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Miti Miti: Modern Mexican Cuisine

a. How were you addressed when you entered the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated?

In the heart of Park Slope, restaurant Miti Miti stands as one of the most recommended Modern Mexican cuisine places in the area. Located at 138 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11217. The restaurant serves as a dine-in, takeout, and delivery cuisine, serving Brooklyn natives for over eight years. The term Miti Miti is short for sharing. In Mexican culture, sharing is seen as a symbol of values and caring. As one approaches Miti Miti, one might be taken aback by the restaurant's vibrant colors, bright lights, and colorful flower arrangements. Through their huge window decorated with bright lights and floral arrangements you can see people laughing and dancing throughout the restaurant.

Once inside, the atmosphere is filled with vibrant colors, bright lights, Day Of The Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*) decor, lively chatter from guests, traditional mariachi music and reggaeton music, and a tantalizing smell of spices. Before being seated you will be greeted by the Hostess “*Hola como estas, welcome to MitiMiti*”, with a big smile. Since reservations were previously made, there was no wait time. However if one didn't have reservations there would be a 15 - 20-minute wait. Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays are the restaurant's busiest times it is best to arrive at your reservation 10 minutes early to avoid waiting past your reservation time. Sadly there's no waiting area available so one would have to wait at the bar (if it isn't full) or outside. When escorted to the table one will be greeted by each staff member with big smiles and waves.

b. What are the cultural differences you notice? (Use class notes) Using your five senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, & sound (remember Eicher & Roach-Higgins (1992) definition of Dress) describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to (in comparison to All-American restaurant or restaurant chains, but do not write the actual comparison to American restaurants). For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. One

should use all five senses in this cultural experience in detail. Each of the five senses should be in a separate paragraph).

One would notice many cultural differences between American restaurants and Mexican cuisine. Based on the cuisine, ambiance, dining experience, ingredients, and presentation. Mexican cuisine is characterized by flavorful dishes containing spices like cumin, chili powder, Epazote, chipotle peppers, etc. It's not coming to come across biblical or religious statues in American restaurants. However, at Miti Miti there are many spiritual statues. Including Cristo Rey and the Virgin Mary(Figure 1). Both symbolize religious and cultural significance. The Virgin Mary is presented in restaurants as a sense of comfort, peace, and faith (Janzen, 2020). The Virgin Mary is placed as a Catholic symbol.

While waiting patiently for your food to arrive you can't help but notice the decor around the restaurant. Hung up are paintings of Frida Kahlo, Day Of The Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*) decor, and bright floral flowers(Figure 2). Day Of The Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*) is a holiday where the souls of the dead are awakened and visit the living on Earth. The living prepare for the holiday by wearing costumes, preparing for the parade, and preparing a feast for the dead and alive to eat. The symbols are skulls, skeletons, and vibrant flowers (Onion, 2019). When food is served it is placed on colorful ceramic plates matching the bright wall decor. One's yellow rice and beans will be served in a *Molcajete* dish. The word Molcajete is a Spanish term for mortar and pestle. The hostess explained the food is served in this particular dish because it keeps the food warm and the flavor won't dry out (Figure 3). The dishes also showcase details of bright colors from the garnishes put on the food, like cilantro and mangos.

When seated one will be given a complimentary appetizer, of Chips, *Pita Diego*, and water. Each bite was bursting with the flavor of spices and savoriness. With just the right amount of cilantro, tomatoes, peppers, and onion. Within 15 minutes the hostess arrived with the entree and drinks. My first sip of the Spicy Hibiscus Margarita was sweet then intensified to a strong spicy taste. Each sip intensified as one tasted a contrast of jalapenos and sweet syrup, with a bitter taste of tequila. The entree consisted of coconut shrimp tacos with chipotle sauce and topped with mangos and cilantro. The meal came with a side order of yellow rice and black beans. Each bite led me into a dimension of savory goodness. The crunch of the taco contrasts perfectly with the coconut shrimp and chipotle sauce flavor.

The moment one enters Miti Miti, they would be greeted by the smell of spices, herbs, and tequila. One could tell that the food will be fresh based on the smell of fresh ingredients and smokey meats. The smell can waken one's appetite and entice one to order the whole menu. Yellow rice and beans smelled rich in flavor and strong in scent. Each wif one took of coconut

shrimp tacos took one to a different place. The smell of fresh fried shrimp will provide a feeling of being on a vacation in Mexico.

One would typically use their hands to eat this style of food. With sleeves rolled up and clean hands, as it might get messy. As one picks up the taco, one can feel its tender and crunchy texture. The weight of the taco lets one know the food is fresh and packed with ingredients. The heat of the rice right before it touches one's lips entails the rice will be hot and soft. The consistency of the beans feels tender and smooth. Beans and rice are a staple in Mexican dishes and can be used in rice, tacos, or burritos.

One will hear loud music when entering the restaurant. This isn't like your quiet diner in Manhattan. Songs from popular Latin-American artists like Selena, Marc Anthony, Daddy Yankee, and Cardi B. Mexican music comes in different genres and dates back to the 16th century when they were a Spanish colony. Miti Miti played two genres of Mexican music, Tejano music and Reggaeton. Reggaeton is a fusion of Jamaican reggae, Hip-hop, Cuban, and Puerto Rican music (Anon 2020). Reggaeton has gained popularity in Mexico and transferred to the U.S

c. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual food items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? What are the ingredients? List various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the foods on the menu? Please write in detail.

Miti Miti shares a large selection of Mexican-style cuisine. You are presented with three menus, One for drinks, a second for desserts, and one for lunch. The selection ranges from chips to eighteen different tacos, bowls, and burritos. All items on the menu are customizable including the drinks and desserts. On the lunch menu, you have the option to order corn or flour tortillas and add or take off garnishes. Ingredients are listed on the menu and most dishes are made up of onion, cilantro, salsa, and cheese. For people who may have food intolerances, they do offer vegan and gluten-friendly options(Figure 3).

Ordering off the menu was a breeze as the language was in full English language. Some unusual food items were jerk chicken tacos and green goddess tacos. A bit skeptical about trying the jerk chicken taco because jerk chicken is a dish that originated from Jamaica. One would politely ask the hostess if they could try a sampler of the Jerk chicken. When tasting the chicken, it was more spicy than a normal jerk chicken dish. The level of spice took away from the other ingredients cooked with the chicken. The green goddess taco description didn't sound appetizing and the ingredients did look appetizing.

d. Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of breads are offered (flat, pita, tortilla chips)? What type of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like? Describe each in detail.

Traditional salad isn't offered, unfortunately, tortilla chips with a side of *Pita Diego* is a complimentary appetizer. Since the culture is immersed with these hand-eaten dishes it is very expected to be served with chips and *Pita Diego* instead of a salad. Chips and salsa are a staple in the Latin American culture.

The menu consisted of a small amount of desserts the two that caught my eye were Apple Pie Tacos and Xangos. Both desserts were Mexican delicacies. Xango is a homemade fried cheesecake deep in cinnamon sugar, and vanilla gelato. Apple Pie Tacos are freshly baked apples with a blend of cinnamon and sugar, served with vanilla ice cream and caramel drizzle. I went with the most common Mexican desert Churros. Churros are a prism-shaped, cinnamon sugar pastry stick served with chocolate sauce on the side. It appears soft and gooey, but it's hard and textured. Was a bit disappointed about the texture because it scraped the roof of my mouth. Despite feeling disappointed, the sugary flavor of the churro was indeed delicious. Churros can be traced back to Spain and were introduced to the Moors. The Moors originated from North Africa and invaded the Peninsula during the 8th century. The Moors were Muslim Europeans of African descent (Blakemore, 2019). The delicacy was called *calientes* before churros.

e. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant? Describe each in detail.

The restaurant offered a plethora of tequila drinks made up of different spices, sweetness, and tart taste (Figure 1). When one is seated they are given a drink menu with a shot menu. On the drink menu are margaritas, tequilas, mezcals, sangrias mojitos, and a section of their signature drinks. If one wanted a non-alcoholic beverage they would be verbally told a list, there is no menu for that option. The staple drink in Mexican cuisine is Margaritas. Margarita in the Spanish language means flower Daisy. Beverages in an American restaurant would be a dirty martini, cocktails beer, or club soda. Drinks like Jalapeno pineapple margaritas or spicy hibiscus margaritas aren't typically offered in an American chain restaurant. Due to its different ingredients and alcohol regulations. Both America and Mexico have different regulations based on alcohol, and Mexico has regulations governing Tequila. Unlike America, Mexico has NOM-199 which regulates/ authenticates mezcal and tequila (Szczech, 2015).

F. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography (Use class lecture notes for each definition)? (i.e. spices are abundant in India which is rich in spices & fish (sushi) is popular in Japan & it is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from country, this culture's 17 food is best

known. Be sure to research the country about geography, spices, foods, etc.....Be sure to use APA in-text citations and references.

Figure 4
Mexico's Map



Mexico is located geographically in Northern America. Mexico is not a part of the G8, it isn't one of the most developed countries in the world (Sternquist 1998). One of Mexico's top exports is its tropical fruits, mangoes, strawberries, avocados, and alcoholic beverages. Mexico's fruits are the number one exported food to the U.S. The food is reflective of the cultural geography due to the use of authentic ingredients and cultural celebrations and rituals. Many of Miti Miti dishes contain avocado and mango. Despite being located out of Mexico, Miti Miti does a great job of capturing the richness and diversity of Mexican cuisine. Buy every dish or drink with avocado, mangos, strawberries, or staples spices used in traditional Mexican culture.

g. Describe the dress. (Dress is inclusive of all five senses – you smell perfume, hear jewelry, see make-up, etc....) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing? Please use the Eicher-Roach-Higgins (1992) article to define the dress and answer appropriately. This must be used and written in at least 2 paragraphs with correct in-text citations and references discussing all five (5) senses.

The servers at Miti Miti wore comfortable clothing with the company uniform t-shirts. The company t-shirt showed a skeleton at the back of the shirt representing *Dia de los Muertos*. The front design of the shirt was pretty simple, with only the company's name in a bright color. Each employee wore a shirt, with black tights or pants and comfortable footwear. Bartenders wore the same uniform plus a long black apron. The women at the restaurant wore soft eye

makeup and bold lipstick in the color red or pink. Everyone was presented with a cohesive and professional look.

h. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the LA Times or Houston Chronicle). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality and price and should range from A-F (“A” being the best). Explain why you chose this rating. Be thorough and detailed in your explanations. Be sure to write at least 2 paragraphs. Use details to explain

My experience dining at Miti Miti was fantastic! I rate it a 9/10. From the moment I walked in, I was greeted with a big smile and warm hospitality. The vibrant colors of the ambiance and music kept me alert and in good spirits. The food was delicious, hot, and plated knit. For my main, I ordered The Lunch special, two coconut shrimp tacos topped with mango and cilantro with chipotle sauce. The special came with a side of rice and beans in a *Molcajete* dish. The drinks were top notch and I enjoyed its sweet yet tart taste. The prices seem very reasonable for drinks and food, prices ranging from \$12 -\$14 for drinks. As for Mitis food price range is \$18-\$30. If you attend between the hours of 1 pm - 4 pm you can catch their deal, which consists of two tacos, with a side of rice and beans, with a soft drink for \$22. Yummy dessert delights cost \$10 or less for each dessert. Overall, I highly recommend Miti Miti to anyone looking for a tasty Mexican cuisine.

i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute?

The multi-sensory project has opened up and enhanced my ability to pay attention to detail and express myself creatively. My dine-in experience at Miti Miti, allowed me to immerse myself in the culture, past a food level. My research on Mexico's heritage has taught me about the meaning of the Day Of The Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*), imports, exports, and different alcohol regulations in different countries. Mexico is the second-largest source of foreign crude oil to the United States and is the top destination for petroleum product export (U.S.D.O.S,2023) 2023. This emphasizes the trade relationship between the U.S. and Mexico.

Figure 1

Picture of The Virgin Mary



Figure 2

Picture of *Dia de los Muertos*

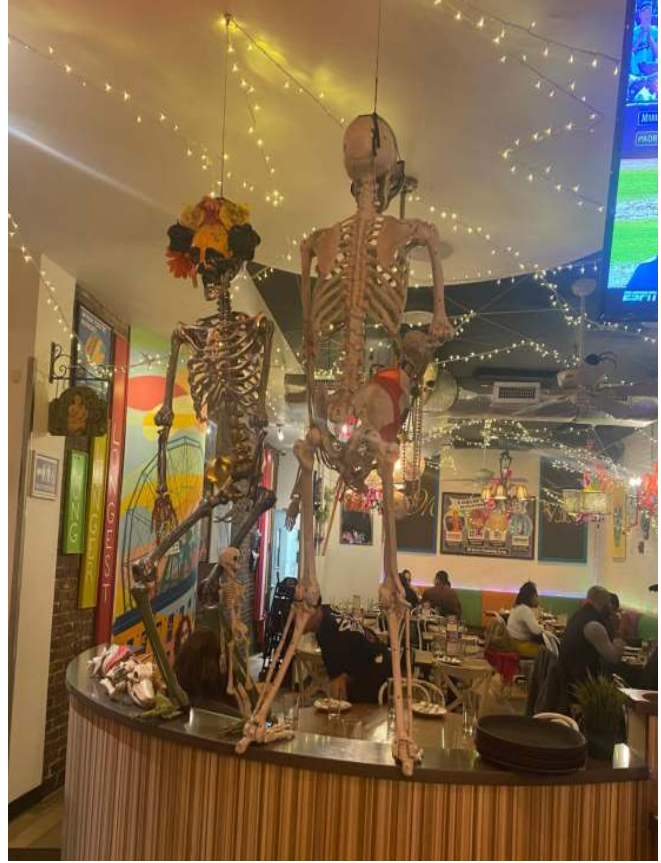




Figure 3
 Description: complimentary chips and pito (left),
 Rice, beans, and two coconut shrimp topped with mango.



Figure 4
 Miti Miti menu

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