

Nothing in the House Lemon Chess Pie

Makes 1, 9-inch pie

INGREDIENTS

Your favorite pie crust recipe for a 1-crust pie, unbaked
½ c. (1 stick) butter at room temperature
1 ¼ c. sugar
1 Tbsp. yellow corn meal
3 eggs
Grated zest of 1 lemon
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tsp. vanilla extract
¼ tsp. salt



DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the pie crust per your preferred recipe, or use the Nothing in the House crust recipe (found online). Chill dough at least 1 hour before rolling out and fitting into a greased and floured 9-inch pie pan. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Put the rolled and fitted crust back in the fridge while you prepare the filling.
2. Cream together the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl, using a wooden spoon or a stand mixer. Then beat in the cornmeal.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in the lemon zest, lemon juice, vanilla, and salt until well combined. Pour the filling into the pie shell and bake for 45–60 minutes, or until the top of the filling forms a crust and a knife inserted into the middle comes out clean. Serve with berries and whipped cream. 🍷

Emily Hilliard writes the blog www.nothinginthehouse.com. Elizabeth Graeber is an illustrator whose work can be found at www.elizabethgraeber.com. Together, they created the book *PIE: A Hand Drawn Almanac*.

ILLUSTRATIONS by Elizabeth Graeber.

TE QUIERO, LA MICHOACANA

Mexican paletas find a following in Memphis



by Mark Camarigg

EVERY MORNING, twenty-five-year-old Rafael Gonzalez delivers coolers laden with homemade ice cream and *paletas*, or popsicles, to his three Memphis-area La Michoacana ice cream shops. His recipe is simple: fresh fruit, fresh cream, and sugar. Horchata (a blend of rice milk and cinnamon) and pine nut are the most popular flavors, along with avocado, strawberry, and vanilla. Gonzalez sources dulce de leche from his father's ice cream shop in Chihuahua, Mexico. And he imports ice cream making equipment from the tiny village of Tocumbo, in the state of Michoacan.

Ice cream making is a Gonzalez family tradition. Says Rafael, "My father is sixty-five, and he started selling paletas when he was fifteen in Tocumbo. I started when I was seven years old, and my dad taught me how to make them. He gave me my recipes, and I'll show them to my kids."

The history of paletas is tangled in a seventy-year-old ice cream making tradition that originated in Tocumbo. In the 1940s, cousins Agustín Andrade and Ignacio Alcázar left behind field work in

their native Michoacan and began opening *paleterías* (shops selling popsicles and ice cream) in Mexico City. Alcázar soon discovered he could make more money financing the *paleterías* of others than running them himself. He began lending money to Tocumbo natives who wanted to open ice cream stores. Decades later, an estimated 15,000 La Michoacana *paleterías* dot Mexico.

La Michoacana is not a corporation or franchise, but a very loose network of independent businesses with no central marketing, accounting, or advertising. La Michoacana ice cream is not a registered brand in Mexico. Anyone with an ice-cream maker and a storefront is free to use it. The *paletería* supply company in Tocumbo makes money selling equipment, ingredients, and marketing advice to entrepreneurs.

La Michoacana stores hit the United States around 1990. Proprietors like Gonzalez have adopted the La Michoacana name to gain name recognition with Mexican customers. “If you go to Mexico, there are more La Michoacanas than there are McDonald’s,” he says. “I get a lot of people from St. Louis and Little Rock. They say, ‘When I was a kid, my dad would send me to the ice cream store, and now I can come here.’”

Gonzalez’s first Memphis location, on busy Winchester Road, initially catered to a Mexican clientele. Now, Gonzalez says, “I’m surprised by the response we get at our other stores. It’s probably seventy percent American and thirty percent Mexican patrons.”

Buoyed by success, Gonzalez will open a fourth Memphis-area location and a new store in Nashville in 2013. More operators are getting in to the business, but Rodriguez is convinced he offers something that the start-up *paleterías* can’t touch.

“I won’t change from what I’m doing here. If I change, it won’t be La Michoacana.” The other guys, he says, will never be able to recreate the flavor of the La Michoacana recipes. Nor can they top the magic of the La Michoacana name. 🍷

Mark Camarigg is the publications manager for Living Blues magazine at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

AN ORAL HISTORY CAKEWALK

The sweetest stories behind the food

from the SFA oral history archives

WE’VE BEEN COLLECTING the stories behind Southern food for a decade now. Our archive is filled with interviews about boudin and barbecue, catfish and kibbeh. It’s about time we offered you something for dessert. Here are a handful of sugary oral histories to satisfy your sweet tooth. You can always meet more bakers, confectioners, and sno-ball slingers at southernfoodways.org.

