

Handouts

Little Cambray Tamales

CLARIBEL ALEGRÍA was born in Nicaragua, but grew up in Santa Ana, El Salvador. She attended George Washington University in Washington, DC. Originally traveling through Europe with her husband and translator, Darwin “Bud” Flakoll, she became an exile when she spoke out against the Salvadoran military’s role in the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero. A celebrated poet, novelist, and translator, her books include *Luisa in Realityland*, *Ashes of Izalco*, and *I Survive*, which won the Casa de las Américas prize for poetry. She currently lives in Managua, Nicaragua. “Tamales from Cambray” is from Alegria’s novel *Ashes of Izalco*.

To Eduardo and Helena who asked me for a Salvadoran recipe.

Two pounds of mestizo dough
half a pound of Guachupin loin
cooked and finely ground
a little box of pious raisins
two spoonfuls of Malinche milk
one cup of seething water
lightly fried conquistador helmets
three Jesuit onions
a purse of multinational gold
two dragon’s teeth
a big presidential carrot
two spoonfuls of informers
Panchimalco Indian lard
two ministerial tomatoes
half a cup of television sugar
two drops of volcano lava
seven pito leaves
(don’t be evil-minded it is sleep inducing)
put it all to simmer
on a low heat
for five hundred years
and you’ll see what a flavor!

Translated by D.J. Flakoll.

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Name: _____

Little Cambray Tamales: Reading Guide

After reading "Little Cambray Tamales" for the first time, what do you think the poet is trying to say about her country? What do we learn about the history/culture of El Salvador? What is the poet's attitude towards her country?

After learning a little more about the ingredients of the tamales from Cambray, now what do you think the poet is trying to say about her country? How did your understanding of the poem change? What new insights do you have into the poet's relationship to her country?

Ingredient List: Little Cambray Tamales

| Ingredient | What You Learned About History/Culture of El Salvador |
|--|---|
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| two spoonfuls of Malinche milk | |
| lightly fried conquistador helmets | |
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