

***International Palette:
A Multi-Sensory Experience as a
Food Critique***

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BUF 4300

Answer the following question in a four –five (4-5) page typed report using your **five senses:taste, sound, sight, touch, & smell. You must use notes from lecture.**

- a. How were you addressed when you entered into the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated? How was this experiencedifferent due to COVID? Did you have to show your vaccinations card?**

Located at 727 Grand St in Williamsburg in Brooklyn, Grand Morelos is an authentic Mexican diner and bakery in one. As soon as one walks in, you are greeted by the scent of warm bread, cumbia music and Mexican inspired decor. To enter this restaurant, one can simply walk in at any time during the day and grab themselves some breakfast, lunch or dinner without the need of making a reservation. The wait for seating is not often a long one. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one must show their vaccination cards to stay and eat at the restaurant, but not if one is only buying pastries from the bakery. The ambiance of the restaurant is quite “homey” due to the bakery that is located at the entrance, the personalities of the workers, and of course, the decoration and music that plays inside.

- b. What are the cultural differences you notice? (Use class notes and cite in APA 8th ed) Using your five senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, & sound describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to in comparison to All-American restaurant or restaurant chains. For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. Oneshould use all five-senses in this cultural experience. Be sure to write in third person...one will or would see, smell, etc....**

Some of the cultural differences one may notice in the restaurant, as opposed to all traditional American restaurants, is the décor, the music, the scents, and the languages that are spoken. The different use of ingredients in the food is one of the most obvious cultural differences one sees due to the different amounts of traditional dishes they offer. Starting off with the décor that can be seen in the restaurants, it’s very traditional to that of Mexico, there are a variety of colors that can be seen in murals painted inside the restaurant, as well as the mosaic plant pots that were location near the booth seats, as seen on Figure 1. The décor is more simplistic and colorful which is what gives it this “homey” comfortable feel rather than that of a fancy sophisticated restaurant. One of the things one notices as soon as stepping foot into the restaurant is the music

that is playing near the back counter. The sound coming from the speakers is that of cumbia music, which is very popular in Latin countries. Cumbia is a more uplifting music genre that can be harder to describe due to its many influences. It may be slowed down or really sped up, depending on which group of cumbias one might listen to. To generate a better idea of what this music sounds like, it safe to say that the inspiration for this genre of music comes from native tribes and the instruments they used like, gaita flutes and guacharacas, which was a type of percussion instrument (Garsd, *Cumbia: The musical backbone of Latin America* 2015). Due to the sound of the cumbias that play in the restaurant, it has the power to transport you to Mexico without the need of a plane ticket. Along with the music, the scents in the air also contribute to the feeling of transporting to another country. One may experience the scent of fresh baked bread coming from the back as the waitress brings them into to the bakery section, as well as the smell of the food cooking in the back kitchen. The language that is spoken in the restaurant is also a major factor of culture differences. As one walks, one might hear the workers speaking amongst each other in Spanish, adding to the authenticity that is felt in the restaurant.

- c. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? 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? How does this relate to cultural geography? Be sure to use and cite lecture notes appropriately in APA 8th ed.**

The menu offers a variety of different food from traditional dishes that may be found in Mexico to more popular dishes that have become popular and, in a way, “standard” in the United States. Some of the more “unusual” dishes that can be seen on the menu include, chilaquiles, sopes, flautas, grilled nopales, birria, and enchiladas. Some of the drinks that are offered here include fresh juices like horchata, jamaica, tamarindo as well as hot beverages like arroz con leche, and champurrado. Most of these dishes use different salsas in order to make them. Due to the cultural geography, which is how people in different parts of the world live, different type of ingredients may be used in the food (Dr. Adomaitis, 2022, February, Fashion Economics, lecture notes, PowerPoint 1, slide 2). Most of the dishes are accompanied by rice and beans which is said on the menu. Although the full list of ingredients is not listed directly on the menu, due to the cultural geography, it is evident that most of the ingredients used are those that are known to grow in Mexico soil. Ingredients like different types of peppers, spices, herbs and even corn. Some of the more standard dishes included in the menu include tacos, quesadillas, guacamole and chips, and burritos. Most of the dishes on the menu are listed in both Spanish and English while the contents of the dishes, like cheese, lettuce etc., are listed in English. The language spoken in Mexico is Spanish, so it’s clear as to why the menu would have dishes listed in Spanish. Due to the adaptation of being in a different country where one of the many languages spoken is English, it is also reasonable to have the dishes listed in English as well. We decided to try the chicken quesadilla and the horchata, most because we visited the restaurant during lunch time and on a weekday. The dish came with three chicken quesadillas with sour cream and cotija cheese with a side of lettuce and tomato.

- 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 the ingredients as well.**

Since one of the most American known dishes are hamburgers, sandwiches, and salads, they can be found on the menu at Grand Morelos. Different type of salads like Caesar and Greek salads are offered as well as BLT sandwiches and cheeseburgers may be found. Although these dishes may be found, what is brought out as an appetizer are tortilla chips paired with two different type of salsa's, red salsa or green. One may order guacamole, nachos, tamales, or even a shrimp cocktail. The desserts offered here at Grand Morelos are many because of the bakery that is included inside the restaurant. Some of them include popular known desserts like flan, carrot cake, and a tres leches cake slice. Since there is a bakery, they do offer a photobook with different birthday cakes that one may choose from to order a custom birthday cake, as well as cake for other occasions like baby showers or weddings.

- e. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant? Be sure to address what is different in the menu.**

Coffee, oatmeal, hot chocolate, teas, and cappuccinos are some drinks that are offered on the menu. Some of the most traditional desserts include a variety of pan dulce, which is sweet bread, from the bakery as well as other pastries that are popular in Mexico. The traditional hot beverages include arroz con leche or rice with milk, which is made with milk, rice, and condensed milk to add sweetness. Champurrado is also a popular hot beverage in Mexico that is featured on the menu. This is similar to hot chocolate but much thicker since in order to make it, one must use hot chocolate, milk, cinnamon, vanilla, anise seed, and corn flour to make it thick (Martinez, 2019). Along with these, standard drinks like canned sodas, water, Snapple and jarritos are offered. Fresh juices from Mexico like horchata and Jamaica (hibiscus) is also offered. As for alcohol, one may come in and enjoy a beer of their choosing.

- f. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography (Use class lecture notes)? (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 food is best known. Be sure to relate the geography with the country's food. Include a map. Be very detailed.**

As mentioned before, the food is reflective of the cultural geography and economic geography due to the different ingredients that are used in the dishes. Most of them include different spices and salsas to showcase authenticity to the dishes. Most ingredients used are the ones that are known to grow in Mexican soil. These dishes were developed in Mexico and were in a way exported to the United States through people moving in and establishing small businesses and new roots. Some of the most popular crops that are grown in Mexico and are used in some of these dishes include corn, which is one of the most popular crops grown there, as well as beans, tomatoes and of course, avocado (The economy-gob). The regions of where corn and beans are planted can be seen on Figure 2, which is the map below. Since Mexico is in the South, the

weather is much warmer than that of the Northeast, which allows for different crops to grow and be exported into the United States. The most known crop from Mexico would be corn, which can be used in different dishes or be eaten by itself as a corn on the cob, which is offered at Grand Morelos. Peppers and avocado are also some of the crops used in many dishes which are also grown in Mexico. Although these are some of the most used crops, livestock and meats may also be exported and have a value of \$1,425,008 from the year of 2021 (Mexico-Agriculture, 2022). The use of livestock and poultry is very popular among Mexican dishes, especially those offered here at Grand Morelos. Due to the value of dollars, economically some of the products that generate money include grains, oilseeds, horticultural products, livestock and meat, dairy, poultry, sugar and tropical products, and planting seeds among many others (Mexico-Agriculture, 2022).

- 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 Eicher-Roacher-Higgins (1992) article to define dress and answer appropriately. Be sure to use all five senses in each description.**

The dress needed to enter this restaurant is very casual. Since it is a bakery and diner style restaurant, there's no need to dress up in your fanciest little black dress. One may go in, in any clothing and still be greeted warmly by the staff. Allowing people in any dress to come in and enjoy a meal is what makes this place welcoming and again create a sense of comfort. According to Roach-Higgins dress includes appearance, clothing, adornment, ornament, and cosmetics (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Body modifications like piercings, jewelry and tattoos are also a form that contributes to dress (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Coming into the restaurant, one can see the workers were dressed in comfortable clothing yet looked very polished. Although they were wearing masks, due to COVID-19, the body modifications they had were seen. This included the waitress who had piercings and big hoop earrings. The customers that were in the restaurant were also dressed in comfortable clothing and overall, a polished appearance. The language that was heard was mostly Spanish and it was spoken by both the workers and the customers, as well as the music playing in the background. Most of the smells from the restaurant came from the kitchen as the chefs prepared the food.

- 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.**

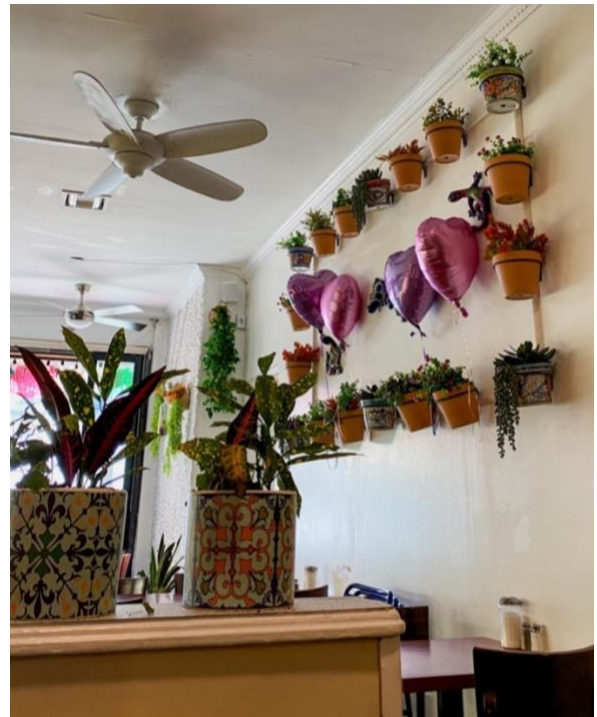
The overall rating for Grand Morelos would be an A. The location is in a very popular place where people from different cultures live in, which allows for them to gain an experience when visiting Grand Morelos. The ambiance and décor are something that can transport anyone to the country that is Mexico, while also giving an experience of new taste through their traditional authentic Mexican dishes. The staff is welcoming and makes one feel comfortable while enjoying a meal. The restaurant brings in the authenticity through the language one can hear being spoken and through the music playing as well as through the food and drinks that are on

the menu. The quality of the food is great due to the servings, which do tend to make one feel satisfied and full by the end of it. Prices at Grand Morelos start at \$8 for appetizers and range up to \$22 for bigger and heavier dishes, that include a greater amount of food.

i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multi-cultural experience in a class discussion?

This experience gave a lot of insight into what it is to be authentic and traditional. This may contribute to a class discussion through questions. Before this experience, going to a restaurant meant going out to have a good meal one craves and then returning home. Now, going to a restaurant means taking in all the information one receives while being there. From thinking about what ingredients are used in the dishes offered to thinking about why it is that they use these ingredients. Now one may go to a restaurant and question why a dish is made a certain way, where do these ingredients come from and how long have these ingredients been used. One might ask themselves “is this what they use back at their country?” and think about all the features, geographically and economically, does using these ingredients benefit the country that they come from. It’s a great learning experience that one may have never thought of before, which expands one’s learning, understanding and acceptance of different cultures throughout the world.

Figure 1. Grand Morelos Interior Décor.



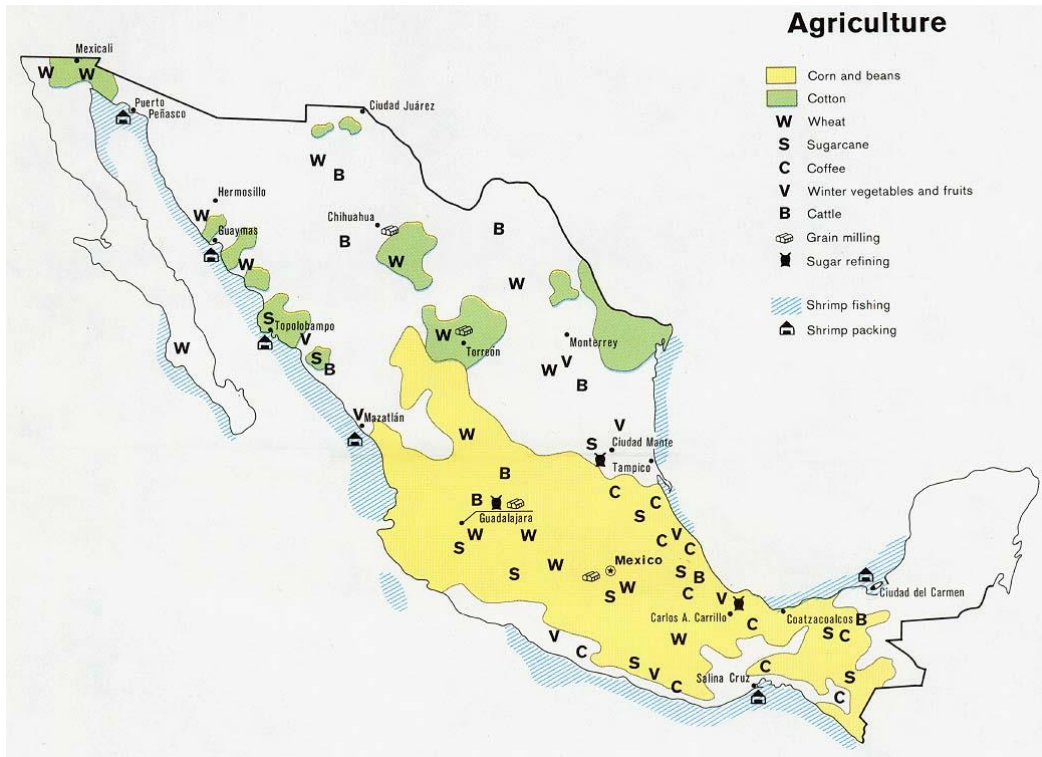


Figure 2. Map of Agriculture in Mexico.

The University of Texas at Austin. *Mexico-Agriculture*. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. <https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mexico.html>

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