have used it in religious ceremonies and as a cure for ailments. When I heard about the culinary, spiritual, and medicinal importance of turmeric, I knew it was a tradition every bit as rich as clay in Mexico.

PURE EARTH AND BARRO APROBADO

The day I learned about Pure Earth's Barro Aprobado project in Mexico and the effects of lead, especially on pregnant women and children, time stopped. "In Mexico, 1 in 5 people are poisoned by the pottery they use daily at home and in restaurants; children exposed to lead have at least 5 IQ points less; the damage is irreversible." The list went on and on. But returning later to my grandma's kitchen, I realized I couldn't imagine our culinary traditions without clay. So, when Karissa from the Pure Earth Mexico team offered me the honor of being Chef Ambassador for the project, I didn't hesitate to accept. I was eager to learn more and do more.

I had the opportunity to visit Pure Earth headquarters in New York. Meeting and cooking with the team was such a wonderful experience, the perfect time for us to brainstorm ways to bring worldwide attention to the issue. Speaking with Pure Earth's Carol Sumkin and Angela Bernhardt, we realized that creating a cookbook would be the perfect way to promote the beauty of our traditions and the importance of preserving them safely.

Because the biggest problems with lead and cookware come from Mexico and India, we decided to create this cross-continental collaboration between two countries that share a love for cooking and gathering around the table. I am grateful for the trust and confidence this project placed in me. If because of this book one family stops using lead clay utensils, or starts using lead-free turmeric, the effort will be worth it. My wish is that this cookbook be the starting point to many more opportunities to keep our kitchens and traditions lead-free.

THANK YOU

A very special thank you to Yanet García for being such a wonderful and easy-going coordinator. Yanet's professionalism was truly inspiring. Thank you to the Pure Earth team and the Barro Aprobado team in Mexico for all their support and leadership.

Thank you to all chefs and artisans who have contributed to this book. Your generosity moved us in a very special way. Special thanks to all Indian chefs and friends, such as Keshav Aggarwal, who believed in the project and shared their talent with us. Trying to coordinate a cookbook with an eleven hour time difference wasn't easy.

COOK WITH YOUR HEART

As you read the pages in this book, you will discover different recipes from chefs, artisans, and producers that use clay and turmeric. Every time you try one of these recipes at home, I invite you to always cook with your heart. I can assure you the love you put into the meal will be shared with anyone who has the pleasure of trying it. Always remember that every clay pot, every spice, every flavor, and every ingredient, has a story waiting to be shared.

All our love from Pure Earth's Kitchen.

GRACIELA MONTAÑO

PURE EARTH CHEF AMBASSADOR
BARRO APROBADO CHEF AMBASSADOR

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
MARCH, 2022



MEXICO
MOUNTAINS IN MAZATLÁN, OAXACA, MEXICO



A LETTER FROM CAROL SUMKIN ON PURE EARTH'S GLOBAL LEAD PROGRAM

At Pure Earth we believe the global pollution crisis can be solved. Our global team of pollution experts have been proving this daily for two decades. We now are focusing our efforts on lead pollution and lead poisoning, and this cookbook is an innovative way to draw attention to the widespread exposure of lead from cookware and spices. Exposure to lead affects a child's physical and cognitive development, and is associated with reduced intelligence, behavioral disorders, and lower educational achievement. Nearly 800 million children—or 1 in 3 worldwide—are lead poisoned. And lead is a silent killer. In 2019, at least 900,000 premature deaths globally were attributable to lead.

In Mexico, lead-based pottery glaze on cookware and serving dishes is a significant source of lead exposure for both children and adults. Spices, such as turmeric, are also often adulterated with lead chromate to enhance their color and weight in many countries, including India. In India alone, it is estimated that 275 million children have elevated blood lead levels.

While these disturbing figures are daunting, Pure Earth has replicable, concrete solutions to address this crisis. In Mexico, for instance, Pure Earth's Barro Aprobado project is working to raise awareness about the dangers of lead, and to promote the use and production of lead-free pottery in artisan communities in Mexico through workshops and programs, such as the **Círculo de Mujeres** or **Circle of Women** project, which you will learn more about.

Pure Earth is a global leader in reducing children's exposures to lead. By assessing thousands of contaminated sites, publishing groundbreaking research, and demonstrating solutions that have impacted more than 1 million people, Pure Earth has increased the awareness of the issue and elevated it as a global priority. In 2020, Pure Earth, Clarios Foundation and UNICEF announced the Protecting Every Child's Potential (PECP) initiative, which is raising awareness of the dangers of lead exposure on children's health and mobilizing action to abolish dangerous practices that result in lead poisoning.

Through PECP, we are engaging a diverse range of partners and advocates. When we began educating chefs, like Graciela, about toxic cookware and contaminated spices, they quickly became passionate ambassadors and wanted to help us raise awareness and scale up our solutions.

We are deeply grateful for Chef Graciela's vision and dedication to create the first edition of *Pure Earth's Kitchen* and the talented chefs who contributed these special recipes. My hope is that you will enjoy these beautiful stories and recipes as much as I do, and learn about how to protect your family and families around the world from lead poisoning.

CAROL SUMKIN

VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT
PURE EARTH

NEW YORK, NY
MARCH, 2022



A FIVE-STEP GUIDE TO KEEPING A LEAD-FREE KITCHEN FROM DR. JACK CARAVANOS

I'm Dr. Jack Caravanos, Clinical Professor of Environmental Public Health Sciences at NYU and Director of Research at Pure Earth. Since 2005, I've worked with Pure Earth to reduce exposure to lead and other heavy metals. After visiting over 20 countries and witnessing countless sources of lead exposure, from car battery recycling plants to ceramics, one thing has become clear: the kitchen is one of the main places where communities, especially pregnant women and children, are exposed.

There are many ways lead finds its way into our kitchens and food. Lead dust from paint, mines, and smelters can coat vegetables and seep into garden soil. Children who play in these environments and don't wash their hands may ingest lead when they eat. Spices are particularly dangerous, especially turmeric and saffron. In addition to being grown in unsafe environments, lead may leach into spices during the grinding phase and sometimes is even added intentionally to enhance color and weight.

Last, but certainly not least, lead may find its way to our kitchens in aluminum cookware and pottery. Many potters in Asia and Latin America use lead to create a ceramic glaze. While the glaze leaves a glossy, appealing finish, it poses a big risk to consumers, particularly when used with acidic foods like lime and tomato juice.

The good news is there are many evidence-based ways you can protect yourself and others. Here is a five-step guide to keeping a lead-free kitchen...

1 AVOID PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN LEAD

- Purchase lead-free pottery, pots, and pans.
- Reduce your use of spices or ingredients that have been contaminated with lead. Consumer Reports has a helpful online list of the heavy metal content of 126 spices from popular brands.
- Use products that have been certified free of chemicals and contaminants of concern by the Clean Label Project.

2 KEEP A CLEAN KITCHEN AND HOME

- Wash your hands frequently, especially before preparing meals and bedtime.
- Wash locally grown fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Make sure children wash their hands and faces after playing in potentially contaminated areas.
- Grow and dry your own spices in soil that is safe from lead and other heavy metals.
- Use a 3M LeadCheck Swab or similar test to test your home for lead. These tests are relatively inexpensive and work in under a minute on most surfaces.
- If you find lead in your home, decrease dust by mopping floors and wiping down window sills. void dust-producing construction projects without proper safety protocols and protection.

3 MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET

While a healthy diet can't negate lead exposure, it can reduce your body's absorption. Here are the vitamins and minerals that help:

- **Iron**—eggs, legumes, seeds, red meat
- **Vitamin C**—citrus fruits, bell peppers, tomatoes
- **Calcium**—green beans, yogurt, cheese, leafy greens

4 GET TESTED

Worried that you or your children have been exposed? Getting a blood lead level test can prevent lead poisoning. While there is no safe amount of lead in blood, levels over 3.5 µg/dL means you've been exposed to an environmental source and should consult a professional to find and eliminate it. At levels of about 10 µg/dL, some medical intervention may be advisable. Please note, there's nothing a medical professional can do below 10 µg/dL. For severe cases of over 40 µg/dL, chelation therapy may be recommended.

Here are examples of who should be tested:

- Adults at risk for lead exposure from work, hobbies, or use of lead-containing products
- Pregnant women during their first prenatal visit.
- Children under six, preferably every twelve to fifteen months.
- Children in high-risk areas every six months.
- Tenants who believe their rental homes may contain lead. Find your city's tenants' rights guide, which explains your rights and how to request a lead hazard inspection.

5 JOIN THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO STOP LEAD EXPOSURE

You can be part of the growing movement to end lead poisoning. Here are a few resources to get you started:

- Sign the Consumer Reports petition calling on the FDA to set stricter limits on heavy metals in foods.
- Support artisans in Mexico producing lead-free pottery through Pure Earth's Barro Aprobado program.
- Share this cookbook and other educational materials with friends and family.
- Join Pure Earth's email list and follow Pure Earth on social media to keep up to date.

Coliflor con Requesón Fresco y Salsa de Molcajete (Grilled Cauliflower with Molcajete Salsa)

BY MÓNICA PATIÑO

TIME: 1 HOUR  TOTAL YIELD: 4 SERVINGS  TYPE OF RECIPE: STARTER/SIDE

Gluten-free, vegetarian alternatives available

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small cauliflower (1¼ lb) (600 g)
- ½ lb ricotta cheese (250 g)
- 4-5 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil (60 ml)
- 1 Tbsp zaatar (a mix of herbs, salt, and spices, such as oregano, marjoram, thyme, roasted sesame seeds, black pepper, and cumin)
- 1 lemon
- 1 loaf of rustic bread or corn tostadas
- 1 Tbsp sea salt
- 4 c water (1 lt)

MOLCAJETE SAUCE

- 1 garlic clove peeled
- 1 piece ginger peeled (3 cm or 1 in)
- 2-3 fresh green serrano chilies
- 2-3 ripe red tomatoes (½ lb) (250 g)
- 1 tsp sea salt

UTENSILS

- 1 lead-free clay pot with a lid
- 1 lead-free clay comal or flat griddle pan

Two techniques are used to cook this dish: steaming, which allows the vegetables to cook and preserve their inherent flavors, and roasting, which accentuates the sugars and provides a flavor contrast. The combination of spice, dairy, and steamed vegetables creates a fun dish that makes a perfect starter.

PREPARATION

Cauliflower:

1. Add 4 c of water to the lead-free pot and bring to a boil on medium heat. Add 1 Tbsp of sea salt and add the whole cauliflower. Cover and cook for 5-8 minutes, or until the cauliflower is cooked, yet still a bit firm.
2. On a cutting board, divide the whole cauliflower into 4 pieces.
3. In a lead-free clay comal or flat griddle pan, roast the cauliflower on both sides (no oil needed).

Molcajete salsa:

1. Roast red tomatoes and chilies in a lead-free clay comal or flat griddle pan (no oil needed). Once they look burned, remove skin.
2. Crush the garlic clove with a molcajete or mortar, then add a tsp of sea salt and ginger, mashing well.
3. Add chilies without stems and tomatoes. Grind and set aside.

PLATING

1. Place cauliflower on a lead-free clay plate. Top each piece with zaatar, a splash of extra virgin olive oil, lemon zest and lemon drops. Then, add a spoonful of ricotta cheese and serve “salsa molcajeteada” on the side. Eat with a loaf of rustic bread or corn tostadas for a gluten-free dish. Enjoy!



Kachi Haldi Ka Halwa (Fresh Turmeric Pudding)

BY PARVINDER SINGH BALI

TIME: 30 MINUTES  TOTAL YIELD: 4 SERVINGS  TYPE OF RECIPE: DESSERT

Gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian and vegan alternative available

INGREDIENTS

TURMERIC PUDDING

- ¼ lb fresh turmeric peeled and washed (125 g) [alternative: 2 tsp of turmeric powder (10 g)]
- ½ c ghee or clarified butter (100 g) [alternative: vegetable oil to make it vegan]
- ½ c almond powder (60 g) [alternatives: cashew nut powder, desiccated coconut]
- ½ c gram flour (60 g)
- ½ c jaggery (150 g) [alternatives: raw sugar, brown sugar]
- 3-4 green cardamom pods coarsely grounded

GARNISH

- 1 Tbsp freshly sliced almond flakes (5 g)

This is a traditional, winter dish, often used as a remedy for a cough, cold or flu. It is made in the northern parts of India and usually prepared by pureeing or grating fresh turmeric. The sweetening agent used in this pudding is jaggery, but you can substitute with raw or brown sugar.

PREPARATION

1. Peel the fresh turmeric and wash well. Cut into smaller pieces and blend in a blender or grinder to make a smooth paste. Add a few Tbsp of water if needed. Set aside.
2. Grind the almonds to turn into a powder. Set aside.
3. In a pan, add 60g of ghee over low heat and add turmeric paste. Cook for at least 10 minutes or until the mixture leaves the ghee.
4. Add almond powder and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Remove the pan from heat, keep stirring the mixture for another 2-3 minutes.
5. In another pan, heat 40g of ghee and the gram flour over low heat. Cook together for 8-10 minutes or until the ghee separates.
6. Remove from heat and add jaggery to the gram. Stir for 1-2 minutes and then put the mix back on the heat. Cook for 2-3 minutes or until the jaggery melts.
7. Add the cooked turmeric and cook the mix for another 2-3 minutes.
8. Add the crushed green cardamom powder for flavor.
9. Place the pudding in a serving bowl and garnish with almonds. Enjoy!