

THE ALL AMERICAN ICE CREAM PARLOR

J.R. Harlan

Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois, USA

RESUMEN: Menu: Sabores: Chocolate, Vainilla, Pifia, Fresa, Mirtillo, Arándano, Papaya, Guayaba, Granadilla, Aguacate, Chirimoya, Lucuma, Lulo, Pepino, Guanabana, Capuli(n), etc. Frutos secos: Cacahuete, Anacardo, Nuez de Brasil, Pacana, Nuez negra, Pifión, Nuez americana, etc. Decoraciones de la mesa: Zinnias, Caléndulas, Fucsias, Dalias, Salvias, Cosmos, Nardos, Cañacoros y otras ornamentales utilizadas por los indios americanos. Los americanos nativos producían comida para los dioses y colores para deleitar la vista, y éstos se han extendido por todo el mundo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Biodiversidad, alimentación, frutos americanos, vainilla, chocolate.

SUMMARY: Menu: Flavors: Chocolate, Vanilla, Pineapple, Strawberry, Blueberry, Cranberry, Papaya, Guava, Passionfruit, Avocado, Cherimoya, Lucuma, Lulo, Pepino, Guanabana, Capuli(n), etc. Toppings: Peanut, Cashew, Brazilnut, Pecan, Black walnut, Pinion nut, Hichoiy, etc. Table decorations: Zinnias, Marigolds, Fuchsias, Dahlias, Salvias, Cosmos, Tuberoses, Cannas, and other ornamentals developed by the American Indians. The Native Americans produced food for the gods and colors to delight the eye, and gifts have spread widely around the world.

KEY WORDS: Biodiversity, food, American fruits, vanilla, chocolate.

We are here celebrating the great watershed of plant exchange between the Old and New Worlds that began 500 years ago. The major social effects are obvious: sugar cane to the New World with the slave trade that followed, potato to Europe with a consequent population explosion and famous famines to follow. Wheat to North America and maize, manioc, cacao, peanut, and rubber to Africa, coffee and banana to tropical America, and so on. A feature of the grand plant exchange that might be lost in the historic panorama is the contribution of the American Indian to be delights and pleasures of this world.

The attached menu (Fig. 1) is not complete and does not represent all the contributions, but surely everyone can find some favorite fruit, nut, or flower on the list. In total, it is nectar for the gods, ambrosia for the self indulgent. I shall briefly annotate the menu.

The first on the list, chocolate, may be the most popular flavor world wide, used not only for ice cream but in candies, icings on cakes, Napoleons, and other sinful pastries, in beverages both alcoholic

and nonalcoholic and in mole dishes perfected by Mexican chefs. Chocolate held a special place among Mesoamerican Indians. The beans were used as currency and to pay tribute; a beverage beaten to a froth was consumed by the nobility in golden goblets, and FERNANDEZ DE OVIEDO (1944) adds an interesting note. Writing of Nicaragua, he inscribes Lib. XLII Cap I: "Hay mugeres públicos que ganan é se conçeden á quien las quiere por diez almendras de cacao de las que se ha dicho ques su moneda..."

Indeed, chocolate is not so innocent as some people belive. "Mucilage, polyphenols, tannins, cyanogenic compounds and the purines caffeine and theobromine have been found in this species." (SCHULTES & RAFFAUF, 1990 :447). Infusions of leaves and bark are used