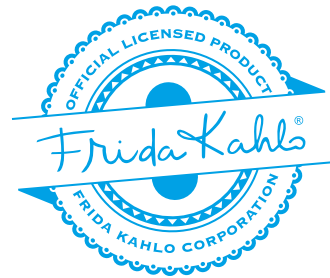


DINNER AT FRIDA'S



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PRESTEL
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Ensalada viva la vida
"Viva la Vida" Salad



Quesadillas fritas rajas
Deep-Fried Potato and Chile Quesadillas



Sopa de milpa
Corn and Zucchini Soup



Tacos de Birria
Birria-Style Beef Tacos



Pollo con mole poblano
Chicken with Mole Poblano



Mole de olla
Mexican Beef Stew



Enchiladas suizas rojas
Red Enchiladas Suizas



Panqué de elote
Sweet Corn Cake



Michelada
Mexican Beer Cocktail



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VIVA LA VIDA

Frida Kahlo lived a life that was exciting and dazzling, but it was also filled with drama. The eccentric painter was born in 1907 in Coyoacán, formerly a village to the south of Mexico City that was swallowed up by the metropolis.

She grew up at a time of great turmoil. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 kept the country on edge for more than a decade and led to social upheavals that would have an influence on Frida throughout her life.

Far beyond the political changes, the artist was also shaped by the tragic blows dealt to her by fate as a child and young woman. She experienced polio at the age of six. Although she recovered from this serious illness, she was left with a limp. Furthermore, when she was only eighteen years of age, fate would strike Frida a cruel blow that would shape her life like no other. A bus she was riding on crashed into a streetcar. She was impaled through her pelvis by a metal rod and seriously injured. After narrowly escaping death, she began a long and arduous recovery process that would initially keep her bedridden for months and in constant pain. During this time, Frida took up painting. She began to express her pain and loneliness in self-portraits. These pictures display her body in all its vulnerability, sometimes in unusual poses and with a symbolism that reflected both her personal experiences and her political convictions.

After her recovery, she met the painter Diego Rivera, the love of her life and her biggest supporter. Frida and Diego married in 1929 but, although they were close, their marriage was

marked by affairs and separations. Nevertheless, the two artists achieved world fame as a couple. Frida accompanied Diego all over the United States when he was commissioned to paint large-scale murals in major cities, such as San Francisco, Detroit, and New York. Frida was also able to draw attention there to her own work, personality, and authenticity. An exhibition of her work was staged in New York in 1938. Later, she would be the first Mexican artist to show her surrealist works at the Louvre, in Paris. Shortly before her death, her dream of having her own exhibition in her home town of Mexico City finally came true.

Frida died in 1954 at the age of just forty-seven, presumably from a pulmonary embolism. Until that time, pain and suffering had been her constant life companions. But her inner strength and irrepressible will meant that there was always a place in her life for hope, love, joy, and passion. Her fighting spirit was her driving force in art and in everyday life. She was already considered an extraordinary woman and unique artist during her lifetime, but it was only after her death that she would be able to step out of Diego Rivera's shadow, and today she is regarded as an icon for feminism.



FRIDA, THE HOSTESS



Frida Kahlo is not only one of the most famous painters in the history of Mexico but also around the world. Food often played a role in her art.

Frida perceived Mexican cuisine as much more than its flavors and saw beauty in the colors and shapes of its dishes, which also reflected her love of tradition. She focused on the typically Mexican in her paintings, filling them with fruit, flowers, and bright and colorful clothing.

While Frida is mainly seen today as the iconic free-spirited and independent woman who was far ahead of her time, her love for Mexican cuisine is less well known. She attached great importance to tradition when it came to food, from the way a particular dish is cooked in Mexico to the etiquette at the table. A few decades later, in 2010, traditional Mexican cuisine would be recognized as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

The house where Frida lived, known as *La Casa Azul* (the Blue House), is located near the center of Coyoacán, the Mexico City neighborhood

where the painter was born and raised. Today, it is the Frida Kahlo Museum. In addition to the museum's collection of her paintings, you can visit the rooms where she lived and cooked. The pictures and family photographs found around the museum contain clear references to the great importance Frida attached to food. Her recipes are also on exhibit.

The highlights of the Blue House include her bedroom, studio, and kitchen. Visitors are greeted by the intense colors of her clay pitchers and pots, woven reed figures, blown glass, *calaveras* (typical Mexican skulls), papier-mâché figures, and other items representative of the country. Also of note are the wooden dining table with matching chairs, the traditional oven, *molcajetes* (stone mortars), and *metates* (grinding stones) in the style of the time.

Frida's kitchen was both decorative and functional, which gave it a special charm. Hardly any object served a merely ornamental purpose, with practically everything being used. Frida

Frida Kahlo's house *La Casa Azul* (the Blue House)



Original kitchen: Yellow was Frida's favorite color in the Blue House.



rejected some of the innovations of the time and opted for the vernacular and traditional. For example, she rejected new-fangled gas stoves and continued to use her old wood-fired stove.

She also consistently chose and tested cooking utensils. Certain ones were made of wood, her *molcajetes* were made of volcanic stone, and her pans of copper. She placed great importance on where the utensils were made. The pans are from Santa Clara del Cobre, a town synonymous with quality due to the skill of the indigenous Purépecha people in copperwork. Pots, casserole dishes, and clay pots are from the state of Oaxaca, while glasses, goblets, and glass pitchers are from Guadalajara. Frida was renowned for her love of Mexican craftsmanship.

A Rebel with an Inclination for Tradition

Frida's fondness for all things pre-Hispanic extended beyond the useful and decorative. In her house, mainly pre-Columbian and popular dishes were prepared, including *pozole*, tamales, mole, and *tlacoyo*; and corn, beans, squash, and chile were widely featured. Her food showed great respect for her own country and cultural roots throughout her life.

It is said that Frida's personality is not the only thing to have won the heart of her husband, Diego Rivera, but also an invitation to dinner, suggesting that Frida was a skillful cook. In reality, this was probably not entirely true. However, this did not diminish her love of traditional Mexican cuisine. She was looked after by two cooks who prepared the dishes she would request. She carefully supervised the staff and chose the ingredients herself at the market. Many of the dishes she would ask for came from her mother's cookbook, *Nuevo cocinero mexicano* ("New Mexican Cook").

Even before her wedding, Frida knew that she would have to sharpen her culinary knowledge, because it was easy to cheer up the often grumpy Diego with the right dishes. Frida even went as far as to seek help and inspiration from Diego's previous wife, Guadalupe Marín, who is said to have been an excellent cook.

Instead of cooking, Frida took it upon herself to set the table; it was her personal ritual. The tables in her house were always decorated with beautiful tablecloths, baskets, and flowers grown in her own garden—some of which would make it into her paintings. She would then position the dishes between her flower arrangements and fresh fruit.

A Generous Hostess

"*Estamos de manteles largos*" is the expression used in Mexico when something particularly special or grand is being celebrated. The aim is to show everyone the significance of the event. Literally translated, it roughly means "it's time for us to use long tablecloths," which is the equivalent to the English reference of bringing out the fine china.

Frida was a wonderful hostess and an excellent ambassador for her country's cuisine. She believed that hosting a dinner party was both a social and political event where she could express her deep admiration for her country's culinary heritage.

She would often play host to numerous guests from all walks of life, from ordinary folk who lived in the neighborhood to international personalities, such as the likes of Leon Trotsky, the Rockefellers, Orson Welles, and Gary Cooper. These gatherings were the stuff of legend. Even in periods when she was confined to her bed by illness, she would simply hold them in her bedroom.