A Recipe for Identity:

Food and Culture in Oaxaca, Mexico

By

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Stirring mole in a cazuela.
Declaration

This thesis is original and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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March 2015,
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Abstract

This thesis is about the centrality of food to culture in Oaxaca. Food is highly sensual and tastes in food are developed at a very early stage in life, making tastes in food intimate, emotional and therefore extremely memorable. Tastes in food reflect far more than nutrition and like the perception of the senses, it is clear that taste is in large part socially constructed. Eating is an essential activity but it is also an intensely social activity, which reveals much about culture. Activities surrounding food including production, shopping, cooking and eating are considered both in everyday and festive circumstances. The labour of men but especially the labour of women in the purchase and preparation of food is discussed as an expression of love and devotion to family, which is a mundane form of sacrifice that raises consumption into the social sphere and uses it to communicate, create and maintain important social relationships, thereby negating the destructive capacity of consumption for its own sake (Miller 1998, cf. Adapon 2005).

Individual ingredients such as corn, mezcal, chocolate, chiles and chapulines as well as iconic dishes such as mole negro are considered as carriers or reminders of history and of personal and group identity (Palmer 1998). These ingredients are considered to be local and traditional with a long history of farming and use in the area that dates back to well before Spanish conquest. In the face of global market pressures, Oaxaqueños deliberately choose to shop at local markets rather than supermarkets for fresh ingredients, which are grown in the area. These ingredients are seen to be the best and the tastiest but their flavours also connect people to place and to history. In fact, notions of terroir are explicitly used to advertise mezcal while a single grain of native corn can be seen to carry the whole of Indian history and farming knowledge which has been passed down through generations of men (cf. Mendras 1970, Trubek 2005). Unwritten recipes for everyday and festive dishes are stored in the body and are handed down through generations of women serving a similar function.

Habitual body memories such as cooking skills are considered as knowledge and as the basis of all other forms of memory (Casey 2000). Memory is the foundation for any narrative of group or self, which in turn is the basis of identity. Oaxaca is a place with a unique ethnic identity within Mexico and one of the finest expressions of this unique culture is the highly elaborate food that it is famous for. Even the most basic of foods in Oaxaca are labour intensive and involve the investment of time and effort by the cook, which is recognised by the family as an expression of love. The most highly prized dishes are the most labour intensive and these are also the most suitable offerings to the gods during festivals such as the Day of the Dead festival. Festivals serve important functions and bind communities through obligatory food sharing but also through the commemoration and re-enactment of past events (cf. Mauss 1954, Casey 2000). Food is integral to any celebration but it is also consumed on a daily basis and therefore has a central role in nourishing, creating and binding Oaxacan people, constantly reminding them of who they are and where they come from.
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Dedication

To my mother, without your support and patience this would not have been possible.

To my father, who would have been proud.
Table of Contents

A Recipe for Identity: Food and Culture in Oaxaca, Mexico................. 1

1) A Recipe for Identity ............................................................................ 7
2) Ethnographic Fieldwork........................................................................ 38

Section 1............................................................................................................. 63
3) First Foods: Corn .................................................................................. 69
4) Mezcal - Gold of Oaxaca....................................................................... 89
5) The Original Drinking Chocolate....................................................... 112

Section 2.............................................................................................................135
6) Celebrations and Commemorations.................................................. 137
7) Sacrifice, Love and Shopping............................................................. 161
8) Cooking with Feeling .......................................................................... 185
9) Food and Culture in Oaxaca................................................................. 207

Glossary ........................................................................................................... 226
Bibliography .................................................................................................... 232
A Recipe for Identity

Chiles, tomatoes, jitomates (green husk tomatoes), onions and avocados at the Abastos market.
This thesis is about the centrality of food to culture in Oaxaca, Mexico. In Oaxaca, food, especially local food, is important. One of the first questions asked of a stranger was whether or not they had tried the famous local dishes and ingredients: 'Have you tried chapulines?', 'Have you tried mole?', 'Have you tried chocolate?', 'Have you tried mezcal?', 'Do you like chile?', 'Have you tried tamales, memelas and tlayudas?'. These questions were asked by taxi drivers, tourists, acquaintances, shopkeepers, waiters, market vendors, friends and teachers. It wasn’t hard to explain what I was doing because people thought it was perfectly natural that I should have come to Oaxaca to study food there. In order to better understand the significance of local food to Oaxaqueños (Oaxacans), I employ theories of phenomenology (Blend 2001), material culture (Appadurai 1986, Miller 1998, Adapon 2005), the senses (Classen 1993, Goody 2002, Korsmeyer 2005, Seremetakis 2005, Howes 2006), place and terroir (Mendras 1970, De Certeau 1984, Feld and Basso 1996, Trubek 2005, Harvey 2009, Paxson 2010), memory (Connerton 1989, Casey 2000), the global and the local (Inda and Rosaldo 2008) and identity (Lepstein 1978, Bourdieu 1984, Palmer 1998, Pilcher 1998, Jenkins 2014).

In the 1970s, Levi-Strauss stressed the importance of food and particularly cooking to anthropology and urged further study of it because: 'in any particular society, cooking is a language through which that society unconsciously reveals its structure, unless - just as unconsciously - it resigns itself to using the medium to express its contradictions' (1978: 495). He noted that despite the generally accepted importance of food both as symbol and sustenance: 'adequate data about culinary practices in various parts of the world is lacking, anthropologists having paid little attention to the subject' (1978: 490). By the 1980s this was changing; Appadurai recognised food as a: 'highly condensed social fact' because it presupposes and reifies: 'technological arrangements, relations of production and exchange, conditions of field and market, and realities of plenty and want' (1981: 494). Douglas (1982) researched food taboos and ideas about the religious purity or pollution of foodstuffs. Mintz (1985) famously studied sugar consumption and its relationship to slavery and social change. Miller and Jackson (1998) showed that shopping was analogous to sacrifice and that shopping
choices tend to be motivated by devotion to family demonstrated through thriftiness. Seremetakis (2005) explored the nostalgic sensual memories of certain childhood foods experienced in Greece, in particular a peach that was no longer available but was still vividly remembered. Christie (2008) viewed cooking in Mexico as art and flavour or sazón as an expression of love. Avieli (2009) agreed with Appadurai (1981) that: ‘food is... the most perfect cultural artefact, the outcome of a detailed differentiation process’ (223). Carrier (2010) looked at the fetishism of commodities and how this affected consumers of Fair Trade coffee. Food, cooking and food ways are thus topics of increasing importance in anthropology today.

Mexican culture has drawn the attention of a number of prominent social anthropologists including Whetten 1948, Lewis 1960 and 1961, Beals 1975, Malinowski and De La Fuente 1982, Dennis 1987, Vogt 1990, Brandes 1998, Zolov 1999, Gledhill 2000, Higgins and Coen 2000, Cohen 2001, Inness 2001, LeCount 2001, Stephen 2005, Cook 2006, Adapon 2008, Christie 2008 and Mahar 2010, to name just a few. Mexico has a large population, and is in the process of modernising quickly. Studies of the country have thus tended to focus on poverty (Lewis 1961, Mahar 2010), the agrarian revolution and its effects, resistance (Zolov 1999), village life (Redfield and Villa 1934, Whetten 1948, Lewis 1960, Dennis 1974 and 1987, Vogt 1990) and its spectacular fiestas and festivals, especially the Day of the Dead festival (Brandes 1998, LeCount 2001). Oaxaca specifically has a rich and vibrant culture and is renowned for being the culinary capital of Mexico. It is seen as a traditional place, with many religious festivals throughout the year and a much studied market system, which forms part of the national and global economy (cf. Beals 1975, Malinowski and De La Fuente 1982, Higgins and Coen 2000, Stephen 2005, Cook 2006). Oaxaca has a large Indian population and an ethnic identity. As an agricultural people, the Mexican Indians have always considered food, especially corn and chocolate, to be highly important both in ritual and everyday life (Driess and Greenhill 2008). Judging from media, advertising, the sheer number of restaurants, travel guides and general conversations, food is almost topic number one not only for tourists
but also for locals. It follows that food is central to an understanding of life and experience there.

The study of food and related daily occurrences such as shopping, cooking and eating, involves material culture and invites a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology is distinctly human and sensuous, tying us directly to our immediate environment where: 'human bodies are sensually linked to food and the fertile landscape' (Blend 2001: 155). Like material culture in anthropology, phenomenology seeks to uncover meanings that are often over looked in the everyday activities of people (cf. De Certeau 1984, Appadurai 1986, Miller 1998, 2001). Looking at Oaxacan food practices and tastes through these lenses and those mentioned above will help to uncover the importance of food for memory, culture and identity. I will explore the meanings of cooking and food in Oaxaca, particularly foods that strike newcomers and locals alike as important and distinctive including chiles, chapulines, corn, chocolate and mezcal. I include drinks such as chocolate and mezcal here in a broad definition of 'food'. Some questions I hope to answer are: What are Oaxaca foods? Why are Oaxacan foods famous? Why is local food important? Why are specific foods such as chiles, mezcal, chocolate, corn, mole, tamales and chapulines especially important for identity? Why/How is food such an excellent carrier of memory and identity? How do tradition and history become part of a foodstuff? Is memory stored in places and items such as foods? What do Oaxacan foods say about Oaxacan culture?
Food for Thought

Although food choices are obviously governed by physiological needs, these are far from the only factors that influence food choices in humans (cf. Mintz and Du Bois 2002). Eating and drinking are essential and truly universal human activities but they are also a social institution and involve learned behaviours of comportment. Food cannot be segregated from the major concerns of a person and these major concerns are social. All human structures tend to reflect the social order and humans everywhere tend to organise their food ways into a system that parallels other cultural systems such as language and culture. This means that the cuisine of a people is closely linked to their understanding of the world and is expressive of identity and difference. Food can be used as a tool to express an endless array of things including politics, resentments, class status, gender, agency, opinion, love, cultural attachments, inclusivity and exclusivity, religious and other beliefs, desires, different times of the day and of the year, innovations, art, flair, luxury, comfort, festivity and sentiment (cf. Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Appadurai 1981, Bourdieu 1984, Douglas 1984, Kopytoff 1986, Christie 2008). Foods have and can convey these meanings because they are part of larger and more complex systems of meanings, that is, a culture (cf. Sutton 2005, Paxton 2012, Sammells 2012). Viewing culture through food can therefore be a powerful methodological approach. Even the simplest cuisine encodes subtle cosmological propositions and as cuisine becomes more elaborate, its ability to bear social messages is increased: 'food is never just food...food is endlessly symbolic' (Paxson 2010: 445). Oaxacan cuisine is highly elaborate and therefore especially expressive both of culture and of the art, devotion and agency of individual cooks (Adapon 2008).

However, food is not just a symbol or a sign in a language; it is more than that because it literally creates us (Goody 1998). Like water, food is integral to the body and constitutes a major part of our substance. Incorporation of food is therefore essential to the composition of the self and one's identity. There is a liminality in eating where food, a foreign object, is destroyed in the act of consumption and ingested into the body, actually becoming the body. Eating food
therefore involves danger as anything that penetrates the body can pose a threat to the psychological integrity of the self and to identity (Douglas 1966, Synnott 1993). Any process of incorporation is an act laden with meaning and eating is therefore a means through which selfhood is defined and boundaries are created (cf. Fischler 1988, Caplan 1997). Lupton agrees that: 'food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies' (2005: 99). Any human is constructed biologically, psychologically and socially by the food they choose to incorporate into their bodies. Eating food forcibly reminds us of our embodiment through ingestion and essential to this process are the senses, which allow us to gauge food and water quality.

Through the creation of boundaries, food can bring people together both literally and theoretically. Eating together creates an instant bond, especially if food is eaten in an intimate setting. This simple act creates a feeling of connection, mutual understanding and respect or commensality. Eating together then implies intimacy and lies at the heart of social relations (cf. Powdermaker 1932, Appadurai 1981, Rozin 1983, Tilley et al 2006, Christie 2008, Dieter and Hayden 2010, Haines and Sammells 2010). Food sustains life and relationships, demonstrated in the adage: 'the family that eats together stays together', which is also true in a broader sense in Oaxaca where commemorative festivals, which always involve food sharing, serve to bind communities (Casey 2000). The act of offering something to eat or drink to a guest or visitor is a sign of hospitality in any culture, making food a media of social inclusion or exclusion, symbolising belonging and identity in a variety of groups including the nation (Anderson 1983, Dietler and Hayden 2010). However: 'food does not simply symbolize social bonds and divisions; it participates in their creation and recreation' (Sutton 2005: 315). Goods such as foods therefore make and maintain social relationships and are also a medium for the human creative faculty through the art of cooking (cf. Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Miller 1998, Adapon 2008).

Individual and collective identities of self and state are based on memories of personal narratives and commemorations of events. Storytelling, cooking and
recipes perform narrative functions on a personal level while festivals and festival foods perform the same functions at a state level (Anderson 1983). Recipes which are handed down through generations of women in families tell stories and transmit values, tales and histories both in the recipes and the ingredients as well as through the anecdotes and instructions that go with them. Recipes and individual ingredients are therefore important as symbols or flags of identity (cf. Anderson 1983, Palmer 1998). In Oaxaca, recipes like *mole* and ingredients such as corn and chocolate symbolise ancient Indian traditions, while corn and *mezcal* can be seen to symbolise resistance to colonisation and homogenising global market pressures (cf. Kohl and Farthing 2006, Inda and Rosaldo 2008). To eat these native foods then is to partake in and identify with Indian heritage and country and to resist outside pressures on the food market.

Food, identity, emotion and attachment are strongly bound together in people's lives. Appadurai (1981) thinks that this emotional property of food: 'has roots in the powerful association, in the human life cycle, between the positive memory of nurture and the equally powerful negative experiences (such as weaning) of early human life' (494). It is clear that from a very early age, people develop strong emotional connections to food making it memorable and thereby important for identity:

> Food and eating...are intensely emotional experiences that are intertwined with embodied sensations and strong feelings ranging the spectrum from disgust, hate, fear and anger to pleasure, satisfaction and desire. They are central to individual's subjectivity and their sense of distinction from others.  

*(Lupton 2005: 324)*

Food can capture innumerable emotions, meanings, stories and memories and can evoke past experience, ghosts of loved ones lost, and history. This means that it can serve as a constant reminder of history, family and of group and personal identity (cf. Palmer 1998). Brillat Savarin (1925) said: *'tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are'*. It is true that what we eat defines us in many ways and consequently food is important for the creation and maintenance of identity. It is a highly sensual and therefore memorable object, which is remembered both consciously and unconsciously (cf. Casey 2000). Sensual, habitual body
memories such as those which surround food and food preparation are largely unconscious but it is this kind of memory that allows us to conceptualise both self and place (cf. Connerton 1989, Csordas 1993, Synnott 1993, Seremetakis 1994, Stoller 1997, Korsmeyer 2005, Tilley et al. 2006).

**The Senses**

Discourse surrounding food focuses on sensory qualities and this in turn leads us to the body. Paying attention to the senses and the body can help us to unlock new knowledge and write richer ethnography. Some fine examples of this include Seremetakis (1994), Howes (1991), Classen (2005) and Geurts, who describes the advantages of the sensory lens below:

> In a sensory order we find cultural categories for experience. We find cultural meanings that are embodied, and because they are as much a part of the body as the mind, they are considered 'natural' ways of being, but in fact they are learned or acquired at an early age. In other words, a cultural group's sensory order reflects aspects of the world that are so precious to it that (although they remain largely unconscious and habitual) they are the things that children growing up in this culture developmentally come to carry in their very bodies.

(2002: 230-1)

All humans engage with the world through the body and through the agency of the senses, although different cultures have different hierarchies of the senses (Classen 1993). The Ongee prioritise smell, the Tzotzil heat and I would contend that in Oaxaca it is taste that is foremost, which is one of the reasons why food is so important. Rather than pointing to the nose when indicating me, as the Ongee do, the Oaxacan would point to the belly or more accurately think of the 'belly' of the home; the kitchen and family. Therefore the senses, especially taste, how they are socially constructed and how they contribute to remembering will be an important aspect of this study (cf. Rodaway 1994, Seremetakis 1994, Feld and Basso 1996, Bourdieu 1984). My aim in this thesis is not to describe the Oaxacan world of sense but rather to demonstrate how the activities that surround food such as growing, preparing and consuming, constitute modes of bodily knowing. This bodily knowing is the basis of farming and cooking skills, which are handed
down through generations in families and it is the foundation of memory and identity (cf. Connerton 1989).

Aristotle is famed with first having distinguished the five separate senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. There is a hierarchy of the senses in Western thinking, which is based on objectivity. Within this Western hierarchy, the 'higher' senses are vision and hearing with vision considered to be the first and most objective sense. These are followed by the 'lower' senses of smell, then taste and lastly touch. The senses lose their effectiveness with distance; first touch and taste, then smell, then hearing until finally sight is the only sense left, which may explain why it is at the top of the hierarchy (Tuan 1993). Another reason may be that the eyes are situated at the top of the body and in this sense are literally above the other senses. Interestingly, the face is the location of four of the five sensory organs; the only sense not located solely in the face and therefore not restricted to a specific location is touch. The higher senses are sometimes referred to as far senses because they detect stimuli from far away whilst the lower senses can only get information about things they are directly in contact with, which is why they are sometimes called near senses and are generally considered to be less sophisticated modes of gaining information.

The higher senses are traditionally equated with cognition, men and reason whilst the lower or near senses tend to be associated with women and emotion. It follows that: 'philosophy is masculine and disembodied', while: 'food and eating are feminine and always embodied' (Lupton 1996: 3). Only the lowest type of humanity is ruled by the senses, the mind is treasured over matter and in general men over women. This hierarchy of the senses was further expounded upon by Plato, who: 'argued that there are three types of men: of gold, of silver and bronze, ruled by the head, the heart and the belly, corresponding to reason, courage and...the senses' (Synnott 1993: 131). That is to say that bronze, the belly and the senses are connected and base. Touch and taste are considered to be dangerous as they can lead to lust and gluttony and distract people from 'proper' use of the body for worship and reasoning. The senses have a powerful hold over humans and there is evidence throughout history of a long-standing
fear that the senses can overwhelm our capacity for reason. The subjugation of the senses to reason is recommended and we are warned against sensuality, which is a sin. The data of the senses is not trusted and should be deliberately put aside so as not to be: 'led down the wrong path' (cf. Synnott 1993, Tuan 1993). Philosophers such as Descartes, Plato and Berkeley did not trust the senses as a way to acquire ultimate truth. However, questioning the nature and truth of sensual experience is akin, as Socrates and Descartes found, to questioning our very existence.

This Western categorisation of the five distinct senses and their rankings is often treated as basic and natural but the fact that sensory orders vary in different societies forces us to question this assumption. It suggests that sensing is more cultural than one might expect. Bodily ways of gathering information are: 'profoundly involved with a society’s epistemology, the development of its cultural identity, and its forms of being-in-the-world' (Geurts 2002: 3). Geurts (2002) theorises that there may be a sixth sense or even more and observes that balance is considered a sense with a specific organ for its reception in Anlo-land. Brillat-Savarin posits physical love as the sixth sense (Korsmeyer 2005). Many Westerners might suggest Extra Sensory Perception as the sixth sense. Notably something mental and not physical is selected, which reflects a bias already present as discussed above, which privileges mental representations and external modes of knowing. This ordering is a social construct and is a way of embodying social categories, similar to habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Sensing most likely involves many more than five fields. The term 'sense' in fact can have a much wider usage, as described by Goody:

In which the senses would include, for example, a sense of humour, of justice, of duty, of colour, of rhythm. And there is a third and even broader usage in which the term sense (in the singular) covers the capacity to understand, to make sense, to have common sense.

(2002: 17)

The skills of cooking, preparing and appreciating food fall into this broader usage of sense, where sense can mean knowledge and especially bodily or habitual knowledge. Regardless of how many senses there may be, any given culture must
be in agreement about the way the senses are perceived, in fact sanity within a culture implies a shared or common sensibility or agreement about what is real perception wise. Society is grounded in consensus, the meaning of which is quite literally agreement with the senses, making society a sensory fact (Howes 2006).

The senses are entangled with culture, history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence and can only be understood in the wider context of a person’s bodily immersion in the world. Ways of sensing and apprehending the material world are formed through the symbolic mediation of experience and are deeply inscribed to the point that they are largely unconscious, habitual and literally 'made body'. A sense then becomes: ‘a field where habituated bodily sensations link to individual feelings, attitudes, orientations, and perceptions and finally to cultural themes, motifs and ethos’ (Geurts 2002: 17). People carry bodily or sensory memories with them and these memories are a large part of what makes a person’s life story or identity. Memory is based on the body and therefore the body’s relationship with the world that it inhabits must be considered as it is charged with meaning (Casey 2000). Embodied experience is then: ‘the starting point for analysing human participation in a cultural world’ (Csordas 1993: 135). We live in an 'intersubjective milieu' with others and because of this we must attend not only to our own bodies but also to the bodies of others. Culture shapes our sensual embodied experiences, making the body a social creation of immense complexity with different meanings, composed, imposed and developed by each individual (Synnott 1993).
The Senses, Memory and Identity

The often maligned or designated 'base' or bodily senses of taste, smell and touch are the more essential senses in relation to food. All senses are engaged in the selection, preparation and eating of foodstuffs but one could argue that especially in this arena, maybe even all arenas, the sense of touch is the most important sense and it 'reminds us that we are not only observers of the world but actors in it' (Tuan 1993: 46). Ironically, although touch is distrusted in theory (as are the other senses ever since Descartes due to the possibility of deception), it is in reality the most trusted sense (Goody 2002). This is demonstrated by our instincts; if we are unsure that something we are seeing is true, our first reaction is to reach out and touch it, to test the information our eyes give us. Despite its status as a 'lower' sense, touch is in fact 'the sense least susceptible to deception and hence the one in which we tend to put the most trust' (Tuan 1993: 45). Contrary to popular Western belief, there is evidence that the sense of touch is the most fundamental, most widespread and perhaps the most important sense of all as it forms the base of all memory and thus of identity (Casey 2000).

It is possible to conceive of all other senses as being quite literally based on a sense of touch where vision is the reaction of the retina to the touch of light, hearing is the eardrum reacting to the touch of sound waves, smell is a reaction to particles hitting scent receptors in the nasal passage and taste is the mouth and tongue reacting to the touch of foodstuffs (Schiffman 1996, Korsmeyer 2005). Touch is an exceptional sense in that it alone encompasses the entire body while the other senses are located in specific places. It is a sense we register from head to toe, inside and out. It is also the most delicate sense in that it registers minute and massive amounts of information constantly and simultaneously such as the ambient temperature and a slight itch (Classen 2005, cf. Howes 1991). The lack of touch in the development of a baby can lead to complete social disengagement and madness as is proven by awful psychological experiments in the sensual deprivation of baby monkeys, which were never able to fully recover from their lack of motherly interaction (Haraway 2005).
The culture of touch then involves the whole body and all of culture. Tactile actions and symbols are integral to everyday life and form the basis of all other sensations. Taste is one of the most intimate forms of touch, where an object from the outside is incorporated to the inside of the body. The mouth and tongue enable us to 'ingest' the outside world and help us decide what to put in our bodies. 'Taste', like 'sense', also has a broader meaning where 'physical tasting is extended to mental tasting, the classical notion of judgement' (Stoller 1986: 23). This echoes Bourdieu's (1984) theory that taste classifies and in turn classifies the classifiers, making taste important for identity. The word taste used to be much closer in meaning to 'touch' and 'feel' and 'sense', as described above, is still equated with having a 'feel' for something. This 'feel' or knack is a type of bodily knowing which could also be described as body memory. In fact, taste can be seen as a mode of knowing in its own right.

While sensations are specific to each sensory modality, perceptions are not. The perception of any one sense, for instance taste, is a function of the brain, which combines information from multiple sources or senses into a coherent whole, like it does when we are watching a movie. Perception of flavour or taste is a prime example of this integration of information from different senses into what seems to be a single experience. When we smell, we are actually confronted with hundreds of different smells at any one time, which we bundle together and perceive as overall single aromas. Smell is extremely important in the perception of taste as odours from food travel up the nasal cavity and combine with information from the mouth and tongue, which register temperature and texture. This information is also merged with visual information to form a perception, although the brain interprets the overall sensation as originating from within the mouth (Auvray and Spence 2008). This means that temperature; colour, texture and consistency all influence the overall perception of flavour. Oaxacan food was often served warm rather than hot, which allowed for a fuller appreciation of flavours, consistencies and textures. As discussed previously, the perception of sensory information is linked to cultural logic and taste is a domain where these links may be more readily apparent than in other sensory modalities (Geurts 2002). Goody agrees that culture and taste are closely related and that taste is
cultivated 'like flowers. This is also true of the sense of smell, which is closely linked to taste and is often applied to cooking and to wine' (2002: 19).

Smells (and tastes) are often evaluated by the positive or negative value of the remembered context of their occurrence, making the meaning of an odour individually or socially constructed. This demonstrates that 'odour, memory and meaning are...intimately linked, and reach deep into our personal lives, all day, every day' (Synnott 1993: 187). Smells are seldom the focus of our attention:

But this does not mean that they do not serve to guide our behaviours. A number of recent experiments have revealed that odours and flavours that are not attended to at all are nevertheless encoded and remembered.

(Piggott 2012: 16)

This type of remembering is incidental and unlike explicit learning say, of something in school, we often could not state what we have learned in this way. Generally, such knowledge is not based on recognising a certain target but rather on the detection of novelty. If a new food does not fit our accepted and generally unconscious food parameters, then it is likely to be rejected, especially at the first exposure as is the case in Western reactions to the eating of insects (cf. Haines and Sammells 2010). Unconscious or incidental memories last longer than targeted or explicit memories which may explain why food preferences remain the same over time even while the sensory system of the organism changes.

The body itself, not just the brain is capable of remembering. Howes (2005) describes how in some cultures such as with the Cashinahua of Eastern Peru, the skin is thought to 'know'. That is, it is thought to actually contain knowledge, rather than simply to transmit data to the brain (considered the only site of knowing in current Western thinking). There is a history even in the West of thinking of the skin as somehow knowing or remembering and it is only relatively recently that we have sought to distance ourselves from our sense of touch through architecture and the removal of our bodies from natural spaces (Classen 2005). The body, although it has often been described as such, is not only a text that is read or written; it is also felt and sensory experience reaches far beyond verbal or written expression. In truth, the body 'is consumed by a

Taste is intimately linked with memory, especially with lasting memories and 'it is probably in tastes in food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longer withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain the nostalgia for it' (Bourdieu 1984: 79). There is something almost magical about the way that the smell and taste of grandmother or mothers' cooking can evoke memories of childhood. Food and the memory of food persist within the person and are deeply rooted in the body and in primitive bodily experiences. In these memories, tastes and aromas are enmeshed and one can trigger the other. The more senses that are activated by a particular experience the more memorable it is. This is the case with a fiesta or a festival, commemorations that are repeated yearly (Connerton 1989). Seremetakis explains how such:

Sensory memory is a form of storage. Storage is always the embodiment and conservation of experiences, persons and matter in vessels of alterity. The awakening of the senses is awakening the capacity for memory, of tangible memory; to be awake is to remember, and one remembers through the senses, via substance... Memory is stored in substances that are shared, just as substances are stored in social memory which is sensory.

(1994: 28)

This suggests that places, bodies and objects can indeed store memories and that objects and sensations are needed in order to remember past experience.

The past is 'hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling' (Proust 1981: 51). The eating of mole or the drinking of mezcal then awakens the senses and in turn awakens memories of other occasions when these same senses were aroused, probably at a commemorative community fiesta or festival and probably at a happy or enjoyable moment. Memory is thus a reliving and recreating of past experience where a part can
hold the key to revivifying a whole structure of associations, as is so eloquently demonstrated by Proust:

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

(1981: 54)

The way memories are recalled corresponds to the way that they were inscribed as is demonstrated by the above quote, which is the author's description of his response to eating a Madeleine with a cup of tea as a grown man. The taste of it combined with the tea brings back long forgotten childhood memories in a flood. These memories had not arisen from simply being in the same place or even from looking at the Madeline; it took a taste and a contemplation of the familiarity of that sensation to dig up the memories.

From this single awakened childhood memory of eating Madeleines with his aunt, spring a series of other related memories of the house they lived in, the town that contained it and even the people who lived in the town:

So in that moment all the flowers in our garden...and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.

(Proust 1981: 55)

Proust is hugely attentive to the workings of the senses and body memory and also describes how every time we awaken from slumber, we instinctively read our position on the earth's surface; first the positions of our various limbs, from there the direction of the wall, the position of the furniture and so on in an expanding sensual awareness of ourselves and our surroundings. He explains how when you first arrive in a place, new smells or sounds keep you awake and how habit, then, is getting used to a place to the point where you don't notice them anymore.
Bodily remembering how and where turns into habit. As things or places become habitual, they begin to feel like home. Once something becomes a habit, it is acting without having to think about acting (cf. Tuan 1977). This process occurs with most daily practices and such habitual body memories liberate us from the constant relearning of skills and reorientation to our surroundings. Habitual memories are deeply engrained and do not require explicit recalling during performance, they are drawn on effortlessly. They 'are at once pre-reflective and presupposed in human experience' (Casey 2000: 149). These kinds of memories serve as our constant guide in daily actions although we are generally unaware of them. Habits and traditions perform similar functions for remembering; 'The role that 'tradition' plays in the constitution of cultural history is here paralleled by a set of habitual body memories that are the unique possession of a given individual' (Casey 2000: 151). According to Casey, all memory, 'all that we call 'the person', 'personal identity', and the like - everything, in short, that pertains to an individual's life-history' (2000: 176) is based on habitual body memory. Casey even goes so far as to say that 'there is no memory without body memory' (2000: 172).

A body has inherent memories of its own historic route and these memories become part of the makeup of a lasting personality. Body memories are located in the lived phenomenal body and like the organs of the body, which have an intentionality that does not need to be conscious, many body memories do not need to be accompanied by consciousness in an explicit form as described above. The body is continually and usually unreflectively engrossed in the world and as a memorial container it therefore grants unmediated access to body memories. This is why body memory often arises spontaneously and without premeditation, as described by Proust (1981) above. Body memory re-enacts the past rather than simply representing it: 'the body's past acts in the present' (Casey 2000: 194). The body is felt as unmediated although it is in fact the mediator; 'it is always in or from or through this body that the other items are grasped or met, witnessed or transformed: There is no getting around the body' (Casey 2000: 179). The body occupies the borderline between place and mind. It takes us into places and habituates us to their peculiarities allowing the mind to focus on
matters other than simply being in the world and helping us to remember places and things vividly.

Spatiality and temporality are closely connected to the point of being almost inseparable in memory, which is to say that the when and the where are inextricably linked although time is not as important as place in the recall of memories. Everything perceived has its place and to be embodied is to have a place in which we are situated (cf. Feld and Basso 1996). Bodies are always perceived of as occupying particular places and memories are first of all of place as embodied and then of that body in a place. The art of memory relies on and is greatly aided by a stable place system on which memories can be 'hung', which is why situated memories are easier to recall than others. Place retains, it contains, shelters and sustains memories as much as the body and the brain do:

Places are potently receptive and preservative of memories, which they hold to keep. As much as body or brain, mind or language, place is a keeper of memories - one of the main ways by which the past comes to be secured in the present, held in things before and around us.

(Casey 2000: 213)

However, human beings do not only use and occupy places, they are also expressions of their landscapes and landscapes are expressive to begin with (cf. De Certeau 1984, Van der Ploeg 1993, Feld and Basso 1996). Further aides to memory are things or objects, which provide centres of attachment within places and the lived body itself serves as a place and as an object of attachment in the extreme. To remember is to fight a battle against forgetting which is why we need memorial aides such as places and the objects within them with which we can form emotional attachments (Massey 1994, Casey 2000). The place that is Oaxaca and certain foods which are place based such as corn, chocolate and mezcal provide strong centres of attachment, act as memorial aides and therefore as anchors for identity.
Identity

Identification matters in everyday life and in theory. Jenkins (2014) defines identity as the human capacity, rooted in language, to know who's who or what's what. Identification is a process, something we do; it is 'a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities' (Jenkins 2014: 6). While individual identities emphasise difference, collective identities such as nations, regions and ethnicities emphasise similarities. To deem another person to be of the same community or ethnicity is to assume common knowledge, customs, doctrines, values and to ascribe to them the stereotypical characteristics associated with the community/ethnicity: 'Placing someone in a particular category presupposes some knowledge about the person: his language, dress, eating habits, and so on' (Lepstein 1978: 11). Identification and classification imply relationships with 'others' because 'who we think we are is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa' (Jenkins 2014: 13). Differentiating others is always a two way process where one is also defining oneself, therefore it is both objective (external or independent of the actor) and subjective (internal to the actor, a perception of the self). This process also has contributions from both conscious and unconscious thought processes and involves value judgements, which are usually hierarchical.

Lepstein (1978) describes how various groups increasingly seek to assert their autonomy and distinctiveness through identification with an ethnicity. He describes identity as nebulous and as a matter of perception, which is shaped and coloured by its social environment. Remembering our personal past, or who we remember ourselves to be, creates self-identity. Individual memories or identities are formed as pastiches of the past, usually in the form of images. The past is constructed in the present, as are notions of authenticity (cf. Hobsbawm 1983, Massey 1994). Identity is not fixed but is somewhat negotiable and flexible, continuously being produced and shifting according to social context (Jenkins 2014). Identity is also relational and requires an 'other' because social identities are 'instituted through boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, articulated in
terms of family relationships and by distancing those who are perceived to be socially different' (Miller et al. 1998: 113). Furthermore, all people have layered identities, some of which may even clash and which are forever up for contestation. These identities include but certainly are not confined to: village, indigenous, gender, city, state and national. Out of multiple possible identities, the social context determines which one will be stressed. Identity is articulated through narrative and shown through choices of foods, activities and clothing.

A sense of identity is formed on the basis of memories but particularly in the case of ethnic identity, it also requires a place where a sense of belonging and a connection to the homeland is fashioned through historical roots and the art of dwelling or art de localité (Mendras 1970). Ethnic identity is concerned with boundary maintenance, power and traditional culture and serves as a system of social classification that always has a duel or oppositional element of 'us' and 'them' where the criteria of comparison are similarity and difference (Jenkins 2014). Lepstein (1978) states that relations with grandparents are of critical importance in the formation of ethnic identity. If grandchildren have regular and easy access to the grandparents, as is the case in Oaxacan villages where they lived with or very near to them, then they tend to form important relationships. Grandparents are usually the ones that teach their grandchildren about family history, folk lore, proverbs and other traditions, including cooking. They tend to have a more tender and indulgent relationship with the grandchildren and therefore while they may reject their parents as representatives of authority, children identify with their grandparents and 'it is in this process of identification with the grandparents that the child comes to associate himself with certain of the values to which they subscribe, and it is in this way that the grandparents come to serve as a symbol of continuity, offering an anchor for the sense of ethnic identity' (Lepstein 1978: 148). This is because grandparents are the closest to the ancestors, living links with the past.

Powerful emotions are aroused by ethnicity, the roots of which are formed in the experience of childhood, as are eating habits, and in the process they acquire their emotional potency (Jenkins 2014). In fact, ethnic tastes in food can play an
important part in maintaining the cohesion of the group as is the case in Oaxaca but strong attachment to 'ethnic' food also suggests a continuing influence stemming from the earlier mother-child bond (Lepstein 1978). Although identification always involves individuals, it also involves collectivity and history. Mass public occasions such as festivals are public affirmations of shared as well as individual identities, a form of collective identification. The ethnic group, which begins with family and other kin, becomes an extension of the self and 'the health, happiness and affairs of other members become matters of one's own concern. Conversely, any threat or hint of danger to the group is perceived as though it were a threat to oneself, and may provoke the same angry or even violent response' (Lepstein 1978: xv). These primary identifications of selfhood, human-ness, gender and ethnicity in addition to their deep roots in infancy and early childhood, are definitively embodied and gain much of their power from their roots in the unconscious (Jenkins 2014).

Although the larger groups that people identify with are imagined, as described by Anderson (cf. 1983), they are experientially real. People think these groups are real, they act as if they are real, and in doing so they create and construct that reality. We live in an everyday world of small groups that are real such as family and friends and 'these small local groups are embedded within, and help to produce and reproduce, larger groups' (Jenkins 2014: 12) where we may never meet all the other members, such as a nation or an ethnicity. Community in larger groups is imagined but it is not imaginary, it has power in people's lives and provides an umbrella for all to shelter under. The word community itself is powerful symbolically and is ideological in that it is about how things should be (Jenkins 2014). Symbolism helps create solidarity and shared rituals such as weddings, parties and festivals act as symbols of community. Community membership means sharing a similar sense of things, a common sense and participation in a common symbolic domain, although community and symbols of community can still mean different things to different people. The sense of homogeneity or uniformity believed to exist is apparent not real; it is a construction, an ongoing historical contrivance. It is what people do together that creates this shared sense of things and a shared symbolic universe:
'Symbolisations of community are umbrellas under which diversity can flourish, masks behind which a considerable degree of heterogeneity is possible' (Jenkins 2014: 142). Identity then, is who we are individually and collectively (Austin 2005) and can be described as the characteristics that are seen to define a person, family or community.

Change or the prospect of change is likely to provoke concerns about identity (Jenkins 2014). In times of social upheaval and transformation, history becomes especially important for the maintenance of identity over generations because it provides people with a perception of their past in a narrative form, which enables them to stress certain values and make positive identifications with their forbears. The past cannot be directly remembered and can be easily forgotten therefore it must be remembered through narration both on a national and an individual level. All people, nations and regions must deliberately create a narrative of identity, which is a form of willed creation (Austin 2005). The main concern of a narrative activity is the marking out of boundaries, making narrative as well as memory crucial to definitions of identity (DeCerteau 1984). Places, things, habits and traditions all serve as aides to memory, as do narrative activities. Food plays an important role in marking boundaries and maintaining connections with the past and the use of certain foods, meals and cooking styles is a conscious reaffirmation and expression of both personal and ethnic identity. Any individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the food he/she chooses to incorporate and the way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organisation (Fischler 1998). Food then serves multiple purposes for identity; holding and representing place and boundaries as well as national, family and personal histories.

Food and food choices contribute to personal and family narratives and identities through the creation and storage of lasting memories. People learn certain dispositions from early childhood, through their daily practices and their senses and 'those moods and dispositions in turn become fundamental to an expectation of what it is to be a person in a given time and place' (Geurts 2002: 5,
cf. Bourdieu 1984). Eating habits and the bodies they create are concrete symbols of cultural and personal identities:

...our bodies, the foods we eat and the physical nature of our surroundings are 'objects' of the material world. All these serve to define who and what we are, both to ourselves and to others. As objects they are our alter egos, our parallel selves, because our use and understanding of them communicates 'us' and our identity as effectively as the spoken word.

(Pearce 1997: 176)

Food can therefore act as a continual reminder of who we are and what we believe in (Palmer 1998). It forms a constant link with and is a reminder of the past and history, of family and the nation. Food evokes taste, memory and emotions and is important for social relations, identity and selfhood (Caplan 1994).

**Oaxacan Identity**

Oaxaca has a unique ethnic identity within Mexico that has been formed under threat from, in response to and in opposition to others and ethnic identification is first to place, to the pueblo or village. In Mexico, the identities of native groups have been under threat in some form or another since the Spanish conquest and probably even before then under the rule of the ancient Mesoamerican empires (Caplan 1997, Fischler 1988, Pilcher 1998). The Spanish sought to catholicise the native populations and discouraged the use of native foods and practices in favour of the adoption of their own. The city of Oaxaca was built by the Spanish and follows their system of town planning with a grid pattern and a central plaza surrounded by administrative buildings and the church. The city was and is surrounded by a diverse mix of Indian cultures, the two major cultures in the area being Mixtec and Zapotec. In the valley of Oaxaca, a Zapotec area, colonization was rapid and relatively free of bloodshed. The Spanish were eager to form alliances with the nobles of the area who in turn were quick to adopt the Spanish lifestyle and those that could afford it even moved to the city. They used Spanish law and held onto their land, establishing an independent economic base.
Property, race and political power were the three principal determinants of rank in colonial Oaxaca and racial purity was an important concern for both Indians and Spanish who could claim it although there was much mixing of cultures. There was already a well-established market system in the villages which supplied the city. Oaxaca city relied heavily upon the Indians for foodstuffs and supplies during most of the colonial period and by 1970, there was economic integration of the village markets with the city. The valley's market system served Indian and Spaniard alike and created a web of interdependence between them (cf. Chance 1978, 1989).

However, the remote and mountainous nature of the state of Oaxaca has ensured that Indian cultures and many of their traditional practices survived and still survive today. This is despite the homogenising forces of colonisation and global corporate capitalism which are beginning to leave their mark in the form of supermarkets and global food chains and in the commodification of one of the most basic Mexican Indian foods, the tortilla. The villages in Oaxaca remain relatively autonomous. They continue to be places where everyone knows everyone and where people shop daily at local markets rather than at supermarkets. These communities have a hierarchy of social prestige and tradition and change tends to come quite slowly, especially in relation to food ways. Social prestige in such communities is measured by two standards: the degree of confirmation to traditions, and wealth. Embodying traditional values increases or maintains authority and status, which is why traditional celebrations with traditional foods served are so important (Mendras 1970). Many Oaxaqueños are traditional peasants in Mendras' sense, with detailed knowledge of crops, soils and animals that has been developed and passed down through generations.

Oaxaqueños perceive themselves, and are perceived by others to be different from other Mexicans, especially city Mexicans (Mexico City). This is achieved and maintained through rituals, clothing, festivals and special or distinctive foods such as black beans rather than red, larger and different styles of tortillas, mezcal as opposed to tequila, criollo or native corn varieties, distinctive types of chiles
which are endemic to the area, special cheeses, moles and the continued use of ancient cooking and preparation techniques that have mostly been lost in other parts of Mexico where modernisation has progressed more rapidly (Brandes 1998, LeCount 2001, Asimov 2010, Goertzen 2010, Alisau 2013). Oaxaqueños are seen to be deeply religious. In fact, city Mexicans go there for the express purpose of experiencing traditional or authentic religious celebrations such as weddings, Christmas, Easter and The Days of the Dead. Another distinguishing feature of Oaxaca is that over half of the inhabitants are Indian, dress traditionally and continue to speak a variety of native languages whereas in the larger Mexican cities and in the north most people are mestizo or mixed race, tend to speak Spanish and dress in modern styles (Goertzen 2010). Oaxaca relies heavily on tourism and the traditional culture and food are an explicit focus of this tourism. This is reflected in the many cooking classes offered there, the numerous restaurants offering local specialties and the profusion of advertising materials that describe the foods and festivals as traditional and unique.

Oaxaqueños eat certain things in certain configurations, as do all cultures. How things are combined and presented is what makes them recognisable as being from a certain area (Rozin 1983, Rozin and Rozin 2005). These configurations or rules about how to construct a meal are often more important in defining a cuisine than the individual ingredients used but individual ingredients are also important and the inclusion or exclusion of certain crucial ingredients can determine whether or not a meal is acceptable. For instance, corn in the form of a tortilla is an important part of any Oaxacan meal and without salsa in one form or another one is not thought to be eating. In fact, tortillas and salsa must be included for a complete meal. This is with the sometime exception of the breakfast meal, often the first to bend to the influence of foreign foods, which now usually includes sweet wheat bread with coffee or chocolate. Corn is the basis for virtually all foods available including many sweets and hot and cold drinks. It is important for identity because it is rich in ancient and religious symbology as the cornerstone of ancient Mexican cuisine and religious practices. Chocolate is a focus because it too is rich in symbolism and represents ancient Indian traditions, religions and preparation methods. Mythologically, it links
people to the ancestor spirits and to the gods. It sometimes represents the world tree in mythological depictions and the gods themselves are depicted using it as an offering and as a gift in the same way that men do (Mauss 1954, Szogyi 1997).

Seasonal local foods are cherished both for the freshness and variety that they bring to the diet but also because they represent older, healthier, Indian ways. Daily shopping for fresh foods at the markets is a labour of love and devotion and requires special knowledge (Miller 1998). Seasonal food is opposed to supermarket food, which is available all year round but is of low quality in comparison to the fresh local produce, much of which is grown within or on the outskirts of the villages where it will be consumed. At the furthest, market produce is grown in the neighbouring states, for instance cacao comes from Chiapas or Tabasco. Local foods are more meaningful than supermarket foods because they encapsulate the relationships between producers, the environment and history (Angyal 2000, McBrinn 2010). Oaxaca is a place where for the most part, commodities are still linked to persons and are embedded in the flow of social relations (Appadurai 1986). There are still relatively small gaps between producers and consumers as compared with contemporary capitalist economies. Food thus ties people to place and family in a kind of reverse commodity fetishism where the commodities are produced on a relatively small scale and retain strong meanings of place through connections to production and producers (Marx 1976). These connections give them special value and link people directly and theoretically with the land and with a long history of food cultivation.

Place and the history of place then is literally ingested and tasted in foods and drinks with mezcal being an excellent example and one which is marketed and described explicitly in terms of the taste of place, using concepts of terroir (Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005). Mezcal is a rich symbol of the land, seen like wine to literally embody and reflect place in its smoky flavours. Mezcal is nearly always served with worm salt, made using grubs that eat agaves. The eating of chapulines or grasshoppers and other insects is tied to Oaxacan identity because they are a traditional food and local but furthermore they are something that
others don’t eat and therefore they help distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’. Ritual and festival foods such as *tamales* and *moles* are important because they include many of these already meaningful ingredients but also they represent an investment of time and skill and therefore the love of the cook (Adapon 2008). Festival foods also represent money, family, community, nation, ancestors, history, celebration and lavishness. Foods and ingredients become ‘flags of identity’ (Palmer 1998), powerful symbols of collective identification which, as a result of early socialisation ‘and not necessarily obviously, call forth the ‘inarticulate speech of the heart’ in powerful and consequential ways’ (Jenkins 2014: 7).

*A Recipe for Identity*

This chapter has discussed theories relevant to the cultural importance of food in Oaxaca. These include theories of place and space (De Certeau 1984, Feld and Basso 1996), *terroir* (Mendras 1970, Trubek 2005, Paxson 2010), the senses, especially touch and taste (Classen 1993, 2005, Goody 2002, Korsmeyer 2005, Howes 2006), personal, social and habitual body memory (Connerton 1989, Casey 2000), identity (Jenkins 2014, Lepstein 1978), the re-enactment of the past and remembered life stories (Anderson 1983, Pilcher 1998) and classifications such as ethnicity (Bourdieu 1984). I will suggest that these theories are closely intertwined and connected with food and cooking and that shopping for food and making food are labours of love, which partake of aspects of ritual and sacrifice, as do festivals and fiestas (Miller 1998, 2001, Adapon 2008, Christie 2008). Certain labour intensive dishes such as *tortillas* and *tamales* but also individual ingredients therefore act as ‘flags of identity’ (Palmer 1998) and anchor people to place, family, their community, the spirits of ancestors and the past. The sharing of special foods at commemorative events aids memory through the sharing of emotion and group identification and creates social bonds in much the same way as a gift does (Mauss 1954). Through the exploration of these themes I hope to answer key research questions including: What are Oaxacan foods? Why are Oaxacan foods famous? What do Oaxacan foods say
about their society? Why is local food important? Why is food such an excellent carrier of memory and identity? Why are specific foods such as chiles, corn, tamales, chapulines, chocolate, mezcal and mole especially important? How do tradition and history become part of a foodstuff? Is memory stored in items such as foods?

The second chapter describes the two main fieldwork sites: the city of Oaxaca and the village of San Juan Guelavía. It explains the fieldwork methodologies employed (Appadurai and Kopytoff 1986) as well as some of the challenges encountered in the field and attempts to give the reader a sensual 'feel' for the city of Oaxaca and the surrounding townships, especially the village of San Juan Guelavía, the markets and the various foods available. Theories applied to the fieldwork experience include Powdermaker (1967), Chinas (1993), Wolf (1996), Campbell (2001), as well as Robben and Sluka (2007).

I employ Casey (2000) and his arguments about the varieties of human memory to structure the rest of this thesis into two sections, consisting of three Chapters each. Casey's discussion begins with body and place memory and reminding and then considers how these feed into social remembering in the form of commemoration as will this thesis. The first section consists of Chapters three, four and five, which consider the importance of the lived body and therefore the senses, place and particular food objects that serve as reminders or flags of identity (Palmer 1998). These food objects, like the places which they embody, are integral for remembering and therefore for the construction of identity.

Chapter three discusses corn, probably the most important ingredient in Oaxacan food. It is the staple food and the base of every meal, usually in the form of a tortilla. It is an ancient food and native varieties are still farmed by most people within a village, with seed stock passed down through generations. It therefore connects people to their ancient Indian roots and to place. Native corn has also become a symbol of resistance to hegemonic market pressures that are pushing sweet corn from the United States into Mexican markets (Kohl and Farthing 2006, Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Places like Itanoni exemplify this
resistance. Corn is therefore an important holder of memory and flag of identity (Palmer 1998). It is something which people are literally made of, both in mythology and in the daily practice of growing and eating corn in a variety of forms (cf. Mendras 1970, De Certeau 1984).

Chapter four investigates the manufacture and consumption of *mezcal*, an important food for hospitality, sociability (especially amongst men), festivity and ritual. *Mezcal* is believed to embody place, which is discussed in terms of the taste of place, using notions of *terroir* (Trubek 2005, Paxson 2010, cf. Mendras 1970). This makes *mezcal* an important symbol of oppositional identity symbolising 'we' as opposed to tequila or 'them' (cf. Palmer 1998). Tequila represents the rest of Mexico; modernisation, the use of chemicals and factory production, while *mezcal* represents ancient traditions, natural methods and is produced by artisans in small batches. The social conditioning of taste preferences is also discussed in this chapter as *mezcal* is an acquired taste, and displays strong smoky characteristics as do many other foods in Oaxacan cuisine (Rozin and Fallon 1980, Bourdieu 1984). It is also commonly served with *chile* and worm salt or *sal de guisano*. *Mezcal, chile*, and insects are all powerful flags of identity since they are things that foreigners often do not eat.

Chapter five examines the use of chocolate, an important everyday food in Oaxaca as opposed to other places in the world where it is a luxury snack. Chocolate is an ancient food, most often consumed in the form of a drink, which was much used by Indian ancestors. Chocolate is special because it is connected with the gods and ancestor spirits and is believed to be a suitable offering for them. It is therefore also a ritual food and a festival food, especially when it is used to make a *mole negro*. These factors make chocolate a vessel of memory and therefore a strong marker or flag of identity (Palmer 1998). The making of chocolate and in particular black *mole* is a labour intensive process and expresses women’s love and devotion to family (Miller 1998, cf. Adapon 2008).

The second section of this thesis also consists of three chapters; six, seven and eight, which investigate food and memory in its commemorative setting,
examining the role of ritual and participation in the creation and perpetuation of social memories still following Casey (2000). The handing down of recipes through generations is also considered as a form of social memory. This section further examines shopping and cooking as mundane sacrificial rituals that express love and devotion and how women seek to create and maintain relationships of love through these practices (Miller 1998).

Chapter six explores the major festivals in Oaxaca, especially the *Guelaguetza* and the Days of the Dead and how food is an integral part of these events. Offerings are made to the spirits in order to sate them and encourage them to intervene with the gods on behalf of the living. These offerings must include chocolate and *mezcal* and the favourite foods of the deceased (often black *mole*). In any community festive event, the giving of food creates a network of social obligations that holds communities together (Mauss 1954). These events are also important because they express the distinctiveness of Oaxacan culture and are therefore significant for a sense of oppositional identity, attracting spectators from all over Mexico and the world. Festivals in Oaxaca conform very closely to ideal commemorations, displaying all aspects described by Casey (2000).

Chapter seven investigates the social space of the markets and begins with a discussion of the distinctive ingredients found in Oaxacan markets. *Chapulines* and the eating of insects are discussed in relation to the development of oppositional identity as they are thought to be something that only Oaxacans like or enjoy and are often greeted by Westerners with a disgust reaction which locals find amusing (Haines and Sammells 2010). The market system and shopping are important aspects of any study of food and the values and beliefs revealed by these practices are of fundamental importance (Miller 1998). In fact, the practice of shopping can be seen to enact the ritual elements of festivals in the setting of daily life, where the destructiveness of consumption is transformed by being dedicated to a higher being (Miller 1998).

Chapter eight considers cooking that is undertaken daily by women in order to feed their families. It describes the importance of the markets for this cooking,
and how the fresh ingredients described in the previous Chapter are used in various dishes, with a special discussion of mole, the star of the cuisine. The agency of the chef is analysed and cooking is seen as an art, following Adapon (2008) and Christie (2008). Cooking is also viewed as an embodied skill, which becomes a habit and is therefore a potent carrier of memories (Casey 2000). The labour intensiveness of most Oaxacan foods and the exercise of the skills required to cook well is interpreted as an expression of love and sacrifice by cooks and families alike. Cooking is found to perform a similar function to shopping where the sacrifice of time and labour by women transmutes consumption from an act of destruction into an act of love and devotion, used to create and maintain relationships (cf. Miller 1998).

Chapter nine concludes this thesis, showing how these various ingredients, theories and discussions combine to create a recipe for a unique identity, based on common histories, place, memories and understandings which are encapsulated in foods. The protection of native varieties of foods and the conscious eating of them is a daily affirmation of ethnic identity and demonstrates that food is central to culture in Oaxaca.
Ethnographic Fieldwork

People eating, drinking and talking at a café in the zócalo.
This chapter begins with a description of the author's fieldwork experience during 11 months in Oaxaca and then attempts to describe to the reader in statistical and sensual terms what Oaxaca was like in order to give a sense of place and to describe the pleasures and challenges of doing fieldwork there. The fieldwork discussion is informed by the work of Goffman 1959, Powdermaker (1967), Chinas (1993), Wolf (1996), Campbell (2001) and Robben and Sluka (2007).

In Oaxaca, explaining what exactly I was doing was not very difficult. Many people knew what an anthropologist was or had at least heard of them before. One informant shrugged his shoulders and told me that Oaxaca: ‘was full of artists and anthropologists’. It certainly had a very bohemian feel and its vibrant Indian cultures had attracted many anthropologists before me and will no doubt continue to entice others. The place also attracts many tourists who come for the feel, the culture, the festivals and the food. Food was considered to be of utmost importance; every person I spoke to told me about foods I had to try. Most people seemed to think it was perfectly normal for me to be obsessed with food. Informants even ask me what foods I miss most now that I have returned to Australia. I tell them: ‘Memelas, mezcal, tlayudas, tamales, chocolate and mole’.

Speaking with people in a new language can be difficult and uncomfortable at first and possibly one of the greatest or most obvious marks of a different culture. Despite having taken Spanish classes before I left and feeling fairly confident, I found that when I arrived in Oaxaca, my Spanish was near to non-existent especially in the face of fast speaking locals. Learning the language was a little overwhelming at times particularly if you managed to get the first sentence right then people assumed that you could speak Spanish and started talking very fast and expecting you to answer. Panic ensued in these situations for the first few months. I even tried writing pre-emptive scripts for various situations but found that other people never stuck to the script. After a few months I began to feel like I was making some real progress as I gradually became fluent. I considered using a translator for my research but didn’t for a couple of reasons: firstly, I was lucky enough to meet informants who fulfilled this role early on and secondly, the size
and intimacy of Oaxacan kitchens did not allow for extras other than myself. Although I met and interviewed many people, only a few of them became close friends or main informants.

Early fieldwork was very structured with Spanish lessons and translators, prepared and formal recorded interviews as well as commercial cooking classes in the city. I attended 7 classes with Pilar, recorded two interviews formally and had informal conversations with her before and after and during the lessons. I attended 2 classes with Susannah Trilling and conversed with her before and after the classes. I also interviewed her co-worker who took us on the market tours. As my grasp of the language improved I was able to stay with families in the village of San Juan Guelavía, meet informants for coffee in the zócalo, conduct open ended discussions and interviews, observe daily life, listen to other’s conversations and ask questions in an informal manner about cooking techniques, ingredients and practices. I observed Miguel cook 6 times, Paco cook 10 times, and Justino cook 7 times. I watched street food being prepared 50+ times and discussed processes and ingredients with the women who prepared it daily. I interviewed the fruit lady, Rosa, 5 times. I conducted over 50 interviews with informants and had countless conversations and multiple interviews and meals with my closest informants; Amado once, Miguel 15, Paco 10, Pilar 9, Victoria 20, Justino 25, Jonathon 4, Marta 5, Lili 10, Flor 20, Yesenia 5 and Silvia 3 times. I stayed with Justino and his mother, Victoria in San Juan Guelavía, spending my time observing her and her cooking activities 20+ times. I observed and interviewed the women who worked at the Cultural Centre twice when they were cooking foods for large numbers of people. I observed in the markets at San Juan Guelavía 15 times and the city Sanchez Pascua markets 25+ times. I ate at and observed cooking in 60+ restaurants in the city and stalls in the markets in Oaxaca City, Tlacolula and San Juan Guelavía. I attended the Day of the Dead festival, the markets and cooking classes in Etla, the Guelaguetza in the city of Oaxaca, the Saints Day celebrations as well as the heats before the Guelaguetza, a quincíñera and attended a family fiesta in San Juan Guelavía where I watched the preparation of sweet tamales. I watched multiple weddings in the city, attended the Night of the Radishes in Oaxaca City, observed the Easter parade through the
streets of the city. I travelled for a week with Flor to the Istmo region of Oaxaca where I observed cooking and markets and discussed food and culture with her and stayed with local people in their homes.

Sometimes I was in the city where the largest markets were but I also travelled to the villages surrounding the city (Etla, Tlacolula and San Juan Guelavía) where there were smaller more specialised markets and where traditional methods of food production and consumption continued to be used. 'Following the thing' meant conducting multi-sited ethnography where sites included restaurants, festivals, supermarkets, museums, cultural centres, businesses, cooking schools, street stalls, markets, the city of Oaxaca and the town square as well as village squares, village markets and private homes and kitchens (Appadurai and Kopytoff 1986). In the village, I had more opportunities to see food preparation by chance, rather than waiting on invitations, although the city provided a different range of opportunities with daily public cooking in the street stalls and in the markets that I took advantage of as well as various festivals and events involving food that occurred throughout the year. I had decided before arriving in Oaxaca that I should eat whatever the locals ate and accept whatever food was offered to me so as not to offend possible informants, however eating insects was challenging for me as it is for many Westerners (cf. Haines and Sammells 2010).

Fieldwork methods

Fieldwork was based on participant observation. Methods used included hanging out, observation of village and family life, observing cooking for small and large groups, casual conversation, structured and unstructured interviews, tours, attending language and cooking classes, attending cultural events and festivals, teaching, visits to museums and cultural centres, investigations of markets and supermarkets as well as restaurants and street food vendors. To avoid suspicion and awkwardness I preferred to administer questionnaires and interviews in the form of casual conversations and to find people who were willing to talk and to offer me introductions to amenable others (Chinas 1993). This was necessary
because locals tended to be wary of strangers asking lots of questions. They worried that people asking questions might be from the government or the United States trying to raise taxes or see where their political allegiances lay. The method that people were most comfortable with was to obtain verbal consent for the use of information and then conduct casual interviews and informal conversations, which could be recorded from memory in the evenings. Tape recording and note taking generally made people uncomfortable, with the odd exception. It was important to try to fit in with people's ongoing lives and not cause too much disruption, although key informants had to be willing and able to spend large amounts of time answering questions. It was difficult to find translators in the city, as locals were not always willing or able to do this work.

I started my fieldwork by simply walking around the city, following maps, collecting pamphlets, visiting markets, restaurants and street stalls, taking notes and photographs. In this way I was able to orientate myself to my new surroundings and to observe the goings on. I spent the majority of the first weeks in the historical centre of the city in the zócalo (town square) because there were restaurants all around this area which were very 'touristy' and many of the waiters spoke English. It was also a local hang out, a place to be seen, and was always full of people such as musicians, couples, men, women, groups of friends, children, tourists and various vendors of food and other items. I would sit and watch the people go by, observing the numerous interactions, taking notes about what was happening. I was able to study and record many aspects of culture in notes and photographs whilst I gained proficiency in the language. Understandably, people did not always like having their photos taken and shop owners tended not to let you take pictures of their produce without at least asking first and possibly paying a fee. I always asked for permission to take photos and was happy to pay a small fee. People in Oaxaca were generally 'muy amable', (very agreeable). If you asked someone in the street for directions, they never said they didn’t know, they always gave some sort of direction even if it was wrong simply because they wanted to be helpful. As one informant said: 'People would rather give you the wrong directions than tell you they don’t know
the way'. Often, the person you had asked would even walk you to the street you had named to make sure you got there.

It took almost two weeks to get over the feeling of jetlag that I arrived with but by the end of that two weeks, I had met my first informant. One day while I was sitting at a café in the zócalo drinking a cup of chocolate and writing down my impressions, a young man who spoke English approached me. He was from the coast but spent quite a bit of time in Oaxaca city selling his art, which was carved out of wood. He was at leisure whilst in the city and offered to show me around. He was also able to help me find an apartment quite quickly through people he knew in the city. This would have been near to impossible for me to do on my own at that stage, although I had been trying. The language barrier made meeting informants quite difficult in the beginning so meeting someone who was able to speak English was advantageous. Site and informant selections were made as new insights developed, as opportunities arose and to some extent by chance. This first meeting was a chance meeting and I found out about San Juan Guelavía, one of my most important field sites, by a string of pure chance occurrences described below.

I had been attending Spanish lessons for a week or two when my Spanish teacher invited me out to a club one night. I went with her to Café Central and happened to strike up a conversation with a man who worked for the museum. After a while, he introduced me to his boss, Miguel, and after a few hours of discussion with Miguel, we realised that were living in the same apartment block. We walked home together that night and became friends, often eating out at restaurants or at each other's houses and going to the markets together. He was very helpful as an informant for my fieldwork but he also introduced me to many people, including the couch surfers that stayed at his house on a regular basis. One evening, I went out with one of Miguel's couch surfers to meet a man, who was a friend of a friend or hers in the town square. We walked, talked and had dinner together. This man, Justino, was the director of the Casa de la Cultura in San Juan Guelavía. He was very interested in starting an intercambio (language exchange) with me. I took him up on this offer and in the course of one of our
conversations, he asked if I would be interested in volunteering to teach English at the cultural centre in his village. I thought this would be a good way to get 'in' to a village community and agreed to do it. I was right, very quickly it was known that I was the new *Maestra de Ingles* (English teacher) and people began to greet me in the street and initiate conversations with me. I was invited to various fiestas in the village and shown respect by the community. It was satisfying and eased my conscience to have a relationship which involved some reciprocity with my informants and to: 'perform some useful or valued service in return for the collaboration [I] require[d]' (Seymour-Smith 1986a: 117).

I spent approximately half of my time in the village at the *Casa del Cultura*. This was a place provided by the government for the village, which offered free classes for everyone but was mainly utilised by children and young people. Classes offered included *La Danza de la Pluma, Danza de Pina, (Guelaguetza dances) Zumba, English, Guitar and Brass band*. The other teachers were paid for their classes but I was there voluntarily; my payment was entry into the community and invitations to social events, excursions and introductions to various people within the community. On teaching days I caught a taxi like the locals (*collectivos* described below) and had Malinowski-esque (1961) strolls through the village to the cultural centre on the other side of town after being dropped off in the square where the markets were and eating some street food while chatting to stall owners. Villagers could be observed going about their daily business at these times and would often wave or stop to chat. The rest of the time I spent with my host family, trying to learn the native language (Zapotec), observing cooking and food preparation and taking part in daily life.

Although I was accepted in the village and had an 'in' as a teacher, I found that I often still felt like an outsider or stranger. I always felt like I stood out, which I did, as literally the only white person in the village. People were friendly but they also found me strange and amusing. I was laughed at a lot. I found that many times I didn’t understand people or their reactions and I sometimes felt used or cheated in social arrangements and contracts. People over charged me constantly, especially in the beginning. It was done with good humour but I
sometimes found it exhausting to be constantly on guard and having to haggle over every item I purchased. Even the authorities couldn’t be trusted and I believe I was robbed by the soldiers at an army checkpoint I passed through when I was travelling to the Isthmus region. However, I managed to avoid most of the dangers of fieldwork and due to my mundane topic of interest, I don’t think anyone ever suspected that I was a spy (Robben and Sluka 2007).

Gender impacted on data collection and research results in various ways. Powdermaker (1967) suggests that women have an easier time collecting data, however in Mexico this was not necessarily the case. Women did tend to be the gatekeepers in the area of food because gender roles were quite traditional with the men generally working in the fields or elsewhere while the women shopped, cooked and took care of the domestic chores. I was interested in women and kitchens but it was often difficult to meet them and even more difficult to get into their kitchens. Women were outwardly friendly but guarded and not quick to invite a stranger into the private space of the kitchen (cf. Paz 1985, Bayless 2007). In this sense, the kitchen in Oaxaca could be seen as a 'back region' (Goffman 1959), an area that the anthropologist was not necessarily welcome to view or learn about. I was lucky to get into five home kitchens, two on a regular basis, but other than this I found that I had to pay to get into this space, by participating in cooking lessons or by buying street food and watching cooking in the street, restaurants or in the markets. Bayless describes how he too struggled to reach the private spaces where women worked in Oaxaca:

The common walled dwellings that hug the walkways and streets of Mexican towns create a peculiarly strong sense of public versus unapproachable private.... In a country that is so renowned for open festivity. I felt it acutely in Juchitan, Oaxaca, where day after day I heard inexplicable fire fuelled pops and cracks from behind the high wall across the alley from where I was staying. Only after several careful and courteous inquiries was I hesitantly invited into the private patio of the chocolatera.

(2007: 313)

In contrast, the men were overly friendly and clearly considered lone foreign women to be: 'of questionable character, and...irresistible' (Chinas 1993: 16).
It was easy to get invitations to fiestas and public events; even people you had just met were happy to invite you to a fiesta in their pueblo. However these were not the best places for conducting fieldwork, as the music was usually too loud to speak over, meaning that the only option at a fiesta was participant observation. To get an invitation into someone’s house and especially into their kitchen as described above was extremely difficult. Often people would happily agree to such an arrangement in a conversation and then not do anything about it. Women would ask me to come and watch their mother cook a certain dish, which I would eagerly agree to and then I would hear nothing further from them. It was difficult to gauge how many follow up calls would become harassment of informants. Many people either chose to ignore my requests or didn’t understand exactly what I wanted from them despite my numerous explanations. Even later, when I was much better able to explain what I required and had, ad nauseum, to some participants, they continued to invite me to the event only and not to the food preparation, which I had specifically asked to see. Often this wasn’t deliberate evasion; it came down to the fact that people didn’t like to plan ahead. If I happened to be there while they were doing the preparation, as I was by chance on a few occasions, they were more than happy for me to help and observe but they were not prepared to think about it in advance or make a definitive plan.

In general, it was very hard to pin people down, exact dates and times were for the most part avoided. On the other hand, once you had been accepted into someone’s private life, a lot was expected of you. It became apparent that invitations to various fiestas (and there were always many) and other events were no longer optional and if you refused or happened to be doing something else (often the invitation was on the day) then offense was taken. Accepting an invitation to a fiesta incurred a social debt as does gift giving and therefore declining an invitation was considered a rejection of individuals, families and culture as well (Mauss 1954, Chinas 1993). This is supported by the fact that the most common assumption if you were unable to attend an event you had been invited to was that the person inviting you must have done something to offend you. In fact, on one occasion when I was unable to attend a last minute invitation,
my informant sent me an email asking me to explain ‘what she had done to offend me’ and when I explained that I simply had another engagement, it was clear that she didn’t believe me.

I felt prepared for the culture in many ways and did not experience discernible ‘culture shock’ (Seymour-Smith 1986). However, being quite tall and very blonde made the anthropological ideal of ‘blending in’ almost impossible to achieve, although people did get used to me as time went by. Everyday three or four men, sometimes more, commented on my beauty and whiteness. Most of the time this was fairly flattering as it was intended to be, but often this and the constant staring got on my nerves. While I was in Oaxaca, I was constantly approached by or commented on by men. They told me they loved me from car windows, made strange kissing/sucking sounds with their mouths when they passed me, tried to touch me, or followed me around trying to talk to me and asking me out. This sucking sound they made with their mouths was actually a way that was commonly used to tell a woman she was attractive. I discovered this one-day when I was walking in the village with a female informant. Two older men walked past us and made the sound. She said to me: ‘The men love your white skin’. I told her that I found it annoying and she thought that this was hilarious. She told the rest of the family about it when we got to the house and was still telling people about it the next weekend when I returned.

I was constantly addressed as: ‘Güera!’ which translates quite literally into ‘white girl!’. This was not an insult, it was a term also used by market sellers to address customers as I noticed one day when I was shopping with Pilar Cabrera who was also addressed as ‘güera’. The term is used as a compliment because white or light coloured skin is highly esteemed. The general assumption in Oaxaca was that if you were white, you were American, you were rich and you didn’t speak Spanish. However I found that once I started speaking Spanish fluently people were pleasantly surprised and even warmer in their initial attitude towards me. When I said I was Australian rather than American people were even more surprised, commenting on how far away that was (muy lejos!). Often I was asked about the weather in Australia and when I told them that it was a lot hotter than
Oaxaca, they looked stunned and I assume that they were thinking the same thing that an informant once voiced to me, which was: ‘If Australia is so hot, why are you so white?’ My answer was that I wasn’t meant to be there and then I had to explain our colonial history to him. He still wanted to know why after a lifetime of Australian sun I wasn’t more tanned: ‘I just don’t have that type of skin but the Indigenous peoples are much darker than me’, I told him, and he seemed satisfied with that.

_Dangerous Mexico?_

When I stepped off the flight from Mexico City to Oaxaca, I walked down a corridor of armed men into the airport (I also arrived to find that my luggage had been lost in transit). There was a constant presence of police with machine guns hanging at their sides in the city. Groups of them drove around in utility trucks, with machine guns strapped to their backs or on their laps and an even larger machine gun attached to the top of the cab. There was certainly not an 'everydayness' or immediate threat of violence, but the possibility was there (Nordstrom and Robben 1995). There had been violent protests in Oaxaca, which resulted in 'disappearances' a few years prior to my arrival. Mexico in general has a reputation for being dangerous and certainly it is in some parts such as in the Northern Border States where there are problems with narco-trafficking and violence. These same gangs do operate drug trails from South America through the South of Mexico but they seemed to stay away from the city and the villages. Certainly there was fairly heavy border security involving the checking of papers, car boot and interiors, bags, wallets and baggage but overall I got the impression that in Oaxaca, people would much rather help you than harm you.

Friends and family were very worried that I would be robbed or worse and I was constantly warned to be careful. However, robbery was a fieldwork hazard that I encountered only once during transit, when I was disoriented and tired (and unbeknownst the me at the time, suffering from a poisonous spider bite). It was necessary to be alert and aware of your surroundings but I believe this to be so
almost anywhere. I felt safe in Oaxaca but I avoided going out alone at night wherever possible and I chose to live in an apartment complex in the downtown area, which is the main tourist area and had a reputation for being one of the safest parts of town. I also felt safe in the village (San Juan Guelavía) because I was generally with a member of a local family or at least known to be associated with them; they 'took me under their wing' so I had no problems there (cf. Lee 1995).

The main 'danger' that I saw would have been in relation to the lack of building regulations and public liability. Buildings, especially houses in the pueblos, were usually built by hand by the owners and were often quite makeshift. Most houses still had metal rods from early construction spiking out of the top of the house and into the sky. These rods were often utilised as clotheslines. House and fence parts were ingeniously created out of various scrap materials, including old cans. There were person-sized holes in the roads and footpaths, unmarked and un-signpostposted. You literally had to watch where you walked. You also had to watch your head if you happened to be reasonably tall like I am (175cm) because there were tarps strung up in markets and shade cloths lowered with metal poles in the streets, all of which were at head/face height for me or even below that as Oaxacan people are generally quite short. It was also true that in the villages and especially in the pueblos, where most families had farmland allocated to them, that men walked around wielding huge machetes, or scythes depending on what work they were doing on their farmland at the time, which could be a little intimidating. Even the owners of small stores selling fruit in the city or villages tended to use huge knives for cutting and peeling.

Food poisoning was an issue for locals and travellers alike. The tap water was undrinkable; it looked decidedly brown and smelled unsavoury. It was only possible to use and ingest a small amount of it without ill effect, for instance enough to brush your teeth with. Fruits and vegetables had to be washed with 'chlorox' (or another brand of anti bacterial disinfectant) because they were watered with 'black water'. Early in my fieldwork, I took strawberries to a family in San Juan Guelavía as a gift and noticed that they were carefully disinfecting
When I told them that I had eaten a whole bag without disinfecting them they looked horrified and laughed and told me that strawberries in particular were 'muy sucios' (very dirty). They were worried that I was going to be horribly ill, luckily I wasn’t. Locals tended to keep rehydration salts and special teas (mint) for upset stomachs on hand. Bottlenecks also had to be cleaned with a slice of lime and a napkin before you drank from them, as they were often dirty or rusty (the origin of Corona served with lime in the neck). The risk of contracting infectious and parasitic diseases was quite real due to underdeveloped water sanitation systems (Lee 1995). Despite the dangers of the food and water, I ate everything while I was in Oaxaca: ice, salads, street food, unwashed fruit and vegetables and unrefrigerated, partly cured meat and fish. Not only was the food delicious but I hoped that by eating what the locals ate, I would become part of the group more easily (Fishler 1998). Ironically, the one time I was ill with food poisoning was when I brought food from an American bulk buy supermarket.

Oaxaca is on a fault line and has constant temblors or minor earthquakes. These are usually quite gentle and it took me a few weeks to even realise that this was what was happening. The small quakes are easy to ignore, however, while I was in Oaxaca there was a relatively large earthquake. This earthquake occurred on Wednesday, the 21st of March 2012. It measured 7.4 on the Richter scale and was quite scary at least for someone unaccustomed to earthquakes such as myself. The apartment I was staying in was literally shaking from side to side. I ran out of the house in a panic, and crouched, having no idea what else to do. It passed quickly and my landlady thought it was quite amusing that I had locked myself out of my house. The earthquake caused a fair amount of damage in the region, especially the coastal areas, but luckily almost no one was injured.

As far as I could tell there was no such thing as public liability in Oaxaca. Colectivo taxis demonstrated this quite nicely. I would catch them regularly to get to San Juan Guelavia. These taxis were the less expensive transport option because they were shared. The driver squeezed three people into the back seat and two into the front passenger seat. Once I saw a taxi driver put a sixth person
in the open boot before he tore off down a dirt road. Anything could be transported in the boots of taxis and one time I saw five live chickens. Small children rode for free so it was quite common to have two or three children in a taxi as well as the five adults. This system worked fairly well because most Oaxacan people are quite small. However, in the front of the taxi it could be so tightly squeezed that the taxi driver struggled to move the gear stick. The windscreens of these cars were usually cracked and seatbelts were not worn. Without fail there was an image of The Virgin of Guadalupe, of Jesus on the cross and rosary beads hanging from the rear view mirror. When the taxi drove over speed humps and the car was full, the bottom of the car scraped uncomfortably. Other cars such as utility trucks were regularly loaded with people in the back, standing up, sitting down and hanging off the sides.

Another example of freedom from protective laws was the presence of toques in the streets and bars. ‘Toques’ is the name for a machine worn strapped to the body of the vendor. The machine was small, approximately the size of a shoe box and had two cords extending from the box (I was told these contraptions are made from car batteries). To the ends of these cords were attached two metal handles. The idea was that for entertainment you paid to be lightly electrocuted. It was ten pesos per person and people sat in a group holding hands with the first and the last persons holding the metal handles. The charge then travelled through all of them. When I spoke to a Mexican friend about how dangerous this was and asked him: ‘But what if a person has a heart condition?’ His reply was: ‘Well, if they have a heart condition, they shouldn’t be at a bar drinking and smoking’. I asked: ‘But what if they don’t know?’ He had never thought of that before. This was a pervasive attitude in Oaxaca; people were expected to look after themselves.

A friend visited me in Oaxaca over Christmas and we hired a car to drive to the coast. It was during this trip that I felt I understood the need for the religious icons in the taxis and cars; you take your life in your hands on the roads there. At every traffic light there were people weaving through the stopped traffic trying to sell papers, water, fresh juice, coffee, churros (a type of doughnut), washcloths,
or trying to clean the windscreen for you, whether or not you wanted them to. There were disabled people begging from the median strip and people in wheelchairs also weaving in and out of the traffic, begging for money. Once the lights turned green, they hurried off the road as the cars sped off. The minute you left the flat city basin area, you drove on crazily winding mountain roads, which did not stop until you began the descent to the coast eight hours later. On the roads, it seemed like the only rule was to try not to hit anyone. Cars swerved all over the roads trying to avoid potholes and humps. People over-took on the inside, the outside or through the middle of traffic. There were three lanes or two or even four on the highways, seemingly dependent on how people felt at the time. On mountain roads with no safety barriers or fences of any kind we witnessed cars overtaking semi trailers or up to four other cars at a time on blind corners. There could well have been a herd of animals on the road, a car overtaking on your inside, a large unavoidable hump or pothole or rock fall coming out of nowhere. Vehicle accidents were a real danger and a distinct possibility but were luckily avoided (Lee 1995).

**Oaxaca: A Cultural Treasure of Humanity**

Oaxaca is internationally recognised as: 'one of Mexico's most appealing colonial capital cities' and because of its rich history and unique character, it has been declared: 'a Cultural Treasure of Humanity by the United Nations' as has its food (Alisau 2003). The Mexican government has designated most of the city an historic monument and it is protected from development. Oaxaca (pronounced *Wah-Ha-Ka*) is in the far South-East of Mexico, one state in the East (Chiapas) away from Guatemala. It is bordered by the states of Veracruz in the North, Puebla in the Northeast, Guerrero in the West and in the South it is bordered by the Pacific Ocean. The state has a population of 3.8 million people. It is geographically quite large at 93 952 square kilometres and has many different terrains, some rather isolated (*Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*). The state is commonly grouped into three main areas: the coast, the plains and the mountains. These areas have quite different climates, varying from hot and
humid at the coast, to temperate in the plains and cold in the mountains. This climactic variation allows a diverse range of foods to be grown, from the staples of beans, corn and chiles, which grow in most of these places to mushrooms and tropical fruits which grow in the mountains and near the coast, respectively. Historically, Oaxaca was a centre of trade due to its geographical positioning at the intersection of ancient trade routes from South America to Central Mexico which brought many products including chocolate and feathers though the state to the Aztec empire. Despite its status as the second poorest state in Mexico, in some ways Oaxaca can be seen as one of the richest states if one considers its ethnic heritage and its natural resources.

Oaxaca, Mexico, Map data ©2014 Google, INEGI

Oaxaca has the highest Indigenous population in Mexico, which was an attraction when choosing where to undertake fieldwork. For most of the locals, Spanish is a second language. There are fourteen different language groups in Oaxaca including: Amuzgos, Chatinos, Chinantecos, Chochos, Chontals, Cuicatecos, Huaves, Mazatecos, Mixes, Mixtecos, Nahuatl, Triquis, Zapotecos and Zoques.
(Stephen 2005). There are also different dialects of many of these languages. For example there are at least three different dialects of Zapotec spoken within the state. The Zapotecs are the largest indigenous group, followed by the Mixtecs. The different cultural groups have in many cases not only retained their native languages but also their distinctive dress and cooking styles, making Oaxaca the most culturally and linguistically diverse state in the whole of Mexico. It is a place that is perceived as being very traditional, where the Indian peoples were less affected by Spanish conquest than in other parts of Mexico because of the remote and mountainous nature of the region. Despite this fact, the Catholic religion and the celebration of the Saints were adopted quite extensively and the Catholic celebrations such as Christmas and Easter are now also seen as being very traditional. However, many Indian practices have continued relatively untouched and there are many foods that are still prepared using traditional tools, ingredients and methods such as corn and chocolate. In fact the culture of Oaxaca is an interesting and vibrant mix of ancient, colonial and modern aspects. This is especially the case in Oaxaca City, which is compared to the Zapotec village of San Juan Guelavía in the Central Valley, a pueblo where locals retain a strong sense of identity based on place, which has been occupied by Zapotecs since before colonisation (Chance 2001). Therefore this thesis compares village and urban food practices and focuses mainly on Zapotec identity. It does not cover other cultural groups in Oaxaca although some mention is made of them generally and especially in relation to a range of different chocolate drinks made throughout the state.

**Oaxaca and the Senses**

Although sensory experience reaches far beyond verbal or written expression, I will attempt to describe some of the sensual experiences of being in Oaxaca below. Oaxaca City is beautiful. It sits in a natural basin and it is possible to see the surrounding grey-blue mountains from almost any point in the city. Outside of the city, there were fields of corn, cacti and other products, dotted with *torros* (bulls) and men, working in the fields. The weather was fine; it was like constant spring, blue skies and light cloud cover, slightly humid, up to thirty degrees
during the day and cool in the night-time. This idyllic climate and the natural beauty of the landscape are some of the reasons why Oaxaca is such a popular tourist destination.

Oaxaca is a place that virtually assaults the senses, making it extremely memorable (Seremetakis 1994). To be there was to be consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds, and tastes (cf. Stoller 1994). Out of the hundreds of smells in the city streets I identified three dominant smells: that of fresh and rotten fruit and vegetables, freshly cooked tortillas and street snacks and oversweet men’s aftershave (Auvray and Spence 2008). In the villages the streets smelled of manure, animals and sweet corn in a not unpleasant way. Whiffs of copal and the scent of flowers sometimes wafted into the streets from the churches and the markets. The amount of colour was striking; the houses and shops were painted every colour of the rainbow and every possible combination of those colours, usually two that contrasted. Everywhere there were green trees and brightly coloured flowers. In the village streets and the city highways there were coloured flags strung in zigzags across the roads, flapping in the wind. Even the food was colourful, with green and red salsas, multi-coloured sauces and bright fresh salads served as condiments. Aguas (fresh fruit cordials) of every colour from pale pink to deepest red, bright green and orange were displayed in markets and street stalls. Markets were bursting with fresh ripe fruits and vegetables, brightly coloured clothing, flowers and chiles of every hue neatly stacked and beautifully displayed. Coloured embroidery decorated most tops and women wore bright coloured skirts and ribbons in their long plaited hair. Oaxaca is a tactile society where acquaintances and friends greet with a kiss and people were quite likely to touch you on the arm if they were talking to you. At times, drunken men literally stumbled around the streets, stopping to stare at women and trying to touch them or talk to them. Informants told me that ‘this was normal behaviour for men’. The culture is machismo and most women would not react to being touched sexually by an unknown man in the street.

There was a veritable cacophony of noises, not a moment of silence day or night except on very rare occasions. Radios blared so loudly that they distorted from
every shop, including unlikely stores such as optometrists. Vans, trucks and cars drove along in the street with the radios on so loud that it hurt your ears when you walked past them. The trucks selling gas cylinders had a rope with metal rings of varying sizes tied to the back of them which made a high pitched jingling noise as they dragged it around the streets. Usually you could hear them playing the local radio station and every five minutes there was a fog horn blast followed by a man who bellowed: 'Oaxaca! OAXaca! OAXACA!!!!' Then the station theme music was played which was an ear-splitting and jaunty piano number. Vendors rode their converted bicycles around the streets calling out on loudspeakers, advertising what they were selling. Every morning it was possible to hear a particular bicycle vendor shouting: 'Tamales! TAMales! TAMALES!!!' Other vendors had ovens built onto their bicycles that seemed to be steam powered and had a screeching, piercing whistle like a steam engine which could be heard from many streets away in the evenings.

Car horns were a constant and seemed to be used for any and all situations. A taxi driver looking for passengers would beep at anyone that looked like they might want a taxi. The buses and taxis nearly always had music on, always loud. Often there were church bells ringing or sirens screaming through the city. The bang of fireworks was another constant, particularly during the wedding season (December through till April) when parades of revellers walked around the streets following brass bands, drinking mezcal and beer, dancing, shouting, singing and letting off fireworks. During this time in the city there can be up to two or three weddings a day, sometimes more. Fireworks marked the beginning and the end of most festivities. Nights and early mornings sounded like our New Year's Eve. Dogs could be heard endlessly barking and crying. Ordinary people sang, shouted and whistled as they walked down the streets and the night air always carried the sound of a band playing somewhere in the distance, usually it filtered out from the zócalo (town square). All of these sounds were an element of the everyday environment.

A variety of street food was available all day, from dawn until late in the evening in the zócalo, the markets and the surrounding streets. These street stores were
either entirely mobile or they were stationary but set up and taken down again everyday. The foods sold included but were not limited to: boxes of pre-prepared fruits and vegetables including mango, watermelon, pineapple, papaya, strawberries, rockmelon, cucumber, carrot, jicama, coconut, tuna (red cactus fruit), all served with chile, lime and salt; chicharones, (similar to potato chips but made out of pork skin, served with salsa), corn in the form of elotes or esquites, hamburgers and hotdogs, tortas (best described as a Mexican toasted sandwich), tacos and corn based snacks such as memelitas, empanadas, quesadillas and tlayudas. It was also common for women to set up small shops (puestecitos) in the doorways or porticos of their houses. They sold a small range of products that included fresh fruit and vegetables from their gardens and some form of pre-prepared food such as juices, tortadas, pickles or fruits in spiced syrups. The everyday food in Oaxaca was relatively plain fare, although it was always fresh and delicious and it was always served with spicy salsas and condiments. The more complicated dishes such as moles, tamales, pozoles and barbacoas tended to be reserved for special occasions. Corn immediately stood out as an important ingredient as it was on every street corner and incorporated into nearly every snack. Chocolate also stood out because its sweet smell permeated the spaces around markets, restaurants and cafes.

The Zócalo

The zócalo was a great place for observation and it was very pleasant to sit there, as it was somewhat of a hub. It was comprised of two adjoining squares, both of which contained manicured gardens and large trees surrounded by low cement walls and chairs. The zócalo also contained the ‘Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption’. Outside this Cathedral was a popular meeting place and there were often musical concerts and other performances such as clowning shows in this area. Past the gardens, in front of the Cathedral, was a semi permanent outdoor market selling clothes and jewellery. The main part of the zócalo or the larger square was bordered on one side by the Palacio de Gobierno (Government House) and on the other by the side of the cathedral. The remaining two sides
were filled with cafes and restaurants and a few retail shops. Because of the large numbers of people in the zócalo, mobile snack vendors were also attracted there and set up in the outer corners. There were always beggars in the streets, small children in tow, asking for money for food or trying to sell individual chewing gums and other sweets that they had bought in bulk to sell at a small profit. If you walked home late at night, it was possible to see people sleeping in the city streets and especially in the town square (almost fifty percent of the people in the state are malnourished due to poverty and the vast majority of this fifty percent live in the pueblos).

The zócalo was often decorated with lights or other displays depending on the time of year. At Christmas time, the whole garden was planted out with special Christmas flowers (poinsettias) and decorated with illuminated stars and two very large nativity displays. The zócalo used to be the site for the central marketplace however as these markets grew, they became too large for the area and began to clog the city streets. This market was moved to the outskirts of town and is now the Abastos markets. However, a vestige of the central markets remains in the Noche de Rábanos (Night of the Radishes) held on the 23rd of December, which is a major tourist attraction (discussed further in Chapter 6). It is clear that tourism is the main industry for the entire state, especially the city and the zócalo. This bias in the city was confirmed by the inflated prices, the blandness of the food, the types of food available and what times they were available. Most notably, regional platters containing chapulines and mole were available all year round when these products are seasonal and special and wouldn’t be eaten by locals all throughout the year. The city displayed other signs of globalisation with supermarkets, malls and fast food stores such as McDonalds, Hungry Jacks and Dominos appearing in the outer city streets. However, these businesses were kept out of the historic city centre, which was a protected heritage area due to its Spanish colonial buildings. There were a number of International restaurants including Thai, Italian, Chinese and Moroccan as well as regional restaurants selling distinctive foods from different areas of Oaxaca such as the Isthmus region.
Oaxaca City, with the central Zócalo in green. Oaxaca, Mexico, Map data ©2014 Google, INEGI
San Juan Guelavía

San Juan Guelavía is a Zapotec village approximately half an hour's drive from the city of Oaxaca and one of my main fieldwork sites. Generally there were more women than men the village as many men left their homes for work either in larger Mexican cities or in the United States. The men who remained were for the most part farmers with a family plot or milpa where they grew corn, animal feed and other vegetables. Animals were everywhere in the village; they lived in people's yards and could often be seen in the early morning and the evening being herded through the streets back and forth from the yard to the milpa. Most families owned chickens and one or two pigs; also goats, donkeys, cows and bulls were common. Houses were most often built in sections by the family as funds became available and were sometimes quite makeshift, with spikes from early construction sticking out of the roofs and walls and fences made of scrap metals such as old cans.

The village lifestyle was more traditional than that in the city and women continued to use metates for grinding corn, chocolate and sauces although a mill had been built there for grinding corn. Food was either grown at home or in the milpa or else purchased daily from the markets, which were situated in the town square, next to the church. The women wore coloured ribbons in their hair and distinctive blue or black and white patterned scarves, which they wrapped around their heads or shoulders and sometimes used as padding when carrying big baskets on their heads. The majority of the older women wore traditional clothing consisting of a knee length dress or skirt made of patterned material or coloured lace, with a blouse and a highly ornamental embroidered apron over the top. They generally wore a plainer apron around the house while preparing food and then changed into the ornamental one when they left the house to go out visiting or to the markets.
Map showing the village of San Juan Guelavia, Oaxaca, Mexico, Map data ©2014 Google, INEGI
Conclusion

Oaxaca is a vibrant, noisy, colourful and hugely interesting place with a huge range of distinctive foods available and many markets. It is a place where you are expected to look after yourself and although there were some dangers present, overall it was a safe place to conduct fieldwork. The many festivals and the Indian cultures and crafts attract tourists from all over Mexico and the world. The local people were outwardly very friendly but it was sometimes hard to really get to know them, especially women, and to gain access to private spaces such as the kitchen. The history of the city is palpable with the zócalo in the colonial historical centre and the city surrounded by ancient Indian archaeological sites and cities such as Monte Alban, Mitla and Yagul. It is also evident in the ancient technologies such as the metate and the donkey powered crushing wheels used to make mezcal and in the ancient ingredients which are still used everyday such as corn and cacao. People continue to shop for these foods daily at their local markets, an institution which is ancient in the region. Oaxaca is a place that a person could spend a lifetime in and still be learning about the huge range of different cultures and foods there. All of these factors made it a challenging and rewarding field site.
Section 1

The following chapters focus on the social lives (cf. Appadurai, Kopytoff 1986), values and special meanings of particular commodities in Oaxaca. These are: corn, chile, chocolate and mezcal. All of these foods perhaps excluding mezcal, are consumed on a daily basis in Oaxaca but they are also important festive foods and are rich in meaning and symbolism. For instance, a Day of the Dead offering would not be complete without chocolate, mezcal and corn and a daily meal would not be complete without corn tortillas and salsa. In addition to their daily and festive importance, these foods stand out as sensual reminders and symbols of the local and historical as opposed to the global and modern (Inda and Rosaldo 2008), acting as anchors or ‘flags of identity’ (Palmer 1998, Casey 2000). The associations and narratives that are carried by these foods serve to define identity because they delimit boundaries which decide what is and isn’t chocolate, what is and isn’t mole and what is and isn’t Oaxacan (DeCerteau 1984). The transmission of these narratives, boundaries and associations through recipes and individual ingredients is very important for the maintenance of a unique ethnic identity. Food has a natural homogenizing effect, as do the forces of global capitalism, cutting across boundaries and increasing intimacy, equality and solidarity (Counihan and Kaplan 1998). To reassert differences between people, rules and narratives are created and which emphasise distance, rank and segmentation. It is ‘deep play’, a species of competitive encounter: ‘within a shared framework of rules and meanings in which what is risked are profound conceptions of self and other, high and low, inside and outside’ (Appadurai 1981: 509).
The phenomenal or lived body as a receptacle of memories

Phenomenology is a useful perspective when considering foods, the senses and practices such as shopping, cooking and eating because it is devoted to discerning and thematising that which is indistinct or overlooked in everyday experience. Casey (2000) uses a phenomenological perspective to prove that memory is not wholly mental and is not limited to the mind in the ways that one might think. He suggests that memory also involves factors that are external to the mind such as physical reminders, the concrete discourse of reminiscing and other human beings; what he calls mnemonic modes. Casey describes how we are literally surrounded by reminders in our daily lives; including timetables, recipes and signs that stop us from being engulfed in forgetting: 'it is as if reminders constituted a gigantic exoskeleton of memory, serving to protect it from oblivion by their determinacy, their unique combination of noticeablity and reliability' (Casey 2000: 90). These reminders are what Palmer (1998) would call 'flags of identity' which surround and support our ongoing existence. They signal to us what we should remember to do or think and who we are: 'for by being reminded we are drawn into ourselves by what is outside ourselves' (Casey 2000: 103). Reminding brings together and unifies human experience; it connects past, present, future, duty, desire, the forgotten and the remembered. Reminding, reminiscing and recognising then are forms of memory writ large, they mediate between and connect the mind and the body and the body and the world, taking us beyond the confinement of the mind as the exclusive receptacle of remembering.

Casey emphasises the centrality of body memory in daily experience and for memory in general: 'if the body is indeed 'the natural subject of perception' and the 'point of view on points of view', [then] body memory is in turn the natural center of any sensitive account of remembering' (Casey 2000: 148). He defines body memories as those that are intrinsic to the body, that are in and by and through the body rather than of the body. The body has its own intentionality that is not a part of consciousness. Like the organs it is made of, the body is itself an organ, which acts unconsciously. This means that many body memories,
especially habitual ones, do not need to be accompanied by consciousness in any explicit form. This is demonstrated in the learning of skills such as reading, riding and cooking which are often completely forgotten except that we remember how to do them, or at least the body does, at which point they have become habits or habitual body memories (Connerton 1989). The body as a memorial container then grants unmediated access to the memories held within it. This is because it re-enacts the past and therefore it does not need to represent it, so no mediation by the conscious mind is called for. Body memories are some of the very last to leave us as we age due to their continued use throughout a lifetime, which strongly suggests their fundamental importance. Casey goes so far as to say that we could not remember in any other modes or forms without having the capacity for body memory and that all memory is in fact based on body memory. To begin with, we recall events from our bodily point of view and because the body is the primordial perceptive mode then the bodily basis will be intrinsic to any connection with any past (and any future). The body is therefore intrinsic to memory of any kind and this means that the self is always present in remembering and that: ‘all that we call 'the person', 'personal identity', and the like - everything, in short, that pertains to an individual’s life-history - is rooted ultimately in body memory’ (Casey 2000: 176).

The phenomenal or lived body acts as a receptacle of memories; it is a place. Casey (2000) defines a place as something that occupies a position relative to other objects; it is a fixed position in relation to a systematic whole. Place is distinctive and stable and therefore memorable because ‘it is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability’ (Casey 2000: 186). Localisation or place is much more important than time in the recall of memories and is of prime importance after body memory: 'if body memory moves us - is the prime mover of our memorial lives - it moves us directly into place, whose very immobility contributes to its distinct potency in matters of memory' (Casey 2000: 215). Memory is supported by place and memory itself is a place for places. Place serves to contain, shelter and protect the items or episodes on which the act of remembering comes into focus. The body is what takes us into places and
habituates us to them, helping us to remember them vividly. The lived body mediates between memory and place and:

Puts us in touch with the psychical aspects of remembering and the physical features of place. As itself moveable and moving, it can relate at once to the movable bodies that are the primary occupants of place and to the self-moving soul that recollects itself in place. Above all, through its active intentional arc, the lived body traces out the arena for the remembered scenes that inhere so steadfastly in particular places: the body's maneuvers and movements, imagined as well as actual, make room for remembering placed scenes in all of their complex composition.

(Casey 2000: 189)

Place is then the primary scene in which we hold onto memories, the frame on which we hang them so to speak and places are as much in us as we are in them: 'as much as body or brain, mind or language, place is a keeper of memories - one of the main ways by which the past comes to be secured in the present, held in the things before us and around us' (Casey 2000: 213).

The customary or habitual body is focused on orienting itself in place, which arises in the ever-lengthening shadow of our bodily past. It brings the past into the present and enacts it rather than simply picturing it, as is the case in other forms of remembering. The body place is an organisational centre and things gain position in relation to it. The body's place within a place is then a centre of anchoring. Memory and place, like identity, involve a sense of intrinsic delimitation that comes from within as well as without. Houses hold memories and are the primary exemplars of remembered places: 'precisely as self-enclosed, houses encourage memories in which intimacy is a leading value' (Casey 2000: 211). A house and especially a childhood home serve as active enclosures for the most cherished and intimate memories of place. Material things or objects frequently constitute the specific content of places and memories alike and things such as foods then become centres or anchors in places and provide points for attentive reattachment. Place and anything that connects us to it including the objects in it are extremely important for memory, upon which identity is based. One of the reasons that foods are so important is because they link the body mentally and physically to place by the ingestion of place. Also food
consumption happens in the self-enclosed, most intimate and therefore the most memorable place of all, the home and specifically the kitchen.

**Flags of Identity**

Any discussion of identity needs to take into account the physical landscape within which it operates and the human body, as the mediator between the natural and the cultural cannot be ignored (cf. Casey 2000). The body can represent culture and identity both to the society to which it is attached and to others. Echoing Casey's (2000) discussion about the importance of things in places as points of attentive reattachment, Palmer (1998) expands on Billig's (1995) concept of national flags and banal nationalism to highlight the importance for identity of such commonplace things as the body, food and the landscape. These commonplace things are as much flags of identity or symbols of national belonging as are the more obvious examples of flags, coins, costumes and ceremonies such as festivals (discussed further in Chapter 6). She argues that flags can consist of nearly anything that reminds people who they are and where they belong and that the reminding or flagging of nationhood is continuous and happens on a daily basis. It is often unconscious but nonetheless keeps people aware of where they belong, what they believe in and who they are. Such flags are to be found in the daily habits and routines of life, which is why people do not forget their identity. In Oaxaca this identity is nationally Mexican, regionally Oaxacan and ethnically diverse.

The idea of nation or of a national identity 'is inextricably tied to a sense of history, to the memories and traditions that have been handed down from one generation to the next' (Palmer 1998: 177). The imagined shared knowledge and similar basic understandings including religion, race, foods and festivals are what serve to create a sense of belonging and of community with others whom one may never actually meet in person (cf. Anderson 1983). National styles of eating reflect cultural traditions and beliefs and as discussed above, act as reminders, making eating a daily reaffirmation of identity. In fact, food
consumption is often used to define and maintain identity boundaries and especially to define minorities from the dominant core identity of the nation. This is certainly the case in Oaxaca, where the traditional, ethnic, regional food is opposed to 'Mexican'. Food links with and reminds of the past becoming a badge or flag of identity and signalling who we are to ourselves and others and in recounting a personal or shared historical narrative, which maintains collective and individual identities, it is important where and when things happened (cf. Casey 2000).

Especially when cultures are faced with change or 'threatened' from outside forces, objects or things with long historical associations become fundamental referents of identity. In Oaxaca these things include foods such as insects, *chiles*, corn, chocolate and *mezcal*, which have ancient histories and meanings. These histories and meanings are entwined in stories of personal and collective identities and serve to stabilise identity in the face of change. Insects, corn, chocolate, *chiles*, and *mezcal* then become:

Symbols of the 'past', mythically infused with timelessness...[they] attain particular effectiveness during periods of intensive social change when communities have to drop their heaviest cultural anchors in order to resist the currents of transformation.

(Cohen 1985: 102)

The following three chapters therefore explore the symbolism of these foods, their histories, their uses, their meanings and their ongoing importance for Oaxacan identity.
~3~

First Foods: Corn

Nixtamalised corn cooling in a pot.
Corn paste (masa), ready to be pressed out into tortillas, with some quesillo (cheese) pulled into strips for making empanadas, on a metate in Victoria’s outdoor kitchen.
Using a tortilla press to make fresh tortillas from corn masa.
Any bite of food in Oaxaca will include corn. In this chapter, I will discuss corn’s role as a food that is fundamental to both Oaxacan cuisine and to being Oaxacan. It is one of the things that the gods made man out of, something that creates Oaxacan people both Mythologically and as a daily practice (cf. Goody 1998). Corn is the very basis of Oaxacan cuisine; it is the staple food and people do not feel full unless they have eaten tortillas with their meal (Adapon 2008). Once when I was at a restaurant with an informant who always asked for extra tortillas, sometimes even a third round, I asked him if he had to pay for the extras. 'No', he said to me, 'Tortillas are like water', demonstrating that tortillas are so fundamental and important to the meal that they are taken for granted, expected. Corn and corn-based foods are recognised as an important symbol of Mexican Indian ethnicity and cultural heritage, with a single grain of native corn literally embodying thousands of years of history.

Corn is a commodity that is produced by virtually every family in a typical Oaxacan village and all members of the group share knowledge about corn although it is often divided by gender into production (men) and consumption (women). Fathers and mothers pass down technical, social and aesthetic knowledges mainly concerning how to grow and how to consume a product. In the case of corn, the tending of the milpa (corn field) is an ancient art handed down from father to son, while the making of tortillas is a comparable art, handed down from mother to daughter (cf. Van der Ploeg 1993, Mendras 1970, DeCerteau 1984, Appadurai 1986). Corn is therefore a highly marked food, a flag of identity, which ties Oaxacan people to their family home and history, ancient mythology, pre-colonial past and place (Palmer 1998). The meanings of foods and especially of corn: 'are part of a cultural history that is learned, practiced, and constructed' (Lind and Barham 2004: 49). A movement, which is here represented by Itanoni, has arisen in Oaxaca to protect local and ancient varieties of corn (criollo) in the face of market pressure to buy American sweet corn, proving once again how important corn is to local people and illustrating global/local tensions (cf. Kohl and Farthing 2006, Inda and Rosaldo 2008).
There are a variety of specialty markets for maize in Oaxaca. Blue maize is grown and used for tortillas and snacks; it is preferred because it is higher in antioxidants than other types of corn and has a slightly different flavour. A large grained, white, floury maize is used for making pozole, a corn and meat based soup, which is very popular. The harvest of this white maize for pozole must be done by hand as the ears and large grains are easily damaged and the cooking process for the grains, required to prepare them for use, is also lengthy. Totomoxtle or maize husks are grown and used for wrapping tamales. Red or pink maize is fed to livestock and in some areas made into tortillas. Elotes or fresh green maize on the cob is sold grilled, boiled or degrained as esquites. Huitlacoche, a fungus otherwise known as 'corn smut', destroyed and discouraged in the United States, is considered a delicacy and cultivated. In fact, huitlacoche is an ancient Mexican Indian word which when translated means: 'excrement of the gods', demonstrating a connection of corn with the divine. As is demonstrated here 'the range of Mexican corn varieties is rich and fascinating and Oaxaca state is one of the greatest centers of corn-based cuisine' (Martinez 1997: 90).

The Art of Locality

Mendras (1970) discusses traditional polycultivating family farms in France, which can be compared to family farms in Oaxaca. He describes peasant agriculture and the intimate knowledge of the land that is built up through generations as an: 'art of locality'. In this type of society, children are apprentices and assistants, with the son inheriting the field from the father. The son knows all the most intimate details of the field, the result of long years of apprenticeship, work and observation. This is a knowledge that he alone possesses, what used to be called a 'feeling' for the land and the animals. The field is thus felt to be made, a product of constant care, and the farmer is its creator. The different combinations of soils and microenvironments combine to make each plot of land unique, requiring intimate personal knowledge in order to farm it properly. This is what makes agriculture an art of locality, because 'each bit of ground is unique.
and...intimate personal knowledge of it is the first requirement of cultivation' (Mendras 1970: 48). This uniqueness extends to the products grown in this way and in these soils. Further paralleling my findings in Oaxaca, Mendras specifically discusses the introduction of hybrid corn from the United States of America. The peasants in France resisted this new crop to begin with displaying a strong identification with 'our' (native) corn and stating that American corn belonged in America.

In most traditional peasant societies prestige is measured by two standards: wealth and conformity to tradition. In general, any income is hoarded or invested rather than spent. Change comes slowly because farmers like to test new crops before they accept them; otherwise it is too much of a risk (Mendras 1970). The economic pressures of farming combined with social pressures to conform and show respect for traditional norms therefore encourage conservatism. In such societies, both the self and society are threatened by rapid change. The pressure to grow new corn varieties and abandon native crops and methods of agriculture is a result of processes of Globalisation, which Inda and Rosaldo (2008) define as the intensification of global interconnectedness, involving movement, mixture, contact, linkage and cultural interaction and exchange. Globalisation effects a compression or speeding up of time, space, flows of capital, people, goods, images and ideas across the world. Borders and boundaries are becoming increasingly porous and global links are becoming somewhat regularised which means that what happens in one area of the globe can have consequences for cultures and communities in quite distant locales around the world. There is a heightened entanglement of the global and the local, often with cultures mixing in conditions of radical inequality. This often leads to a view of globalisation as cultural imperialism, where certain cultures, specifically Western/United States, dominate over others. Although this is clearly true in some respects, it assumes that other cultures are passive consumers when often they interpret, translate and appropriate or resist imported cultural goods, in this case hybrid corn. Globalisation is complex and can involve movement from periphery to periphery and periphery to core as well as core to periphery (Inda and Rosaldo 2008).
The global has an influence on the experiences of people living their everyday lives especially as global interaction increases and although people continue to live their lives locally, their phenomenal worlds have to some extent become global (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Modern political and ideological struggles are thus often framed in terms of cultural authenticity versus foreign influence. Traditionally culture, defined as the way in which humans construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation, encompasses both the practices through which meaning is generated and the material forms in which it is embodied. This traditional idea of culture has usually been tied to a fixed place or territory; however, the process of globalisation pulls culture away from place. Such developments have led to increased concerns about individual and national identities, which are concerned with the maintenance of boundaries between 'us' and 'them', global and local, traditional and modern. Identity is competitive and comparative in nature and state identity is opposed to national identity, regions are opposed to states and ethnicities are opposed to regions.

National identities are to a large extent a creation of the imagination (cf. Anderson 1983). Like this idea of 'nation', the idea of a 'community' is also mentally and symbolically constructed 'making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of.....identity' (Cohen 1985: 118). After language, food is probably the most important bearer of national identity and can carry a symbolic load far heavier than nutritional or preferential arguments can capture (Lind and Barham 2003, Wilson 2006). Food itself is a powerful metaphor that blurs boundaries between things and persons, linking nature and culture, survival, health and livelihood. Everyday food practices then connect us to broader assumptions about living in society through webs of signification which link people to food, history and social pasts. These meanings of foods are part of a cultural history that is learned, practiced and constructed and differ from one group to another, although they are though to be natural 'traditions' that we associate with the way we grow, process, distribute, prepare, and eat our food were in large measure constructed through the larger social processes of colonialism, development, and globalisation' (Lind and Barham 2003: 49).
**The Divine Seed**

In Oaxaca, despite global pressures, the making of tortillas and the growing of corn (called *maize*) remain largely unchanged since ancient times. While I was in Oaxaca (2012) some of the most ancient domesticated corn on record was discovered in caves at the archaeological sites of Yagul and Mitla. The use of corn almost certainly began when a wild grass was tamed and cultivated and at some early stage *nixtamalisation* was discovered, where ash or lime is added to the water used to boil dried corn kernels. This process renders the kernels softer and allows for easier removal of the outer husk, making the nutrients more available during digestion. Without the discovery of *nixtamalisation*, the Mexican Indians would not have been able to survive on corn as they did (cf. Zizumbo-Villarreal et al. 2012). Corn is grown in a *milpa* or cornfield, which usually contains *maize* (corn), beans and squashes (pumpkins and zucchinis). These plants work together, with the beans growing up the *maize* plants and fixing nitrogen in the soil while the squash grows on the ground and protects the area from insects by attracting and then poisoning them. It is an ancient and natural symbiotic system, which works very well. This *milpa* agro-ecosystem is one of the more important and distinctive cultural elements in Mexico and especially Oaxaca. It is also the basis of a popular soup, *sopa de guías*, a soup worth mentioning here as it is made out of everything that can be found in a cornfield and contains corn on the cob, squash, squash blossom, young squash stalks and leaves and a wild herb called *chepil*.

There are many practical reasons why farmers continue to grow native corn varieties. The climate in Oaxaca can be harsh and native varieties are better adapted to the environment. Buyers of corn value freshness and local produce and therefore tend to buy from neighbours, small sellers, roadside stands and local markets. Products such as corn and *mezcal* (Chapter 4) are still local and unregulated in Oaxaca where production is small scale. Such products are sold mainly to friends and neighbours meaning that a lot of buying and selling happens 'off the books'. Agriculture, in this case the growing of corn and
particularly the specialty corn varieties that are consumed in Oaxaca, is an 'art de localité' (Mendras 1970). The cornfield, in parallel to cooking knowledge for women, is handed down through apprenticeship from father to son, along with all of his knowledge of the land. Many crops are grown rather than a single crop and 'the diversified influence of microclimates combines with the peculiarities of the soil to individualize each piece of land' (Mendras 1970:47) as well as the products of that land.

After long years of apprenticeship, work, experimentation and observation, farmers have knowledge of their land that they alone possess and therefore they alone are able to cultivate that land properly. The soil and the corn seed are then a product of his and his ancestor's constant care:

*It is a living thing that has arrived through each person in the village, working year after year, for six thousand years, so when I eat it; I eat with all the energy of my history. One grain represents all this. Something alive that came from thousands of years ago.*

(Amado, Owner of Itanoni)

The growing of corn therefore represents an ancient art de localité, where the men hold specific and intimate knowledge of their cornfield, which has been handed down for generations along with ancient varieties of corn seed, meaning that corn and the place where it is grown hold Mexican Indian history both literally and symbolically (Mendras 1970, cf. Casey 2000). As happened in France, native corn becomes 'our corn', whilst American corn should stay in America. The insistence on using and preserving native corn varieties then represents a form of counter hegemonic resistance (Kohl and Farthing 2006).

In peasant communities, and especially the somewhat isolated village communities in Oaxaca, change comes slowly. When this is the case, personal identity tends to be more concerned with constancy and tradition rather than flexibility and adaptation. On the whole, crops are grown to feed the family and domesticated animals for the year rather than for profit. New strains of corn which require new technologies to grow and prioritise productivity over all other factors are then seen as a threat where 'a strain of corn can seem to some
people a vehicle of clericalism and American imperialism' (Mendras 1970:43, cf. Kohl and Farthing 2006). The introduction of hybrid corn means a new economy and a new society where farmers must become merchants, must buy seeds, machinery and fertilisers and are at the mercy of 'the market' and 'experts'. It also provides a new way for the government and administration to meddle in the affairs of the peasant, as is the case with the standardisation of products such as mezcal (Chapter 4).

'Corn and beans, this is what feeds us'
(Amado, Owner of Itanoni)

Through a lifetime of consumption, corn (maize) literally makes Oaxacan bodies. Corn has further significance due to the mythological belief that people were made from corn, the 'divine seed', by the gods. Corn is something that is consumed by all members of the group and therefore corn, like rice, similarly comes to represent 'we'. Ohnuki-Tierny describes this phenomenon excellently:

The power of food as a symbol of self-identity derives from the particular nature of the symbolic process involved. An important food as a metaphor of a social group involves two interlocking dimensions. First, each member of the social group consumes the food, which becomes part of his or her body. The important food becomes embodied in each individual. It operates as a metonym by being part of the self. Second, the food is consumed by individual members of the social group who eat the food together. Communal consumption of the food leads to...

Foods, especially staple foods like corn, are used as metaphors and in this case, corn becomes a metaphor for ethnicity and tradition as well as history and community. The symbolism of corn as 'our' food and the cornfields as 'our land', reinforce each other, playing an important role in the identities of Oaxacans. Corn binds men, women, ancestors and history together:
This plant is permanent and constant reproduction. Life, death, man, woman. From this (corn) our ancestors constructed their way of seeing the world..... I understand who I am when I look at corn. Corn is something very profound in our history.

(Amado, Owner of Itanoni)

Corn products are a result of gender complementarity and cooperation where the men grow corn while the women make tortillas: 'the tortilla is the providence of women whose role at the hearth is that of a gatekeeper to the inside meanings of culture, the family, the home and the meal' (Lind and Barham 2003: 54). In many ways the kitchen and the women who work in the kitchen, are the centre of social life in Oaxaca and are its heart and soul (cf. Adapon 2008). They spend many hours a day making food for the family and tortillas are arguably the most important food they make.

Corn is an essential foodstuff that is eaten everyday for breakfast, lunch and dinner and is the foundation of the Oaxacan kitchen. Fresh corn is eaten grilled and boiled and mobile street stalls can be found all over the city, especially around the zócalo, selling fresh cooked corn on the cob (elotes) and soupy corn in a cup (esquites), served with mayonnaise, chile, salt, a crumbly tangy white cheese (queso fresco), and fresh lime juice. However, most corn is dried and stored on the cob, to be de-grained by hand as it is needed, so that corn crops last the year or more with a good harvest. This dried corn must be processed (nixtamalised) to be edible and nutritious. The nixtamalised corn is most commonly made into a paste called masa, which is formed into tortillas although sometimes it is ground into a slightly courser paste for making tamales. Tamales are a type of corn cake, made of lard and coarsely ground corn paste, wrapped in a cornhusk or a banana leaf and often (although not always) filled with various ingredients including moles, beans and meats. Tamales are a common food and are eaten daily however they are also a special use of corn and when filled with luxury ingredients such as black mole and chicken or turkey, they are marked as special, celebratory and traditional (Palmer 1998).

Other common uses of corn masa include the making of hot and cold gruel drinks called atoles, for which masa is mixed with water and cooked until it thickens.
Atoles are traditionally made with corn, water and sometimes chocolate but others are now made with nuts, rice, wheat and milk. They are creamy and slightly thick in texture, flavoured with canela (Mexican cinnamon) and sweetened with panela a brown sugar, similar to palm sugar. These drinks are very popular for breakfast and are sold from mobile carts in the zócalo along with various types of tamales. They are delicious and very filling, *great for young children (minus the sugar) and also for sustaining the men who work hard in the fields* (Victoria). Corn paste is sometimes added to soups and sauces to thicken them as it is for *sopa de guías*. Although there are many uses of masa as described, the main use is for making tortillas, the basis of any meal.

I spent time watching Victoria make tortillas in her outdoor kitchen, she seemed happy to have some company during this fairly lengthy task, which she usually completed alone apart from the company of her pet cat and chickens. In the evenings, she and her husband sat and removed the dried corn kernels from the cobs, collecting them in a bucket. This was corn that he had grown and then dried and stored for the year in a shed attached to the house. To make tortillas in the morning, she boiled the dried corn kernels with water and lime (*cal*) overnight. In the morning, when the corn had cooled, she drained it, rinsed it and took it to the local mill to be ground into a paste. When she returned, she ground the paste one more time on the metate to get the right texture, something that made her tortillas better than others’ (attested to by her family’s comments but also by the fact that her neighbours purchased her tortillas from her). Once the masa paste was the right texture, she pulled balls of it off and kneaded and pressed them into a flat round cake (a tortilla) using her hands and then finishing the process with a tortilla press. *'It is important that the tortillas are pressed out carefully and are evenly flat and thin, otherwise they will not cook properly' (Victoria).* She peeled the tortilla off the plastic which lined the press, onto her hand and then placed them carefully on the comal, as they can easily fold and break if they are laid without care, even by someone like Victoria who had been making them all her life. She then cooked them one by one and turned them from side to side until they were done, placing them in a basket lined with a tea towel. The time this process took has been drastically reduced by the introduction of
mills and tortilla presses. Prior to this, the entire process was done by hand and women rose many hours before dawn to make the day's tortillas, which Victoria remembered.

Masa paste does not last longer than twenty four hours before it turns sour and cooked tortillas go stale in a day so women must know or judge exactly how much paste to make in order to feed the family for the day without wasting any. Smooth tortillas are prized and commented upon by families but to make them smooth to Oaxacan tastes, they must still be finished on a hand grinding stone (metate). The making and cooking of tortillas therefore requires a practiced hand and a careful eye. Women are judged on how well they make food, particularly something as 'basic' as tortillas and making them well is recognised as highly skilled work, a way of expressing love and devotion for the family and of gaining status in the community (cf. Adapon 2005, Miller 1998, Bourdieu 1984 and Chapter 8). Victoria's tortillas were greatly appreciated by her family and by the wider community in San Juan Guelavía, who purchased her tortillas on a daily basis.

Tortilla mechanisation and the commodification of corn have pushed peasants into the national economy. As a result of this, agribusiness has entered corn production and manufactured tortillas have become available along with other mass produced foods such as soft drinks and potato chips. The tortilla is now a fast food component of the diet of twenty first century Americans. These types of outside pressures encourage Oaxacan people to define themselves by their ancient traditions such as the eating of native corn, the drinking of chocolate, unique local knowledges, daily market shopping, using traditional cooking methods and the making of moles: 'as cuisines internationalize in many parts of the world, ethnic festivals and food ways 'revive'. These 'ethnic revivals' often are 'invention[s] of the tradition' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 4). This desire to maintain ethnic traditions in the face of global pressures is quite pervasive in Oaxaca and it is here represented by the restaurant Itanoni (discussed below), which seeks to preserve the diversity of native corn varieties and rejects American sweet corn. Sweet corn from the United States cannot be used to make
tortillas, it doesn't contain enough starch and will not hold together once it is cooked and ground into corn masa. It is also unsuitable for many other dishes that require specialty local corn varieties, hence the importance to Oaxaqueños of a variety of locally grown or criollo (native) corns.

Lind and Barham (2003) describe how the social life of the tortilla is intimately woven into the Mesoamerican culture of corn (maize). As described above, maize is a cultural artifact and its domestication is strongly correlated with the development of cultural complexity and the rise of Mesoamerican civilizations. Maize permeates the oral traditions, folklore and mythologies of the region as does cacao, making them powerful tools for relating meanings from one generation to the next and: 'each time a woman bends over her metate to work the wet maize kernels into dough and shape the dough into tortillas, she re-enacts the initial creative moment' (Lind and Barham 2003: 53). The eating of corn tortillas binds families and the wider community, the state and even the nation together because they are in effect eating together. The community, the state and the Mexican nation can then be conceptualised as a metaphorical family since they also eat tortillas: 'cuisine and other seemingly mundane aspects of daily life compose an important part of the cultures that bind people into national communities' (Pilcher 1998: 2, cf. Palmer 1998, Casey 2000). Eating tortillas makes one a member of Mexican and especially Oaxacan food culture.

'**Corn is symbolic in my culture**'

*(Amado, Owner of Itanoni)*

Corn therefore is fundamental not only as a staple food but also as a symbol of family, community, history, identity and resistance to global homogenising pressures (cf. Scott 1985, Kohl and Farthing 2006, Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Miguel, Pilar, Justino, Flor, Jonathon, Amado, Susannah and Victoria, in fact all of my informants were passionate about true Oaxacan corns and insisted on using and eating them, viewing their use as an affirmation of and a continuation of their ethnic identities. Mexican Indian cuisine and especially corn, was scorned
by the Spanish conquerors and after them the *mestizos* or Spanish/Mexican mixed race elites who felt that Spanish wheat bread was more sophisticated and nourishing than corn based cuisine. It was also the food required by the church as wafers had to be made from wheat and not corn. Corn products such as *tortillas* and especially *tamales* were seen as foods of the 'lower orders' of society and poor indigenous communities, while wheat bread was associated with progression or modernity and wealthy creoles. This tension between *maize* and wheat culture reflected the confrontation between Spanish and Mesoamerican peoples until the emerging middle class re appropriated the *tortilla* as a symbol of national identity so that: 'despite centuries of efforts to change them, Mexicans remain a people of corn' (Pilcher 1998: 6). This is what makes corn a symbol of Indian ethnicity and resistance in today's society and one which has been somewhat turned around to have a positive meaning, linking present day Mexican Indians with their pre-colonial history. Food is life and food is a symbol of life; corn symbolises all food and therefore corn is a symbol of life and corn *is* life. To a large extent, food is consumed for the values that it embodies and these values are then transferred to the self so that: 'to eat... [any culturally marked] food is to incorporate some of the desired attributes of [that culture]' (Lupton 1996: 27).

However, the meanings of food as symbol, identity and self are not fixed, they are relational and changing as is demonstrated in the case of corn. There is now a growing movement in Oaxaca to preserve old ways, traditions and methods of production, especially to protect native seed stocks in the face of global market pressures to grow other strains, especially American sweet corn. Change; whether it be the development of capitalism, the growth of worldwide trade, or the spread of religion, means that people are forced to redefine their concepts of self as a result of the encounter. Tradition and cuisine are both retrospectively constructed practices that arise when people are confronted with the need to redefine themselves. This need usually surfaces when confronted with the 'other' or in the face of changes wrought by internationalisation and globalisation and of colonisation by the Spanish in the case of Oaxaca (cf. Hobsbawm 1983). This is so 'because the self, in any culture, is always defined in relation to the other
dialogically with other individuals in a given social context or dialectically with other peoples’ (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 8). As described above, the self is in many ways defined by what is eaten and therefore traditional cuisine becomes more important as countries modernise and are forced to redefine concepts of identity. Native or criollo corn varieties have symbolised Oaxacan ethnic identity as opposed to the conquering Spanish but now they also symbolise opposition to the United States and its agro-business concerns as well as other more generalised global pressures such as the expansion of fast foods and supermarket chains.

‘Our intimate meetings of creation and re-creation are: the [garden] plot and the kitchen; the plot, our bed in which we reproduce and the table the space in which we enjoy ourselves in eating’

(Itanoni website)

Itanoni is a restaurant in Oaxaca dedicated to native corn. The above quote from the restaurant website clearly demonstrates that Oaxacans identify themselves and life itself with the corn that they grow. For the owners of Itanoni, corn represents continuity with the past. It represents life, man and community. Itanoni is dedicated to the use and preservation of different strains of criollo or native corn and blends this concern with ethics such as the conservation of history and culture through food, environmental concerns and resistance to the homogenising affects of capitalist pressures (cf. Kohl and Farthing 2006). The business began operation in 2001 as a tortilleria, which is a place that makes tortillas commercially. At this stage their efforts were focused on trying to forge links between native corn growers and consumers. The corn used in the shop is purchased from cooperatives thereby encouraging local farmers to continue to grow different native corn varieties. Itanoni try to reduce transportation by using local grains and thereby reduce greenhouse gases as well. They also try to tackle global economic inequalities by paying just prices to local producers. In 2002, the owners decided to start a restaurant on the same site as the tortilleria, using their tortillas to make and sell traditional Oaxacan snacks.
According the website, corn was given to man by the god *Teocintle*. The story goes as follows:

*Many years ago, in a time when food was scarce, an ant confessed to Quetzalcoatl (a god famed to have given cacao to the people) the secret of the solution. Quetzalcoatl could become a black ant and in this form he could enter the mountain of life and bring back to earth life’s most valuable food: maize. Then he showed man how to care for it and how to use the cycles of nature.*

(Author's Translation)

The website tells the story not only of corn but also of Mexican man from the beginning and how he travelled all over the continent freely. Then the Spaniards came and alienated the people from their land, taking the best farming land to raise their own crops. To reconnect with the past and with their true identity, it is proposed that the people need to reclaim their land and grow their own corn, which is the base not only of their identity but also of their very bodies: *the corn was and it is our skeleton and base: in the Tlayuda we raise up the meal, in the Taco we embrace it, in the Maize tortilla we pinch to stop it and to melt it in the tetela*. Again in this quote, the owner emphasises how corn and foods made from corn embody Oaxacan origins and identity and literally make the people that eat it. Here, the: *invocation of specific food [corn] conceptualizes ethnicity as informed by a whole range of social, historical, and cultural circumstances within which the subject locates herself [or himself]*' (Blend 2001: 150). *Itanoni* explicitly states that: *food is intimacy, family, identity*. The owners suggest that by consciously consuming the *maize*, customers can 'savour their identity' and the diversity of the native corns and other native plants used in the preparation of the traditional snacks served there. Some of this discourse ties in closely to notions of terroir and the taste of place, discussed in the following Chapter (cf. Paxson 1998, Trubek 2005).
The Art of Local Identity

In the case of Oaxaca, identity is tied to food and particularly to the production and consumption of local varieties of corn, which are the staple food and therefore the foundation of life. The peasants who grow corn in Oaxacan villages conform closely to Mendras’s (1970) conception of the French peasant, practicing agriculture as an 'art of locality' in the form of a polycultivating family farm, which is passed down through generations from father to son, while the knowledge of how to consume the corn in the form of making tortillas and other corn based foods is handed down from mother or grandmother to daughter. The field is felt to be a creation of the farmer, a unique product of his constant care and intimate knowledge of the soils and microenvironments that exist within it. The crops grown in these fields are also thought to be unique as they embody, represent and taste of the place where they are grown (Mendras 1970, cf. Paxson 1998, Trubek 2005). As in France, Oaxacan peasants and the general population, including city dwellers, display a strong identification with 'our' corn, resisting the introduction of new crops from America by seeking out products made with and thereby supporting the continued farming of native varieties of corn (cf. Kohl and Farthing 2006). Following Bourdieu (1984), both women and men in Oaxaca are constructed through their practices in relation to corn. Although the work of men and women is different, it is complementary. Both contribute equally to the most fundamental element in the cuisine making them equally important in the production of corn and therefore in the production of culture (cf. Mendras 1970).

Inda and Rosaldo's (2008) argument about the complexities of global imperialism can be taken even further in the case of Oaxaca and I would add that sometimes Western/American cultural products are rejected quite strongly and global forces are often confronted with resistance as is demonstrated here by Itanoni but also in movements such as the Sin Maíz No Hay Paíz (without corn no country) food sovereignty movement and by Igancio Chapala and his anti GMO stance. Such forces are not new however; Indigenous Oaxacans have been influenced by wider systems before global capitalism, even before Spanish
conquest, when the Aztecs and the empires before them ruled Mesoamerica and traded throughout South America. However, recently Mexico has been exposed to an aggressive global market with cheap hybrid sweet corn from America swamping Mexican producers, driving small farmers, millers and tortilleria owners out of production and off their land. Despite the resistance, the diversity of food crops is slowly diminishing due to supermarket selection, and large-scale capitalist agriculture. In response, hybrid American corn is rejected in favour of local varieties. Traditional methods are upheld, especially now in response to a rise in popularity and corresponding push for regulation and standardisation of local products for world markets, which is perceived as a threat to small producers and hence to Oaxacan culture itself.

Tradition is important in the cooking of any dish and the use of traditional methods and recipes equates to a quality product, as demonstrated by the perception of Victoria’s tortillas, believed to be of the highest quality due to her use of the metate. Local produce was much preferred by informants because it is believed to be ‘fresher and tastier’ although I would suggest that in addition to this, the preference for local foods, especially corn speaks to the importance of food for an oppositional Oaxacan identity, which rejects the ‘other’ here represented by the global and America in particular (cf. Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005, Inda and Rosaldo 2008). The focus was on the preservation of the traditional and the local and while some elements of global culture are accepted, others are refused and continue to be fought against. This attitude was also demonstrated in the refusal of an application for permission to build a McDonald’s restaurant in the zócalo. This proposal was greeted with strong resistance in the form of organised demonstrations and events in the zócalo that consciously sought to promote locally produced foods such as tamales, salsa, coffee and mole. Interestingly, a quote from a local recorded during this time almost exactly echoes a quote from one of Mendras’s (1970) peasants, who felt that American corn belonged in America: ‘McDonald’s belongs to the United States, not our zócalo’ (Lind and Barham 2003: 58). The resistance is about a consciousness and the preservation of a way of life. The zócalo is the heart of the city and an almost sacred place, a centre of and for Oaxacan identity. Although
ethnic revivals and interest in ancient foods may be considered a new phenomenon (cf. Ohnuki-Tierney 1993) I argue that in Oaxaca and for the locals, especially those that live in the villages, this interest in ethnic foods is not so much a revival as a continuance of ancient traditions. Although corn and corn based foods were not fashionable during colonial times and were actively discouraged in many cases, corn has continued to be eaten and through these historical processes has gained increasing importance.

Corn literally makes Oaxacan bodies and is integral to the cuisine. The consumption of a food such as corn constructs identity at the level of the ordinary, the everyday and in the face of social change, corn serves as an anchor for or flag of identity. It represents history and roots both personal and communal, tradition, the homeland, the farm (milpa) and people (Indians as opposed to mestizos and Spanish), oppositional us and them relationships, both men and women, resistance, sustenance, food and mythology. Corn is something stable like place, rich in symbolism, which people can tie their identities to in times of change, making it an important carrier of Oaxacan identity. The very concept of place is intertwined with criollo or native corn where roots and arts of dwelling preserve the biodiversity and the uniqueness of a region and of a people. The maize culture in Oaxaca, especially in the villages, has proven to be extremely resilient and the old or traditional ways and corn varieties are still of utmost importance.
Mezcal - Gold of Oaxaca

A mezcalaria, selling Oaxacan made mezcal.
The outside wall of a mezcalaria advertising mezcals made from 100% Oaxacan agaves and showing two commonly used types of agave: Espadín and Jováala.
A traditional stone pit and wheel for crushing roasted agave hearts.
Mezcal has become an important part of any celebration in Oaxaca, replacing the ancient pulque as the main drink imbibed. One informant, Jonathon, described it as a 'social key', meaning that it was very important for socialising and for business, acting like other alcohols as a social lubricant and it was through drinking and eating together that business deals were sealed as I witnessed on an occasion when he allowed me to accompany him on a business trip. Mezcal is a flag or reminder of identity in Oaxaca, along with chiles, chapulines, corn and chocolate (cf. Palmer 1998, Casey 2000). It is distinguished as 'local' and explicitly uses concepts of terroir and the taste of place to establish a unique identity (cf. Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005). This feeds into a conception of an oppositional identity where mezcal is opposed to its more famous cousin tequila, which is made in other parts of Mexico. Mezcal represents localness, tradition, small time production and Oaxaca itself while tequila represents the whole of Mexico, new technologies, and mass production. Furthermore, it is served with worm salt, made from insects called guisanos. The eating of insects while consuming mezcal further defines Oaxacans as people who eat insects as opposed to people who don’t. Mezcal is often referred to as Oro de Oaxaca, or 'Gold from Oaxaca’ and in fact this is the name of one of the more commercial mezcal brands, sold to tourists in the city stores. Mezcal is a highly sensual object, imbibed whenever there is a celebration, large or small, making it extremely memorable. It is what some might call an acquired taste and smokiness, burnt and earthy flavours are desired in the final product. The acquisition of certain tastes such as those for mezcal and insects is of interest as an example of the social conditioning of the perception of the senses, which feed into body memory and all other forms of memory (Casey 2000).
Mezcal

Mezcals range in colour from white or colourless to dark amber, with the youngest being the whitest and the oldest being the most amber in appearance. There are three main types of mezcals. The first is called silver, joven or blanco, all referring to 'fresh', white or unaged mezcal, which comes straight from the first distillation. This is the cheapest and least flavoured mezcal available. Then there are reposados, which have been aged or 'rested' for less than a year. These rested mezcals have a stronger flavour profile than white mezcals and are more expensive. Finally there are añejos, which are 'old' or aged for more than a year. Añejos are usually an amber colour and are very strongly flavoured. Most mezcal is distilled once (blanco). In addition to these differences in the length of the aging process, the agave plant itself can be used at various ages (it can grow for up to ten years before it is ready for mezcal production) and can then be distilled numerous times with various products including fruit, agave worms (gusanos), herbs and even meat (pechuga). Clearly this allows for a huge variety of different drinks that fall under the classification of mezcal. There are also many cremas de mezcal, sweet creamy liqueurs, which are very popular and are available in a wide variety of flavours; mainly fruit but there are also coffee, vanilla and chocolate creams.

Mezcal is not tequila but rather tequila is a type of mezcal, made from a specific agave, the blue agave. Mezcal on the other hand can be made from a range of different agave plants, although certain types are favoured for mezcal production also. The espadin agave is the one most commonly used because it is believed to make the best mezcal. Mezcal, especially the 'backyard' mezcal available within but not outside of Southern Mexico, can be well over fifty proof and is highly intoxicating. There are small producers of mezcal all over Oaxaca although they tend to be gathered in specific villages, as are other crafts such as woodworking and pottery. In Matatlan in Oaxaca and a few other villages, almost every family produces mezcal in their back yards or small distilleries, which are called fabricas or palenques. Using different types and ages of agave and different finishing techniques makes it possible to produce a range of quite vastly different
tasting *mezcales* and 'you can taste the difference from village to village, because of the water, because of whether it was processed in a clay pot or a copper pot. It's handcrafted' (Rexer 2009). The making of *mezcal* is thus an *art de localité* and is thought to reflect the soil, the plant and the production techniques as well as the authentic identity of its producers in the final flavours (cf. Mendras 1970, Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005). Good quality *mezcal* is made in minute quantities and is relatively expensive because the plants take so long to mature.

Walton (1977) suggests that the first stills in Mexico may have come from the Philippines to Colima, Mexico, where they were used to make coconut rum. This technology was then adapted to make *mezcal* from *agaves* and spread from Colima throughout Mexico (Zizumbo-Villarreal and Colunga-Garcia Marin 2007). The Spanish authorities banned coconut and agave liquors because they competed with Spanish products, which pushed *mezcal* production into the mountains and other remote areas, such as the state of Oaxaca in the South, where the Spanish had less control. Oaxaca is a remote and mountainous region and therefore lends itself to such clandestine production. The production of rums and *mezcals* was legalised again in the nineteenth century, however many makers today continue to operate clandestinely in remote places to avoid taxation and regulation. Despite its now legal status, *mezcal* remains a symbol of Indian resistance originally to the Spanish colonial powers but now also to the United States and world market pressures which seek to standardise and certify *mezcal* and therefore again effectively outlaw the production of *mezcal* in small backyard distilleries which cannot afford such certification costs. Oaxaca is the home and heart of mezcal production although there are other states in Mexico that produce mezcal. In fact, Oaxaca produces only four percent of the nation's *mezcal* but this statistic includes tequila production. Oaxaca is especially renowned for producing high quality *mezcal* and *mezcal* containing the *agave* worm.
Agave

Mezcal is a spirit with a rich syrupy body and a distinctly smoky taste made from roasting, crushing, fermenting and distilling the heart of the maguey, a useful plant also known as the agave or the century plant:

'Maguey and its daughter-products deserve a whole book to themselves. They are as much a part of the Mexican identity as chile and corn. Throughout the country different species grow wild and were domesticated in ancient times. Most belong to the genus of the agave or 'century plant'. The plant is not a real cactus, but people tend to assume that it is one since it thrives in arid conditions. It clothed, housed, and fed ancient Mexicans with the tough fibres of its sharp pointed leaves (pencas) and the sweet nourishing central core that they sprout from. The Spanish who found people utilizing every part of the plant in some manner nicknamed it el arbol de las maravillas (the tree of marvels)'

(Martinez 1997:268)

The agave is a type of succulent, rather than a cactus. It grows wild in Oaxaca but it is also cultivated and farmed. Agave was thought to be a gift from the gods along with other foods such as corn and chocolate. Evidence suggests that before corn became the staple crop in Mexico, agave roots and pinas (hearts) were roasted and eaten widely and were the main carbohydrate source in the diet (Zizumbo-Villareal and Colunga-GarciaMarin 2007). The stems and bases of the leaves were cooked in the earth ovens then ground, sun dried and eaten made into a kind of bread. The agave plant has giant swordlike leaves that are 'v' shaped. These large broad leaves contain a fibre commonly known as sisal or henequen, which is used to make rope or twine in the United States and is used locally to make things such as mats, sandals, bags and ropes or for fuel for fires as wood is scarce. My informants in Guelavia fuelled their outdoor kitchen fires with these dried agave leaves, which influence the flavour of the foods cooked in this way. The sap of the agave, called aguamiel (honey water), was also used as a sweetener and as an essential energy source. This sap was harvested in Pre-Columbian times and fermented into an alcoholic drink called pulque, which was used for ritual purposes. Pulque is a white, slimy, foamy, thick and sweet drink made from the collected and fermented raw sap whereas mezcal is the distilled
liquor from the same plant after it has been roasted. Once the leaves have been harvested for various purposes described above, what remains is the heart or the *pina*, which is then ready to be used to make *mezcal*.

*It’s handcrafted*

When the agave plant is deemed ready, the leaves are harvested in the field and what remains is the heart or the *pina*. The *pinas* are transported from the fields to home distilleries or larger *mezcal* producers. They are then either left whole or cut into halves or quarters and roasted in a pit. The pit roasting of *agaves* is a pre-Columbian technique (*pib*) and is most common in the South of Mexico, where it is still practiced by small producers and clandestine 'moonshiners'. This pit or earth oven method is also used to make some foods, especially *barbacoa* (pit roasted lamb or goat meat). To cook in the earth oven, it is filled with heated rocks and the prepared *pinas* are buried in it, sealed and cooked for up to a week. The resulting product is brown and soft and has a sweet, caramelised, smoky character. It can be eaten at this stage and is often given to tourists to try on tours of *mezcal* factories. The *agave* is cooked in the oven in order to convert the plant starches it contains into fermentable sugars and it is this extended pit roasting that gives *mezcal* its intense and distinctive smokey flavour (cf. Saltzstein 2009). At Jonathon’s *mezcal* factory, the *agave* hearts were grown locally, harvested and transported to the factory where they were cut into quarters before being roasted in this manner as he said that this gave ‘a better flavour’.

The roasted heart or *pina* was then crushed in a donkey pit, now only seen in the South of Mexico and especially in Oaxaca. The donkey pit consists of a stone wheel, which is pulled around a flat-bottomed, ridge surfaced stone basin until a mush or mash is created. When it is ready, the mush from the basin is transferred into large wooden barrels, which are covered with a tarp and left to ferment. The fermented mush forms a dark beer which can be drunk and which I tried, but to make *mezcal* this beery mush must be further refined. Fermentation
in the wooden barrels stops when the alcohol levels inhibit yeast growth and this was when the mash was boiled and distilled in a copper or clay pot, usually twice but sometimes up to three times. The alcohol or mezcal is condensed using cold water and is channelled into a tube, which drains the liquor into a plastic container, ready for bottling. For certain types of mezcal the third distillation uses a piece of meat, which is hung above the boiling liquor. The meat used can be chicken, turkey or in some rare cases such as for Jonathon’s brand, Pierde Almas (Lost Souls), rabbit saddle. All of these meats are thought to purify and flavour the finished mezcal. Pierde Almas also used very old agave plants because it enabled them to ‘obtain a very smooth young mezcal (blanco) without having to age it’ (Jonathon).

As you travel from South to North through Mexico, the process for making mezcal becomes more and more mechanised and ends in the mass production of tequila in factories. Despite their similarities mezcal and tequila tend to represent polar opposites of production. Compared to tequila, mezcal is small time, and this is a large part of its appeal. Tequila is mass-produced by large companies, sold all over the world and uses factories and chemical processes rather than natural ones. Mezcal on the other hand is an artisan product made in small factories or distilleries called fabricas and palenques, or even backyard stills. Mezcal is always pure agave with no added sugar or chemicals whereas tequila is not always made this way. Also, mezcal is ready to drink sooner as blanco (white) after a single distillation and typically has a more concentrated colour and potent flavour (Sibley et al. 2009). Although it is slowly beginning to enter world markets, mezcal is sold mostly locally within Oaxaca and Southern Mexico. The smaller batch mezcals tend to be the most sought after and are considered to be of the highest quality:

Gusano Rojo and Monte Alban are the most widely distributed mescals available in the United States; both are from Oaxaca (and include a maguey worm in the bottle), but neither compares to the good quality mescal (a siglo or pechuga) available in Oaxaca city.

(Bayless 2007: 306)
'For every bad, mezcal; for every good, the same' (Miguel)

*Mezcal* performs a similar function to other alcohols in that it is drunk for festivity and sociability amongst large and small groups of people. It is considered to be rude not to drink the first *mezcal* offered to you and it is thought that *mezcal* aids in the digestion of rich festival dishes such as *moles*. Whenever I visited Miguel in his house and whenever he had people over for dinner, *mezcal* was served. *Mezcal* is a drink used both to celebrate and to commiserate events which is demonstrated in a common saying I heard many times: ‘Por todo mal, mezcal, por todo bien, tambien: For every bad, mezcal, for every good, the same’. In other words, *mezcal* was seen as a drink for bad times and for good times, to celebrate and to commiserate. It was also considered to be a medicine that was recommended for various ailments, especially to help digestion and to help people sleep. *Mezcal* is festive and is present at the largest and the smallest social events, which can involve a considerable amount of drinking (Bennett et al 1998). *Mezcal* is an important part of The Day of the Dead festival where there were designated *mezcal* servers that roamed though the crowd with bottles of *mezcal* and shot glasses offering it freely to everyone, especially the dancers who were quite inebriated by the end of the night. Shots of *mezcal* were also placed on the altars and are considered to be an important part of the offering (see Chapter 6). *Mezcal* is usually drunk undiluted and at room temperature from a large shot glass, sometimes with a beer chaser. In bars and restaurants, it is always served with a small plate filled with slices of lime and orange and sal de gusano (*agave* worm and *chile* salt). This plate could be refilled as often as requested.

To drink *mezcal*, one either buys it to take home or visits one of many *cantinas* or *mezcalarias*. These establishments are an urban phenomenon while in the villages people tend to drink at home or visit small shops that sell and serve alcohol and sometimes snacks. Until recently in Oaxaca, drinking in *cantinas* and *mezcalarias* was restricted to men. Only women of ill repute were allowed in *cantinas* and still today women are a minority. *Cantinas* have a festive and
pleasant ambience; the atmosphere is jovial, loud, macho and social. In the city of Oaxaca, every second street contains a *cantina*. Some of them are large and may include a bar, seated area and an area for dancing such as clubs and pubs do in the West. Many of the *cantinas* however are very small and unadorned containing no more than eight small tables in a single room, usually with a small kitchen at the back or an agreement with a street vendor to supply snacks. One way or another some form of snack food is always provided either cheaply or freely for customers while they are drinking. The snacks are called *botanas*; literally 'corks' or 'stoppers'. They are small snacks, very much like tapas, which include meats, olives, tacos and even small serves of stews and soups. These *cantinas* were the main venues for drinking *mezcal* and offered a wide range of types and flavours, along with other drinks although there were also *mezcalarias*, which were devoted solely to serving *mezcales*.

Public drunkenness was quite acceptable for men, not so much for women, slightly more so for foreign women. Drinking by women is generally considered inappropriate whilst men were expected to drink and drinking large quantities was considered *macho* (manly). Drunks are given quite a lot of license in Oaxaca and total inebriation is tolerated. Complete intoxication including stumbling, slurring, vomiting and passing out is not uncommon. Such drinking is generally cyclical with some men drinking every weekend as a release from the working week. On Saturday and Sunday mornings in the city it was usual to see men passed out on the streets, sleeping off a night of drinking. In the past, inebriation with *pulque* or intoxication of any kind was believed to put a person in a threshold, transcendent or liminal state where they could communicate with deities and ancestors, which is perhaps why drunkenness was prohibited by the Aztecs except on ritual occasions (Stross 2011). In pre Hispanic times drinking was restricted to ceremonies, special occasions and males: 'legitimate drinking was mostly ceremonial, confined to the upper classes, the old, and the wise' (Bennett et al 1998). Following Van Gennep (1960) inebriation creates liminal spaces, ambiguous in between states, which are neither here nor there (Turner 1969). Sexlessness and anonymity, confluences of sacred and profane, past, present and future are highly characteristic of this liminal phase. Drinking
together at any time, but especially at festivals, serves to break down social boundaries and is a rite of incorporation, of physical union or communion, which binds people together. Cantinas are social place of tolerance and letting go where social norms can be transgressed and men can express their emotions.

'Have you tried Chapulines?'

The liking or disliking of certain foods is largely a learned response as is quite clearly demonstrated in the case of eating insects, a highly nutritious food, which can arouse sensations of pleasure and delight or visceral disgust depending on culture, proving that sensations represent social ordering rather than food items themselves (Bourdieu 1984). People articulate and recognise their distinctiveness through the medium of food, through who eats what. Distaste for the food of another group then serves to distance oneself from that group and vice versa: 'revulsion for the food eaten by another is a common expression of discrimination and xenophobia, a means of distinguishing between social groups' (Lupton 2005: 322). Eating similar foods makes someone 'like' us, eating disgusting foods makes a person 'other'. The strong aversion of most foreigners to the eating of grasshoppers makes chapulines a powerful marker of identity for Oaxacans (cf. Palmer 1998). These foods are 'only' eaten by Oaxacan people and therefore become symbols of oppositional identity. Foods that White/Spanish people do not eat then have special significance for identity, which perhaps explains some of the pride felt in the eating of chapulines, ants and iguana, hot chiles, corn tortillas, traditional chocolate, backyard mezcal and offal. In the same way that vegemite has become a symbol of Australianness: 'and tales of foreigners' aversion to the substance are recounted as instances of how one must be Australian to truly appreciate the subtle joys of vegemite' (Lupton 1996: 26), so too for the chapuline as a symbol of 'Oaxacanness'.

As a part of the diet, insects have high nutritional value, and are a good source of protein as well as of fats, vitamins and minerals. In Oaxaca insects are regarded
as great delicacies, and are eaten with pleasure (*con gusto*) as they are in many other cultures including African, Chinese and Australian Indigenous. When speaking to locals about Oaxacan food, inevitably the question of insects arises: 'Have you tried Chapulines?' they ask. These grasshoppers (*chapulines*) and a variety of other insects have long been a part of the diet in Mexico and DeFoliart describes how even kings enjoyed insect fare:

At the court of Emperor Montezuma and the Aztec kings who preceded him, the *ahuahutle* (the famous Mexican caviar, composed of the eggs of several species of aquatic Hemiptera) were specially prepared during the ceremony dedicated to the god Xiuhtecutli and brought into Tenochtitlan by native runners from Texcoco so that the Emperor would have them fresh for breakfast. (1999: 22)

The variety of insect cuisine in pre-Hispanic Mexico was and is still quite extensive. The main insects eaten in Oaxaca are *chapulines*, *gusanos* and *chicatanes*. *Chapultines* are grasshoppers, caught in the mornings in the cornfields. Depending on the season, these grasshoppers can be small or large. They are boiled, drained and then fried with *chile*, garlic and lime and sold at the markets. *Gusanos* or *agave* worms are most commonly used to make the worm salt (*sal de gusano*), which is served with mezcal although sometimes the worms are used in the bottle of mezcal and are the famous 'worm' in the tequila. During the rainy season in May and June, large ants (*chicatanes*) surface that are collected, toasted and then ground into salsas or *mole* sauces. The eating of these insects is a matter of pride and tourists are always encouraged to eat them, again with much pleasure on the part of Oaxaqueños who seem to find tourist reactions highly amusing. Pilar's classes emphasised the eating of insects as an important and unique part of Oaxacan cooking and culture.

According to DeFoliart (1999), Western views about insects can adversely affect societies that traditionally eat them and the eating of insects is often abandoned in the move towards modernity as it is considered to be a primitive habit or 'Indian' in a negative sense, in the same way that the eating of corn was framed as 'Indian' and backwards in comparison to wheat bread (see Chapter 3) and was therefore rejected by those who sought to be seen as modern and progressive.
This does not however seem to be the case in Oaxaca where people continue to eat insects with pride and feel that this forms part of their unique identity as Oaxaqueños or ‘eaters of insects’. In fact, insects such as chapulines and agave worms are in high demand throughout all classes in Mexico and can command quite high prices, sometimes higher than beef. The eating of insects forms a part of the habitus of Oaxacan locals and is one of the sources of a sense of distinction from 'others', who feel repulsed by the very idea, often drawing the line of immersion in another culture at the eating of bugs (cf. Bourdieu 1984). The eating of chapulines is discussed in Haines and Sammells (2010) where it is described as a necessity because locals insist that you try them and it is rude to refuse. Not eating a Chapuline in Oaxaca is to make a critical judgment about what does and doesn’t qualify as food (Lohmann 2012).

The Taste of Burnt Things

A further example of the cultural construction of taste preferences in Oaxaca is the love of burnt, charred and smokey flavours. For Westerners, even when barbequing, only a very small amount of char is acceptable. However in Oaxacan cooking it is the opposite, and cooks deliberately try to get burned and charred flavours into their dishes and even into some sweets in order for them to taste good. Many favourite foods had these burnt flavours. A popular ice cream flavour is burnt milk (leche quemada). A popular ricotta like cheese is cooked over an open fire specifically to get a distinctly smoky flavour and this cheese was one of the reasons that the Etla markets were famous. In the markets, it was possible to watch women making this cheese over smokey fires. Coffee beans are heavily roasted (or even burnt to my palate). Good mezcal always has a smoky flavour from the week long roasting and caramelisation of the agave heart. Meat, onions, garlic, tomatoes and sometimes tortillas are often cooked directly on coals or over open flames, resulting in a sweet, smoky, charred flavour. The best tlayudas are cooked this way and served slightly charred. Chiles were almost always roasted or toasted before use, whether dried or fresh, for the same effect. The chile passilla, which is used to make salsas, imparts a smoky flavour. On the coast
they make sal quemada or burnt salt, which is made with dried cando leaves, moulded into a corn husk and cooked in hot ashes for approximately two hours.

This love of burnt flavours extends to the actual burning to a cinder of some ingredients for moles. One dish that requires this is coloradito, which I made in a cooking class with Susannah Trilling. To make coloradito we piled the seeds of the chiles into a tortilla, which was placed on the comal. When the seeds became sticky and began to release their oils, we set them alight and they and the tortilla were burned until the flame had burnt itself out and they were completely black. The charred remains were then soaked in water and rinsed twice before we ground them up and used in them in the mole sauce. While the social conditioning of the sense of taste is one explanation, Adapon (2008) suggests another reason why smoke or burning is popular in Oaxaca. This is that smoke is believed to purify. Chiles are sometimes thrown into fire because the smoke emitted is believed to remove anger (Adapon 2008). In churches, incense is used to arouse and purify the senses. Smoke and essences are also the parts of foods that are offered to the spirits, meaning that the burning of foods and the presence of burnt flavours could be seen as a mundane instance of sacrifice. Here we begin to see a connection, explored in detail in section two of this thesis, between shopping, cooking and sacrifice (cf. Miller 1998).

'Taste and smell are subject to cultural control'
(Douglas 1991: 30)

The senses and our perceptions and memories of them are important because they are our window on the world and are the way that we acquire information about it. They are also the means of communication at a physiological and cultural level. The physiological abilities of the senses seem to be more or less the same across humanity with individual variations, but the classifications of the senses and perceptions of them do differ with culture in interesting ways. That is to say that sensing is primary but meaning is mediated through our frames of reference. In the case of the perception of food, it is plain 'that our likes
and dislikes do not greatly depend upon the nature of the foods themselves’. This is ‘clear from the wide variations in people's preferences, both within our own society and between different cultures around the world and in history’ (Fiddes 1991: 31). Attitudes to different foods are clearly conditioned by the culture we grow up in and the associations that we invest them with. Tastes and the assumed knowledge that goes with them are constructed by society through choices about what deserves value and social value is derived from social use. Following Bourdieu (1984), a person's taste is not a result of things themselves but rather it is a result of class, history and upbringing, which means that while taste classifies, it classifies the classifier. Distinction (from others) is at least in part achieved through choices of foods. Taste is therefore a sociological phenomenon, an incorporated principal of classification that governs all forms of incorporation. It is a class culture turned into and perceived as nature, which is embodied and therefore helps to shape bodies according to their social class.

While it is true that the majority of taste preferences are cultural, there are some that seem to be evolutionary, pre-programmed and already observable in infants. These preferences are namely a dislike for bitterness, which is often present with toxins in nature and a liking for sweet substances, which are often good sources of nutrients (Rozin and Fallon 1980). However these natural preferences only account for a small proportion of food selection, while the rest of the decisions about food acceptance or avoidance would seem to be based solely on cultural factors (Rozin and Fallon 1980, cf. Bourdieu 1984). We learn such preferences and begin making positive or negative associations from the day we are born and there is evidence that some food preferences are even learned by a foetus in the womb through the transfer of flavour substances eaten by the mother (Piggott 2012). From childhood 'the palate is trained' (Douglas 1991: 30, cf. Bourdieu 1984). In addition, people tend to develop a taste for what they know or what they are used to, with repeated exposure to certain foods resulting in familiarity and 'liking' of certain tastes: 'food is basic, and people's taste for food tends to be traditional, conservative, associated with old family recipes and perhaps also regional ones. People tend to like what they have always had' (Tuan 1993: 50). Certain tastes can be developed over time such as the taste for 'mouldy' cheese,
beer, wine or olives but ingrained gastronomic preferences are difficult to change even in circumstances of starvation.

'It is probably in tastes in food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longer withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain the nostalgia for it'
(Bourdieu 1984: 79)

Food and the taste of food is intimately linked with memory, especially with lasting memories which is demonstrated eloquently in Seremetakis (1994) who writes about nostalgia and the memory of the senses. She describes in great detail the feel, texture and smell of a peach from her childhood in Greece and how: 'every journey back was marked by its taste' (1994: 1). The peach disappeared, nowhere to be found, but continued to exist within persons and became a narrative, a memory. In Greece, regional products such as this native peach are disappearing, making them all the more precious. Objects and things such as the peach are intricately entwined with the ability to replicate cultural identity, which she describes as 'a material practice embedded in the reciprocities, aesthetics, and sensory strata of material objects' (Seremetakis 1994: 3). In a similar way to objects and things (a peach, a corn snack, or mezcal), the landscape is the repository and horizon of historical experience, emotion, embedded sensibilities and thus of social identities and therefore the food (or drink) that embodies the landscape represents these things. Sensory memory of such things is not mere repetition but is transformation, bringing the past into the present as a natal event (cf. Casey 2000).

The landscape is of utmost importance for Trubek (2005) who discusses the French notion of terroir. This is the idea that the taste of place can be traced back from the mouth through animals or plants, to the soil and the producer's history with a certain place. Flavours in foods and drinks are thus thought to derive from geographical, historical and cultural roots and this discourse links place,
production and the authentic identity of the producer with quality and authenticity. In France, it has been used to protect regions legally and gain proprietary rights through denominations of origin as in the case of Champagne, where only wines grown in this region and made in a certain way may have that name. The commitment to traditional production methods preserves the historical quality of local flavours. These ideas betray a feeling of nostalgia not only for the taste memory of certain foods and drinks from a region but also for a certain way of life (Trubek 2005). Terroir based foods and their associations can be drawn upon when a person wishes to express a sense of identity. Eating these terroir rich foods is a time of reckoning with local memory and bodily incorporates the belief that a place and the foods produced in that place are unique (cf. Mendras 1970). Celebrating the unique flavours of an area is in part a way of rejecting of the trappings of modernity and is a way of embracing the local as opposed to the global (cf. Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Furthermore, terroir based practices are a form of local knowledge in which local and small scale production are seen to be superior to other methods, especially industrial methods (cf. Mendras 1970). Paxson (1998) also discusses this concept of terroir and place based taste, describing how it is being adapted and 'reverse engineered' by artisan cheese makers in the United States to add value to their products.

'Desert moonshine, organic and artisanal, made entirely by hand in the mountain villages of Oaxaca'
(Wondrich 2005)

Mezcal, as with many other alcohols and foods such as chiles and insects, could be described as an acquired taste that is cultivated (Goody 2002). Class and ethnic identity are socially reproduced through the cultivation of such tastes as a mark of distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1987). Everyone in Oaxaca knows where mezcal comes from and how it is made and this knowledge of the skill involved in making it and the local ingredients used contributes to the value that is placed upon it. Like the peach described by Seremetakis (1994), every journey back to
Oaxaca and every special occasion is marked by the flavour of mezcal and the
taste of place and memory. Alcohol in the form of mezcal performs the function
of an essential social lubricant, being present at any festive occasion and even
marking an occasion as festive by its very presence as does mole. Mezcal is a
highly sensual object, which 'speaks’ of the landscape (Seremetakis 1994). It
contains and tells the story of its origins through its flavours, as is attested to by
the following collection of statements:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Mezcal is one of the world’s great spirits: complex, gorgeous and endlessly intriguing,}
distinguished like great wines by a strong sense of place.
\textit{They [mezca] are diverse, fitting for a spirit that reflects its terroir so well, and}
gorgeous in their rusticity.
\textit{You get a briny, vegetal burst, with Tabasco-like hints of vinegar, salt, oily smoke}
and earth, and an uncompromising purity.}
\textit{Each of the villages may have a slightly different production method, and the results}
are highly distinctive. \hfill (Asimov 2010)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Authentic mezcal is handcrafted in Oaxacan villages, so no two batches of the good}
stuff are the same. Smoky like a single-malt scotch and rich in terroir like quality red
wine.} \hfill (Lowe 2011)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{The diversity of regional practices for mezcal production results in a product that is}
characteristic of each region.}
\textit{Age, region, species and variety of each agave batch, as well as the way the must is}
prepared for fermentation, will impact sensory attributes.} \hfill (Piggott 2012: 364)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{A complex artisan spirit with a rich indigenous history.} \hfill (This article is Illegal… 2010)
\end{quote}

Really, mezcal is mostly ethanol and water but regular consumers can easily
distinguish between different products. The flavour compounds described above
come from the raw materials and from the processing prior to fermentation,
especially the pit roasting. As with wine and chocolate, people must be trained to
taste the place based distinctions in mezcal.

As with other products such as native or criollo corn, which were discussed in
the previous chapter, people believe that the growing conditions, ingredients and
manufacturing processes can be tasted in the final product. *Mezcal* therefore reflects the area or place in which it is made, the small producers that make it and their *'art de localité'* (cf. Mendras 1970, Van der Ploeg 1993). *Mezcal* is described as being reflective of place in the same way as some artisan cheeses and wines are (Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005). Both tequila and *mezcal* are becoming increasingly regulated and now have denominations of origin. Having a denomination of origin ties *mezcal* directly to notions of *terroir*, which originated in France. The idea of *terroir* focuses on the role of the natural world and production techniques in the production of the taste of food and drink (Trubek 2005). *Terroir* then, is the taste of place, which is traced back from the mouth to plants and animals, and ultimately back to the soil. *Terroir* is moreover frequently associated with roots or a person’s (or people’s) history with a certain place.

Sometimes obscured by the label 'artisan' are the social relations that go into the certification of various products such as *mezcal*. There is currently tension in Oaxaca because attempts are being made to regulate the production of mezcal. It is believed that this would destroy the small producers who will not be able to afford to purchase the necessary certifications. There are posters in and around the city of Oaxaca, especially outside of the *mezcalarias* (shops specialising in *mezcales*) highlighting exactly this problem. One of these posters reads as follows:

> The legality of mezcal is manipulated for political convenience and for big companies as well. This prevents the development of the authentic mezcal of the people as rules are implemented that make these mezcales illegal. Do you know where the mezcal you consume comes from?

*(Author's translation)*

As the drink is becoming increasingly popular in the United States and other places, there is growing market pressure on the Mexican government to tighten regulation and improve quality. Peasants and small producers in Oaxaca recognise standardisation as a threat to their very way of life in the same way that hybrid strains of corn are (cf. Mendras 1970). Regional products are thus threatened, making them even more important to local culture as symbols of tradition and identity.
As we have seen, perception of foods and beverages is mediated by culture but it is also mediated by the human senses, which are themselves culturally mediated. Certain tastes can be developed over time such as the taste for 'mouldy' cheese, beer, wine and olives. The enjoyment of eating insects and the liking of burnt flavours, especially those present in mezcal are some examples from Oaxaca. The state of Oaxaca has a special cuisine by which it identifies itself and by which it is identified by others. Foods such as black mole, tamales, pozole, tlayudas and mezcal are claimed to be from this region only and therefore are very special. In Oaxaca, these products are not yet disappearing however they are threatened by global market forces. Mezcal is a product that is seen to embody many of the things that Oaxaca is famous for such as traditional and simple methods of production and the purity and freshness of local ingredients. It is related to men, land, place, tradition, resistance to colonial domination and globalisation.

Makers of mezcal are artisans who are guided by sensory analysis and environmental conditions and adjust their methods accordingly rather than standardising production to achieve the same outcome every time. This context dependent variation is what allows for claims of special tastes of terroir. Such ideas about places and the nature of the foods grown in particular places seek and serve to preserve biodiversity and uniqueness. They are important for creating a sense of belonging and therefore a sense of identity, as described by Harvey: 'the sense of belonging and not belonging (and hence of identity and otherness) is closely intertwined with ideas about place and territory' (2009: 170). Denominations of origin however, require regulation and certification and therefore threaten small producers. Many people in Oaxaca compare mezcal to wine and as it grows in popularity and sophistication, it is tasted and described in a similar way. Different types of agave, areas and production techniques give the different varieties unique characteristics, which can be savoured in the finished product (Trubek 2005, Paxson 2010). It is obvious that the making of mezcal can be seen as an art de localité as with the growing of native corn varieties. Makers of mezcal must possess a vast range of knowledge about the
agave plants, the soils they grow in, the time to harvest, how long to roast the agaves for, how many times and with what additions to distil and how all of these things will affect the final flavour of the drink (Mendras 1970, Van der Ploeg 1993). Locals, especially experts such as Jonathon but also Miguel, were able to guide newcomers such as myself in the tasting of mezcals, describing the various desirable characteristics and how they were achieved through place and production techniques eloquently.

Just as the concept of terroir is being adapted in the United States by artisan cheesemakers, so too in Oaxaca it has been adapted for mezcal (Paxson 1998). Such terroir talk frames and reveals values and ways of life. It values age-old tradition and techniques, the uses of which are employed as a way to assess the quality of a foodstuff. 'Traditionally' made food products are distinguished from industrially manufactured goods and established as regional and national patrimony. Trubek (2005) wonders if the notion of terroir transcends France. I contend in the light of my research that it does indeed do so. However, I argue that in the case of Oaxaca, notions of terroir are not reverse engineered as described by Paxson (1998) but rather fall very close to the original French conception. Also, that rural places and 'traditional' practices already have value in Oaxaca, which has a long history of peasant cultivation.

Ideas about terroir and the taste of place tie into people's ideas about identity, which in Oaxaca is certainly established through attachment to local foods where: 'local taste...is....evoked when an individual wants to remember an experience, explain a memory, or express a sense of identity' (Trubek 2005: 268). Weiss echoes this sentiment and describes how these ideas of identity and terroir are tied together through food:

Cultural identity is established through attachment to local food. In the act of tasting, nature and culture become one. Flavours are derived from geographical, historical and cultural roots. All of these shape the cuisine and flavour. It is true that many things taste best at the source, precisely because the culinary context is a totality that seeks affinities of local ingredients and recipes.

(2012: 77)
Quality of flavour here is linked to location and production style. Distinct geographic regions provide specific taste experiences so that place can be tasted in foods. Rural agricultural practices and the crops and livestock that respond to the local climate and geography, become the building blocks of regional cuisines, such as that of Oaxaca. In this way, ingredients and dishes, codified (cookbooks) and immortalised, come to represent their regions.

There is a dynamic interaction between perception, memory and a landscape of artefacts, organic and inorganic (Seremetakis 1994). Geurts (2002) agrees that memory, identity, the body and the senses are all intertwined and coincide in sensory interactions with others such as relatives, neighbours, ancestors, and gods. These interactions in turn create identifications, which are essential to being human. Attachments to places and to the tastes of the foods that grow there contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities and the memories held in landscapes connect people to their roots. Local ways of doing things become markers of a local way of life in distinction to Mexico/the world, as with mezcal, corn and chocolate. Connections to the land are marked firmly in food and certain ingredients such as mezcal. These ingredients then tell stories of connection, identity, memory and history. These stories are partly articulated through the theory of terroir. Foods such as mezcal and chapulines represent and evoke home for Oaxacan people. These foods are even thought to draw you back to a place and: 'residents of Oaxaca City say that those who taste the fried chapulines, or grasshoppers, which are dished out on many street corners, will return one day' (MacLaggan 2004).
The Original Drinking Chocolate

~5~

Raw cacao beans.
A cup of frothed drinking chocolate made with water.
Chocolate atole, with a molinillo for making the foam and a small gourd bowl for serving.
Chocolate is mentioned in almost every ethnography of Mexico and Oaxaca, including: Redfield and Villa (1934), Whetton (1948), Lewis (1960 and 1961), Dennis (1974 and 1987), Vogt (1990), Brandes (1998), Zolov (1999), LeCount (2001) and Mahar (2010). However, it is never focused on as an item of interest in itself. From the passing mentions in the ethnographies, it appears that chocolate as a part of Mexican culture is taken for granted and treated as either trivial or as if it doesn’t matter, however these types of artefacts are often the most effective in social reproduction and carry multiple meanings as we have discovered in the cases of corn and mezcal (cf. Appadurai 1986). Cacao seeds and especially the frothed chocolate drink embody history and their use speaks of a certain past; that of the Olmec, the Maya and the Aztecs who used it for trade and ritual. More recently, it speaks of conquests and voyages of discovery, which led to the introduction and adoption of ingredients such as cinnamon, now almost always added to chocolate paste. Cacao and chocolate are tied to histories that extend far from Mexico and into modernity, which involve slavery and the expansion of global industrial capitalism (cf. Szogyi 1997, Terrio 2002). Cacao has deep religious and social significance and continues to be an important offering to the spirits during the Day of the Dead festivities. It therefore links Mexican Indian people to their pre colonial and colonial past and to each other in a community of shared memories and understandings and is an important marker or flag of identity that has continued importance as an everyday, ritual and festival food (cf. Anderson 1983, Palmer 1998).

Although the word ‘chocolate’ is the same in all languages, in Oaxaca it refers specifically to a drink made with cacao paste and water or milk, rather than a bar of eating chocolate (Posada del Cacao, San Pablo Cultural Centre 2012). The term cacao refers to the drink, the paste, the seeds and pod and is not to be confused with cocoa or coca. Cacao is very nourishing and has a stimulating effect on the body, which was recognised by the Aztecs whose soldiers were said to be able to march for days on chocolate and nothing else. Raw cacao and ready made chocolate paste are available all over Oaxaca city: in restaurants for breakfast and supper, at the markets all day and at dedicated chocolate shops. In the villages it is generally still made by hand in the home or at least purchased at the
local markets from someone who made it by hand and it is consumed daily for breakfast, usually served with sweet bread. As with corn (Chapter 3), it requires special knowledge and skills to produce cacao and to make chocolate drinks. The delicate process of growing and harvesting is most certainly an art de localité but the making of chocolate drinks is also an art in itself (cf. Mendras 1970, Adapon 2008). Chocolate in Oaxaca is women’s knowledge because it is rarely grown there, rather it is transported from neighbouring states and purchased by women in the markets (cf. Miller 1998). It is the women that then control the process of chocolate making from the purchase of the best cacao for the best price to the ratios of the various ingredients that are added to the paste and the grinding of the ingredients by hand or at a mill. It is they that then turn the resulting cacao paste into the various drinks. Chocolate in this form is an important everyday food in Oaxaca.

Cacao is also present in the star of the cuisine and one of Oaxaca’s most famous dishes; mole negro. Oaxaca is known for its food traditions throughout Mexico and the world, especially its moles. In fact, cooking and food are among the finest expressions of Oaxacan culture, vividly portraying the state’s history and traditions. Despite capitalist pressures, food remains steadfastly local and eating local foods made in traditional ways is a point of pride as well as a tourist attraction. Food is at the centre of family life and cooking skills are handed down from one generation to the next, especially in the villages, where such cooking skills constitute a form of embodied habitual knowledge (Casey 2000). It is also labour of love for the women of Oaxaca, who seek to create and maintain relationships of love and devotion through the work and sacrifices involved in cooking well for their families (cf. Miller 1998, Adapon 2005). Cooking well is based on the selection of excellent, fresh, seasonal ingredients, which is why the food varies from region to region, even village to village and although foods can be found in the supermarkets at any time of year, people prefer to wait for the seasonal produce to appear at local markets. The best food is grown either within the village or the state, although cacao is an exception to this rule as it is grown mainly in the more tropical neighbouring states of Chiapas and Tabasco.
Identity, Love and Sacrifice

Chocolate in the form of a drink is a daily food in Oaxaca and Victoria made it everyday for her husband before he went to work in the milpa. It is also an ancient food with connections to religions and mythology from times before the Spanish conquest. This makes it a potent ‘flag of identity’ (Palmer 1998). Flags include foods and recipes as symbols of belonging as much as more obvious examples such as costumes, ceremonies and festivals; all of which stop us from being engulfed in forgetting. Such reminders surround and support our ongoing existence, bringing together and unifying human experience. A food such as chocolate then connects past, present, future, duty, desire, the forgotten and the remembered. Food links with and reminds us of the past, becoming a badge or flag of identity and signalling who we are to ourselves and to others. This feeling of belonging is achieved through imagined shared knowledge and similar basic understandings that are embodied and symbolised in food (cf. Anderson 1983). When cultures such as those in Oaxaca are faced with change, objects or things with long historical associations can become fundamental referents of identity. These things in Oaxaca include corn, eating insects, drinking mezcal, chocolate and chiles although this list is by no means exhaustive. Such food items have ancient histories and so serve to stabilise identity in the face of change, becoming symbols of the 'past'. The physical act of cooking is a form of habitual body memory that literally brings the past into the present by re-enacting it, however the practice of cooking has other important functions, as described by Adapon (2008).

Adapon (2008) explains how cooking in Mexico is a creative, even artistic process. The personal touch of the cook or their 'sazón' is something inexplicable that arises from within, from the heart. In other words, love is the 'secret' ingredient that makes a home cooked meal special. A woman's cooking skills are an embodied practice, which must be previously learned through experience and apprenticeship. To cook well therefore requires both social and gastronomic skill. The cook invests many hours in making a meal and therefore food can express how much you love someone through the amount of time and effort involved in
making the dish that you serve to them. The time and labour is then an investment in the social relationship between the chef and the intended eater. (c.f. Miller 1998). Echoing Miller's (1998) findings about the motivations behind shopping and thrift, in Mexico eating alone is seen as asocial and destructive but sharing food lifts consumption into the (sacred) sphere of social interaction and women seek to create and maintain important social relationships through shared consumption. Cooking is therefore a sacrifice and an act of devotion, practiced in order to establish a relationship of love.

Miller (1998) described how historically, sacrifice was a part of everyday life and was an ordinary and regular form of expenditure, especially when it was related to eating. He contends that the daily use of sacrifice as opposed to the spectacle of sacrifice may in fact be the most important way in which divinity is affirmed. Miller sees the act of shopping as a mundane act of sacrifice and claims that the two practices are motivated by the same thing, that is the need to create a relationship with a desiring other, or love. Mundane or materialistic consumption that is not devoted to a higher purpose is feared because it represents destruction, excess and asocial liberation without regard for any kind of larger responsibility. However, this destructive element of expenditure and consumption is mitigated and transformed by its incorporation into sacrifice. Sacrifice constitutes or confirms the existence of the objects of devotion to which it is directed and it allows communication with them. According to Miller (1998) shopping and the practice of thrift while shopping, amount to a sacrificial rite that purifies the act, protecting against the destructive powers of consumption. Through this rite, women strive to maintain the key relationships to which love can be ascribed such as families and partners. Love is then the primary context of shopping and of cooking and it is expressed most obviously in dishes that are skilled, labour intensive and require careful shopping such as chocolate and especially mole negro.
‘Theobroma’: Food of the Gods

The chocolate tree's botanical name is Theobroma Cacao and ‘Theobroma’ means food of the gods. It is a forest plant, native to Mesoamerica and probably first utilised by humans for the sweet white pulp which surrounds the cacao seeds, rather than for the seeds themselves. The cacao plant is quite delicate and is susceptible to various diseases. It is sun, wind and drought sensitive and nitrogen dependent. Although it needs heat and moisture to grow, cacao must be planted in the shade or it will burn (Barrera and Alphiat 2006). The plant depends on midges for pollination and therefore needs mulch around it to produce seedpods. These seedpods are approximately the size of a hand and grow directly from the trunk of the tree (Clarence-Smith 2000). Once they are ripe, the cacao pods must be harvested carefully by hand to prevent damage to the part of the trunk from which they grow because if this patch is damaged during harvest, no further cacao pods will grow there. Also, harvesters must be careful not to damage the seeds inside the pods when they split them open as a single damaged seed can destroy the whole batch during the next process, which is fermentation where the seeds as well as the sweet sticky pulp that surrounds them are scraped out and left to ferment in batches for up to a week in the sun. This process is where the chocolate flavour begins to develop. Probably, fermentation was the easiest way to get the pulp off the beans, which otherwise get dry and very sticky. It also allows the bean to dry better and therefore store and travel better (Telly 1997). It is very important to keep the beans dry to prevent mould forming because mould will also adversely affect the flavour of the chocolate.

When the beans have fermented, the seeds are then cleaned, dried and roasted to further develop the chocolate flavour. Usually the beans are packed into bags and transported at this point. Many factors can influence the end flavour of the beans such as whether they are ripe, under ripe or over ripe when harvested, too little or too much fermentation, the kind of mould present and how much (there will almost always be some), seasonal and regional variations in climate, moisture content of beans when bagged, and the age of the beans which cannot be told by
looking. The bags of beans must be cleaned before use to remove packing debris and then they are ready to be roasted. The roasting process is also delicate because the amount of roasting needed varies with every lot of beans. Also, depending on what they are to be used for the beans need to be differently roasted and finally different varieties require different roasts. There are three main varieties of cacao; criollo, forastero and calabacillo, however this last one is often included when people speak of forastero. Criollo is large, plump and light brown to almost white in colour and is considered to be the better bean for pure chocolate flavour. The forastero beans are smaller, flatter and dark brown to purplish in colour. Although it is said to have an inferior flavour, the forastero is the main commercial bean grown because it is hardier, produces more pods per plant and more beans per pod than criollo varieties. The criollo or red coloured beans from Chiapas are much sought after and were considered to be the best quality by my informants, in particular, Victoria. She purchased raw cacao at the markets and then roasted and winnowed (removed the outer skin or husk) her own beans. This left the shiny dark brown nibs, which she ground into a cacao paste. This paste is referred to in the West as cocoa liquor and is processed further to make eating chocolate but in Mesoamerica, it is the final product (Szogyi 1997).

To make the type of chocolate Westerners are used to, the raw cacao paste must be further refined since at this stage it has a grainy texture and is almost half fat in the form of cacao butter. The cacao liquor is squeezed until almost all the fat is removed in a process called 'dutching'. After that, the remaining chocolate is ground finely into cocoa powder and fat is added back. This is often a vegetable fat instead of the cacao butter, which is profitable on its own and is usually sold to cosmetics companies. The fat and cacao powder mixture is then heated, ground and mixed at the same time in a further refinement called 'conching'. It is in this way that a smooth eating chocolate which 'snaps' is produced for Western consumers. However, in Oaxaca the cacao paste or liquor is mixed with sugar and other ingredients (especially cinnamon and almond), most often pressed into a small circular pie shape, is the final product and what is called chocolate. The chocolate paste is very sensitive to changes in temperature and it is said that 'if a
wind blows through the house while you are making chocolate, it can ruin the whole batch’ (Susannah). For this reason the doors are kept closed while chocolate is being made. Susannah Trilling had been trying to perfect the making of chocolate for many years but said that there was always a challenge in that something always went wrong with the process for her. She said that: 'Good chocolate should be dark, smooth and a little greasy looking. If it is white and powdery looking then it wasn’t made properly'.

Oaxaca has few manufactured chocolate bars for sale and in comparison to raw cacao beans these bars are very expensive. It costs approximately the same amount to buy one kilo of raw cacao or a small box of eating chocolates, that is, sixty pesos. A kilo of raw cacao makes a lot of chocolate drinks and is a much more economical way to consume chocolate, especially when mixed with other things, such as corn. Many people in Oaxaca would not be able to justify spending that amount of money on a small box of chocolates. Interestingly, Easter and Valentines Day in Oaxaca were notable for their lack of chocolate when in the West they are major chocolate festivals. In the home of chocolate, there was not a trace of Easter eggs (huevos pasquales) or bunnies. In fact, there was not a sign of any kind of egg as eggs are not a part of the tradition in Oaxaca. An informant told me that in other parts of Mexico they do have Easter eggs, but not in Oaxaca where the celebration is much more traditional than in other places and has a deeply religious rather than a commercial character. Valentines Day celebrations were less about chocolate and more about sweets and flowers. It was also used as a day to express love for friends, not only for lovers. Chocolate is not a popular gift for any occasion because it is too expensive for most people to buy.

**Mole Negro**

A further distinctive use of chocolate in Oaxaca is as a savoury spice in cooking, especially in the famous black mole as well as in numerous other moles such as coloradito. A mole is a sauce, usually spicy, made with a mix of ingredients such as chiles, various herbs, tomatoes, fruits and nuts. *Mole negro* is probably the
most famous mole because it is closely associated with festivals such as the Days of The Dead, where it is an important part of the offering (see chapter 6). It is also the most complex sauce, the star of the cuisine, and has become symbolic of the region as a flag of identity (cf. Palmer 1998). Mole negro is a hugely labour intensive sauce and can take up to a week to prepare. It contains up to thirty ingredients almost all of which must be toasted first, then ground, then fried, then cooked down with stock into a sauce.

To make mole, the women remove the veins and seeds from the chiles (chilhuacle, mulato, pasilla, chipotle mora), reserving the seeds, as it is the flavour and the black colour, particularly from the chilhuacle, rather than the heat that is required. Then the chiles are toasted and soaked in water. Depending on the cook, the chiles are either toasted or burnt as they were in Susannah Trilling’s class and then soaked in two changes of water. The herbs and spices (peppercorns, Mexican cinnamon, cloves, oregano) are toasted until fragrant and set aside. Then lard is heated in the pot and ingredients including sesame seeds, bread, almonds, peanuts, plantain, raisins, walnuts, pecans are fried separately. These fried ingredients are then ground with onion, garlic and herbs and spices until a paste is formed. The paste is then added to a pan with lard and fried. Water is slowly added until a thick sauce is achieved. The sauce must be stirred constantly while it is cooking over one to two hours to ensure that it doesn’t stick or burn. Towards the end of the cooking process, chocolate, sugar and salt are added and then the sauce is cooked further. At this stage the sauce can be kept and it is at this stage that the sauce is sold in the markets. However it must be finished before it is used. To finish the sauce, tomatoes are char grilled and ground, then fried in lard, mole paste and stock are added and the sauce is cooked until it is smooth and shiny looking. It is cooked in a special ceramic pot, called a cazuela, which is large and round with a round bottom and sits over an open flame.

Mole negro was traditionally made with turkey (which is indigenous to the area) but today it is most commonly served with chicken and is had with rice or in a banana leaf wrapped tamale. Although mole is sometimes said to be of Spanish origin, ancient murals show tamales with a chocolate coloured sauce and in El
Salvador, a vessel was found that: 'contained cacao separated from chili peppers by a layer of cotton gauze - preparation as if for a pre-Columbian mole sauce' (Dreiss and Greenhill, 2008: 127). However, this could also have been preparation as if for an original chocolate drink. There is some speculation that the sauce was originally served over the meat of Aztec human sacrifices but this hasn't been proven for certain. Debates rage over the authenticity of many of Mexico's iconic dishes such as mole negro, pozole and chiles en nogada (Pilcher 1998, Hobsbawm 1983). The upshot of these debates over authenticity and tradition versus Spanish influence seem to be that a chocolate sauce of some description has been made in Mexico since ancient times, however it has been modified and developed since the Spanish came and now includes many Spanish ingredients. Therefore the cuisine and its iconic dishes represent a blending of European and indigenous cuisines during the colonial period. Mole negro continues to evolve as some of the chiles that were traditionally used to make it have become too expensive for most people to buy and have therefore been replaced with cheaper varieties by most housewives in their family mole recipes.

*Chocolate has gone so far from home that today few realise what a vital role the rustic cup of hot chocolate plays in Mexican life.*

*(Bayless 2007:315)*

The Spanish conquistadors worried that the Aztec commoners ate very little but this is likely due to the fact that rather than eating solids, they drank a lot of their food. Most of their nourishment came in the form of an endless variety of corn gruels (atoles) and on special occasions, chocolate drinks. The original drinking chocolate is believed to have been a beaten, cold, bitter drink. It was unsweetened but often flavoured with chile and pepper. When the Spanish arrived they were the ones who introduced milk as well as the heating and sweetening of this ancient drink using sugar (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008). Chocolate was enthusiastically adopted and adapted by the Spanish and today chocolate is popular worldwide as a special treat or snack but in Oaxaca, cacao continues to be employed for ritual purposes and is used for making a variety of
daily drinks as well as for cooking a variety of savoury dishes called *moles*, a form of chocolate use which is mostly alien to Westerners. In Oaxaca today, chocolate is still consumed most often in the form of a slightly grainy, sweetened beaten drink and is usually served with *pan de yema*, an eggy sweet bread. This combination is said to be a very traditional breakfast (although it is a mix of Indian and Spanish traditions of eating chocolate and wheat bread respectively) and is exactly what Victoria served her family for breakfast in the mornings. It is served in private homes, offered in restaurants and cafes and sold from mobile food carts all over the city. This chocolate drink is hugely nutritious and is an important part of the diet (Bayless 2007). The chocolate drink in its most basic form is made from cacao nibs ground into a paste with sugar but other ingredients that can be added include vanilla, cinnamon, walnuts, pecans and almonds, less often *annatto* (a red dye), *chile*, pepper and honey.

In the village of San Juan Guelavía, the preparation of chocolate has changed little over the centuries and although homemade chocolate can be purchased in the local markets, most women still make their own especially for their families. When Victoria made chocolate for the family, she first purchased the best raw cacao, then toasted it on the *comal* (a ceramic plate heated over an open fire) and winnowed it by hand. She then ground the remaining nibs on a heated *metate*, (she used a candle underneath) using a stone rolling pin (*mano*), adding sugar and cinnamon to taste, until it formed a shiny, runny paste. This paste solidified as it cooled and she shaped it into circles with her hands, which she then stored and later used to make the chocolate drink. To do this, she broke a small amount of the solid cacao paste off and added it to a special jug with a long neck and bulbous base along with warm water. She heated this mixture over a flame and beat it with a *molinillo* until the cacao paste had dissolved and the *molinillo* had created a layer of foam on top. Then she served the drink with sweet bread.

There are at least six large stores in the city that sell pre-made drinking chocolate and the raw ingredients for making it. *Mayordomo* is the largest brand, followed by *La Solidad*. However these stores dedicated to chocolate are largely a tourist attraction in Oaxaca as the locals prefer to shop at the markets for all
things including ingredients for making chocolate and even premade chocolate and *mole* pastes. All of the city markets have sections selling traditional chocolate, *mole* and raw ingredients and the smell of freshly ground cacao permeates the busy streets around them. Often even when women purchase chocolate instead of making it, they still create their own special mix rather than buying a premade one and they closely supervise the mixing and grinding of their ingredients in the shop, standing over the operator and giving constant instructions.

The drinking chocolate described is by no means the only cacao based drink available in Oaxaca. Cacao is also mixed into a variety of ancient corn-based drinks. Variants include *atole* with foam (a warm corn based chocolate drink on top of which is poured a cold, sweet cacao based foam), *Tzone* (a corn and cacao drink, served on special occasions such as Day of the Dead and Holy week), Popo (made with cacao, rice, corn, cinnamon, water and sugar), *Champurrado* (a corn *atole* and cacao drink) and *Pozontle* (associated with weddings and baptisms). Traditionally, these drinks are ceremonial and offered at special times such as at large assemblies of persons or religious occasions, although increasingly alcohols such as beers and mezcal have replaced chocolate drinks for celebrations (see Chapter 4). Corn and chocolate drinks are becoming increasingly available and are now common in the city, especially *tejate*, which is offered for general consumption daily in the markets. The mixture of corn and cacao reduces the amount of cacao needed and therefore reduces the cost of the drink, making it much more accessible to all social strata and allowing it to be consumed daily, not only at festivals or special events.

*Tejate* is an ancient beverage and there is evidence that it has been prepared in the same way since the time of the Zapotec empire when they offered it to the gods in ceremonies asking for good harvests and rain. At this time only the kings, who were considered to be gods themselves, were allowed to consume the drink, which is why today it is still considered to be the drink of the gods. The community of *San Andres Huayapam* is thought to be the cradle of *tejate* and the main ingredient for the flavour of this drink, the cacao flower, is obtained from the home gardens of this community. *Tejate* is a cold drink which when ready
consists of two very differently textured layers. The bottom layer is a light brown, smooth liquid *atole* and the other is a fluffy, white, buttery tasting and feeling foam, which floats on top of the *atole*. *Tejate* is a nutritious food and is given to the workers (men) to bring them energy. In the village of *San Juan Guelavía*, this is one of the last things that the traditional *metate* is still used for. You could see women out in the yard making this drink for their husbands at around two o'clock in the afternoon, which was the traditional time to serve it. To make *tejate*, the cacao, *mamey* seeds and the cacao flowers are usually toasted the day before. Peanuts are also toasted and set aside. Corn is prepared in the same way as it is for corn *masa*, using *cal* or ashes (see Chapter 3). The corn, the cacao mixture and the peanuts are all ground separately and then the three mixtures are combined and ground a second time until they form a smooth velvety paste. Finally, the mixture must be kneaded and mixed by hand in a large bowl, slowly adding water, for up to an hour to get the right consistency. If it has been made properly, the *flor de cacao* rises to the surface to form a thick layer of foam. Then the drink is sweetened with syrup as it is served in a gourd bowl.

The preparation of chocolate drinks and their foams is a delicate process, an art, or a science, which requires experienced hands, the proper tools and carefully chosen ingredients, all of which require and demonstrate the love, devotion and skill of the maker (Adapon 2008, Miller 1998). The skill and labour involved is an example of sacrifice in Miller's sense (1998) as described in the following chapter (6). Notably, the making of these drinks is women's work. It is hard work that requires detailed knowledge and bodily memories of certain movements, textures and looks which indicate that the foams and pastes are ready. The women must have a 'feel' for it, as for other forms of cooking which are learned from doing and then become habit (cf. Black 2012, Connerton 1989, Casey 2000). If the pastes and foams are not made properly or if any grease is allowed into the mixture then the foams will not rise and they will not be stable. In the case of *tejate*, if it is not made properly, the top layer will not float. This would make an unacceptable drink and the production of an unacceptable drink affects a woman's status in the community (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008, cf. Bourdieu 1984).
Cacao: a holy fetish and... the gods’ elixir... coin of their realm.

(Rosenblum, 2005: 56)

The archaeological evidence that remains of Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec and Aztec civilizations suggests a long history of cacao use in Mesoamerica and pre-Columbian ceramics prove that Mesoamericans have been eating and drinking chocolate since 1500 BC. The first archaeological record for the use of cacao comes from the South Coast of Guatemala where ceremonially buried vases full of cacao beans were found (Coe 1997). The area is perfect for growing cacao which likes hot and humid temperatures that exist in a limited area, no less than twenty degrees from the equator. Cacao is native to the area surrounding Oaxaca, specifically to Chiapas, in the area once called Socunusco, famed since ancient times and today as the home of the world’s finest cacao. At the time of the Spanish conquest, the Aztecs had control of Soconusco, which contained a thriving cacao industry. This area supplied the Aztec empire where cacao was being used as a medium for exchange in addition to having considerable ritualistic and ceremonial importance. Twenty-five years later, the area was paying tribute to the Spanish in cacao, which continued for the next 200 years into the mid 18th century. In the 18th century, the cacao from this area was considered so fine that it was reserved for the exclusive use of the Spanish royal family (Coe 1997).

High quality cacao continues to be raised in Soconusco, Chiapas and is known as criollo. Almost ninety percent of the world’s chocolate is now grown in Africa on the Ivory Coast but Brazil, Venezuela and Indonesia also grow for the world market. In contrast, most of the chocolate grown in Mexico and Central America is for local consumption and the cacao consumed in Oaxaca still comes from the neighbouring states of Chiapas and Tabasco. Oaxaca has been a centre of trade for centuries due to its location and its relative flatness and cacao has passed through for trade and tribute on its way to the Mayas, the Aztecs and the Spanish after them: ‘the principal markets for the commerce of cacao were in the city of Oaxaca and the town of Tehuantepec’ (Torres 2010: xv).
The Olmecs are believed to have begun the domestication of chocolate but the Mayas were the first to perfect the laborious process of fermentation, roasting, drying and grinding to get the pure chocolate from the cacao bean (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008). The classic Maya had a hieroglyph that stood for cacao and the Maya god, Chac, eats cacao. The Maya book of creation, the *Popul Vuh*, describes cacao as one of the foods from which the gods made humans. These foods were taken from the mountain of sustenance, which was filled with: 'sweet things, thick with yellow corn, white corn, and thick with pataxte and cacao' (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008). The Mayans also drank the juice from the fermenting beans, which was said to be a delicious and strong liquor: 'but it was the Aztecs who made cacao a holy fetish and incorporated the gods' elixir into their grand ceremonies. And, even more than for the Mayans, it was the coin of their realm' (Rosenblum, 2005: 56). The Aztecs worshipped Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent god, who was thought to be the bringer of all culture and enlightenment and it was he who gave chocolate to the people and showed them how to use it.

Cacao is repeatedly shown as an offering in the Madrid and Dresden Codices. Figurines have been found of both male and female cacao gods who are either carrying cacao or growing pods directly from their bodies. One Mayan vase painting depicts a palace scene believed to be portraying the gods, which features a maiden pouring a liquid from a height into a vessel at her feet. This same action is depicted in later Aztec manuscripts where it is labelled as cacao making. It was poured in such a way because: 'the pouring produced the foam, considered the delicacy of delicacies, the sign of quality, and the object of many complicated culinary operations of skimming, reserving, and replacing' (Coe 1997: 149). Spanish eyewitness accounts of the Aztec customs at the time of conquest described the king, Moctezuma being offered two different cacao drinks during a meal. One of the drinks was rumoured to be an aphrodisiac that he took before visiting his wives, the other was a frothed drink served in jugs by women (Coe 1997).

Maize, cacao and blood were central elements in Aztec religious practices and are conceptually linked in the idea of fertility. The production of food and the
practice of sacrifice bind men and gods in relationships of mutual obligation. The following description of the Hindu relationship with food and the gods is very similar to the Oaxacan conception where:

In a very real sense, ...food, in its physical and moral forms, is the cosmos. It is thought to be the fundamental link between men and gods. Men and gods are co-producers of food, the one by his technology and labor (the necessary conditions) and the other by providing rainfall and an auspicious ecological situation (the sufficient conditions). Men assure this cooperation by feeding the gods and eating their leftovers.... Thus, at the most abstract level, the production and consumption of food are part of a single cycle of transactions with the gods. (Appadurai 1981: 496)

If the gods were not appeased, disaster would ensue, therefore the gods had to be fed with sacrifices of blood and cacao. The blood was believed to be necessary to nourish the gods who in turn would provide favourable weather and rain for growing corn and other crops. The most pleasing sacrifice to the gods was human blood and hearts from warriors. Cacao is symbolically associated with blood and was sometimes even substituted for the heart of sacrificial victims. Although these kinds of rituals no longer take place, the importance of cacao which began with these ancient customs continues today: 'the passion for many foods throughout the world is rooted in ancient rituals that appeased the gods, and this is certainly the case for chocolate and the chocolate-giving cacao tree' (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008: 3). A seed called annatto is used as a red dye and was commonly mixed into chocolate drinks, which could have furthered this association of chocolate and blood.

In Maya, Mixtec and Aztec mythology, cacao was used by the gods themselves as a negotiating tool to ensure the balance and order of the Underworld, the Earth and the Sky (Dreiss and Greenhill, 2008: 9). Offerings of cacao are therefore used not only to appease the gods but also to sustain the souls of the departed and as payment during the journey of death (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008: 138). People were buried with cacao seeds and corn because souls that were not properly provisioned (or honoured later) could haunt the living. This ritual use of cacao continues in the Day of the Dead celebrations (Chapter 6). Cacao is a suitable offering or sacrifice and is thought to allow dialogue with supernatural beings.
who are able to smell or 'eat' the aromas of the offerings (cf. Miller 1998). The gods are believed to live under the earth, literally in the underworld and cenotes and caves are thought to be entrances to the underworld. They also happen to be a very good place to grow cacao as they provide exactly the right kind of environment. The cacao tree therefore often represents and may actually be the world tree or axis mundi, which is at the centre of the universe and is a symbol of abundance, rulership and ancestry. The cenotes and caves which the trees grow in are seen as liminal, in between or transitional places and cacao is therefore closely associated with death and it also has associations with almost all transitional or liminal stages of life:

Linked to the earth and the cyclical nature of human life, it both mediates and transcends relationships between humans and the forces that animate the earth. In this fashion it reflects the tenuous place of humans, balancing social needs and their need to acknowledge the creative forces that make the social possible.

(Prufer and Hurst 2007: 20)

Cacao is used to celebrate birth, puberty, death and marriage, in agricultural ceremonies, and during sacrificial ceremonies as an offering to the gods and the spirits (Gasco 1997: 156, cf. Grivetti and Shapiro 2009).

Interestingly, cacao is associated with women both in Mexico and in the West: 'the association of chocolate with women is enduring' (Moss and Badenoch 2009: 21). In Oaxaca women are the cooks and therefore they make the chocolate drinks and other dishes that include chocolate such as mole. However, chocolate soon came to be associated with European women too. One of the first stories to explicitly link chocolate and sinful temptation with women in its ruthless pursuit was that of the women in Chiapas who took chocolate during mass and murdered the priest who objected to this disturbance with a cup of poisoned chocolate (cf. Robertson 2009, Rosenblum 2005, Off 2006). This association may also be due to women's perceived connection to the senses (especially the lower senses of taste, smell and touch as discussed in the introduction) and chocolate is and always has been a drink that excites the senses, as described by Norton:

The emphasis put on flower spices, the frothy foam, the special drinking vessels, and the requisite reddish hue shows that chocolate was valued not only for its
effects on the taste buds, but also for the stimulation of the olfactory, tactile, visual, and affective senses.

(2006: 675)

'Even today, the value of a rural Mexican woman is often measured by the amount of foam she can produce on chocolate'

(Dreiss and Greenhill 2008:111)

Foam is most often produced using a molinillo which is a special wooden device introduced by the Spanish as an easier alternative for creating the prized froth on the top of the chocolate drink. Prior to this invention as described above, chocolate was poured from bowl to bowl from a height until foam was produced (Coe 1997, Dreiss and Greenhill 2008). Foam is highly esteemed, sought after and sometimes considered sacred as it is thought to feed the soul rather than the body. The amount of bubbles or foam in a substance is considered to be an index of divine presence as bubbles and foam represent and are believed to contain the essence of life itself (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008, Stross 2011). In Mesoamerican mythology the living soul is identified with air and breath and this breath soul is associated with sweet air and flowers or scent. Foam allows the consumers of it to take in some of the divine air. Rather than sending up the mundane into the sacred (in the form of smoke or scent from the offering) it brings the sacred down to the mundane, creating a reverse connection with the divine and cleansing the body:

Like the copal smoke, that is the bridge between the physical and the spirit world, in a reverse direction - the smoke goes up into the air, sending up prayers and wishes, carrying away the illness and fright, and the other [foam] brings the aire into the remedy and into the body.

(Stross 2011:487)

Further evidence of the importance of foam is that plant additives are often used to produce more and longer lasting foam. One common additive used for this purpose is a type of cacao called pataxte (theobroma bicolor), which requires a long production process where the beans are buried and watered regularly for
months until they turn powdery white and become calcified. The lasting foam made with such an additive can be removed and stored for later use or sometimes even spooned on top of a different drink such as *atole* (maize gruel). However as froth doesn’t last long, even with such additives, it can also be seen as a sign of freshness, activity and potency.

Furthermore, foam indicates fermentation, which is most often associated with alcohol. Alcoholic inebriation is traditionally a sacred state, which was thought to allow communication with deities (see chapter 4). Many cacao *atole* drinks were once alcoholic (using fermented *atole*), so the idea of the sacredness of the foam may linger from its association with these more ancient ritual drinks (Stross 2011). Scientifically, foam is able to improve flavour by making a food or drink more available to the nose. Also the tactility of foam is found to be quite pleasurable in almost all societies where beverages and foods that contain foams and bubbles are appreciated, not just in Oaxaca. Drinking chocolate with foam on top is an enjoyable multisensory experience, especially in the case of some of the drinks that involve cold foam on top of a warm *atole*. All of these aspects make drinking chocolate a memorable experience and a pleasant bodily memory, which is usually associated with festive or happy events is shared by all members of the group (Casey 2000).

*In Oaxaca, chocolate is more than history. It signifies the binding of a pueblo to its roots and to the belief that the divine (sacred) purifies, gives new force to, and celebrates life.*

*(Torres 2010)*

Chocolate in Oaxaca is more than a fatty snack; in fact it is rarely eaten in this form even today. In Oaxaca, chocolate is a nutritious food that is consumed daily and has been used as such, usually in the form of a breakfast drink since ancient times. There are a wide variety of different ways that chocolate is consumed, depending on the region and the relative wealth of the consumers. Cacao paste can be mixed with water or milk in its most basic form or combined with corn
and other ingredients to make a cheaper but still delicious and nutritious drink. Chocolate is understood to be good for both the body and the soul. The foam, with its links to the divine sweet breath, is believed to feed the soul while the chocolate nourishes the body. Chocolate is included in one of the dishes that Oaxaca is world famous for, that is, black mole or mole negro. Chocolate and especially mole negro are associated with pleasure and festivities, women, the profane and the sacred.

Any Oaxacan cooking, including making what is thought to be a simple thing such as a cup of chocolate is a highly involved and labour intensive process. Making chocolate drinks and raising the foam is women’s work and is a delicate process requiring careful selection, toasting and grinding of the beans and careful control of the ambient temperature. The making of foams requires substantial effort and adds value to the beverage because it represents and embodies the labour involved in the production process. The making of chocolate drinks is a form of embodied knowledge of ingredients and techniques, which is sometimes described as having a 'feel' for a recipe (Casey 2000, Tuan 1977). It is an embodied, habitual and sensual form of knowledge, passed down from woman to woman through the generations (cf. Abarca 2001, DeCerteau 1984). The making of mole negro, to which drinking chocolate is added is a highly involved process, which can take up to a week to complete. The efforts expended in the making of these drinks and of mole in particular are acknowledged by the value placed upon them socially, which comes from an awareness of the technical mastery and skill that is required to make it well. The effort put into cooking equates to a show of love and cooking skills are associated with women’s status (cf. Bourdieu 1984, Miller 1998, Adapon 2008, see also Chapters 7 and 8). The chocolate drink and especially mole negro therefore embody the labour, agency, value and the artistry of women (cf. Adapon 2008).

Chocolate today quite literally embodies the history of Oaxaca; ancient, colonial and present and therefore acts as a flag of identity (Palmer 1998). It links Oaxaquesños to their roots and to ancient Mexican Indian religions such as the Mayas and Incas who used chocolate in their religious ceremonies and as a form
of currency. Through the integration of new ingredients, such as sugar, it serves as a symbol and reminder of the more recent history of colonisation by the Spanish (Palmer 1998, cf. Torres 2010). It forms a link between gods and humans as well as with the spirits of the ancestors and therefore continues to be used as an important offering during Day of the Dead ceremonies. Chocolate symbolises home, tradition, history, ancient techniques, power and prestige, the Gods, sustenance, money/wealth, well-being, ancestry, mythology and women’s labour. Foods such as chocolate therefore become important markers of identity, which are closely associated with place, connecting people strongly to their ancient history and to their community (Casey 2000). A cup of chocolate with foam on top, flavoured with spices, serves as a daily sensual reminder of the past (cf. Seremetakis 1994). Foods such as chocolate, corn and mezcal stand out as particularly memorable due to their associations with enjoyable and exciting events such as fiestas and festivals, becoming important bearers of memory and both personal and communal identity. The importance of cacao for Indian identity was recognised early on by the Spanish who found chocolate to be suspect, associated with sorcery and thought it dangerous because it was seen to be capable of spreading Indian culture, with colonists adopting Indian food ways rather than changing them as they were supposed to and it has only gained in significance and symbolic power since then.
Section 2

The previous chapters focused on the social lives and meanings of things in relation to bodies and place. Particular commodities in Oaxaca were examined including corn, chocolate, mezcal, chiles and chapulines all of which were found to have a heavy symbolic load. They carry history and flag identity through daily reminding (Palmer 1998, Casey 2000). They also help define group boundaries and distinguish between the global and the local (DeCerteau 1984, Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Corn and mezcal especially literally embody the land in their flavours (cf. Mendras 1970, Trubek 2005, Paxson 2010). These foods were shown to be important both in daily life and for fiestas and festivals. This thesis follows Casey (2000) who begins with a discussion of body and place memory and the role of things or objects such as foods which act as reminders of identity and then moves on to consider social remembering in the form of commemoration as will the following section. The following chapters broaden the focus of section one and explore the importance of food in the creation and perpetuation of social memory in Oaxaca firstly through commemorative rituals or festivals and then through activities such as shopping and cooking (Casey 2000, Connerton 1989). Shopping, cooking are examined as a form of social memory which still involve the senses, body memory and the formation of habit. They also involve the creation of stories and relationships making them important for individual and group identity.
In addition to Casey's (2000) conception of social remembering through commemoration, the theme of sacrifice links these three chapters. Sacrifice is first investigated in its more usual sense of offerings to the gods and spirits in Chapter six on festivals but Chapters seven and eight explore sacrifice in a mundane setting where it transforms and transmutes the destructive capacity of shopping and cooking (consumption) into a positive expression of love and devotion which creates and maintains relationships with significant others (families). Chapter seven specifically examines Miller (1998) on shopping and sacrifice, while Chapter eight follows Adapon (2008) on cooking and how cooking as art is an expression of love. Following Mauss (1950), gifts also link these chapters as they are made to the gods by men in festivals or to the family by women in the form of the offering of the love and labour involved shopping and cooking. The offering of such a sacrifice, like the gift, demands reciprocation and is itself an affirmation, creating and maintaining the relationships it seeks to confirm (Miller 1998). These commemorations, gifts and sacrifices then are a way of entering into contracts or relationships with the spirits of the dead, the gods, the community and loved ones (Mauss 1950).
Celebrations and Commemorations

Day of the Dead flowers.
Mayordomo parade in the village of San Juan Guelavía.
A skeleton figure holding a bottle of mezcal at the Abastos markets prior to the Day of the Dead celebrations.
The state of Oaxaca is known throughout Mexico for its traditional celebrations and many tourists travel there for weddings, Christmas, Easter and The Days of the Dead. Festivals involve large numbers of people while fiestas are comparatively small celebrations however both are usually spread over one to three days and nights. The Saints Day celebrations in San Juan Guelavía lasted for a week and had three days of festive activities, including feasting as well as parades around the streets and music. Participation in festivals and the sharing of food helps to define who is and isn’t a part of the community, although the bigger festivals now attract many tourists. Such commemorations both assume and create a bond between members of the community by reminding them of their shared identities and histories. Many fiestas in Oaxaca also incorporate and strengthen local social systems such as compadrazgo (godparent or ritual kinship) and the mayordorno or cargo system. Life, especially in the villages where entertainment is scarce, revolves around the cycle of festivities and these festivities revolve around the sharing of specially marked foods such as tamales, moles and mezcal. These foods are doubly marked not only as flags of Oaxacan identity (discussed in Section one) but also as special, festive and traditional.

The Day of the Dead festival is organised by community members, not by the priest or Church hierarchy, although it explicitly involves sacrifice and the offering of foods to the spirits and the gods. The dead eat the flavour or essence of the food, the love, which was cooked in especially for them (c.f. Adapon 2008). Oaxacan festivals also partake in the spirit of the gift, involving obligations that serve to bind communities together. Invitations to even the smallest fiestas and mole are coercively given and received in a social contract that fits with Mauss (1954). A return in kind is expected and the food that is exchanged carries something of the essence of the cook/s. Like daily food, fiesta food is prepared by women but it is made in such large amounts that it usually requires multiple cooks to make. Women share the load, exchange stories and gossip to pass the hours it takes to make these foods. Such food preparation is recognised and appreciated as work in the community and part of the value given to mole comes from an awareness of the technical mastery and skill that is required to make it well. It therefore embodies the labour, agency and artistry of women (cf. Adapon
Due to the effort required to make it and the expense and complexity of the dish, the black mole recipe is placed hierarchically at the top of the cuisine and is the festival food. Making such a complex and elaborate dish marks the occasion as special and simply eating mole makes people feel like they are celebrating, as Pilar said, ‘mole is for special occasions, not for everyday’.

Following Casey (2000) and Connerton (1989), I will discuss how festivals in Oaxaca are commemorations and serve as a form of social remembering, fostering a unique ethnic and state identity. Commemorations such as festivals and fiestas, private and public link the past, the present and the future and they link individuals to groups. They achieve this through various methods, most importantly through participation, text and ritual, and through eating and drinking together (Casey 2000). Festivals serve to commemorate the past, bringing it into the present and preserving it for the future and thereby helping people to remember who they are, while family recipes for festival foods such as mole and tamales serve a similar function on a personal level (Casey 2000). Cultural themes and values are communicated through these performances, making them a kind of dialectic group reflection (cf. Turner 1987). Festivals involve bodily participation and the stimulation of the senses in order to arouse emotion. Oaxacan fiestas display a multichannel character emphasising all the senses at once, involving colour, sound, loud noises, dancing, processions, scents and food (cf. Howes 1991).

**Festivals**

The majority of festivals in Oaxaca are Catholic based, however some of them can trace a number of their elements back to ancient Indian traditions. Fiestas and weddings and even the Days of the Dead are happy occasions with many people, live music, dancing, feasting, fireworks and drinking. Festivals and fiestas provide recreation and relief from the monotony of day-to-day living. They are highly emotional, repetitive, pleasurable and long awaited events, which make them 'stand out' from other memories. Alcohol is globally associated with such
celebrations and Oaxaca is no exception (cf. Douglas 1987). In Aztec times it was believed that intoxication put people in a transcendent state, allowing them to communicate with ancestors and deities and it was therefore restricted (cf. Stross 2011), but today special occasions are marked by drinking and mezcal is an important part of festivals, especially the Days of the Dead where there were designated mezcal servers who roamed though the crowd with a bottle of mezcal and shot glasses offering them freely to the crowd but principally to the dancers who were quite inebriated by the end of the night, allowing them to communicate with the spirits they represent. Shots of mezcal were also offered to the spirits of the dead at the altars and were an important part of the offering. In general, women drank a small amounts of beer while men tended to drink a lot of mezcal at fiestas and more generally.

In the weeks leading up to the various festivals, especially Christmas, The Day of the Dead and the Guelaguetza, the markets became more specialised. Especially notable was the Christmas market, held in the zócalo. Although the original markets have now been moved out of the city, the Christmas market remains as an event in itself, the Night of the Radishes (Martinez 1997). The Night of the Radishes, on the twenty third of December, is an afternoon when stalls are set up in the zócalo and locals create lavish displays of religious and cultural scenes using carved radishes, corn husks and marigolds, some of which are quite astonishing in their intricacy and imagination. The tableaus included depictions of Guelaguetza dance troupes, biblical scenes, churches and landscapes, devils, angels, fantastical creatures, Day of the Dead altars, women making tortillas and empanadas, historical events and figures. As with all celebrations in Oaxaca, the Night of the Radishes finished with a spectacular fireworks display.

**Dias de los Muertos (Days of the Dead)**

The Day of the Dead celebration is the most important celebration in the annual cycle, especially in rural areas where the preparations are a major preoccupation for much of the year. Oaxaca is known for having one of the largest and most
strongly traditional Day of the Dead celebrations in the whole of Mexico. Although this festival is often said to demonstrate a purely Mexican fascination with death, it is in fact based on the European tradition of All Saint's Day and All Soul's Day. However, it is also clear that the celebration has roots in ancient Indian tradition. The candy imagery of skulls made out of sugar and chocolate, found everywhere during this celebration is thought to have found resonance in the Indigenous population because they were already used to offerings of this kind: some Aztec and Maya ceremonies involved the making of figures out of amaranth for religious occasions that were later eaten (cf. Brandes 1998). The Aztecs also heaped fruits and flowers on ancient altars as Oaxacans do now during the modern festival. The festivities feed into ancient beliefs about one's earthly fortunes depending on treating the dead well and making sacrificial offerings to spirits and gods in order to maintain a relationship with them and thus secure their cooperation (cf. Miller 1998). Hence, the festival represents an integration of pre Hispanic and Catholic traditions.

The days have a joyful feel rather than a morbid one as the name might suggest. It is a time of excitement and people look forward to spending time with their lost loved ones again; the rest of the year they are believed to be out of reach. A special meal is consumed together, which serves to communicate and maintain good relations with the ancestor spirits. This is important because the dead are thought to be semi divine and have the power to intercede with the gods on behalf of the living. The Days of the Dead are the days between the evenings of the thirty first of October and the second of November. During this time, certain days are set aside for the remembrance of particular categories of the dead. Children return on the thirty first of October, non-baptised souls on the thirtieth and adults on the first of November. The night of the first of November is traditionally spent in the graveyards cleaning family tombs and decorating them with flowers, candles and incense. Odours such as the smell of incense (copal) are another messenger of the festive event. In the week leading up to and on the first and second of November the whole of Oaxaca smells of copal, flowers and chocolate. Fireworks, like food, are almost always used to celebrate an occasion
in Oaxaca and are set off to welcome as well as to farewell the dead at the beginning and end of the celebrations.

The celebration is essentially a private or family feast although there is a public aspect at the community level. The communal Day of the Dead celebrations involve parades through the city and through the villages, with an especially famous celebratory procession held in a small town called Etxa, where I participated in the event with an informant. In the late afternoon, the revelry began in a clearing with a mock wedding, a live brass band, costumed dancers and drinking. The whole audience and visitors then proceeded to follow the dancers and the band in a procession around the town. The procession was led by a man who shouted out thanks and salutations to the dead and to the owners of the houses that were hosting the fiesta, where the band stopped and played a certain number of songs. It is an honour and gains you prestige within the community if you host the fiesta at your house and the more food and music that is provided, the more wealth is displayed (cf. Bourdieu 1984). At the houses, the dancers and the band ate and drank first and then the rest of the people were served. The food provided included banana leaf wrapped tamales filled with mole negro and chicken, and pozole (a corn and meat soup) as well as Coronitas (small Corona beers). The costumed dancers were all men and dressed as various characters including women of the night, skeletons, wrestlers (lucha libre), catrinas, devils, jungle men, cowboys and in furry or bell covered suits. Children especially dressed up in black and silver bell suits (literally covered in tiny bells) that jingled as they jumped and danced around. The costumed and masked dancers represent the returning spirits and it is an honour to be a dancer although the dancers are also paid for their services. The dancers do more than simply represent the dead, they are the dead; they become the ancestors. The dancers and the crowd danced deliberately separated all day, until the procession reached the town square and then the whole crowd joined in, dancing and communing with the spirits.
The Offering

In the weeks before the Day of the Dead festival, the markets are the finest of the year with all the necessities for special dishes and altars on sale including: flowers, breads, fruits, vegetables, nuts, candles, sweets, pottery dishes, gourd bowls, mezcal, copal incense, skulls and skeletons, plastic sheeting and table cloths. Skulls and skeletons made out of sugar, plastic, chocolate and wood are especially prevalent in Oaxaca where there are many craftsmen. Flowers form brilliant mounds of colour, dominated by the vivid orange and yellow of cempasuchil; the flower of the dead. This flower has been associated with the dead since pre-Hispanic times as the name may suggest and its colour and aromatic scent are believed to attract the souls of the dead to the altars. The other commonly used flower is the magenta cockscob or mano de leon (lion’s paw). These are the two most important elements of the flower offering but other flowers are also used to decorate altars including a delicate white flower. The preparations for the altar, including shopping and the cooking of special dishes must be started many days in advance.

In Oaxaca City, household offerings of food, scent and drink are made to the dead on the thirtieth or thirty-first of October. To make the ofrenda, a table is set up and covered with plastic sheeting or a decorative tablecloth. In front of and above the table an arch made of sugar cane is erected which is where the dead will enter. This arch is then decorated with flowers, nuts, fruits and other ornaments. Sheets of multi-coloured tissue paper with cut out designs are hung in front of and behind the offering table. On the table are placed pictures of important saints and photos of the deceased will be given a central position. Candles, incense (copal), bread, and fruit as well as other special foods and drinks are all arranged on the table along with vases of flowers, skulls and skeleton figures. Music is played and candles are positioned to light a path to the altar. The altar is positioned outside the house or near the front door to make it easier for the dead to find it. Copal is burned because the smoke is believed to create a bridge between the physical world and the spirit world. Everything is
carefully arranged; sometimes 'tiers' will have been created with covered boxes or shelves to better display the offerings.

The dead are offered the music, foods and drinks that they preferred in life; usually tamales, mole, candied fruit, chocolate, coffee, atole and alcohol such as beer and shots of mezcal in small gourd bowls or glasses. The 'dead' bread is one of the centrepieces of the offering and is often decorated with faces or flowers in pink, white and yellow frosting. The faces on the pan de muerte (dead bread) are meant to represent the soul of a departed one and it is therefore necessary to place a bread on the altar for each soul. The aromas of the food, flowers and incense are important because it is their pungent smells that guide the dead back to the living. When they arrive, the souls are sensed but not seen. The spirits do not physically consume the food that is offered to them but instead feed off the essences. When the souls have had their fill then the living will eat the food that remains. Clearly food plays a significant part in this holiday as the connector between the past and the present and the living and the dead, who share food during these celebrations.

The Days of the Dead have all of the formal features of commemorative rituals described by Casey (2000). The celebration included the two primary forms of commemorabilia - ritual and text. The mock wedding, the procession around the town and the community celebration which included dancing constituted bodily behaviour that effected immediate interaction with and direct perception of other participants. The wedding included speech and the procession was led by a man who shouted out thanks and salutations to the dead and to the owners of the houses that were hosting the fiesta, which constituted the text. The celebrations involved participation and ritual movement. There was occasion for reflection upon life and death, specifically the death of family members. This festival even included the display of skulls, which are literally memento mori or 'remember death' (Casey 2000). The commemorated persons are directly referenced, not just alluded to, in the form of an altar dedicated to them with their photos on display. The making of altars is a personal ritual, which precedes the group commemoration, although the whole group participates in the making
of altars and the cleaning of graves as well. Bodily actions included shopping for and making the altar as well as the formal procession around the town, drinking, eating and dancing which the whole community participated in. Solmenisation was achieved through taking the past seriously and celebrating it appropriately. Memorialisation was achieved via rituals such as the construction of the altar and by paying a fitting tribute on the yearly altar as well as through the maintenance of the grave. The tombstone stabilises the memory of the honouree and thereby guarantees perdurance (Casey 2000).

The final stage of the Day of the Dead celebrations was when the procession reached the town square and the whole crowd joined in, dancing with the spirits. This final stage is a liminal state such as often occur during fiestas and ritual events (Casey 2000). As per Van Gennep, rites of passage accompany nearly every change of place, state, social position and age (Casey 2000). All of these involve three stages: separation, margin or limin and aggregation. Liminality is an ambiguous in between state, neither here nor there. The sexlessness and anonymity of the masked and costumed Day of the Dead dancers are highly characteristic of this liminal phase (cf. Turner 1969). When food is shared at such events, it serves to further break down boundaries between people and the usual societal norms can be turned upside down or subverted for a short time; the spirits join the living in eating and dancing, different social classes mix and male dancers dress up as women.

The Days of the Dead are accompanied by distinctive odours that signal the event: 'as the celebrations approach, processions of fragrances announce the event and prepare the people, in the depths of their existence, by creating an uplifting ambience' (Roubin 1995: 129). They are also marked by the distinctive tastes of festival foods, especially mole negro. Such sensual body memories anchor human existence, while place memory locates it and commemoration connects it. The body, the senses, place, the and psyche are dynamic co participants in this process of representing the past:

Memory of taste (and of smell, closely associated with it) perdures because of its capacity to permeate one's entire sensibility and thus to be an invaluable
sacrament, a worthy *commemorabilium* able to 'bear unflinchingly' the weight of the *commemorandum* (here, Combray-in-the-past). Precisely as so deeply interfusing - as a profoundly participatory element - such memory is also able to bear 'the vast structure of recollection': which is to say, the episodic past as conveyed by successive mental representations.

*(Casey 2000: 253)*

The sensual elements of the festivities combine to make the event especially memorable and therefore to make it a lasting memory. To remember at any time is to commemorate the past, which allows us to carry it intact into the future.

However, the sensual elements of the Day of the Dead do much more than make the event memorable, in fact the fragrance of the offerings is considered to be a reciprocal medium for communication with the spirits: 'the gods or spirits manifest through scent, are nourished by it, and messages are sent to them through fragrance' (Steele 1995: 233). For both ancient and contemporary Maya: 'incense burners are the kitchen hearths of the gods and ancestors' (Housten and Taube 2000: 271). Smell figured strongly in ancient Mesoamerican thought and the living soul is identified with breath. This breath soul is associated with sweet, perfumed air and flowers or scent. Smell therefore hints at a realm of the spirit as discussed by Classen below:

> The common association of odor with the breath and with the life-force makes smell a source of elemental power, and therefore an appropriate symbol and medium for divine life and power. Odors can attract or repel, rendering them forceful metaphors for moral good and evil. Odors are also ethereal, they cannot be grasped or retained; in their elusiveness they convey a sense of both the mysterious presence and the mysterious absence of god.

*(1995: 389)*

Odours thus connect the living and the dead. They also make events, places and objects more distinctive and therefore easier to identify and remember (Tuan 1977). The meanings of such odours are individually or socially constructed, hence the smells of *mole* and incense, which are associated with festivals, especially the Day of the Dead, are thought to be positive and festive.
The *Guelaguetza* is a dance festival, which is always held on the last two weekends of July in a huge open-air auditorium: the *Auditorio Guelaguetza*, in Oaxaca City. 'Guelaguetza' literally means gift or offering and the dancers throw gifts into the crowd at the end of their performances. These gifts include hats, fruits, food and handicrafts. This is the largest festival in Oaxaca and regional troupes with distinctive traditional costumes and dances travel from all over the state to perform in the city. The city *Guelaguetza* appearance publicises an area to tourists and performances often include a display of the things an area is famous for as well as a speech about the area. The dance festival is linked with various food events in the city such as the 'festival of the seven moles'. Some informants felt that the city *Guelaguetza*, which used to be for everyone, had changed with many tourists now coming to see the dancing, parades, fireworks and to experience the food and music. In fact, Justino told me that the festival is so commercialised now that local people from the *pueblos* can no longer afford to attend. It was preferable for locals to attend the smaller regional celebrations where the dancing as well as the food and drink was financed by the village.

In the weeks leading up to the *Guelaguetza*, the markets sell all the elements of the costumes that are needed for the dances. These costumes are expensive and therefore participants tend to be high status individuals within communities who can afford the time for dance practice and the money for costumes (cf. Bourdieu 1984). The village troupes are all possible entrants to the city *Guelaguetza*. Dancers may be chosen by the mayor, or: ‘in Teotitlan del Valle, a man who wishes to portray Montezuma in the Danza de la Pluma must furnish a three-pig feast to the town’ (Goertzen 2010: 97). An authenticity committee representing the seven regions of the state (*Papaloapan, Sierra, Valles Centrales, Canada, Costa, Istmo, Mixteca*) travels to the villages in order to see the dances performed and decide whether they are acceptable for the city *Guelaguetza*. In *San Juan Guelavía* the local dance troupe was practicing two *Guelaguetza* dances: *La Danza de Pina* and *La Danza de la Pluma*, which I watched them perform for this committee. The *Danza de Pina* or *Flor de Pina* is mainly a women's dance
although there can be male partners, while the Danza de la Pluma is mainly a men’s dance. For the Danza de Pina, the women dress up in traditional costumes wearing long colourful skirts and blouses and dance with pineapples. The danza de pina uses pineapples because the region it comes from, Tuxtepec, is tropical and they are famous for growing pineapples.

However, one of the most impressive dances and one that stands out as an important narrative for Oaxacan identity is La Danza de la Pluma. This is a spectacular dance, performed mainly by men, which tells the story of the Spanish conquest. The Spanish conquest was clearly a major event in Mexican history and has changed the country in numerous ways. The affects of it are still being felt and played out in everyday life. The Danza de la Pluma is most likely a version of a Spanish dance, the Danza de los Moros y Cristianos (Moors and Christians). The dancers wear costumes that include very large headdresses containing great plumes of coloured feathers and hold small wooden fans that represent shields in one hand and gourd rattles in the other. In San Juan Guelavía, they were practicing only a small part of the dance. In fact, it is unusual to see the full version because there are 41 distinct danzas or dances and the whole thing is approximately eight hours long, quite an athletic feat and difficult to learn.

In the full version of the dance, according to Harris (1997), there is a hidden transcript, which actually reverses the outcome of the conquest. The main characters in the Danza de la Pluma are Moctezuma, Malinche and Cortes. Moctezuma and Malinche can be understood as the Aztec ruler and Cortes’ mistress and translator but they can also be read to refer to a messiah like figure and his wife or daughter, who will defeat the Spanish, reclaiming the land for Indians. The subversion is carried out by visual cues during the dance whilst the speech text is the public one. The visual cues include things such as the Indians having much better dance moves and better costumes than the Spanish dancers. At the end of the full dance two negritos or clown like figures, act out the resurrection of Moctezuma:
The Zapotecs of Teotitlan have insinuated into the Danza de la Pluma a hidden transcript, evident only in performance, in which the Indians gain both a clear aesthetic victory and a more discreet military victory.

(Harris 1997)

Although I never saw the dance in its entirety, this assessment agrees with my evidence that Oaxacan peoples have a strong sense of oppositional identity, and display resistance to colonial and hegemonic pressures in other areas of their lives, as described in previous chapters on corn and mezcal (c.f. Kohl and Farthing 2006, Inda and Rosaldo 2008).

'Whenever commemorating occurs, a community arises. Not only is something communal being honored, but the honoring itself is a communal event, a collective engagement'

(Casey 2000: 235-6)

Commemoration is a thoroughly communal remembering of the distant past, an act of creation and maintenance. A commemoration is necessarily of a past event which it seeks to preserve and this:

Distance is crucial to commemoration, which aims at keeping a particular past event alive through ceremonial observance precisely because the increasing remoteness of this event from the here and now threatens its oblivion.

(Casey 2000: 225)

As with initiates who are reborn in a new role, commemoration through honouring the past revivifies the present and gives it a new birth of either a political or spiritual nature. In contrast to body and place memory (discussed in Section 1), commemoration is mediated rather than lived in. It involves quite a significant component of otherness precisely because it takes us out of the confinement of the body and of place. Commemoration shares this mediated structure with reminding, however while reminders may be entirely private, commemorations are never wholly private. Communal remembering differs from personal recollection which is of an image or event because the recollected past is often veiled and sometimes altogether absent. Commemorations therefore involve the use of commemorabilia; mediating acts or objects through which
anonymity and distance are overcome in order to pay homage to people and events from the past: 'I remember the commemorated past through various commemoratively effective media in the present' (Casey 2000: 219).

Casey identifies two primary forms of commemorabilia - ritual and text. The practice of ritual is dynamic and is contrasted to the stabilising effect of place. There is a time and a place of shared assembly and action is taken together. Ritual is action orientated and requires direct participation from commemorators: 'rituals entail bodily behaviour that effects immediate interaction with (and direct perception of) other participants' (Casey 2000: 221). Although many things such as eating, shaving and other everyday activities including shopping and cooking (Section 1) have ritual elements, here, following Casey we focus on ritual which is specifically commemorative and involves at least four formal features. These features include: 1) an act of reflection or an occasion for such an act, 2) an allusion to the commemorated event or person which precedes or sanctions the ritual itself, 3) bodily action, and 4) collective participation in the ritualistic action. Ritualistic bodily actions can include the taking of a certain path through the village every year, as it did in the Day of the Dead celebrations in Etla, which involved the whole community following a band in a path around the village. Most commemorations make use of many and hybrid forms of text such as images, speech, official pronouncements and song. Language is intrinsic to the otherness that is a part of commemoration and its mediational and social nature (Casey 2000).

In addition to the formal features of commemorative ritual, there are three structurally specific features including solemnisation, memorialisation and perdurance. Solemnisation is achieved through taking the past seriously and then celebrating it with an appropriate ceremony. An appropriate ceremony involves repetitiveness in the observance of the re-enactment of some former circumstance, social sanction of the ceremony and formality. A dance such as those performed in the Guelaguetza and particularly La Danza de la Pluma, is an example of repetition and reactualisation of 'those days'. Sanctioning is a subtle mixture of tradition or 'how it has always been done' and contemporary
pressure about how something must be done now. Repetition helps build formality and structure (Casey 2000). Memorialisation via ritual strives to effect lastingness. In fact, part of what is honoured by memorialisation is the sheer fact that the memory has survived to the present. The celebration itself confirms that there is indeed such a past and it honours this past through paying a fitting tribute. Tribute is usually paid in a lasting way for example in a monument or a tombstone, which seeks to preserve and stabilise the memory of the honouree (perdurance). In fact all three temporal modi of perdurance are in operation during commemoration, that is, past, present and future. These elements combine and together make commemoration thoroughly interpersonal. It is undertaken in relation to, for and with others.

The body and place remain central to commemoration because the functional essence of commemoration is participation. Commemoration solicits and sustains participation between commemorators and that to which they pay homage, creating special communities which share in commemorabilia. Commemoration is thus able to overcome separation and individualism, which suggests that commemorators are already deeply conjoined and bounded. Individualism and separatism in fact presuppose: 'collective roots of various kinds: from language to class, from gender identity to personal identity, from shared history to shared tradition' (Casey 2000: 250). Commemorating then assumes that people are already intertwined and it calls on this social being. Commemoration presupposes, creates and constitutes a shared identity, which is lasting and significant. It is a project of continuing connection with that which is commemorated.

Connerton (1989) agrees with Casey (2000) that although memory is usually thought of as individual, there is also such a thing as social or collective memory. Groups or collectives can be small or large and can include villages and nation states. Commemoration takes place through language and is a collective preservation of the past, represented in words and images. Memory, or images of the past and recollected knowledge of it are conveyed and sustained by (more or less) ritual performances. People celebrate symbols of themselves in rituals, the
power of which comes from the emotional effects of social interaction. The process involves a combination of sameness or permanence over time combined with a capacity to modify or evolve as a tradition (Connerton 1989). There is often a focal point for the memories such as an altar and an ongoing steady remembering over a lifetime and over generations. Commemorating then calls on the social being and ancestor commemoration serves to strengthen continuity with forebears by reminding a person of their participation in the same family line. Memories of such events then become self-definitive and important for identity.

Again Connerton agrees with Casey (2000) that memories are for the most part held in our bodies and that even our experience of the present largely depends on our knowledge of the past: 'our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions' (Connerton 1989: 72). These skilled actions are habits and in this habitual memory the past is sedimented in the body. If an experience is shared by more than one person, it becomes a bond between them. Eating together daily and at festive times in a family are repeated again and again and are things that bond people and become sedimented or remembered. The experience can subsequently be told or narrated and becomes part of the general body of knowledge of society. Such objectivated meanings become common knowledge and this knowledge is then incorporated into traditions:

The objectification of the experience in the language (that is, its transformation into a generally available object of knowledge) then allows its incorporation into a larger body of tradition by way of moral instruction, inspirational poetry, religious allegory and whatnot. Both the experience in the narrower sense and its appendage of wider significations can then be taught to every new generation, or even diffused to an altogether different collectivity.

(Berger and Luckmann 1966: 86)
Feasts and Communion

Commemorations in Oaxaca always involve food and the movement of food objects: 'among persons constituting a defined group creates a continuous social bond between them in the same way that a 'communion' does' (Van Gennep 1960: 31). Feasting, sharing food and gift giving are rites of incorporation, of physical union and such: 'exchanges have a direct constraining effect: to accept a gift is to be bound to the giver' (Van Gennep 1960: 29). Mauss (1954) famously describes how gifts enhance social solidarity. Gifts are part of a system of reciprocity in which the honour of the giver and the recipient are involved. The gift involves obligation in that every gift must be returned in some specified way: 'there are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments that articulate the dominant institutions' (Mauss 1954 Foreword: ix). The obligation of the gift relationship applies to objects including food and also to invitations and courtesies, which must be returned: 'to refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality' (Mauss 1954: 13).

Entertainments, dances and feasts are part of a wide and enduring contact where the rules and obligations of the gift apply, to the benefit of the community. Mauss' idea of the gift also states that things sold or given have a 'soul' and are followed by their former owner so that giving a gift is to give a part of oneself. Gifts made to the gods by men in the form of sacrifice are then a way of entering into contracts with the spirits of the dead and the gods, and the same principles apply in gift giving among people also:

With them it was most necessary to exchange, and with them it was most dangerous not to exchange. Yet, conversely, it was with them it was easiest and safest to exchange. The purpose of destruction by sacrifice is precisely that it is an act of giving that is necessarily reciprocated.

(Mauss 1950: 16)

In Oaxaca, gift giving in the form of fiestas and the food that is cooked with love and care and shared on these occasions are a part of living a social life and a social life is the only kind of life:
I present this ofrecimiento (offering) to thank you for helping us celebrate this special occasion, for you know that alone we cannot share life. Others must be there.

(Martinez 1997: ix)

Paz echoes this sentiment in his description of the Mexican character and sees Catholicism as yet another example of communion:

Mexicans......both ancient and modern, believe in communion and fiestas: there is no health without contact. Tlazolteotl, the Aztec goddess of filth and fecundity, of earthly and human moods, was also the goddess of steam baths, sexual love and confession. And we have not changed very much, for Catholicism is also communion.

The food shared at celebrations in an obligatory fashion is special food, rich and expensive. Occasions when such foods are served include birthdays, weddings and religious events. Festival food is eagerly anticipated, which is more or less directly related to its 'specialness' or rarity; if something is commonly consumed it is not festive by definition. Foods that are served all year round such as tamales, are marked as special at by their filling when they are used as a fiesta food. All over Mexico tamales are made for festivals but the South is known in particular for their tamales filled with black mole and chicken, which are made for special occasions in Oaxaca and are marked as special and festive by this distinctive, rich and extravagant filling:

Everywhere in Mexico tamales are fiesta food - the equivalent of 'lets celebrate!' On all occasions like weddings, baptisms, and village saint's days when only the best will do, some kind of tamales will be the most treasured item on the menu. The further south you go in the country, the more amazing and inventive the range of different tamales becomes.

(Martinez 1997: 105)

The effort that it takes to make tamales correctly is also important in marking them as special. Everyone knows that it takes long and careful preparation to make black mole sauce properly and then to make a tamale using this sauce takes even more time, another day at least. If this whole process is done from scratch, it takes almost a week to properly prepare a tamale filled with black mole: 'trying to impress one's guests, for whatever reason, means obtaining and preparing
labor-intensive foods, drinks, serving vessels, prestige items, and ritual items' (Dietler and Hayden 2010: 30). It may also have taken time (sometimes years) to save the money to buy the special ingredients that are required.

**Oaxacan Festivals as Commemorative Ceremonies**

The *Guelaguetza* celebrations conformed nearly perfectly to Casey's (2000) description of a commemoration where any particular ceremony such as a dance is a repetition and reactualisation of 'those days'. This is literally and explicitly the case with the *Danza de la Pluma*, which reenacts the past event of the Spanish conquest, although as described above it is likely that this performance does more than simply commemorate and thereby remember the past. It also seeks to redefine the past and thereby the identity of Indigenous Oaxacans, reinserting traditional beliefs into past events. The Spanish dance of Moors and Christians that the *Danza de la Pluma* is based on tells the tale of how the Spanish were conquered by the Moors but then reclaimed their land back (Harris 1997). This fact lends weight to the argument that Harris puts forward which is that these performances tend to simultaneously represent two conflicting narratives, one endorsing the conquest and the other reversing it, in other words there is a public and a hidden transcript.

Commemorative ceremonies such as the *Guelaguetza* are collective variants of personal memory in which: 'a community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative' (Connerton 1989: 70). A commemoration makes sense of the past as a kind of collective autobiography where an image of the past is conveyed and sustained by ritual performances. Through the *Danza de la Pluma* a past event is acted out and reminds *Oaxaqueños* of their identity. Other dances serve the same purpose for a sense of regional identity. Importantly, this festival involves body memory of dances. Movements are remembered and: 'the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body' (Connerton 1989: 72) through dance. The dances and costumes, music and songs are symbols of living history and represent a blending of indigenous and Spanish
ways, however the festival is promoted and seen as being a traditional indigenous celebration based on an ancient ceremony for the corn goddess, originally banned by the church (Goertzen 2010). The Guelaguetza can thus be seen as a form of storytelling or a narration in acts that is, as a way of building national and regional identity (cf. DeCerteau 1984, Connerton 1989, Anderson 1983).

'Food offerings connect the living and the dead, humans and their gods, neighbours and kin, and family members'
(Counihan 1999: 17)

In Oaxaca fiestas and festivals are an important aspect of social life and in some ways people live for these events, sometimes putting themselves into great debt in order to hold or contribute to the celebrations. To repay the gift of an invitation and maintain their social standing, some families: 'face ruin for the sake of their guests on Saints' Days, weddings, first communions and funerals' (Mauss 1954: 63). Highest levels of status and prestige go to those who sponsor patron saint festivals and to those who host the dancing and serve food for the Day of the Dead. At the same time the sharing of food at such events fosters communitas and serves to suspend rigid distinctions of rank and status that are usually in place in society at large. At festival time accumulation is turned into expenditure, therefore festivals involve sacrifice. The quality of the resources sacrificed is important, which is why only the best foods will do. The extravagance of a festival is not seen as waste but rather as a spending of certain things in order to gain other things. In the case of Oaxacan festivals, it is the spending of money and food in order to establish a relationship with, honour and gain the favour of deities (cf. Miller 1998).

Festivals in Oaxaca apart from being commemorative, also always involve the giving of gifts, especially in the form of food (Mauss 1954). To give a gift is to give a part of oneself and this is especially the case with the giving of food if one agrees with Adapon (2008) and others that the cook imparts their emotions and
essence into the meals they make (see Chapter 8). Gift giving then forms social bonds of inclusion and obligation, which further cement the bonds that commemorative ceremonies seek to create and maintain (Mauss 1954, Casey 2000). The fragrances of the offerings on the Day of the Dead altars constitute gifts for the gods and ancestor spirits, made in the hope that the gods will feel happy, sated and so kindly disposed to the worshippers. Gift giving to the spirits and the gods is modelled on gift giving among men and a reward in the form of benevolence is expected in return for the offerings on the altar. The giving of gifts then forms bonds of obligation both in the human and the spirit world (Mauss 1954). Gods are offered food in the same spirit as men: ‘consciously employing with the gods the mechanisms of hospitality that facilitate human interaction’ (Counihan 1999: 15).

These events then revolve around the creation and maintenance of important social relationships and form: ‘an important part of social integration’ (Dietler and Hayden 2001). By celebrating these events with feasting, participants reaffirm their identity as part of the community while the sensual nature of food and eating help people to remember the event more vividly. Fireworks and music are always part of a fiesta and they invite participation, making everyone a participant even if they are not actively involved and strengthening group feeling: ‘music or chanting is a vehicle for communal rejoicing or communal pleading to the gods’ (Tuan 1993: 87). Through the repetition of these events, culture directs sensory associations. A yearly fiesta then is a shared sensory and emotional experience where ‘commensality can be defined as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling’ (Seremetakis 1994: 37). Through participation in commemorative celebrations, people remember important past events and through them, their identity (Casey 2000). Commemoration calls on the social being, reminding people of their participation in a community and ancestor commemoration, in particular the Day of the Dead festival, serves to remind people of their participation in a family line and strengthen continuity with forbears through ongoing remembering over a lifetime and over generations (Connerton 1989).
Feasts and festivals in Oaxaca then serve multiple purposes; they commemorate past events, reminding people who they are, they bring communities together through ties of obligation and shared memories, they redistribute wealth and allow those who can sponsor events to vie for status and display their wealth and prestige. Festivals and especially commemorative festivals are thought to benefit the whole community by honouring the saints and the ancestors who will in turn look favourably on the villages and their future inhabitants (Chinas 1993). The Days of the Dead in particular celebrate ancestors and therefore family. By remembering family, people remember who they are and therefore the celebrations reinforce a strong sense of identity and connection to place (cf. Kahn 1996, Mendras 1970). Oaxacan festival dishes must be the best of the best and are hugely labour intensive, requiring special equipment and representing sacrifice, love and devotion on behalf of the women of the community, making the cooking of festival foods analogous to shopping and everyday cooking, to be discussed in the Chapters which follow (cf. Miller 1998, Adapon 2008).
Sacrifice, Love and Shopping

A huge variety of chiles on display at the Benito Juárez markets.
A tiangi outside the La Merced Markets, selling chiles, garlic, squash, lime, nopales, radishes, herbs and roses.
Zapotec women shopping at the San Juan Guelavía markets.
The market place represents the culmination and evolution of historic trading partnerships which developed from casual meetings into established trading days at places where they continue today as market towns, so that: ‘standing in the market-place, we are - not always but very often - at the origin of things’ (Hoskins 1998: 191). Markets in Oaxaca City embody a long history, have a distinctive sense of place and represent a synthesis of culture, making them places of interest for anthropologists including Malinowski, who spent the last years of his life studying the markets in Oaxaca with De La Fuente (1982) and Beals (1975), who also turned his attention to them. The markets in Oaxaca are a microcosm of everyday life, where people from all levels of society are brought together. They contain all the raw ingredients for cooking and culture and are a social setting where local people meet daily, greet each other, gossip, sell and eat (cf. Gluckman 1963). Ingredients available at the markets are local and linked to the soil, age old traditions, the seasons and nature and the use of such ingredients makes the cuisine unique and unexportable (cf. Mendras 1970, Trubek 2005, Revel 2005, Paxson 2010).

Festivals and markets form the focus of yearly and daily life respectively and reflect a culture which centred on markets and food from before Spanish settlement: ‘the centres of Mesoamerica’s popular cuisine were village markets and public festivals’ (Pilcher 1998: 20). A festival is always preceded by a special market day. For example, before the Day of the Dead celebrations, the markets were overflowing with ingredients for special dishes such as mole negro and the necessary elements for altars such as candles, skeleton figures, table cloths, copal, flowers, fruits, breads, sugar cane and chocolate. The Guelaguetza too had an effect on the markets, leading to a proliferation of regional dance costumes as well as the ingredients for making various moles in the weeks prior to the festival. During Lent there was a larger than usual amount of seafood available for sale. As discussed in the previous Chapter, festivals in Oaxaca always involve the giving of food and invitations in a way that creates a social contract (cf. Mauss 1950). Daily shopping and the making of food for the family also display elements of the creation of a social contract and can be seen as a rite of devotion (cf. Miller 1998).
Shopping can be and is used to create and perpetuate important social relationships, most notably with immediate family. Following Miller (1998), thrifty or skilled shopping can be seen as a mundane form of sacrifice, which is used by women to transform the destructive capacities of the pure consumption of accumulated resources by dedicating this consumption to a higher purpose or higher being in order to gain other things, in particular relationships of love and obligation with families or with the divine. Thrifty shopping involves the use of knowledge and skills as the shopper must know what is in season, how to tell a good product and what ingredients to buy for a particular recipe as well as what the family wants. In fact, knowing how to buy and sell at a good price is at least as important as knowing how to produce the crops (cf. Mendras 1970). Market activities then are as much social as economic and barter in the markets is a strictly ritualised social game where the parties are able to display their cleverness and cunning. Furthermore, shopping at the local markets and buying fresh local ingredients in preference to supermarkets and global products and the corresponding belief that these local products are the best is one way of flagging identity or reminding of and defining group boundaries and distinguishing the global from the local (cf. Palmer 1998, Casey 2000).

To Market

When the Spanish arrived in Mexico city, they were astounded by the size of the market place (*Tlatelolco*) where up to 60,000 people gathered daily to buy and sell food from all over the country (Day 2001). Later, the Spanish maintained the ancient trade routes that supplied those markets. Oaxaca city is at the centre of these ancient trade routes, which moved products from South America up to Mexico City (Malinowski and De La Fuente 1982). It also lies in a natural basin and is therefore a logical collection point for local produce. The markets hold an especially prominent place in the social life of traditional villages but have also retained their economic and social importance in the city of Oaxaca, despite the appearance of supermarkets, and continue to be favoured for food shopping (cf.
Shopping for fresh food in the local markets is an important part of everyday life in Oaxaca and often women will shop twice a day in order to purchase the freshest, best food for their families. The markets change little except seasonally; the exception to this is prior to special events or festivities when the markets become more specialised (Chapter 6). Markets are a social setting where local people meet, greet, eat and sell their own produce as well as purchase fresh produce. They present a bustling, lively community scene, which is largely dominated by women, as market selling and shopping are traditionally women's business. Market women cooperate by eating together, bringing each other food and watching each other's stalls.

There is a hum of voices and activity at the markets, which are full of colourful fabrics, people, odours and food. It is a seductive spectacle of colour and movement. Markets in Oaxaca usually include a section that houses a variety of food stalls that sell home-style meals. These food stalls are called fondas or puestos, which are larger and smaller eating places respectively. The markets also attract people selling home made snack foods such as tortillas and tostadas, boxes of pre-cut fruit served with chile, lime and salt, tamales, empanadas and drinks such as aguas, atole and tejate. At the 20 de Noviembre and the San Juan Guelavía markets, the stalls spill out of large dark halls, covered with corrugated iron roofing. The floors are cement and metal tables or stands are set up upon which produce is heaped. The markets are arranged quite methodically although it does not necessarily appear this way to the untrained eye. They continue to be organised as they were in ancient times with like things grouped together and artfully stacked into pyramids or other pleasing arrangements; a practice that has been developed into a fine art exemplified by the displays for the Night of The Radishes (see Chapter 6). The chiles are near the spices, these are next to the tomatoes, herbs and onions; all the ingredients needed to make a variety of moles. Flowers are next to candles and incense, grouped together for the maintenance of altars. Molinos for grinding ingredients such as chocolate, nuts, corn and chiles into chocolate paste or mole pastes are also located in or near the larger markets, however in the villages these are usually separate. All senses are engaged in the marketplace and in the selection of foodstuffs. Ingredients are smelled, handled,
tasted, discussed with the vendor and visually scrutinized before the decision is made to buy them or not. Both Victoria and Pilar were extremely careful and discriminating in their purchases from the markets.

In Oaxaca city there are approximately twelve major markets. In addition, each Pueblo has their own daily market, some of which are large enough to attract visitors from the city such as the Tlacolula and Etla markets. Oaxaca has a rotating market system meaning that there are special market days even for those markets that are open everyday. For Abastos market, Saturday is the big market day. Sunday is the day for the Tlacolula markets, Tuesday is Ayoquezco, Wednesday is Etla, Villa de Tela and Zimatlán, Thursday is Zaachila and Friday is Ocotlán. The market places are always centrally located in the town square along with the church. The exception to this rule is the Abastos market, which was moved because it was clogging the city streets with people and stalls and becoming problematic. Abastos is by far the largest market in the state. It was quite possible to get lost in this labyrinthine market because it was simply so large with many different sections and pathways through indoor and outdoor areas. You could buy almost anything there, from live animals to flowers, to furniture, pets and clothes as well as the usual pre-prepared food, fresh meat, fish, fruit and vegetables. The most central of the city markets are now the Benito Juárez and 20 de Noviembre markets. Other markets in the city included the Mercado de Artesanías, La Merced and Sánchez Pascua. There were two organic markets, one on Fridays and Saturdays in Xochimilco and one on week days called the El Pochote Market.

All of the markets have reputations for certain speciality products, for example the markets in Etla are known for their locally produced cheeses and also for the live animal market which is held on the same day. Tlacolula market is famous for its barbacoa (a delicious traditional recipe where goat is first roasted with herbs in an earth oven and the meat is then used in tacos and for consumes). There is a special area which contains approximately 20 stalls all selling this consume de barbacoa. To get to the tables you have to weave through a narrow lane, lined with huge pots of bubbling soup, which sit above open coal fires that are
constantly being fed or stoked to maintain the correct temperature. Women stand behind these pots all day, calling to passers by, asking them to sit, taking orders, stirring the pot, adding more liquid and pulling out bits of boiling hot meat and offal with their bare hands to put into the soup they serve. The Tlacolula market is also renowned for it’s range of woven Zapotec scarves and decorative embroidered aprons.

**Ingredients**

In the valley of Oaxaca much produce is grown from wheat and apples to walnuts, cabbages, pineapple, watermelon, mangoes and cactus. Other areas of the state produce delicious tropical fruits and from the Pacific Coast come fish and shellfish. A very small amount of cacao is grown in Oaxaca but the vast majority of the chocolate consumed there comes from the neighbouring states of Chiapas and Tabasco (see Chapter 5). Markets sell dried foods such as beans, grains and *chiles* and fresh produce including meat, dairy products, vegetables and fruits. A blinding array of produce is for sale including: avocado leaves and native varieties of avocados (quite small with edible skins), banana leaves, cacao, choko (*chayote*), cactus paddles and cactus fruits, *cal, jicama, raw/brown sugar, cheeses, chepil, chickpeas, many different varieties of chiles, cooking oils, corn, corn husks, *crema*, dried beans (mainly black), dried shrimp, *epazote*, agave worms, *hoja santa, asiento*, pork crackling, lard, limes and oranges, *masa*, onions, oregano, plantains, pumpkin seeds, rice and rice flour, squash and squash leaves and stems, sugarcane, vinegar, wheat starch, cinnamon (*canela*), almonds, tomatoes, coriander, *chapulines*, garlic, chicken, beef, pork, seafood and *huitlachoche* (please refer to the glossary for Spanish names). This list is by no means exhaustive but it does give some idea of the range of raw ingredients available.

Corn, beans and *chiles* are known as the holy trinity in Mexican food. Alone these ingredients would be nutritionally lacking but together they are a nutritionally balanced and mouth watering meal. Corn, beans, tomatoes, squashes and *chiles*
grow anywhere and most families grow their own, especially in the villages where they have the space to do so: 'tomatoes, chiles, garlic and onions - they make up the flavour frame-work around which much of Mexico's culinary accomplishments are built' (Bayless 2007: 34). These four ingredients are abundant in any market and are used daily. Fresh and chopped they are salsa Mexicana or pico de gallo, which is served with almost anything. Charred over flames or toasted and ground in a molcajete (mortar and pestle) with the addition of chiles, they become a classic table salsa, also served with everything. In fact, these ingredients are included in most sauces and moles. There are two main varieties of tomatoes: tomatillos and red tomatoes. Red tomatoes are used cooked or raw in sauces and salsas and in condiments such as pico de gallo. Tomatillos are small, green white or purple tomatoes, surrounded by a green leafy husk, which must be removed before eating. They are sticky to the touch and have a slightly tart or tangy flavour. Tomatillos are usually cooked or grilled in the husk and then used in salsas and sauces.

The chile pepper is the cornerstone of Mexican seasoning practice and without chiles, Mexicans do not believe that they are eating, just as they do not feel full unless they have eaten tortillas. Flavour, believed to come from the love that a cook puts into a meal, is the meaningful aspect of food and: 'flavour is chile, and chile is salsa' (Adapon 2008: 114). Salsa is a spicy condiment that is served with every meal, including savoury breakfasts. Like any condiment, salsa embellishes and intensifies the flavours of the food. Salsa, especially red salsa, could be compared to soy sauce in its significance in that it makes the meal Mexican and not anything else (cf. Rozin 1983). The surprise displayed when a 'güera‘ said she liked chile and the careful observation of the evidence that it was true showed that this was a food that was important to Oaxacan identity. This is no surprise since many would suggest that chiles (including salsas made out of chiles) are the heart and soul of Mexican food. Chile is history, it is ancient and it is literally a part of the landscape and of Oaxacan bodies in the same way that corn is, although it is eaten in lesser amounts.
There are a profusion of *chile* varieties grown throughout the region and the range of *chiles* available in the markets is quite astounding with whole aisles dedicated to them. There are hundreds of varieties ranging from mild to fiery hot. They are piled up in large wicker baskets and range in size and colour from tiny red and yellow *chiles* to large shiny black ones and everything in between. *Chiles* are used fresh, dried and pickled as well as roasted. They can be used with the seeds and veins removed to flavour sauces without adding heat but are also enjoyed for their spicy heat. The *chiles* are extremely important in Oaxacan cooking, not only for the flavour they impart but also because the *moles* are named mainly for the colour of their sauces, which is derived in large part from the *chiles* used. *Mole negro* (black *mole*) gets its name from the black *chiles* that are used to make it rather than from the addition of chocolate as is often supposed. *Chiles* particularly define Oaxacan food even in opposition to other Mexican food because there are a number of *chile* varieties used which only grow in that state and nowhere else in Mexico including the *chilhuacle*, *chile de agua*, *miahuateco*, and the *pasilla oaxaqueno* (smoked *pasilla*). These *chile* varieties, like mezcal, then have a taste of place (*terroir*) or a local flavour that is treasured as a marker of Oaxacan identity (cf. Paxson 2010, Trubek 2005, Palmer 1998).

In the meat stores, whole animals are on display, not just sections. Sections can of course be cut for the customer but it is possible to see whole sides of beef and pork hanging in the open air as well as hooves, intestines, organs such as livers and kidneys, tongues, heads, fat in the form of *chicharrón* (fried pork fat, sold in large sheets), *asiento* (the drippings collected from the frying of *chicharrón*) and bags of lard (*manteca*) all for sale at the meat stores. There is no hiding the animal in an Oaxacan market. Meat is sold unpackaged, chickens are sold with legs in the air and heads still on, tongues hanging out of their heads and sometimes they are cut open in order to display the eggs inside them. In the larger markets, there is often a section attached to the fresh meat market, always very smoky, where you can have your meat cooked over coals to take away. The meat sold in this way is generally of three types; *tassajo* (thin cured beef steak), *cecina* (thinly cut pork marinated in *chile* salt and vinegar) and *chorizo* (spiced pork sausage). These three are the most popular meats. Some large markets also
have a fish section where the fish are sat on ice, which slowly melts during the day. There is no refrigeration, one of the reasons it is best to shop for produce early in the morning when it is freshest.

**Consumption and The Everyday Practice of Sacrifice**

Things or objects (in this case food) are the medium of gifting and are therefore at the heart of exchange theory and anthropology. Things can move in and out of the commodity phase, in other words, they can have a biography. Commodities can then be seen as things that are in a certain situation or point in their social lives, that is, the time when the exchangeability of a thing is its socially relevant feature. All things have commodity potential therefore when considering objects and things, we should look at the total trajectory of a thing: 'from production, through exchange/distribution, to consumption (Appadurai 1986: 13). Commodity exchanges take place within a 'regime of value' and in a variety of contexts; 'thus, commoditisation lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural, and social factors' (1986: 15). Despite many claims to the contrary, Appadurai asserts that there is a calculative dimension in all forms of exchange including barter and gift exchange as well as commodity exchange although the form and intensity of sociality associated with these different forms varies. Consumption is then eminently social, relational and active, as Miller and Jackson (1998) also found.

In 'A Theory of Shopping' (1998), Miller shows how the act of shopping in North London can be seen as an act of sacrifice, or a devotional ritual because the two practices are motivated by the same thing: that is, the need to create a desiring other, or love. Furthermore, both acts represent key moments when the labour of production is turned into the process of consumption. There is a symbolic split in many societies (Oaxaca being a prime example) between production and expenditure where males produce and females consume (shop) and have agency though expenditure. Shopping is the moment when accumulated resources are expended. It therefore refers back to the labour required for accumulation,
which is reduced to money. Shopping for food is overwhelmingly associated with women, who are represented as the natural gender of love. In provisioning for the family the housewife is expected to objectify pure self-sacrifice as a woman who lives on behalf of her household. In comparison, other kinds of shopping appear as pure self-indulgence, hedonism, excess and asocial liberation, conducted without regard for any kind of larger responsibility and therefore they are feared for their destructive capacity. The rituals of (shopping and) sacrifice are designed to ensure that goods are first used to reaffirm transcendent goals and this way the destructive element of expenditure and consumption is mitigated: 'shopping is a regular act that turns expenditure into a devotional ritual that constantly reaffirms some transcendent force, and thereby becomes a primary means by which the transcendent is constituted' and affirmed (Miller 1998: 78).

The sacrifice is separated into two elements: one, which is given to the transcendent and the other, which returns to the mundane and is eaten by the priests, sacrificer or others. That which is burnt or sacrificed rises up as sweet smelling smoke and becomes the food of the gods. In this way, sacrifice constructs a relationship with the divine. The rising smoke confirms that there is indeed a divine being who wishes to be fed in this manner. Shopping similarly separates the profane or social consequences of the act and the constitution of a transcendent goal to which it is dedicated, the equivalent of the divine recipient of sacrifice: 'the 'smoke' or essence of shopping as a ritual must be separated off from the mundane elements and consequences of shopping' (Miller 1998: 100). In the same way that sacrifice constitutes or confirms the existence of the objects of devotion as well as allowing communication with them, shopping strives to create relationships of love: 'Shopping is the construction of the other as the desiring subject. Shopping for others is a striving to be in a relationship with others who want these things' (Miller 1998: 148). Miller (1998) sees this devotional love as a practice that incorporates not only positive attributes but also coercive pressure and many emotions including obligation, ambivalence and resentment.
Love is then the primary context of shopping and the central ritual transformation of shopping is its direction to thrift, which negates the destruction of expenditure by saving money. This is instrumental in creating a sense that there is some more important goal than immediate gratification, making practical shopping: 'an idealised activity whose sanctity is secured by the ritual transformation into saving' (Miller 1998: 103). Generalised devotion in the form of thrift is turned into a specific expression of devotional love between the woman and those for whom she has brought back the sacrificial remains (purchases): 'having become sanctified through her agency in the self sacrifice of thrift, she returns with the blessing of love to her family' (1998: 108). Feeding the family is the third and final stage of sacrifice, marked by a return to the social and a move away from the divine: 'where that which has not been given up to the transcendent in the form of saving money returns as the sanctified purchases which are then given out to the recipients as the remains of the sacrificial act' (1998: 107). The distribution of this sacrificial meal serves to affirm the social order. In shopping, the female is the devotee and it is she who constitutes the moral order. Shopping is therefore a practice that has ritual structure and is involved in the creation of value and relationships.

**Shopping and Identity**

Jackson (1998), who participated in Miller's study of shopping in North London, also found that the majority of everyday consumption is performed by women, who articulate identity through shopping in relational terms. Such women have very little scope for 'recreational' shopping and feelings of guilt tended to accompany any form of personal indulgence when compared to the socially approved self sacrifice required in shopping for the family. The exercise of thrift in order to make the best of scarce resources while food shopping makes consumption in the markets a skilled and socially learned accomplishment. Jackson warns that we should steer away from looking at shopping as individual 'lifestyle' choices and rather focus on identity in a less individualised manner by relating consumption to material culture and considering aspects such as place,
the nature of commodities and the built environment. He found that shopping practices confirmed the persistence of traditional values such as the idealisation of family life and suggests that the relationship between consumption and identity should always be related to wider structures of social interaction: 'especially those concerned with gender relations and the family, with generational differences and with competing constructions of 'race', place and nation' (1998: 36).

The foods available at the markets and the choices that are made about what foods are best to buy literally shape and inscribe bodies and identities:

The foods that are selected by traditions and sold in the markets of a society also shape bodies at the same time that they nourish them; they impose on bodies a form and a muscle tone that function like an identity card.

(DeCerteau 1984: 147)

Consumption and shopping for food therefore plays a vital role in personal narratives of the self, or identities, as is demonstrated in Bourdieu's (1984) discussion of how consumer taste as cultural capital can mark out social distinctions, where: 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier' (Bourdieu 1984: Introduction xxix). Systems of dispositions, in particular taste, are characteristic of the different social classes and form a part of their habitus or daily, lived experience. People distinguish themselves by the distinctions or choices they make about what is appropriate to buy and cook, in which their position in objective social classifications is expressed or betrayed. Debates about the authenticity of various dishes and ingredients revolve around such issues of good taste, expertise, knowledge and distinction.

**Victoria**

Victoria lived in San Juan Guelavía and shopped at the markets twice a day. She also made food to sell and tortillas daily. In the mornings she would get up before dawn to take the corn to the mill and then return to finish making these foods in
the outdoor kitchen. During this time she would also make breakfast for her husband, sister, children and grandchildren as they awakened. Overnight, she had cooked corn, beans and cactus, which had cooled by the morning. All of these foods were cooked in ollas (an olla is a special ceramic pot, with a long neck and a spherical bottom, which is balanced on rocks directly over the flames of a fire).

First, she sorted through the three different types of cactus. The cactus was cooked with water, salt and a local herb called epazote. The different types of cactus had been stacked in the pot with the largest at the bottom and the smallest at the top. In the morning when the large cactus cubes were soft, she dug out their spines with her fingers and removed the tough outer skin. The second type of cactus, sometimes called lenguas or tongues (because they look like tongues in shape and size) had their spines carefully removed with a sharp knife before being cooked whole. This was a job that her husband helped her with in the evenings as well as removing dried corn kernels from the cobs. The top layer was the same lenguas, cut into small cubes for making salad. This type of cactus was very popular and could be found sold fresh in many of the tianguis where women sat with large sacks full lenguas, removing the spines and packing them into small plastic bags for sale.

When the cactus was sorted, Victoria started on the beans, which had been cooked with water, salt and epazote. She took the beans just outside the kitchen to where the metate lived. Before she began grinding the beans, she placed a bowl of fresh water and the pot with the cooked beans next to the metate. In front of the metate she placed an empty bowl for the bean paste. After this, she placed two or three toasted avocado leaves on the metate and ground them into a powder before adding the cooked beans, handful by handful, discarding the sprigs of epazote they had been cooked with (the epazote was not wasted however as there were chickens who gathered there every morning just to eat this herb and also in the hope of stealing some beans from the pot. She told me that there was one chicken in particular that always came to eat the herb). Victoria regulated the texture of the paste by adding bean juice if it was needed. She ground the paste twice and then pushed it into the waiting bowl. She took the left over bean juice to the markets, as many customers liked more to be
added to their purchase. When she was finished with this task, she cleaned the metate with her hands and water. The first rinse was washed into the bean paste and the second went onto the ground.

Once these tasks were completed, Victoria moved to the inside kitchen to prepare her two salads and a red salsa, which she served with the large cactus cubes. One salad was made from pasta with chayote (choko), grated carrot and mayonnaise. The other was a cactus salad with tomato, onion, lime juice, salt and coriander. Often her daughter would help her with these final stages of making the salads. Victoria also sold roasted, salted pumpkin seeds (pepinas) which she grew in the garden, harvested, sun dried and toasted on the comal. When everything was ready, she packed it all into containers and took it to the markets in a taxi. While she sold her food, she would eat a breakfast of snacks such as corn atole and empanadas. She would share these snacks with me, often interested to see if I would like them and watching my reactions closely, especially when she gave me empanadas filled with spiced chicken intestine. She also had arrangements with some of the other market ladies who would drop off things that she often ordered such as lenguas. Once all the food was sold or when it was midday she did her own shopping and then returned home to cook for her family who came home for lunch (the main meal of the day). She often consulted her family or took requests for meals before shopping, asking them what they wanted for dinner at lunch.

Pilar

Pilar Cabrera, an informant and a famous chef who ran cooking classes in the city, spoke fondly about the 'tradition of going to the market everyday for fresh ingredients', a tradition she incorporated into her classes. She particularly liked to support the ladies who owned tianguis which were very special to her. The markets attract and are virtually surrounded by tianguis, which are set up all along the outside walls and sometimes inside as well. Tianguis are small stalls, usually selling only one or two items, spread out on plastic sheeting on the
ground. They are run by indigenous women from the *pueblos* and they sold small amounts of surplus produce, usually garlic and herbs, sometimes *nopales* (cactus paddles), *chiles*, squash and squash flowers, tomatoes, avocados, flowers, eggs and roasted pumpkin seeds. Pilar said that in the markets you could understand many things about the culture there: *'The market is part of us'*, she said.

However, shopping at the markets was a tradition that she felt was giving way in the face of modernity and capitalism. A lot of women in the city especially had started to work during the day so they were unable to provide the family with food for lunch time and they no longer wanted to shop or cook. Instead they were buying pre-prepared food for their families: *'Cooking takes time and people, especially working women, no longer have the time'*. Pilar talked fondly about her childhood when her whole family would have lunch together at two or three o’clock. The business they owned would close from two until four, they would eat delicious food that their grandmother had prepared for them and then they would sleep for an hour: *'Now we don’t have any time'*, she laughed. This change was evident mainly in the city: *'It's certainly not New York in Oaxaca city but modern practices are creeping in'*. The appearance of supermarkets where foods could be bought out of season was disruptive to traditional seasonal cooking. Pilar felt it was very important to use seasonal products in her recipes and in general. She used the example of *huitlacoche* to explain this to me. *Huitlacoche* is a fungus, which grows on corn during the rainy season. It was a very popular food and was considered to be a delicacy. In February when we were talking about it, it was not in season, however a lot of gourmet restaurants still had it on the menu. The season for *huitlacoche* was in June and Pilar felt that it should be used just in that time of the year: *'It’s the same thing for black mole,’* she said. *'That is for big fiestas, not for everyday'.*

My discussions with Pilar made it clear that shopping for food requires special skills and knowledge of various ingredients and their seasonality (cf. DeCerteau 1984, Miller 1998). Another ingredient that demonstrated the need for these skills was *chapulines*. The markets, especially the central markets (*20 de Noviembre*), near the *zócalo*, feature vendors with large piles of the popular
snack that is *chapulines* or grasshoppers. These grasshoppers, although they are seasonal and different types are ready at different times, are sold year-round. Only a local knows that the small grasshoppers are fresh in the beginning of the rainy season whereas the large grasshoppers are fresh at the end of the rainy season. The grasshoppers are often flavoured with salt, *chile* and lime although the freshest and the best are said to be delicious without any flavouring at all. In fact, according to Pilar, the flavourings are often used to disguise *chapulines* which do not taste so good, because they are old or out of season. Knowledge of the seasonality of these different types of grasshoppers then is required to make a good purchase. Furthermore, the eating of such a food is a source of distinction, an acquired taste which reveals much about the identity of the buyer and their social class (cf. Bourdieu 1984), a flag of identity.

*Flavour Principles*

The ingredients mentioned above, but more specifically the way in which particular ingredients are combined and prepared are what help to define a cuisine (Rozin 1983, Rozin and Rozin 2005). All cultures tend to combine a small number of flavouring ingredients so frequently and so consistently that they become definitive of that particular cuisine. Rozin (1983) calls these combinations 'flavour principles'. The flavour principles of a cuisine represent a culinary theme that is varied by the addition of other ingredients. One such theme in Oaxacan cooking is the ancient combination of tomato and *chile* and a newer combination is one of lime and *chile*. These broad themes can be delineated further into smaller, regional principles all of which produce a unique and characteristic taste. Repeated exposure to such tastes during childhood results in a strong attachment to the distinctive flavours of native cuisine (cf. Bourdieu 1984, Douglas 1991, Ohnuki-Tierney 1993, Tuan 1993, Piggott 2012 and Chapter 4). Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the base ingredients of Mexican and Oaxacan cuisine, found in almost every dish, were corn, *chiles* and beans. Other commonly used ingredients were squash, avocado, tomato,
chocolate and insects as well as dried shrimp and seafood in coastal areas. These ingredients are native to the area and have been used together for centuries.

In addition to the ethnic patterning and flavouring of foods described above, the mode of preparation differentiates groups and can change a new food from something foreign into something familiar. New foods can be nativised using traditional modes of preparation and can then be seen as being ethnic or traditional. This is the case with moles, which have incorporated many new ingredients but are still seen as being authentic and traditional as they use ancient techniques and expand on ancient recipes. Further distinctive aspects of Oaxacan cuisine post-colonialism include the use of lime, fresh coriander or parsley and fresh onion and sour cream (crema) as garnishes (Vaillant 1944, Bayless 2007, Kennedy 2010). Additional key factors in Oaxacan flavour are richness, spice, smokiness or burnt flavours and sweetness. Also certain herbs such as epazote and chepil that grow wild lend a special flavour to Oaxacan cuisine.

Techniques and ingredients combine to create popular cuisine, family cuisine or what I call local or Oaxacan cuisine, which:

Has the advantage of being linked to the soil, of being able to exploit the products of various regions and different seasons, in close accord with nature, of being based on age-old skills, transmitted unconsciously by way of imitation and habit, of applying methods of cooking patiently tested and associated with certain cooking utensils and recipients prescribed by long tradition. It is this cuisine that is said to be un-exportable.

(Revel 2005: 53)

The local cuisine of a region is un-exportable because it is dependent on the natural resources and knowledges that are available in any particular area (cf. Mendras 1970). Once humans settled in an area rather than hunting and gathering, their cuisine diversified but also became more local in that they then were only able to eat what would or did grow in the area. Regional cooking is thus a manipulation of these available or prosperous foodstuffs and since the exact same ingredients are not available everywhere, food assumes a local
character first of all from the ingredients used and then from distinctive techniques and combinations, which are passed down through generations of women as habits. Such bodily practices are transmitted in and as traditions (Connerton 1989). Yet it is also true that trade in many things including foodstuffs followed fairly shortly after settlement and therefore the distinctive assemblage of ingredients that make a cuisine is subject to change throughout history. In Mexico, this was especially the case when the Spanish arrived and introduced new species and spices (Walton 1977, Caplan 1994, Revel 2005, Ayora-Diaz 2010).

**Shopping, Love and Devotion**

Oaxacan women have very little scope for what Jackson (1998) calls ‘recreational’ shopping, in fact I never witnessed a woman shop purely for pleasure although it was obvious that they enjoyed the social aspects of shopping at the markets and occasionally they shopped for things for themselves such as a new apron although this is probably on a negligible scale in comparison to people in North London. This is not a surprise considering the vast differences in wealth between the two countries. However, this means that thrift is indeed a moral concern of most Oaxacan informants; it is also a necessity. Conspicuous or extravagant spending is only allowed at certain times, namely at fiestas and festivals, where it is imperative. At other times, spending is kept to a minimum (cf. Miller 1998). In Oaxaca thriftiness takes the form of market shopping and buying the freshest or best ingredients for the best prices, which is a matter of pride. It is also important to choose the best, most unblemished and perfect offerings for sacrifice, which explains why black mole, the best of the best, is the ultimate offering but also why it is important to find the best produce in daily shopping. Perfect products are important because they speak to the involvement of the gods by their very existence.

Miller (1998) shows that shopping is a ritual practice with its foundations in a sacrificial logic whose purpose is to create a desiring subject. While shopping,
women utilise knowledge and skills or thrift and act out of devotion for their families who they shop for. The rite of thrift transforms mere consumption into an act of devotion, which maintains important relationships of love, making love the primary context of shopping (and cooking, see Chapter 8). Love here encompasses both negative and positive emotions and is the ideological foundation for the complex relations that exist between household members. Shopping is a labour of love 'that in its daily conscientiousness becomes one of the primary means by which relationships of love and care are constituted by practice' (Miller 1998: 18, cf. DeCerteau 1984). The work of shopping is then an investment in social relationships, especially family relationships, as much as an economic activity. These practices do not merely reflect love but are the major form in which love is manifested and reproduced, in the same way that an offering to the gods is in large part what constitutes and creates the relationship with the divine. There is a persistence of traditional values in shopping practices such as the idealisation of family life, love and devotion and the exercise of skills such as thrift to make the best of scarce resources making consumption a skilled, socially learned accomplishment which in Oaxaca is explicitly recognised through praise of the cook (cf. Jackson 1998).

Shopping is an everyday activity and a skill that is learned sub consciously, therefore it is an embodied or habitual form of memory (cf. Casey 2000). In fact shopping requires the use of a vast body of knowledge and skills, including knowledge of the likes and dislikes of family members, the cost, production and seasonality of foods (in order to buy the freshest and the best products at the best prices), the best places to buy foods (including the specialities of different markets), which times to buy food (the morning is the best time), and detailed knowledge of recipes and the types and amounts of ingredients as well as possible substitutions needed to make them properly. Women must have these skills and knowledges in order to barter and exercise thrift successfully. It was obvious that, as described by Mendras (1970), bargaining is a strictly ritualised social game that allows the participants to show their cleverness and cunning and is enjoyed by all parties. Some North London respondents felt alienated in the new shopping malls and missed the days when shopping was more
interactive and they received personal service. However, in Oaxaca personal interaction is still a major part of daily market shopping and barter is employed in many transactions. The pleasure of shopping comes in part from the exercise of these skills, the sociality involved and in the ability this affords to subtly alter important relationships (c.f DeCerteau 1984).

Choice of commodities is used to extend the ability to negotiate relationships but goods themselves also embody and extend social relations (cf. Miller et al 1998). Decisions about which ingredients are appropriate and 'good' for certain recipes rely on the social capital and 'taste' of the shopper, who is also the cook. Bourdieu (1984) sees consumer taste as social capital, the exercising of which in daily life marks out social distinctions, while DeCerteau (1984) describes how the foods available at the markets shape and inscribe bodies like an identity card. Both Bourdieu and DeCerteau agree that food choices can mark out social distinctions and are therefore important for identity. Personal identity or the notion of the self is sustained through narratives that are constantly revised and attachment to place and objects within places such as foods, offers support for shifting identities (Miller et al 1998). Shopping is then an active component in the construction of identity. Identities are largely relational as is demonstrated in the case of chapulines (Chapter 4) and shopping choices involve the articulation of complex social distinctions and culturally constructed notions of the other, where 'social identities are constituted through boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, articulated in terms of family relationships and by distancing those who are perceived to be socially different' (Miller et al 1998: 113).

In Miller's (1998) study, he found that commodities were fully alienated and became meaningful again only through projects of consumption and value creation. Commodities in North London do not have meaning of their own, rather they come to matter 'as a means for constituting people that matter' (Miller 1998: 152). Miller himself points out that his conclusions about shopping are context dependent and are true possibly only for North London. My ethnography of Oaxaca found that there it was not the case that commodities are alienated and without meaning as might be expected since most products available in the
markets retained strong links to production. In Oaxaca unlike some other places, there remains a place, which houses fairly stable and cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective. There is a sense of interconnectedness in the markets where you are most likely buying directly from the maker or producer or their close relatives, especially when you buy from *tianguis*. You can see the person that made the product and the person that will use it. Maker, buyer, grower and consumer are connected. In the Oaxacan market situation, rather than brands, particular ingredients and recipes objectify the concept of a descent group. They are goods that stand for a continuity that transcends any particular generation:

So far from consumption standing for change and modernity, the legacy of such ...[ingredients and dishes]... is that they have remained constant, predictable and little changed during a century which has seen the most immense shifts in social structures and cultural ideology. As such, commodities become the objectification of family tradition, stability and history.

(Miller 1998: 142)

In Oaxaca, these ingredients and dishes include corn, mezcal, chapulines, *chiles* and *mole*, all of which serve as flags of identity, reminding people of who they are (c.f. Palmer 1998, Casey 2000).

**Labour and Love**

In this chapter I have discussed the markets of Oaxaca using Miller's ideas about shopping and sacrifice (1998, et al 1998, 2001, 2010). My research findings were for the most part in agreement with Miller and Jackson (1998), in that the vast majority of everyday consumption is routine and performed by women who use their skills and knowledge in order to exercise thrift while shopping, thereby transforming the act of consumption into an expression of love and devotion. Through shopping, the housewife aims to create, maintain and sustain relationships. Shopping is an act of mundane sacrifice and the sacrificial nature of shopping serves to remove it from what would otherwise be simply an act of potentially destructive consumption. Although this may not be the case in all
societies, I find that this holds true in the ethnography of Oaxaca. Furthermore, women use shopping to articulate identity in relational terms. The social space of the market and the practice of market shopping for fresh, local, traditional ingredients as well as the ability to cook good food and traditional dishes are important for identity as an Oaxacan woman. Markets are closely associated with history and Indian ethnicity, being an ancient phenomenon in the area and the discourses people draw on when they relate to food and narrate stories of identity are discourses of tradition and Indian ethnicity (Cook 2006, Day 2001). This nostalgia and longing for tradition are new and dynamic notions, which emerge with modernity as things that may be lost or under threat as is the case in Oaxaca currently (Miller et al 1998).

I argue for an extension of Miller's (1998) argument about shopping which most certainly applies in the case of Oaxaca where shopping is the domain of women who exercise skills or tactics and utilise knowledge to buy the best produce at the best price in an exercise of thrift in order to create and maintain relationships of devotion and love with their families. As discussed further in the chapter on cooking to follow (Chapter 8) however, I suggest that this theory can be extended and also used as a lens through which to view cooking, especially the kind of labour intensive cooking that is a daily practice in the villages of Oaxaca and which is already recognised as an expression of art and of love, where cooking for others mitigates the destructive possibility of consuming alone in the same way that thrift does in the context of shopping (c.f. Adapon 2008). Conversely, Adapon’s view can be applied to shopping in Oaxaca, which is also an art, the first step in the more developed art of cooking, which requires the shopper to have intimate knowledge of the products they are buying, in the same way that a farmer has intimate knowledge of his land, making shopping to some extent an ’art de localité’ (cf. Mendras 1970, Miller 1998, cf. Adapon 2008).
Victoria holding a mano, used for grinding foods on the metate.
Victoria, preparing cactus for the markets in her outdoor kitchen.
Victoria, preparing bean paste outside on her metate.
Just as certain ingredients have been found to carry a heavy symbolic load in Section One, so too do particular recipes such as mole. Furthermore, cooking for others creates and maintains the social bonds of family and community with both women and their families interpreting the labour intensiveness of making even the simplest Oaxacan food properly as a show of love and devotion. Cooking food for the family works in an analogous way to thrifty shopping, transforming the negative consequences of consumption into devotion through its dedication to a higher purpose, as discussed in the previous Chapter (cf. Miller 1998). Cooking also draws on habitual body memory and the senses and food events almost always involve family. This makes food memories, especially those experienced repeatedly in youth, emotional and therefore extremely memorable, making them important anchors in stories of identity (cf. Anderson 1983). The handing down of recipes through generations, cooking and the sharing of food creates and perpetuates social memory (cf. Casey 2000, Connerton 1989). This is because cooking is like a language and is a practice that expresses experience and manifests social structures and like language, it can be altered and personalised by actors (cf. De Certeau 1984).

Cooking and eating are extremely memorable and sensual experiences, which involve intimate sociability and a dramatic form of incorporation. Taste and smell in particular have amazing capacities for triggering cultural remembering. The repetition of such sensations and their combination with emotions in the form of special dishes that are eaten in families, results in layered, connected and deeply imprinted memories (cf. Casey 2000). The kitchen is the heart of the family home and most people have fond memories of meals eaten there: 'from clear broths to thick stews, homemade soups harbour the tastes that recapture family remembrances of meals past while nurturing the present generation' (Tausend 1997: 70). While cooking and eating, the body is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds, and tastes, all of which trigger strong cultural memories (cf. Stoller 1994, Fiddes 1991). All senses are gauged when cooking to see if a recipe is going well: food is smelt, looked upon, felt and assessed by the mouth, it is heard whilst it is cooking, being stirred or put on a plate and even while it is crunching in the mouth.
'A practiced hand and a careful eye'
(Pilcher 1998: 101)

To make tortillas, women first must make masa or corn paste. To make masa, the dried corn is first boiled with cal (limestone). When I asked Victoria how long to cook it for she said 'until the corn floats to the top of the pot' and then it is left to cool. This treatment of corn with cal is called Nixtamalisation. Once cooled, the softened kernels are rinsed until the water washes out clean and then they are ready to be ground at the mill (molino), where the paste comes out quite hot and a little cooked, ready to be made into tortillas. Traditionally, the grinding of corn for masa paste was done by hand on a metate. However, I did not encounter anyone who ground corn from scratch anymore as it took many hours and required women to get up long before dawn. Nowadays the process of making tortillas is mostly mechanised, with hand operated tortilla presses and mills to grind the corn kernels. Some women, such as Victoria, still remembered doing the entire process by hand when she was young. She still finished her masa on the metate after it had been ground at the mill to get the texture she wanted, which she said the mill 'couldn't match'. Her tortillas were delicious and very smooth and they were popular with her family and her neighbours some of whom bought them from her daily.

To make a tortilla from masa, Victoria kneaded the masa until it formed a pliable dough, adding water if it was too dry. Then she formed the paste into balls of the desired size (which depends on what is being made and personal preference). She then patted out the balls and squeezed them out flat in a metal press between two sheets of plastic to stop them sticking to the press. She moved them around and squeezed them out approximately three times until they were evenly flat and thin. She then carefully peeled the flattened dough off the plastic and gently rolled it off her hand onto the comal or ceramic hotplate and turned it until it was cooked on both sides. Victoria told me that: 'a properly made tortilla will puff up like a balloon when it is cooked through' and that 'if tortillas are not pressed out thinly and evenly enough then they will not cook properly'. If they are not carefully laid onto and then carefully turned on the comal then they will fold
or tear and be unsuitable for human consumption (a broken or folded tortilla is not served, it is fed to the animals). Cooking tortillas requires a practiced hand and a careful eye (cf. Pilcher 1998). Even Victoria, who was an older woman with a lifetime’s experience making tortillas, still tore or folded one or two daily, attesting to the difficulty of the task.

Tortillas are best served hot, fresh off the comal. Victoria made them early in the morning and made enough to last the family for the day. She stacked them face side up (the face side of a tortilla is the one with the thin puffed cap and small dark splotches) and wrapped them in a tea towel once cooked ‘so that they stay hot and fresh for longer’. Women must know exactly the right amount of raw masa to make for each day since raw masa has a shelf life of twenty-four hours or less before it goes sour and cooked tortillas don’t last much more than a day before they become hard and stale. Due to the highly skilled nature of tortilla making, it took a long time to mechanize the process and to mass-produce what was considered to be an edible tortilla, but when it was achieved ‘the transformation from hand-crafted to store-bought tortillas….. constituted a genuine revolution in the lives of Mexican women’ (Pilcher 1998: 106). This is because it saved the women a huge amount of time and effort. However, this mechanisation has increased the value of handmade tortillas as opposed to factory made ones in Oaxaca. In the village of San Juan Guelavía, many women still made their own tortillas and wouldn’t dream of buying or serving factory made tortillas, although they do sometimes buy them from their neighbours. Even in the city where people did buy their tortillas rather than make them, there were many restaurants where tortillas were made by hand and women making tortillas on comals were placed at the entrances to lure customers inside. There were also vendors in the markets selling home made tortillas to those who didn’t have time to make their own.

Oaxacan people can tell how something such as a tortilla was made just from tasting it. It is the same for salsas, which have a different texture depending on whether they have been blended or ground. By judging the texture, Oaxacan people know whether it was made on a metate, motar and pestle (mocajete), a
mill or commercially. The *metate* is like an industrial mortar and pestle; it is a small, three legged rock table, which sits on the ground and is used with a stone rolling pin (*mano*). Before *molineros*, every paste was made using a *metate* including corn paste (*masa*), chocolate and herb pastes for *moles* and salsas. While teaching us how to make salsas, Pilar was adamant: ‘*Yes, you can make salsas in blenders but they are not the same as ones made on a metate*’. When I asked her to explain further she said that this was because ‘*a blender makes sauces too smooth because it chops instead of crushes ingredients*’. Ground salsa is best and is slightly lumpy in comparison because the ingredients are crushed together rather than finely chopped. According to Pilar, ‘*any good salsa begins in the mortar and pestle with garlic and sea salt*’, then the other ingredients are added bit by bit with water from soaking *chiles* if needed. The more labour intensive and more traditional method of using the mortar and pestle or the *metate* was considered to be superior by all informants because it ‘*gives food a better flavour*’ (Pilar, Victoria, Miguel, Paco, Flor).

**Making Mole**

The recipe for *mole negro*, as with other dishes, is one that is not usually written down but rather learnt and remembered as described above from one’s mother or grandmother through watching and participating in the cooking process. *Mole* is the Spanish translation of the Aztec word for sauce and can refer to any of the many sauces made in Mexico. There is some debate about *mole* sauces and whether they are traditional or not because many of the ingredients used in *moles* today arrived with the Spanish, including pork, chicken, cinnamon, nuts, raisins and sesame seeds (cf. Hobsbawm 1983). However, there is archaeological evidence that a black sauce, probably a form of *mole*, was used with *tamales* in ancient times (Pilcher 1998). The incorporation of new ingredients into ancient recipes, which then evolve to be incomplete without them, is a worldwide phenomenon (Montanari 2006). However, Pilcher (1998) claims that for *mole* to have become such a popular dish after the conquest with the kind of social status it has, it must have been a Creole or Spanish derived dish; if it had been an Indian
dish it would not have had the same status. He also claims that some other dishes such as *Chiles en Nogada* are based on European courtly dishes. So according to Pilcher, the culinary highs of Mexican cuisine were old world dishes created using and incorporating new world ingredients such as *chiles*. Whatever the case may be, the state of Oaxaca is known for its *moles*, which are thought of as being very traditional and as therefore representative of the area and it remains true that 'to understand moles is to understand a basic fact about the kitchen philosophy of Oaxaca as opposed to other cuisines' (Martinez 1997: 136).

*Mole* recipes include *amarillo, coloradito, chichilo, manchamanteles, verde,* and *mole negro*. These are 'the seven moles' although there are many variations of each with every region in Oaxaca having a distinctive *mole* recipe. In fact, Pilar disliked this talk of 'only seven moles' for that very reason; she felt that it ignored the great diversity of the cuisine. *Mole amarillo* is an orange coloured sauce that is made with *chile* and cumin and usually served with chicken. A very popular *empanada* (a folded over and filled tortilla) was called *amarillo* and was filled with this sauce, chicken pieces and coriander. *Coloradito or rojo* is red and made with *chiles* and nuts and has burnt flavours. *Chichilo* is a smokey mole. *Manchamanteles* is sweet and made with pineapple and plantains. *Verde* is made with green *chiles* and fresh green herbs. *Negro* or black *mole* is the richest, most complicated and most famous of the Oaxacan *moles* and is what Bayless refers to as 'the mole': 'mole..... when it's said with that special pause and emphasis, means, the mole: the queen of sauces, with its dark, dried chiles and all' (2007: 202). A misconception is that *mole negro* gets its name and its colour from the addition of chocolate. Although the recipe does call for chocolate, it is actually named for the chocolate-coloured dried *chiles* used in the sauce that impart both their robust flavour and their bold colour. This is true of all *moles*; their colour derives mainly from the *chiles* they contain. For example, *mole rojo* or red *mole* is made with red *chiles* while *mole amarillo* or yellow *mole* is made with yellow *chiles*. Although *moles* can include dozens of ingredients, there are traditionally three main components, which are: *chiles*, nuts and seeds, and spices. Another common misconception is that every *mole* includes chocolate, and while many do, it is not found in all of them.
The mole, or mole negro should be rich, both in colour and taste and it should be shiny and luscious. It should look a lot like melted chocolate, hence the misconceptions, and the smell must be right: rich, spicy and savoury. Everyone has their own special/family touches, and recipes for this mole (and others) which are passed down as heirlooms to women in the same way as family farms are handed down to the men (cf. Mendras 1970). A typical mole negro recipe has the following ingredients: chilhuacles negros (black Oaxacan chiles), mulato chiles, pasilla chiles, chipotle mora chiles, pork lard, sesame seeds, peanuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans, raisins, plantain, semi sweet bread, onion, garlic, cinnamon, peppercorns, cloves, cumin seeds, Mexican oregano, thyme, marjoram, bay leaves, Oaxacan drinking chocolate, sugar and salt. All of the ingredients for mole negro are usually triple cooked; once toasted or fried individually, then ground and fried together as a paste and finally cooked out into a sauce with the addition of stock. No one ingredient should dominate but rather the sauce should give an integrated expression of flavours (cf. Auvray and Spence 2008). These cooking techniques, especially the toasting, are designed to enhance the flavour of foods and bring out their natural sweetness. The techniques employed and the ingredients used represent a blend of Indian and Spanish methods as roasting is the traditional Mexican method for enhancing flavour while frying in oil is the European way. Mole needs to be cooked in a special vessel, that is, a cazuela. The cazuela is a large, bowl shaped ceramic vessel that has a round base and a collar around the top. The mole has to be stirred constantly over many hours as it simmers and bubbles in the cazuela.

Making mole negro can take up to a week if the time spent choosing, purchasing and cleaning over thirty ingredients is included. As can be imagined the separate toasting and grinding into a fine paste of the various ingredients can take days and then it must be cooked slowly over a fire and adjusted to get the right balance of flavours (Further description on page 120). It is a very complex recipe and requires a skilled cook to balance the many flavours involved, therefore cooking it well can give women status in their communities where they may be called upon to cook it for fiestas and other special events (cf. Anderson 1983,
It is a hugely labour intensive dish and the time involved in making such a dish equates almost exactly to a show of love in Oaxaca and elsewhere where left over, cheap, easy or diluted items are all ways to show someone that they are unwelcome or that you are unhappy with them in some way whereas freshly cooked, expensive, labour intensive and rich/concentrated items convey the opposite sentiments (Appadurai 1981, Adapon 2008). The longer it takes to make something, the more love you show by cooking it for your family. In this way cooking can express love better than actually saying the words and family and friends understand this meaning from food, especially labour intensive food.

*Mole* is strongly associated with women and grinding and: 'Mexicans have long associated the act of grinding corn on the *metate* with female sexuality' (Pilcher 1998: 58). Appadurai also highlights this connection where 'cooking and sexual intercourse are appropriate and symbolically interconnected services performed by a wife for a husband' (1981: 498). Much authority is conveyed through bodily postures and if this idea is applied to the *metate*, where Oaxacan women spend hours, in fact their whole lives kneeling and grinding for their men, then it shows that men dominate over women in Oaxacan society. There is certainly a clear distinction between male and female in Oaxaca, both in language and division of labour, as well as in ideas about who should eat what foods. Chocolate drinks are made by women but should be drunk by men as chocolate is considered to be a 'strong' food. Chocolate drinks, mezcal, beer and *pulque* are associated with men who are thought to be able to handle powerful drinks and inebriation due to alcohol is acceptable for men whereas it is not for women. The growing of corn is men's work but the making of the *tortillas* is women's work. The sexes are identified with the different products of their labour, that is, men with growing and women with cooking. These rules about food define men as powerful and women as weak although in many ways the sexes are seen to be complementary, however, it seems obvious that 'a taste for dishes which require a large investment of time and interest is linked to a traditional conception of women's role' (Lupton 1996: 96).
A dish such as *mole* is the ultimate expression of Oaxacan cuisine and is the best dish you can make out of the entire Mexican repertoire and in general it is reserved for special occasions. Adapon (2008) even goes so far as to say that: 'there are three types of orgasms.... the carnal, the spiritual, and the gastronomical - and these three are encapsulated in mole' (Adapon 2008: 18). As the star of the cuisine, it becomes the ultimate work of art and therefore expresses of the chef's agency like weaving and other arts and crafts (Adapon 2008):

Agency in everyday life is a form of craftwork involving intimate collaborations among embodied humans and material objects like food. Like recipes and the cooking skills on which they rely such as tasting food and savouring the company of others.

(Farquhar 2006: 145)

A meal is a symbol of the cook, it represents the chef but it also *is* the chef in that one is thought not only to absorb the intrinsic properties of the food itself but also the qualities of the cook when eating: 'to a greater or lesser extent cooked food is permeated by the qualities of the cook, which are then ingested by the eater. The extent depends on the method of cooking' (Parry 1985: 613).

**The Secret Ingredient**

Adapon (2008) studied food culture in Milpa Alta and Mexico City and describes how cooking there is a creative, even artistic process. Cooking well requires attention and care and it is recognised as an art not only by anthropologists but also by lay people. Being known as a good cook is socially valued in Mexico, and to cook well requires both social and gastronomic skill. Cooked food can express how much you love someone, which is measured by the amount of time and effort involved in making the dish. The time spent is interpreted as an investment in the social relationship between the chef and the intended eater (cf. Miller 1998). Eating alone is asocial but sharing food lifts consumption into the sphere of social interaction, creating social relationships through shared consumption and bonds of obligation in a similar fashion to a gift (cf. Mauss
1954). The time and effort involved in cooking is thus a sacrifice made in order to establish a relationship of love.

Love in cooking is multifaceted and can include handling ingredients lovingly, attention and care while cooking, affection for intended recipients, knowledge and understanding of food and flavour as well as the history of a dish or ingredient, caring about getting techniques right, love of cooking itself and pleasure in the execution of these skills. The cook needs to love the land, the culture and the ingredients as well as the intended recipients to cook well. Mexican cuisine requires an emotional investment from the cook and their emotional state of mind is believed to manifest in the food they make (cf. Adapon 2008). When food comes out well the cook is thought to have cooked with love and when food comes out badly it is attributed to the cook’s bad mood, carelessness or laziness. Home cooking is valued above the cooking of chefs at restaurants, which is thought to lack this quality or flavour of love because chefs do not have the same personal connection to their customers that home cooks have to their families. Love is then the 'secret' ingredient that makes a home cooked meal special and meaningful.

Recipes when used serve as a guide only to something that is then prepared according to the cooks' mood or skill in a deeply sensual process where 'ingredients are chosen, touched and manipulated, assessed by sight, texture and smell, tasted and savoured' (Adapon 2008: 16). When food is ready and correct measurements are judged by feel, meaning that cooking skills must be previously learned through experience and that knowledge about food and its preparation is absorbed in the body as well as in the mind (cf. Casey 2000). Good cooking is a bodily practice or discipline and like any other skill, it is learned through training and imitation of masters. In this case it means that girls learn from their mothers and other women, especially grandmothers. No two cooks ever produce the same flavour even if they use the same recipe or were taught by the same person. The personal touch of the cook, which Adapon calls 'sazón', is something inexplicable that arises from within, from the heart: 'it is a talent or a knack for cooking, and this particular kind of personal touch that is necessary for good Mexican cooking
is love’ (Adapon 2008: 21). The personal touch comes from the heart and is a sensory or epistemological level of knowledge that is thought to be ‘in’ the hand and is likened to a green thumb. Good cooks: ‘are guided by their memories, personal histories and taste, as well as by their internal embodied knowledge or sazón’ (Adapon 2008: 22). Looking at cooking as an art and at recipes as artworks, following Gell (1996) then recognises the technical skills and the personal flair involved in the production of Mexican food. A body of knowledge, corpus or socially developed system is employed in the preparation of foods for consumption. It is the creative element of cooking:

Combined with the fact that raw materials need to be bought or collected from different places and then prepared and combined well, within the constraints of a cook's daily life, that make good food meaningful and thus gives cooks greater social value, hence power.

(Adapon 2008: 31)

Confronting a home cooked meal can then be thought of as confronting a person and their knowledge and intentionalities. To put it in Maussian (1954) terms, food as an object of exchange is an extension of the person and contains some of their essence or spirit, because it is the product of the cook’s creative labour. Cooked food is then ingested in a literal communion of persons. The eater recognises the socially meaningful network of intentionalities that surround the meal, as does the cook. The communicative aspect of cooking and eating then comes from the meanings that cooks and eaters place on the food within their social context. Through the mobilisation of different flavours via cooking, social relations are effectively created: ‘food served to be eaten has flavour because a cook intends to bring out or produce these flavours in the meals that she prepares for other people with whom she has specific social relations’ (Adapon 2008: 117). The cook’s intention to create relationships is the most important factor in cooking:

Although the way that they prepare some dishes may be nuanced by their own taste and pleasure, they still are cooking with the intention of feeding (or offering food to) someone else (a recipient). What they prepare is dependent upon their relationship with the eaters. Hence, they use their culinary agency according to the network of intentionalities in which they are entangled as social beings.
Complex and laborious dishes are typical in Mexico and are prepared everyday so a cook invests many hours preparing food for others, especially when making special or festival foods:

All dishes denoted as special take a very long time to prepare. This is why the time it takes to prepare food is an investment; it is an investment in the social relationship between the cook and the intended eater(s). Cooking with love combines the pleasure of cooking with the pride of culinary knowledge and the sentiments that are transmitted to the eaters.

The most valuable and special food, the best of the best, is mole: 'the value of mole can be understood as effectively equivalent to the value of women' (Adapon 2008: 199). This is because: 'mole represents salsa, which represents flavour, which represents women, who are ultimately governed by an honour code of giving and respect to their children, partners, loved ones' (Adapon 2008: 120). Serving such an elaborate dish in which so much time has been invested transfers its value and commemorates the occasion as special. Art lovers or eaters of mole are enchanted by their perception of the technical virtuosity entailed in the production of these works of art (moles). A good mole then is like an artwork: it is more than simply beautiful; it is beautifully made and has a high value because of its perceived excellence.

**Food, Communication and Social Capital**

Both cooks and families interpret the labour expended on shopping for and cooking food as an expression of love and care. The purchase and preparation of food for the family is the woman's responsibility and one of women's main worries in Oaxaca is that if you don't cook something properly, 'people would talk about you'. This was the main motivation people mentioned when they talked about the importance of home cooking and getting a recipe right, especially something important like mole, tortillas or chocolate. Such gossip is a form of
social control, particularly when employed in relation to ideal manhood or femininity (cf. Delamont 1995). Gossip about cooking, which forms an important part of female identity is then very important. A woman's standing is judged by her industry in preparing food and cooking a traditional meal well gives social capital to the cook (cf. Bourdieu 1984). Women must protect the appearances of self, family and household thus maintaining the unity, morals and values of the social group. In this way, gossip also serves to define the group identity since only members of the group are allowed to gossip (Gluckman 1963).

Rules about food then serve to define group and personal identity and are enforced by social controls such as gossip. What people say about food is thus very important. 'Riquísimo' is a prized comment from consumers of a meal and speaks to the high quality of the food. It means quite literally 'rich' and reveals that this is a quality that is appreciated in Oaxacan food. It is no surprise then that rich, flavourful sauces such as moles are the stars of the cuisine. Other appreciative comments are 'sabroso' (meaning tasty and delicious, and in other situations solid and substantial) and 'muy rico' (very rich) or 'qué rico' (how rich), signalling enjoyment and meaning that the food is flavourful and very rich, valuable, luxurious, fine, sumptuous or very good. People often say 'that smells good' (bien olor) because smell or 'olor' is very important: 'if the aroma is delicious, the food itself is delicious, for most of the sense of taste is the sense of smell' (Synnott 1993: 190). The colour of the food is also quite important, especially when it comes to moles, which are usually categorised by their colour.

One of the most important and basic foods that women make is the corn tortilla. A tortilla can be used like bread but it is also more fundamental in its use. It is a portable and edible food wrapper that can be carried into the field. It can be used as a plate and as a knife, spoon or fork. It can even be used like a glove to cover and protect a hand when eating or pulling apart hot food. Because tortillas are so important to a meal, which is not considered complete without them, they become a powerful tool in the hands of their makers. Tortillas are thus an important and symbolic foodstuff that women control and which can be
explicitly linked with family communication as described by Pilcher below:

Men complemented women by praising their tortillas, and some even claimed to be able to identify the unique taste and texture of their wives’ corn grinding and tortilla making. Women, in turn, expressed affection through their role of feeding the family. Although they avoided direct demonstrations of maternal love after weaning children, mothers offered subtle displays of tenderness by giving them extra helpings of beans or reserving for them the best tortillas. As a result, children were sensitive to the size of their portions and to the order in which they were fed. Food served to communicate anger as well as love; a wife could burn her husband’s tortillas if she suspected him of infidelity, while children could throw their food to show disgust with mother. Women therefore became inextricably connected with the food they cooked.

(1998: 107)

Food is identified with the cook, who imparts their personality and their desires into the food.

The fact that the *tortilla* is considered to be a basic food does not mean it is not labour intensive to make. Although corn is typically grown and harvested by men, *tortilla* making is highly skilled work and it is women’s work:

The tortilla is the providence of women whose role at the hearth is that of a gatekeeper to the inside meanings of culture, the family, the home, and the meal. The tortilla was enclosed within the boundaries of these inside meanings, which extended out to embrace the community, nature, and the cosmos.

(Lind and Barham 2004: 54)

Certainly my informant Victoria, in *San Juan Guelavía*, was the gatekeeper to the hearth, the family, the home and the meal. It was she who invited me into the house and into the kitchen, she who showed me how to make *tortillas*. Victoria made *tortillas* every morning for her family and some to sell to her neighbours. Her family made a point of telling me that her *tortillas* were exceptionally smooth and to praise her meals which was an assessment of her skill as a cook, judged by the texture and flavour of the food. Victoria was well respected and her food was appreciated not just by her family and immediate neighbours but by the whole village. Every day at the markets, she sold out of bean paste, cactus salad, red salsa, roasted pumpkin seeds and pasta salad.
Recipes as Narratives of Identity

Cooking in Oaxaca is learned through apprenticeship, passed down from mother or grandmother to daughter as oral history and body memory, which is built upon through experimentation and personal experience, making cooking not only an art but also an art de localité (Mendras 1970, Adapon 2008, cf. Casey 2000). When I asked Victoria how she learnt to cook, she said with affection: 'My mother taught me'. Pilar learned to cook from her grandmother. Dishes that are handed down through the generations such as recipes for moles and tamales thus embody personal history, family history and a broader social history. They represent a connection to the past and something consistent in a world that is constantly changing. Seremetakis (1994) stresses the importance of the link between grandmother and grandchild, where sensory acculturation and the materialisation of historical consciousness occurs at the same time through the exchange of 'sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling' (Seremetakis 1994: 37). Each sense witnesses and records the commensal history of the others. History, knowledge, feeling and the senses then become embedded in the material culture and its components, which include specific artefacts, places and performances.

Cooking a dish that was made by your mother or grandmother is then a powerful way of connecting and remembering, binding people together through time and space (cf. DeCerteau 1984). Dishes that are handed down through generations are quite fluid in that they change and become personal with unique aspects:

The sharing of women’s stories takes place through the process of sharing recipes. But like a story that yields different possibilities with each new reading, so do recipes yield new stories with each new retelling.

(Abarca 2001: 124)

Seremetakis’ description of embroidery could easily be extended to recipes for traditional dishes here:

The embroiderer, alone or with other women, borrows and elaborates the designs of others in a form of exchange. She is externalising pieces of the self to make it
public. ...It is the transfer of the self into substance that disseminates a history of the person in dispersal.

(1994: 15)

Personal twists on a dish make it your own and are a way of expressing agency through food. Cooking one of mum's recipes is strongly evocative not only of mother but also of home and country and of self. The aroma of a recipe handed down from a mother or grandmother is like a warm embrace from that person. Recipes from family, friends and acquaintances become a kind of gift (cf. Mauss 1954). The recipe for the dish that you receive orally and through bodily training has been modified and perfected over time and through this process it comes to contain multiple selves or generations. Therefore by teaching a dish to someone, you are giving part of yourself and even of others. Food is stamped with the identity of the cook(s), therefore the offering of food can be seen as a symbolic offering of the person. Accordingly, people in many cultures consider offering food to a guest the most fundamental form of hospitality, and the refusal of food may be considered a grave insult to the host (cf. Sahlins 1972).

Furthermore, the knowledge of cooking is handed down as a form of story telling through which a personal and a national identity are made imaginable (Anderson 1983, De Certeau 1984, cf. Abarca 2001). Every recipe tells a story and the most traditional recipes and ingredients tend to have creation myths attached to them as previously discussed in relation to corn and chocolate, both of which are believed to be of divine origin (Chapters 3 and 5 respectively). Mole, discussed below, is another example. In the case of mole, the myth involves a fortuitous accident that led to a new discovery, which was then adopted by the general public. As with the mole recipe, many traditions begin as innovations and people trace more or less mythical origins or roots as well as real ones in order to preserve their identities (Montanari 2006, Hobsbawm 1983). Such stories are active memories that create and delimit a space, traversing and organising places, selecting and linking them together in the same way that they create, delimit and maintain identities (DeCerteau 1984). These stories are then travel stories or spatial practices which tell us what we can do and what we can make, creating boundaries in the same way that place does (cf. Casey 2000). Narratives of
identity are thus descriptions and culturally creative acts. To tell your own narrative you must draw on stories already told or objects that already have meaning as they lend extra historical and cultural significance to personal stories of identity, hence the attachment to traditional ingredients such as cacao and corn (Connerton 1989, Casey 2000). Food is a valuable object in this sense because it is sensorially and socially bonding, emotional and carries social and historical meanings making it especially memorable.

Pilar often spoke of tradition and the importance of technique in cooking and how these things connected her to place and history, specifically to the city of Oaxaca where she grew up and to her grandmother who taught her how to cook. She taught her classes in the same way that she learned, through watching and participating, cooking recipes that she had learned from her mother and grandmother, although she also provided written copies. These were traditional dishes, many of which she had personally altered to be ‘more healthy’ and that she also cooked for her family. In fact, she often held cooking classes in her own home. She always emphasised the market as being extremely important to Oaxacan society, as a microcosm of culture and as an everyday practice of women (cf. DeCerteau 1984). Fresh, good quality ingredients from the markets were paramount for her and cooking delicious meals was an important way that she showed love for her family. Pilar’s classes emphasised traditional ingredients such as corn, chocolate and mezcal as well as recipes for tamales and moles. They also centred around special events such as the Guelaguetza (moles) and Easter (tamales). She certainly saw cooking as a transmission of culture, a gift, as a form of storytelling and as an expression of love and care for family and friends, even customers.

Cooking with Love and Emotion

Meals in Oaxaca were ordered in scale of importance and expense or luxury with festival meals, and mole in particular, being the most important (cf. Douglas 1971). In agreement with Miller (1998) on shopping, and Douglas, the
ethnography found that there was an analogy between table and altar and that rules of meals often encoded religious or devotional concerns. Cooking, like shopping, is associated with females and sacrifice and is a major form in which love is manifested and reproduced through the creation and confirmation of desiring others (Miller 1998). Pleasure is associated with the sense of skill involved both in thrifty shopping and careful cooking for others. As thrift transforms shopping from an act of pure destructive consumption through devotion and sacrifice or thrift, so cooking for others performs the same function and 'when food is transformed (artistically...) into the meal shared, this signifies a transformation of the carnal to spiritual, substance to art, individual to society' (Adapon 2008: 37). Adapon and Miller (1998) agree that the time and labour invested in cooking and shopping is interpreted as love and devotion both by women and their families and it serves to lift otherwise mundane consumption into a higher plane which involves sociality and the creation of desiring others both within the family, the broader community, the spirits and the divine.

The practice of cooking is a form of habitual embodied knowledge of ingredients, tools and techniques (cf. Casey 2000, Tuan 1977). Cooking is a daily practice, learned by watching and participating and is passed down from woman to woman through the generations (Rozin 1983, DeCerteau 1984, Abarca 2001). Oaxacan cooking does not typically come with a written recipe and never comes with exact measurements. Rather, it is learned by watching and participating or by 'feel' as is language. This language of food takes many years to learn and is learnt both intellectually and sensually. It requires the cook to master a wide variety of labour intensive techniques and skills, which allow them to achieve the desired tastes and textures in foods (cf. Pilcher 1998). Cooks must learn all the steps to follow and demonstrate intimate knowledge of ingredients and techniques in order to prepare complex, rich and decadent recipes such as moles. This knowledge is appreciated by a happy family who do not fail to comment on the excellence of a dish or a fine tortilla. Excellence in cooking is also respected by the community and a particularly good cook will be sought after to cook for festivals and special events (cf. Bourdieu 1984). Cooking is therefore expressive
of the cook's vast body of knowledge but it is also expressive of the cooks themselves and is therefore a form of art (Adapon 2008).

Learning how to cook family recipes is not only habitual but it is also emotional and is complimented by the discussions and interactions that take place whilst this learning is happening. Every recipe is full of stories, of the history of the family and of the nation. Recipes and the stories that are passed down with them can be seen as an example of storytelling and narrative and as a form of remembrance, which serves to maintain identity (cf. Casey 2000). A person must have some form of emotional attachment to events for them to be remembered as part of their narrative of identity, which draw on stories already told. Recipes that are remembered and passed down through the family are bound to create such emotional attachments. As Bell and Valentine argue, 'the history of any nation's diet is the history of the nation itself, with food fashion, fads and fancies mapping episodes of colonialism and migration, trade and exploration, cultural exchange and boundary-marking' (1997: 187). Keeping one's own food traditions is then an important way of maintaining boundaries between oneself and 'the other' and of maintaining group and personal identity as well.

Debates about the authenticity of various recipes revolve around issues of good taste, expertise, knowledge and distinction and an obsession with the origins of things. It is no surprise then, if we take cooking as an art, that such debates also arise when the cuisine of Oaxaca and especially the star dish, mole is discussed. Traditional societies such as Oaxacan villages exercise social controls such as gossip to ensure that members conform to traditions and are ridiculed and belittled if they don't. On the other hand if they follow the rules of tradition, they can increase their status and authority (Delamont 1995, Gluckman 1963). For instance, tradition dictates that chocolate must have froth on top and a mole sauce must be smooth and balanced. There are also rules at once practical and cultural about which dishes are suitable for which occasions. An example is mole negro, which is culturally reserved for special occasions. The practical reason for not cooking mole everyday is that it is a hugely labour intensive dish and even a
small batch takes at least two days to make, more if you include the time spent shopping for ingredients, which must be carefully chosen (cf. Miller 1998).

I agree with Adapon’s view of Mexican cooking as an art and of flavour and labour in making good food as an expression of love (2008). Cooking a meal properly is important in Oaxaca. It is a way for women to express or demonstrate love for their family in a similar way to shopping thriftily (Chapter 7, cf. Miller 1998) and it is a way to gain status within their community if they are called upon to cook for others or for a fiesta (Miller 1998, cf. Bourdieu 1984). Cooking for others particularly at fiestas creates bonds of obligation within families and communities in the same way that a gift does, tying people together. The family has knowledge of the effort required to shop for and choose ingredients and to make complex and labour intensive dishes well, which leads them to value foods cooked at home with fresh local ingredients in traditional ways and to recognise good flavour as an expression of skill and love. Furthermore, such cooking carries personal and group histories through narratives, reminding people of home, family, place and identity.
Food and Culture in Oaxaca

A Day of the Dead offering in Oaxaca City, including mezcal, chocolate and mole.
What are Oaxacan foods? Why are Oaxacan foods famous? Why is local food important? Why are specific foods such as chiles, mezcal, chocolate, corn, mole, tamales and chapulines especially important for identity? Why is food such an excellent carrier of memory and identity? How do tradition and history become part of a foodstuff? Is memory stored in places and items such as foods? What do Oaxacan foods say about Oaxacan culture? This thesis has asked and endeavoured to answer these questions and has considered the importance of the perception of flavour and food to culture, exploring the meanings of food and cooking in Oaxaca, paying special attention to activities surrounding food such as shopping and cooking as well as investigating particular foods such as chiles, chapulines, corn, chocolate and mezcal, which struck the anthropologist as particularly important markers of a unique ethnic Oaxacan identity and of the personal identity of cooks. Food is increasingly recognised as an important topic in anthropology and for Oaxacan locals, food was of vital importance. As an agricultural people, Oaxacans have always considered food, especially corn and chocolate to be significant both in ritual and in everyday life. In fact, culture in Oaxaca revolves around markets, festivals and sociality, all of which involve food.


dentify (cf. DeCerteau 1984). Food forcibly reminds us of our embodiment and our sensual nature and it is also emotional, evocative and social. From a very early age, people develop strong emotional connections to food, making it especially memorable and strongly symbolic. It is therefore an important marker of identity and features in personal as well as group narratives, tying people to family and history as well as to place and community (cf. Anderson 1983, Casey 2000). Such narratives are often
concerned with marking boundaries and food too can include or exclude and is therefore important in the creation and recreation of oppositional boundaries and identities. In fact, food serves multiple purposes for identity, holding and representing place as well as national, family and personal history.

Food consumption happens in the most intimate and therefore the most memorable place of all: the home and specifically the kitchen. Food preparation itself falls into the most basic and lasting category of memory, that of habitual body memory, upon which all other forms of memory are based (Casey 2000). Habitual body memories such as cooking do not need to be accompanied by consciousness in any explicit form and they bring the past into the present, literally enacting it rather than simply picturing it as in other forms of remembering (Casey 2000). The art of memory relies on these memories as well as a stable place system on which memories can be 'hung' and the things or objects that provide centres of attachment within places. The lived body itself serves as a place and as an object of attachment in the extreme, mediating between place and mind, taking us into places and habituating us to them unconsciously so that we can focus on other things (Casey 2000). The foods discussed stimulate and create the lived body and therefore serve as centres of attachment in places and as flags of identity (cf. Palmer 1998). Foods are especially important as centres of attachment because they link the body mentally and physically to place by the ingestion of it.

Places, things, emotions, senses, habits, traditions and foods all serve as aids or anchors for memory, upon which a sense of identity is based. The past can be easily forgotten and therefore must be remembered through stories and objects both on a national and on an individual level. Identity is formed through the creation and maintenance of a descriptive narrative that helps us to remember the history of ourselves and of groups such as nations (cf. DeCerteau 1984). To serve a narrative purpose, events must be remembered as 'our own' and for this to happen, there must be some form of emotional attachment to them. Food is made with love by mothers in kitchens, which are the heart of the home and is therefore associated with nurture. It is sensual and emotional, with powerful
conditioning of flavour preferences developed in early childhood. Dishes learned from family members are already meaningful and carry historical cultural narratives. Women have an important role in nurturing the family through cooking food. They manage the routine of daily meals and instil social codes related to food and eating. Cooking practices, especially those that are repeated daily such as the making of tortillas, are a form of habitual body memory, where it is the body that 'understands' (cf. Connerton 1989). Foods are therefore important for personal narratives as symbols of love, family, nurture and history. Foods stop us from forgetting who we are because they serve to remind constantly of, or flag identities.

**First Foods - Corn**

In Oaxacan mythology, the gods made man out of corn and chocolate amongst other ingredients. In daily life, corn also makes Oaxacan bodies. It is fundamental both to Oaxacan cuisine and to Oaxacan identity and tortillas made from corn are a taken for granted part of any meal. In fact, a meal in Oaxaca is not complete unless it involves corn in some form. The consumption of a food such as corn constructs identity at the level of the ordinary, the everyday and a single grain of criollo or native corn literally embodies thousands of years of history and knowledge, passed down through generations of farming men and cooking women. Corn represents the gods, roots and arts of dwelling and consuming it daily forges a strong connection to place. There is a movement in Oaxaca, represented by Itanoni, which seeks to protect local varieties and production methods, rejecting and resisting the introduction of American hybrid corn, which is rightly perceived as a threat in an area where corn was first cultivated, is a staple food and represents an entire way of life. Native corn is a source of identity and pride and Oaxaqueños insist on using their own corns and maintaining a variety of different strains of corn that are prized for their distinctive properties and uniqueness. Corn is an ingredient that is seen as almost synonymous with indigenous cultures and in many ways stands for them, serving as symbol of and a steady anchor for identity.
Mezcal, Gold of Oaxaca

Mezcal is an important part of any socialising or celebration in Oaxaca and represents an art of dwelling as well as traditional production techniques that are no longer used in other parts of Mexico. It is made using an ancient Indian ingredient (agave) and an ancient method, that of pit roasting but it also reflects more recent colonial history, when the process of distillation was introduced and mezcal production was outlawed by the Spanish, pushing production into the South and the mountainous regions where it could not be easily controlled, making it a product that reflects both ancient and colonial history. Not only does mezcal carry historical narratives but it also embodies the soil and the place where the agave is grown and the art de localité of the small producers who make it, all of which can be tasted in the flavour of the end product. Quality mezcal is thought to taste of the landscape and is explicitly linked to place and the authentic identities of its producers through notions of terroir in the same way that wines and artisan cheeses are. Mezcal is therefore seen to be distinctively Oaxacan, however as it becomes increasingly popular worldwide, the market demands standardisation, which means that regulations must be imposed on the manufacturing process. It is feared that this pressure will destroy the smaller producers and ruin the integrity and unique nature of a famously varied alcohol. A large part of the appeal of mezcal is the fact that it is produced in small batches by 'backyard' and unregulated small producers.

Mezcal is a potent marker of or flag of identity representing local and historical 'authentic' Oaxacan identities as opposed to the global, the new and the mass-produced. The fact that mezcal is served with chile and worm salt and sometimes has worms (guisanos) in the bottle, further marks an oppositional Oaxacan identity as eaters of chile and of insects as opposed to others who do not eat these things, especially Westerners. Mezcal, chile and insects are all acquired tastes and mezcal is one of a variety of foods in Oaxaca that display smokey, almost burnt flavour characteristics, much prized in foods. These are acquired
tastes developed in childhood and these ingrained gastronomic preferences are difficult to change. Such tastes are also shared with a community, delimiting who belongs and who does not, thus classifying the classifiers. *Mezcal* is sensual and it is served at times of heightened emotions, namely fiestas and festivals, making it highly memorable and therefore adding to its importance for identity.

**The Original Drinking Chocolate**

Traditionally, the Mexican Indians took a large amount of their sustenance in the form of various drinks, so much so that the Spanish when they first arrived wondered at how little the Indians seemed to eat. Chocolate is one of these drinks, connecting the indigenous tribes of Oaxaca to their historical roots. There are a wide range of different chocolate drinks made in Oaxaca, many of which are made with a mixture of corn and chocolate, making them more affordable. The original drinking chocolate is a grainy and nutritious food, a use which distinguishes Oaxacans and Mexicans from the rest of the world, where chocolate is for the most part consumed as a snack bar. Although these drinks were once restricted to the elites and to festivals (a role which has now been assumed by beer and *mezcal*), cacao drinks are now a daily food for many. The making of chocolate and especially the raising of a stable and fragrant foam, is skilled women's work and represents a form of embodied habitual knowledge. Throughout the production process it is imperative that everything is very clean because any grease inhibits the creation of the foam, reflecting badly on the maker. The foam then represents women's labour, knowledge, love, the sacred and life itself, nourishing the soul while the chocolate nourishes the body (cf. Miller 1998, Casey 2000).

Cacao therefore serves as a flag of identity in Oaxaca, reminding people strongly of their Indian heritage and of their gods and religious festivals. It requires a hot and humid climate and is difficult to grow, as both the tree and the pods are delicate and susceptible to pests, damage and mould. Growing it is therefore a labour intensive process and an *art de localité*. Although cacao is rarely grown in
the state of Oaxaca, it is an everyday food there and an important offering, associated with the Day of the Dead celebrations and with death as well as other transitional stages of life. Feeding the gods offerings of foods such as cacao is thought to ensure their cooperation in the production of food and in other matters. Furthermore, it is an ingredient in the star of the cuisine, the ultimate festival food and the best offering; mole negro.

The Place of Food in Memory

Corn, mezcal and chocolate are rich symbols and centres of attachment for Oaxacan identities. Attachments to place and the food that grows there contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities and the memories held in landscapes connect people to their roots. Eating local foods daily constantly reminds people who they are and where they come from. This reminding is a form of memory writ large, which mediates between and connects the mind and the body and the body and the world, taking us beyond the confinement of the mind as the exclusive receptacle of remembering and towards the body and habitual body memory, which necessarily requires paying attention to the senses (Casey 2000). Through repeated consumption these foods become more than anchors of identity, they literally become the body, which was explicitly recognised by Amado, owner of Itanoni, who described how Oaxacans are made of corn. This was also implicitly recognised by all informants who attested to the importance of eating local foods for their identity as Oaxacans and as members of the pueblo of San Juan Guelavía where corn would only be purchased in an emergency and then preferably from neighbours but certainly not from a supermarket. The body is the self and if the body is the self and the body is literally made from food, then eating is making self. As Christ lives in the Christian through the ingestion of the sacrament, so the landscape and history lives in the person as they ingest place through local ingredients (cf. Casey 2000).
A Recipe for Relationships

The second section of this thesis extended the discussion of things, bodies, and places which followed Casey (2000) and focused on shared food memories, social remembering through commemoration, gift giving and sacrifice (cf. Mauss 1950, Miller 1998, Casey 2000). Festivals and commemorations are practices that bind communities through shared experience and the obligatory sharing of special foods. Food in this instance is a gift par excellence and its exchange creates and maintains relationships. Shopping and cooking are inextricably involved in these events but they are also considered as everyday practices, which are used to cement relationships with significant others. Women’s work in shopping and cooking was considered to be expression of love and an example of everyday or mundane sacrifice which transforms the destructive act of consumption into an act of affirmation and creation that maintains important familial, community and divine relationships (Miller 1998, Adapon 2008). Women, especially Pilar and Victoria, took great pleasure in shopping carefully and obtaining the best produce at the best prices for their families and cooking well was most certainly an expression of their love for their families but also more generally for their food and culture.

These ways of doing or making such as cooking and shopping are seen as arts and the consumer is thus a maker of meaning through the use of skills or ‘tactics’. Habitual skills or body memories such as those related to cooking and eating are the longest lasting of all kinds of memory and do not need to be accompanied by consciousness. Instead, the body as a memorial container grants unmediated access to them. Victoria moved and worked almost in a trance state when she was cooking and when I asked her about techniques or amounts used in her dishes, she would have to stop and think about the answer. The use of such habitual embodied skills in cooking actually re-enacts the past, bringing it into the present, rather than simply representing it (Casey 2000).
**Celebrations and Commemorations**

Oaxaca is renowned for its traditional festivals, which revolve around specially marked foods (corn, chocolate, *tamales*, *moles* and mezcal) that serve as flags of identity as discussed in Section one. Mass public occasions such as festivals are affirmations of shared as well as individual identities, a form of collective identification (cf. Lepstein 1978). Feasts and fiestas are therefore central to the maintenance of community and political cohesion, fostering a unique ethnic and state identity (Casey 2000). Furthermore, festivals are commemorations and serve as a form of social remembering. Commemorations firstly honour something communal and secondly the honouring is communal resulting in the formation of strong bonds between members of the community through participation. Through bodily and sensual participation in these ceremonies, people remember who they are. The Days of the Dead in particular but also the *Guelaguetza* conformed very closely to Casey's (2000) definition of a commemorative ceremony.

Festivals and fiestas serve to link the past, the present and the future and to define who is and isn't a part of the community, assuming and creating a bond, as does the food sharing which occurs during these events in an obligatory fashion (cf. Mauss 1950). Ceremonial eating is a major part of the Day of the Dead celebrations, demonstrating the belief that 'the dead can be raised through cooking, eating, awakening and exchanging, which all require memory' (Seremetakis 1994: 28). The labour intensive food that is served and exchanged carries something of the past but also the essence of the cook, or love. During a festival such as the Day of the Dead, the spirits eat this flavour, essence or love, which is cooked into the food especially for them, replicating for the gods and spirits the everyday sacrifice of cooking for the family. At festival time accumulation is turned into expenditure, therefore festivals involve sacrifice. Offerings are made to the gods are modelled on gift giving among men and a reward in the form of benevolence is expected in return for the offerings on the
altar. It is through such sacrifice that a relationship with the divine is created and maintained, as it is in daily activities surrounding food.

*Sacrifice, Love and Shopping*

Shopping in Oaxaca is overwhelmingly associated with women and can be seen as a mundane form of sacrifice, in which the destructive act of consumption is transformed through thrift, into an act of love and devotion directed towards the creation and maintenance of important social relationships within the family, as described by Miller (1998). Conspicuous or extravagant spending is only allowed at certain times such as at fiestas where it is expected but at other times spending must be kept to a minimum. In Oaxaca thrift takes the form of market shopping and buying the freshest or best ingredients for the best prices, barter and knowledge of the favourite dishes, needs and desires of the family, which is a matter of pride. Sacrifice was and is a part of everyday life, an ordinary and regular form of expenditure, especially when it is related to eating and this may in fact be the most important way in which divinity is affirmed.

Shopping at the local markets as often as twice a day for fresh produce is a part of everyday life. The markets are a highly social space where people meet, greet each other, gossip, sell food and eat (cf. Gluckman 1963, DeCerteau 1984). Barter and banter are expected and women must use their skills and knowledge in order to exercise thrift. The continued importance of daily shopping at local markets despite the incursion global supermarkets chains (in the city) reflect a culture that is centred around food. The main reasons given by informants for shopping at the markets were for freshness, culture and tradition. Pilar and Victoria shopped at the markets as their mother and grandmothers had done before them and taught their children and students to do the same if they wanted to make authentic, tasty dishes. The markets express the being of the community as well as embodying the history of the region. The local cuisine of a region in a place such as Oaxaca is largely un-exportable because it is dependent on the natural resources and knowledges that are available in any particular area. It is
place dependent and relies on heirloom varieties of herbs, corn, chiles and avocados which are hard to find anywhere else as well as heirloom recipes for the making of special dishes and drinks, such as mole and mezcal. Shopping, particularly for these ingredients, which serve as flags of identity, is an active component in the construction of identity and distinguishes group boundaries of local, starting with pueblo or village, in opposition to the global. Decisions about which ingredients are fresh, appropriate and good rely on the social capital of the shopper, making shopping a cultural practice which allows women to utilise their knowledge of food and cooking (cf. Bourdieu 1984, De Certeau 1984).

Cooking with Feeling

Cooking and eating are highly sensual and often emotional experiences that involve intimate sociability and a dramatic form of incorporation, making them highly memorable and therefore valuable in the creation of narratives of identity. Food is almost always cooked at home, resulting in layered and connected memories of food, place, family and emotion and sometimes food memories are so tied up with a particular experience or place that it is impossible to recreate them again. Cooking in Oaxaca is taught through apprenticeships to masters and dishes are handed down in this way through the generations making cooking a form of habitual embodied knowledge and a living memory closely connected to place (Casey 2000). The cooking and sharing of food then creates and perpetuates social memory as well as social bonds of family and community (Casey 2000, Connerton 1989). Through the labour of making food, the cook can demonstrate their flair, spice, loving, talent and various knowledges regarding the recipes, ingredients and eaters of the food. Personal twists on recipes are a way of expressing agency through food thereby stamping the food both with the identity of the cook and of the receiver/s and when ones eats a meal one is therefore confronting the cook, whose emotions are believed to flavour the dish. Having your own personal perfect flavour or sazón is to create your own story through food and in this way there is a connection between cooking and authorship or art (cf. Adapon 2008).
Even the simplest and certainly the 'best' food in Oaxaca is labour intensive and this labour is interpreted as love by the cooks and their families who recognise the effort which goes into making food well. Victoria's family never failed to praise the food that she made when it was served to them and she was always pleased to receive a positive comment from me when she offered me various foods, including tortillas, hot off the comal. Cooking can thus be seen through the lens of Miller (1988) as an act that sacrifices time and labour in order to establish relationships of love and obligation with family members. Cooking food for others, especially at festivals and accepting this food is to enter in a similar way into a gift relationship that demands social reciprocity (Mauss 1954). It is the 'ultimate gift' (cf. Lupton 1996) because it is both symbolically and physiologically consumed and nourishes both the body and the psyche. Many dishes, especially traditional ones such as mole negro, if made correctly, can take days to make. Although moles are made elsewhere in Mexico, the moles from Oaxaca are considered to be particularly refined, in large part because of the painstaking grinding by hand of fresh ingredients and careful cooking and balance of the final sauce. Moles made in this way in many ways represent Oaxacan kitchen philosophy and involve the use of ancient techniques (including dry roasting, boiling and grinding) and ingredients such as chiles and tomatoes as well as new ingredients and techniques learned from the Spanish such as the frying, nuts and wheat bread. Rich sumptuous, labour intensive foods such as mole negro are celebratory and fit for the dead, the gods and humans only on rare occasions. In the same way that particular foods carry a heavy symbolic load, so does the recipe for mole.

**Ethnic Food and Identity**

Identification is a process of classification of the world and our place in it and always involves value judgements. It is relational and intersubjective, always with an 'other', layered and flexible and people may have many and even conflicting identities which shift according to social context. Identity is formed
on the basis of memories and remembering our personal or communal past most
often takes the form of a narrative. Individual identities tend to emphasise
difference while collective identities tend to emphasise similarities. To deem
another person to be of the same group or the same ethnicity is to make a
positive evaluation, emphasise similarities and to assert that there exists and
body of shared knowledge, customs, values and eating habits (Lepstein 1978).
This is precisely what it means in Oaxaca, particularly in relation to food where
the community shares knowledge of special dishes and the appropriate times
and ways to eat them, even though the labour of production and consumption
may be divided between males and females. Large communities and ethnic
groups are imagined, as one will never meet every member, and this sense of
homogeneity is to an extent a construction, but they are not imaginary. They
have power in people's lives and provide an umbrella for all to shelter under.
Symbolism is used to create a feeling of solidarity and shared rituals such as
weddings, parties and festivals act as symbols of community. A symbol of ethnic
identity is then something that serves to identify 'us' (Jenkins 2014).

Ethnicity is often connected to family and a homeland or place is usually the base
for identity as it is in Oaxaca. Relationships with grandparents are of critical
importance in the formation of an ethnic identity because grandparents are the
closest to the ancestors, living links with the past and because they are usually
the ones who teach grandchildren about family history, folk lore, proverbs and
other traditions. What is traditional is subject to change as things can become
traditional through the development of creation myths or by being tied to history
and family through narratives. No inherent characteristic is traditional, rather
traditions are constructed in an oppositional relationship to the new. Ethnic
identifications arouse powerful emotions in the same way and for the same
reasons that foods and food preferences do, because they are formed in the
experience of early childhood and they are definitively embodied. Ethnic tastes
in food have an important part to play in maintaining the cohesion of the group
and since recipes and food preparation techniques are some of the last things to
change in a culture, food practices can capture some of the most vital beliefs of a
society (cf. Staller and Carrasco 2010). Indeed: 'few things link humans to the
earth as concretely as food or reflect cultural traditions as clearly as food preparation' (Christie 2008: 35).

In times of social upheaval and transformation, history becomes particularly important for the maintenance of identity because it provides people with a perception of their past in a narrative form, which enables them to stress certain values and make positive identifications with their forbears. The penetration of Western fast foods and other global food chains represents such a transformation and has increased the sense of an ethnic local identity in Oaxaca where these forces of globalisation have met with some resistance. The importance placed on the consumption of local/distinctive/ethnic foods, the use of traditional methods of preparation and the association of the traditional with quality as opposed to the new and modern are ways that Oaxacan resistance to these forces is manifested. Aztec or Indian cultures are opposed to the Spanish and the Western, traditional to modern, corn to wheat bread and mezcal to tequila.

There is always an implicit relationality in these comparisons where structural opposites define each other and boundaries are thereby created and maintained. Food in this circumstance becomes a flexible symbolic vehicle for identity through the invocation of inflexible cultural stereotypes and oppositional relations, which link particular foodstuffs to particular identities. Things that 'others' do not eat such as chapulines and chiles are especially important for this sense of oppositional identity. Chapulines and other insects are something that Oaxaqueños love to eat and they love to watch strangers squirm as they try to eat them too. Westerners tend to have a strong disgust reaction to eating insects whilst Oaxaqueños eat them with pride and pleasure, drawing on a long history of eating insects. Chiles also fall into this category and Oaxacans were always surprised to see a stranger eat chiles. These differing reactions to otherwise nutritious foods prove that taste is socially constructed and that the eating or not eating of such foods serves to delimit what is and isn't Oaxacan.
Eating Local

Oaxaca has been and remains somewhat isolated from the world due to its difficult terrain and the remoteness of the state. It has therefore retained quite a singular identity. There is a strong sense of indigenous, regional/ethnic or local identity in opposition to the Spanish colonists, the rest of Mexico and the world. Despite the incursion of processes of modernisation and globalisation, many Oaxaqueños are still traditional peasants who retain detailed knowledge of crops, soils and animals and still grow much of their own food (cf. Mendras 1970). Locally grown, native or criollo varieties of ingredients such as corn and fresh meat, herbs and vegetables are highly prized because they are thought to be of the best quality and they symbolise difference, which is embodied through their consumption. By eating local, native varieties of foods, one actually becomes local and native and affirms this identity through daily consumption. Most ingredients are grown in the family cornfield, in the village or at least in another part of the state. Only a few foods are imported and one notable import is chocolate, which is grown in the neighbouring state of Chiapas where the climate is more suitable.

The practice of daily shopping and the emphasis placed on obtaining the freshest local ingredients (the best), demonstrates that these attributes are important. Local foods are laden with meaning and encapsulate relationships between producers, the environment and history. Local foods taste of, embody and symbolise place by drawing on ancient links with the landscape to represent an authentic, threatened, local/Indian identity. Foods such as corn, mezcal and chocolate then become symbols of identity and are important in the face of change and the threat to a traditional life that is posed by pressures from the outside world which seek to commoditise and standardise new flavours and things, in this case mezcal and corn. Eating local foods and making local dishes then, is to partake in and identify with Indian heritage, to define Oaxacan cuisine and to resist outside pressures on the food market. Foods are sensual symbols of the local, the historical and the group, acting as daily reminders (flags) of identity, transmitting personal, historical and family narratives which support the
ongoing existence of a culture and provide a framework and a base for identity in the same way that place does. Recipes and ingredients then serve as reminders, bringing together and unifying human experience, connecting past, present, future, duty, desire, the forgotten and the remembered. As Oaxacan culture faces change, foods with long historical associations become fundamental referents or anchors of identity. Furthermore, as travel becomes an increasingly popular past time for cosmopolitans and culinary tourism is an important part of this experience, the unique identity of Oaxaca and its largely un-exportable foods, rich with meaning and the taste of place become more and more attractive both to locals and tourists alike. The unique flavours and complex cuisine of Oaxaca have even been used as evidence, along with Puebla and Michoacán, in the case for recognition of cultural patrimony from UNESCO. Oaxaca City is internationally recognised as one of Mexico’s most appealing colonial cities and Oaxaca itself has been declared a Cultural treasure of humanity due to its rich history and unique character.

In this thesis I have shown that in Oaxaca, food is central to culture. Food there is social in almost every aspect; it is grown collectively for the family, or purchased in the social space of the markets, it is prepared with children and other women around or involved and it is most often eaten in family groups, with friends or in small groups at casual restaurants. Certain foods such as chiles, chapulines, corn, chocolate and mezcal and dishes such as mole negro were singled out as significant flags, reminders or markers of identity which tied people to history and place through the use of local heirloom ingredients and the string of repeated memories of intimate places which they evoke and re-enact. These are foods that the locals are proud of and urge you to try when you arrive, half expecting you not to like them because you are not Oaxacan. They signify difference in the case of corn, mezcal, chocolate, chapulines and chiles and signal luxury and festive occasions in the case of mezcal and mole. Furthermore, everyday shopping and the making of special dishes such as mole represent love and the labour of women who cook for their families. These foods taste of place and represent the unique identities of their producers and specialised production techniques.
For the time being, Oaxaca remains a largely peasant society surrounding a small city where change comes slowly and the introduction of new hybrid corn crops and pressures to standardise production are rightly viewed by locals as a threat to their very way of life. These changes threaten the artes de localites that here include farming and cooking, which have been built up over countless years and through generations. Genuine ingredients, techniques and traditions continue to be valued and used in order to make things as they have always been made and 'as they should be' made which is traditionally or authentically. This notion of authenticity speaks of a relationship to the new and the modern by which it is defined but also to the groundedness and historicity of taste, which is not purely subjective but rather is socialised. Authenticity thus is a dynamic notion concerning the determination of cultural identity through cuisine. It is a conscious definition of a culture and is generally synonymous with a geographic and cultural delimitation of 'indigenous' and 'traditional' identity, which is inextricably tied to history. In the face of outside threats to their way of life, locals turn to traditional methods, recipes and foods as heavily meaningful anchors for shifting identities.

The taste for traditional foods is rooted in the body and in primitive and repeated bodily experiences. It is therefore deeply ingrained and able to withstand outside influence, durably maintaining nostalgia. Food and the memory of food persists within the person in whom memories, tastes and aromas are enmeshed and can trigger one another. Memories return in the same way in which they were inscribed, meaning that the eating of childhood foods can bring back strong memories of family, place, ethnicity and identity. Food items and recipes store memory and meaning in the same way that place can. Through place and through food, the past comes to be secured in the present, held in things before and around us. Simply being bodily present in a place is going half way to meeting memories of it. Places reverberate with shared experiences and the place that resonates most richly with meaning is home and within the home, the shared space of nurture that is the kitchen. Places are emotional landscapes and the most intimate, personal ones such as homes and
kitchens are shared with only a few people. This is why food and cooking have an almost magical power to bring you home, to invoke landscapes, rooms, smells, voices and people.

Food is the most familiar, intimate and sensual object and is repeatedly ingested, forcibly reminding people of their origins. Experiences that engage the senses fully and explicitly such as cooking and eating are some of the most memorable experiences of our lives. Since identity is based on a personal narrative that relies on memory, and food is especially memorable, food is an excellent vehicle for remembering and symbolising who one is. Food has multiple meanings and is intimately associated with family, the home and childhood memories where tastes, which can last a lifetime, are formed. Oaxacan foods symbolise continuity and history, especially family history and the eating of traditional foods is a major way in which people express an ethnic identity.

Meals come from the heart of the home and are cooked with love and emotion and the sharing of food and food traditions serves to bond both families and communities. The giving and sharing of food is in many ways the giving of a gift par excellence as the labour and skill involved in cooking transfers a part of the cook’s personality and intentionality into the food, which can be tasted and is interpreted as love. Food gifts are given in order to establish relationships of obligation with the recipients, be they family, community, spirits or gods. The consumption involved in shopping and cooking which is inherently destructive and dangerous, must be raised to a sacred level and devoted to some higher purpose (love or thrift respectively) in order to mitigate this capacity. The devotion of a woman's time and labour in order to shop carefully and make delicious food for her family out of these purchases is an expression of love and are mundane forms of sacrifice. Through their efforts, and the gifting of food, women seek to create relationships of love and obligation with significant others.

Food, due to its highly sensual, intimate, embodied, emotional and social nature, lends itself to strong symbolism and lasting memory in a person’s life story, whereby they construct an identity. The interaction of food, the senses, memory
and identity is an area rich with data, which is for the most part untapped. The practices of everyday life such as shopping and cooking are things that may often be overlooked, however, this is an area in which cultural meanings remain unchanged over long periods of time. In fact it is an area in which people actively resist change. Tastes and food habits are deeply ingrained, have become habitual and are for the most part unconscious. Such habits are formed in early infancy and childhood and therefore reflect family history and ethnicity, which is tied to place. This is an area of interest not only for anthropologists but also for the broader community including the food industry, philosophers and lay people, which begs for more extensive research both in Mexico and the world.

It is said that the path to the real Oaxaca runs through its markets and its kitchens and that they are its heart and soul. The above theories that closely tie shopping and devotion, cooking and love, as well as place, local food, history, memory, difference and identity suggest that this may well be true in quite a literal sense.
Glossary

*Agave* A type of succulent plant, sometimes called 'the century plant', used to make mezcal

*Agua* A cordial like drink made from fresh fruit and sugar

*Antojito* A snack, usually tortilla based

*Asiento* Beef drippings

*Atole* A corn based drink often flavoured with chocolate

*Barbacoa* Earth oven roasted goat, used to make tacos and soups

*Boda* A wedding

*Botana* A bar snack, similar to tapas

*Cal* Lime used to soften dried corn kernels

*Cazuela* A large, round bottomed pot used to make moles

*Chapulines* Grasshoppers, cooked and eaten as a snack

*Chayote* Jicama

*Chicharrón* Fried pork fat, sold in large sheets

*Chile* Chilli

*Colectivo* A collective or shared taxi

*Comal* Ceramic Cooking Plate

*Comida Corrida* The daily lunch menu

*Copal* Incense

*Crema* An active sour cream made from unpasteurized dairy

*Epazote* A common herb, used mainly with beans and with cheese in quesadillas

*Empanada* A filled toasted tortilla snack

*Fonda* A restaurant that sells home style cooking

*Geletina* A jelly

*Heirva borracha* Mint

*Hoja santa* A large leafed aniseed flavoured herb

*Horchata* A rice based cold drink

*Huitlacoche* Edible corn fungus or 'corn smut'

*Jicama* A large root vegetable, juicy, white, crunchy and sweet, very popular flavoured with chile, lime and salt and served as a snack

*Maize* Corn

*Mano* Stone rolling pin, used with a metate

*Mariachi* A group of men, dressed in striking uniforms that serenade people in restaurants or in the square

*Masa* Corn paste made from dried semi-cooked corn kernels, used to make tortillas

*Memela* A toasted corn based snack made with an oval tortilla

*Mesoamerica* A geographical and cultural area covering central Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, where ancient civilisations developed prior to Spanish arrival

*Metate* 'The Aztec Blender', an ancient three legged grinding stone table, which is knelt over and used combined with a mano

*Milpa* Cornfield

*Mole* A sauce, sometimes very complicated

*Mole Negro* Black mole sauce, containing many ingredients including chocolate

*Molinillo* A wooden beating device to froth hot chocolate
Molino  A mill for grinding corn
Nopale/s  Edible Cactus leaves, the shape of a small paddle
Oaxaqueño/s  A person or persons from Oaxaca
Ofrenda  The altar and offerings for the dead
Olla  A ceramic pot, with a long neck and a spherical bottom
Pataxte  A form of cacao buried and watered until it turns white, important because it makes good foam on cacao drinks
Peso  Mexican currency
Pico de gallo  A salad like condiment made from finely chopped onion, tomato, chile and coriander
Piloncillo  Solid brown sugar blocks, similar to palm sugar
Pueblo  Village or small town
Puesto  Small store or shop
Quesadilla  A cheese filled toasted tortilla snack
Tamales  A parcel of corn paste with flavourings, wrapped in a banana leaf or a corn husk
Temblor  A minor earthquake
Tiangi/s  A small 'shop', usually outside a large market or in the street, set up on a plastic sheet, selling one or two items
Tlayuda  A large corn snack sometimes called a Mexican pizza
Tomatillos  Green or husk tomatoes
Toques  An electrocution machine, used for fun
Torta  Similar to a toasted sandwich
Tuna  Cactus fruits
Zócalo  Town square
## Table of Oaxacan Ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chiles</th>
<th>Grains</th>
<th>Herbs and Spices</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Nuts and seeds</th>
<th>Legumes</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
<th>Meat</th>
<th>Insects</th>
<th>Fruits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancho chile</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Allspice</td>
<td>Cactus</td>
<td>Black beans</td>
<td>Cream (Mexican)</td>
<td>Asiento (cooked pork lard)</td>
<td>Agave worms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile de agua</td>
<td>Breadcrumbs</td>
<td>Avocado leaves</td>
<td>Capers</td>
<td>Chickpeas</td>
<td>Evaporated milk</td>
<td>Beef (steak, feet, head)</td>
<td>Chapulines (Grasshoppers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chiles de arbol</td>
<td>Cornstarch</td>
<td>Bay leaves</td>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td>White beans</td>
<td>Quesillo (Oaxaca cheese, stringy)</td>
<td>Chicharrón (Fried pork belly/rinds)</td>
<td>Chicatanas (ants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilcosle negros (Black)</td>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>Black Peppercorns</td>
<td>Cauliflower</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Queso añejo (Aged cheese)</td>
<td>Chicken (meat, liver, hearts, intestines, feet)</td>
<td>Olives (green)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chipotle mora chiles</td>
<td>Maize (corn paste)</td>
<td>Chilpipi (Aromatic herb)</td>
<td>Chayote (Choko)</td>
<td>Queso fresco (Fresh cheese, crumbly)</td>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
<td>Chorizo</td>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guajillo</td>
<td>Pan de yema (sweet egg bread)</td>
<td>Chilhuaces (Yellow)</td>
<td>Corn Husks</td>
<td>Almonds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avocados</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Costeños Chiles</td>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Chilhuaces (Yellow)</td>
<td>Green Beans</td>
<td>Cacao/Oaxaca drinking chocolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grapefruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Yellow)</td>
<td>Tortillas</td>
<td>Guajillo chiles</td>
<td>Green tomatoes</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lime, lime juice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guajillo chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jalapeño chiles</td>
<td>Huautlacoche (A fungus which grows on corn, corn smut)</td>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandevia (Maracuya) (fruit with sweet, juicy, red or yellow flesh)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jalapeño chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mulato chiles</td>
<td>Jicama</td>
<td>Pecans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olives (green)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pasilla chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pasilla chiles</td>
<td>Nopales (Young cactus leaves or pads)</td>
<td>Pumpkin seeds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pasilla chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pickled Jalapeños</td>
<td>Onion (white)</td>
<td>Sesame seeds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taviche chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetable oil</td>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>Walnuts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plantain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vinegar</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raisins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks</td>
<td>Soups</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td>Main Meals</td>
<td>Celebratory/Special</td>
<td>Desserts</td>
<td>Condiments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juices</td>
<td>Calderillo Zapatero (Quick soup)</td>
<td>Tetelas</td>
<td>Amarillo (Yellow Mole)</td>
<td>Mole Negro (Black mole)</td>
<td>Nieves</td>
<td>Chile de agua in lime juice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agua Frescas</td>
<td>Sopa de pasta (Red and white)</td>
<td>Empanadas (filled and cooked tortillas)</td>
<td>Arroz con pollo (rice and chicken)</td>
<td>Tamales (depending on filling)</td>
<td>Arroz con Leche (rice and milk)</td>
<td>Rajas de chiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Fresh cordials)</td>
<td>Sopa de guis (squash vine soup)</td>
<td>Molotes (maza paste stuffed with fillings including potato and chorizo, fried and served with beans, guacamole and chile sauce)</td>
<td>Peppered beefsteak</td>
<td>Higaditos (An egg and chicken dish, celebratory)</td>
<td>Lecheccia (custard)</td>
<td>Pico de Gallo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Pozole (red white and green)</td>
<td>Botanas (including dishes such as chiles rellenos, chicharrón, chapulines, guacamole, molotes, Tortillas, salsa, quesillo, chorizo, tasajo)</td>
<td>Mole rojo (red mole)</td>
<td>Pan de muerto (dead bread)</td>
<td>Tamales</td>
<td>Salsa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>Chicken soup with rice and vegetables</td>
<td>Memelas</td>
<td>Chile rellenos (stuffed chiles)</td>
<td>Barbacoa (pit roasted goat)</td>
<td>Churros (Spanish doughnuts)</td>
<td>(red, green)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atole</td>
<td>Caldo de res (goat broth)</td>
<td>Tacos</td>
<td>Enmoladas (tortillas dipped in a bean sauce)</td>
<td>Buñuelos (deep fried fritters in syrup, especially served at Christmas)</td>
<td>Chilaquiles (left over cooked tortilla with meat or cheese sauce)</td>
<td>Pasta salad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tejate</td>
<td>Consume de Barbacoa</td>
<td>Botana de cacahuates (peanut snack)</td>
<td>Enchiladas (tortillas dipped in a chile sauce)</td>
<td>Manchamantel (mole with fruit)</td>
<td>Salsa de queso (cheese in sauce)</td>
<td>Bean paste</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caldo de piedra</td>
<td>Vinegar marinated vegetables</td>
<td>Tomates (steamed masa, filled with frijole (bean), chile (green), chile (red), chicken, black mole)</td>
<td>Pollo asado (grilled chicken)</td>
<td>Salsa de queso (cheese in sauce)</td>
<td>Potato salad</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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