

Making Tamales

Sage and Tumbleweed

September 16, 1934.

by *Inyokel

A tamale is fearfully and wonderfully made. Only white corn, ground by the cook herself, may be used and great red chilies that must be rubbed to a pulp on the metate. Corn husks must be secured and washed; beef or chicken, according to one's taste must be cooked; lard must be rendered on the spot, for if you think that your government-inspected, pure food, canned manteca can be used for Dona's tamales you are but a blundering Yankee. After the olives have been added and sundry spices that remain in the arcanum of the kitchen, there comes a moment when there rests upon your plate, or tortilla, a cylindrical package resembling for all the world one of the old-fashioned crackers that thrilled birthday parties when you and I were younger. The true tamale eater unties but one end of the concoction, deviscerates it upon his dish and then proceeds to forget time and space. *Finis coronat opus*- "the end crowns the work," the Latins said. They must have had tamales in mind.



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We were led into the fields of gastronomy by recalling the tamale dinner served on the church lawn during the jubilee last week. Under the shadow-dispelling radiance of floodlights borrowed from the baseball club, surrounded by the soft glow of paper lanterns in the cloister arches, Lone Pine sat down to eat. And Mrs. Parcher rose up to play, or

rather to sing "La Paloma," and Isabel Sotelo, that was, now Mrs. Mulhouse, gave "La Golondrina." Her little brother found a lot of harmony in an accordion, which pleased Grandpa and Grandma Ruiz mightily. There were tamales galore from the hands of Emma Diaz, Annie Romero and the Savedra girls, as all we old-timers know the Senoras Duarte, Ochoa and Brichaga. Cakes in plenty, even one from the non-Catholic postmistress at Keeler, which bore the words, "Jubilee, September 1,2,3," with pine trees of brilliant green upon its periphery. Even an old bachelor like Inyokel could see that there were many willing hands engaged in the preliminaries that made the supper enjoyable and dozens of willing feet of pretty waitresses that lost no time in tripping over the sward.

'Tis getting beyond my time for jubilees and parades, but I like to go down and meet the boys who have come in from Saline and Darwin, Mazourka and even from Silver Peak. I must have yelled a lot down at the rock-drilling contest, for my throat was awfully dry afterwards. But Bodie Mike took care of that when we went down to his place to discuss the



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merits of the short jab or the full swing in driving the drill. 'Tis many a year since I swung the double-jack in a drilling contest, but I still believe there are few displays of skill and brawn to equal this 15-minute hammering, by two men, of a steel drill into Sierra granite. The rhythm of their blows, the changing of places from swinging the sledge to holding the drill without the loss of a stroke, the swift withdrawal of 30 inches of steel, tossing it over one's shoulder and replacing it with another while one's companion never pauses in his swing, the frenzy of the crowd as the minutes and seconds are chanted off by the timekeeper, the final reading of the fractions of an inch difference in the results of competing teams-as long as we can shout for that, the West will still be wild and Inyokel won't mind.



*Inyokel – Fr. Crowley's pen name.