



# *Embodiment and reflexivity: gaining insight into food lifeways through the Chili Cook-off in Ajijic, Mexico*

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## **Embodiment and Reflexivity: Gaining Insight into Food Lifeways through the Chili Cook-off in Ajijic, Mexico**

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### **Introduction**

An important issue for food studies in Latin America is how to describe and analyze the ways in which food becomes embodied within lived experience. The Introduction and chapters within this volume highlight how a range of food predicaments have emerged across Latin America, as new dietary practices and organoleptic encounters give expression to people's transforming relationships with food. We would argue that processes of embodiment are at the heart of this change, encompassing people's corporeal engagement with what they eat and how food stimulates reflection on the relationships people hold to one another, to places and to material things. Phrased another way, we see these processes of embodiment as part of emerging food lifeways that reveal the changing dynamics of how food is produced, collected, exchanged, distributed, desired, eaten, thrown away, and debated over.

Focusing on the issue of embodiment and its implications for contemporary food issues provides food for thought to enrich debates on the materialization of food politics (Carolan, 2011). Moreover, empirically, a focus on embodiment can act as an entry point for documenting practices, meanings and actions that exist around food as a form of active materiality that mobilizes bodies, minds, relationships and objects. Following this line of thinking, in this chapter we focus on the embodiment of food within lived experience by taking the case of the Mexican National Chili Cook-off competition in Ajijic, Jalisco State in Mexico, an event that incorporates bodily judgments about food and in so doing reveals wider dynamics about civic action and the public domain. Through this example we demonstrate how a food-affect-resonance becomes apparent within "food lifeways", a concept elaborated below, and gives expression to ways of being in the world that focus on the interactions between people and things through the medium of food. Here bodies and material things align with people's sense of dwelling in a locality and their commitment to charitable aims through a public event.

### **On food, embodiment and assemblages**

The notion of embodiment has anthropological antecedents in the actor-oriented approach developed by the Wageningen group under Norman Long in the 1980s and 1990s, whereby the conceptual treatment of ethnographic data depicted multiple ontological realities (Arce and Long, 2000; Long and Long, 1992). More than two decades later, the actor-oriented approach continues to have relevance for the anthropology of food in terms of the recognition of the significance of ontology for understanding the role of food in everyday life. Nevertheless, a critical view that "decenters the question of the subject onto the question of subjectivity" (Guattari, 2006: 22) has shifted thinking on food and food movements in development, as "inducer-producers of salient, public effects" (Bennett, 2010: 39). While an actor-oriented approach emphasizes the social through focusing on human actors, new materialist thinking has drawn the nonhuman dimension to the fore, raising questions about what this means for the social (e.g., De Landa, 2006; Ingold, 2011; Krarup and Blok, 2011).

New materialist thinking has challenged the use of dualisms such as subject and object, nature and culture, and public and private. In this respect the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), amongst others, has been used to demonstrate how human-nonhuman entities become part of a taken-for-granted world (Braidotti, 2013; De Landa, 2006). This world is portrayed as immanent and non-linear in a way that reworks and “breaks through” dualisms (Der Tuin and Dolphinjn, 2010). With our colleague, Gustavo Blanco, we have used assemblage theory to explore the immanent becoming of a salmon-producing region in Chilean Patagonia (Blanco, Arce and Fisher, 2015). A similar challenge to dualist thinking is also found within actor network theory, where emphasis is placed on the co-constitution of nature and culture (Müller and Schurr, 2016).

While different, in both new materialist thinking and actor network theory, we see expressions of what Braidotti (2015) characterizes as change in the paradigm in which we are living whereby the concept of the human emerges as a question. Focusing on the notion of embodiment, and what this means in an age where the very fabric of food, and what it is to be animal, vegetable or human, cannot be taken for granted, the work of Csordas is relevant. Csordas (1990, 1994) saw the collapse of dualities as framing the central methodological issue of embodiment, permitting investigation of how cultural objects (including ourselves) are constituted as objectified through the indeterminacy and flux of cultural life. Thus, lived experience and culture are the focus of bodily being-in-the-world (Csordas, 1999).

Embodiment becomes not about “the body” as such, but the “phenomenon of the body” and the part it plays within the intersubjective ground of lived experience. The body therefore amalgamates the cultural and the material. In this line, and in order to rethink issues of agency and citizenship, Gabrielson and Parody (2010: 380) use the metaphor of the “leaky body” to envisage bodies as “porous, plural and connected” to social and natural worlds. Through the notion of corporeal citizenship they suggest that a focus on the body can offer a means to rethink ideas about agency and citizenship by necessitating recognition of the common materiality of the human being and the natural world, acknowledging the places bodies inhabit and diversity of human-nonhuman relations (see also Hayes-Conroy and Martin, 2010). For this chapter, reflecting on agency and citizenship is important because they emerge from the lived experience that gives rise to new food lifeways in Latin American countries that are realized within or against existing social orderings and public legacies. These public legacies are incorporated into assemblages that configure practices, forms and bodies in ways that confer agency upon entities within a territory (see Arce, 2010; Blanco, Arce and Fisher, 2015; Dewey, 1954).

Our use of the term food lifeways is rooted in the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 232-309) and its influence on the work of Ingold (2011) and Tsing (2015), who both link processes of becoming to expressions of being in the world through the life course. Thus, Ingold argues (Ibid: 69), beings (human and nonhuman) are relationally constituted, building a trail along which life is lived, always in the throes of becoming without reaching a destination. While for Tsing (Ibid: 23), ways of being are the emergent effects of human-nonhuman encounters: “assemblages don’t just gather lifeways; they make them.”

For us, the concept of food lifeways places emphasis on the embodiment of food within lived experience, as it gives expression to the combination of corporality, affect and reflexivity, entwining social and natural worlds through practices, knowledge and technology. In so doing, new relationships and alliances are formed at an interface whereby entities (“real” or not) construct, re-construct and dismantle themselves within processes of becoming that

constitute a sociality and corporeality different from neoliberal individualism because it is constituted by the fact of actors being-in-the-world. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1988), we refer to this process as inter-subjectivity between entities understood as capable of generating influential degrees of potential, power and force, with the experience of creativity available not just to the human, but also to the nonhuman other. In this vein, we turn to our case, the Chili Cook-off competition in Ajijic and ask a simple question, namely what does this focus on food reveal about lived experience in Ajijic?

### **The Chili Cook-off**

The Chili Cook-off, a contest to cook chili - a stew based on meat, red chili peppers and spices - that also serves as a charity fundraising event, has origins in the Americas. While rooted in an American / Mexican ethos, annual Cook-offs are held around the world and raise many millions of dollars for charity. For example, in the United Kingdom “chilli fiestas” and “chilli festivals” (incorporating chilli cook-offs and hot chilli eating contests e.g., “man vs. food”) have become popular summer events led by the UK Chilli Cook-off Association and local groups, with annual festivals around the country that combine stereotypical symbols of Mexico (chillis, ponchos and sombrero hats), the US (cowboy hats, denim and sheriff badges), and the UK (union jacks and tea stalls).

Against this background, a long-established competition is the Mexico National Chili Cook-off in Ajijic, which started in 1987. Participation in the Ajijic Cook-off provides a focus for different groups of people (retirees from the US, Canada and Europe as well as Mexicans from Jalisco) to engage publically together, revealing how the materiality of food crosses social, national and community boundaries to constitute a leaky corporality that assembles foreigner retirees, local inhabitants and a legion of chefs and avid bodies to test and judge chili concoctions through a competitive public event.

#### Multiple origins and contested legitimacy

The history of the dish, chili, and the Chili Cook-off competition is a contested one, with disputes over the origin of chili (Mexican, Texan or neither?) and organizational splits in the international Cook-off movement giving rise to different claims over legitimacy. It is reputed that the first known Chili Cook-off was held in 1952 in Dallas, Texas. However a Chili Cook-off in 1967 in Terlinga, Texas, is considered the beginning of a series of annual contests (Ritchey, 2007).

Organizers of the Cook-off in Texas later split up to form their own organizations, which remain internationally influential. In 1970, the International Chili Society (ICS) was formed to carry out the competition in California. A split in 1974 produced the Chili Appreciation Society (CAS), now CAS International (CASI); while in 1983, the Original Terlinga International Frank X. Tolbert-Wick Fowler Memorial Championship Chili Cook-off, Inc. (TOLBERT) was formed. Today each organization has many members and carries out its own annual championships, with separate rules for how the events are conducted by member groups at events in different places.

To confuse matters further, other cook-offs take place outside these organizations. For instance, the annual men’s “Chilympiad” in San Marcos, Texas, and the “Hell Hath No Fury like a Woman Scorned Cook-off” in response to the Chilympiad’s male exclusivity. The final example concerns our case, the Chili Cook-off of Ajijic, which originally started as a member

of the ICS but became independent in 2009. All these claims of origin emerging from organizational alliances and splits - with perhaps no single origin for Chili or the Cook-off - and contests over legitimacy reveal how an organizational entity acquires a dense social and mobile materiality of significance to “Chili practitioners” that becomes embodied through public engagement at events repeated at different sites and across territorial boundaries, building particular food lifeways for those concerned.

### The Ajijic Chili Cook-off

Ajijic is a town on Lake Chapala whose scenic location has long attracted foreigners to settle in the area. In the 1990s, the size of this foreign population grew significantly, stimulated by changes in law that lifted restrictions on foreign investment in land and property and by trade agreements that facilitated the importing of homeland products favored by retirees. Against this background, in 1978, the Chili Cook-off was started by a small group of foreign settlers guided by an American woman whose motivation for starting the Cook-off was to raise funds for local Ajijic charities. In the beginning, one of the founders, Anita, travelled to the US to find out about running a chili cook-off. Subsequent support from the ICS and foreign cooks was vital because people in the town did not know how to hold a cook-off.

Since 1978, the Cook-off has grown to be the largest charity fundraising event in the area. It is run by approximately 150 volunteers, who are mainly from the foreign community but include a small group of Mexicans from Chapala Lakeside. Sponsorship from local businesses has contributed to growth, the main starting sponsor being Grupo Modelo, a beer company where the Ajijic Cook-off founder once worked, and today sponsoring businesses include Tecate, Coca Cola, Heineken and eSun Energy.

Approximately eight charities, including those working with needy children, their families, the disabled and elderly, are supported by the Cook-off, with each charity attending the annual event to provide information about their services and to sell food to visitors. Also, at the event companies have stands and there are handicraft, art and clothes vendors. Visitors can look around the exhibits and eat and drink, while enjoying music and dance performances. Performances include rock and roll bands, children doing modern freestyle dancing, traditional *mariachi* singers, the *Ballet Folklórico*, and the opportunity to learn US line dancing led by the Lake Chapala Society. One stand includes animals such as corn snakes, South American raccoons and falcons that exhibitors can pick up and handle. Hourly charity fund-raising raffles are held to raise money for charity and to provide prizes from many local restaurants and services.

When the Cook-off started, membership in the ICS meant that in return for an annual fee the organizers were provided with regulations, which included: a list of permissible ingredients for making chili; the opportunity for winning cooks to participate as representatives of Mexico in the international final competition in Reno, Nevada; and finally, that judges could vote for competing dishes in Ajijic and were given the possibility of being invited to judge international Cook-offs. The Ajijic Cook-off remained an ICS member until 2009, when membership was discontinued. However, it continues to follow similar regulations, and foreign members of the ICS continue to participate in the contest.

The contemporary Cook-off in Ajijic has five competition categories for chili and one category for margaritas. These categories are: “Jalisco State Chili Rojo” for cooking “Traditional Red Chili” and “Jalisco State Chili Verde” for cooking green chili - both

categories open only to competitors from Jalisco State; “*Salsa*” for cooking sauce, open to everyone with no restrictions on what to cook; Mexican National Chili, for competitors from any part of Mexico to cook “Traditional Red Chili”; and, the “People’s Choice” for cooking chili and salsa by “home cooks” from Chapala Lakeside and “local chefs” from Chapala’s restaurants. A local judge awards a “People’s Choice” category, determined by the public taking part in the event and using “tasting kit” (a spoon, napkin, container, and ballot paper) that can be bought for 10 pesos (< USD 1).

As the Chili Cook-off has become established in Ajijic over a period of decades, we witness how people’s engagement with food reflects wider processes of change, as the transnational lifeways of foreign retirees have brought the event to Ajijic. In the process, local meanings, practices, traditions and expressions of affect are incorporated into the public event.

### The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cook-off in Ajijic (2008)

The 2008 Cook-off was held in Tobolandia, a waterpark in Ajijic. In addition to the cooking tents, there were about 50 booths for companies and vendors and about 20 booths for charities and non-profit organizations.

Co-author, Díaz Copado, attended the 2008 competition and describes how at the entrance of the “People’s Choice” tent there was a ticket booth where a queue of visitors waited to buy their tasting kits. Around the tent were booths of chefs from the locality, with either their name or a restaurant banner, each chef supported by a spouse and/or team. In a different line of tents, the ICS’ cooks were competing in the category, “Jalisco State Chili Verde”. Amongst these cooks were some who travel to different countries to participate annually in Chili Cook-offs; they are known in Ajijic as “International ICS Chili Cook-off” participants. In 2008 they included a couple that had competed in different cities in the US, including Hawaii. They said the Chili Cook-off of Ajijic is well known internationally within the Cook-off fraternity, due to its “Mexican style”, which contrasts with a more typical Texan style. Mariachi singers and the Ballet Folklórico, amongst other attractions, form this “Mexican style”.

Conversations held at the 2008 competition elicited different responses about the origin of Chili. For the foreign cooks, both the dish of Chili and the Cook-off are Texan; one motivation for participation was to perpetuate a Texan tradition. Nevertheless, some Mexican cooks considered Chili a Mexican dish. One Mexican cook, Victor, explained that he participates in the event to prove to foreigners and the local public that Chili is Mexican. He elaborated:

“I was really irritated that foreigners came to Mexico to tell and judge how to cook with chili, for example, how to cook the carne con chile, salsa, etc. Imagine that! Mexicans have been cooking with chili since the Aztecs and Mayans in pre-Columbian times...somehow these foreigners arrive and say that what they call Chili is a Texan dish...[they]...make this contest where they impose the rules for cooking *Chile con carne*, what they call Chili, and where they even tell you the ingredients you must or must not use. Then they judge the dishes; and in the end the winners are always the foreign cooks...this is changing, there is more Mexican participation; however it is still a contest based on foreign rules, with mainly foreign cooks, and with mainly foreign winners for cooking a Mexican dish. For these reasons the organizers needed to include the category “Mexican Cook”

because they were feeling it had been a bit unfair that foreigners instead of Mexicans had been representing Mexico for many years in the world championship in the US”.

Victor did, however, recognize that another reason for participation in the Chili Cook-off was to support foreigners in their “wish of making Ajijic a place where foreigners and locals join as one to bring local development through charitable activities.” Another man, José, a performer of the *Huentli* ritual in the town, had similar reasons for attending. He saw it as a good opportunity to help the needy and to contribute to the foreign organizers’ objective of uniting foreign and local communities and to bring local development by supporting charities.

While a focus on Chili suggests the Cook-off is a foreign affair, people (both Mexican and foreign) also attend the event because of the traditional music and dancing. Guadalupe, a 54 year-old Mexican woman from the town of Chapala, explained:

“I like to come to the Chile Cook-off because I like to see the Ballet Folklórico. I like their performance, their dresses, and the music. I always get goose-bumps when I see them dancing, it makes me feel happy, it makes me feel very Mexican and even it encourages me to dance – ha, ha, ha.”

George, a 75 year-old man from Michigan, US, explained:

“You see me as a blond, but I think I am Mexican because I always like to be part of the Mexican celebrations. I come to the Chili Cook-off every year because here you can see all the great things Mexicans do, their traditions, the Mexican men (the Mariachi) wearing big hats and singing. This is the reason why I moved to Ajijic, to live the Mexican life.”

Reflecting on these accounts, processes of embodiment amalgamate the cultural within itself, the dish *Carne con Chili* is long-established within local cooking traditions while *Chili con Carne* has roots in southern American cooking traditions. Taken together with traditional Mexican music and different forms of dancing all stimulate the re-composition of elements that give rise to affect - taste, bodily sensation, sound, movement -, each playing out elements of difference and commonality within new food lifeways in the locality of Ajijic. Divisions and continuities between and within local inhabitants and foreigners are revealed in how a competition, originally patronized exclusively by foreigners, now incorporates a wider group. In this respect, food acts as a vehicle that assembles elements of creativity and corporeality, linked to the materiality of the Chili Cook-off.

#### Charitable giving, estate agents and comuneros

At the Chili Cook-off people may come together who are members of social groups in Ajijic between which there is normally strife. One example is between Realtors (real estate agents), and the indigenous community. There are long-standing tensions between the indigenous community of Ajijic (*Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*), known locally as *comuneros* who have sought to protect the status of communal land threatened by residential development. In the 1990s, activism by comuneros against the municipal project of transforming Ajijic into a foreign retirement destination, as promoted by Realtors, stopped the construction of some residential development.



For the 2008 Cook-off, realtor and resident of Ajijic, Ana, attended with comunero Alfredo. As they explained, they were together because they wanted to contribute to forging Ajijic as a town where foreigners and locals work together to stimulate local development through charity fund-raising events. “Alfredo” said that he had joined together with Ana to show people that in spite of the differences between the Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic and some realtors, they can still be together for the sake of the needy of the Lakeside. This they could do by buying tickets and attending the event, buying tasting kits and raffle tickets. The perceived value of the Cook-off for joining together of different communities is explicitly portrayed in the official Chili Cook-off T-Shirt emblazoned with the US, Mexican and Canadian flags and the event’s motto “Mexican National Chili Cook-off. *Juntos Logramos Todo* (together we achieve everything)”.

The focus of “achieving everything” at the Cook-off is charitable giving. Alongside the cooking tents are booths promoting charities at the event, including the local charities that will receive funding from the Cook-off. The Cook-off in Ajijic is considered by organizers, participants and visitors as a symbol of charity, and can be the main reason individuals participate in the event, as well as the reason companies sponsor the event. Most of the proceeds collected from the Ajijic Cook-off are donated to eight selected charities after the event. For example, in 2016, seven sponsored charities received \$32,000 pesos each (approximately USD 1,760). To this end, each booth at the charity provides information about its services and the needs it is addressing. The eight charities also sold food (hamburgers, hotdogs, spareribs, donuts, cookies, etc.) and one even sold second hand furniture. The charitable proceeds from the event have grown year by year as the event itself has grown – in an interview, the event’s founder estimated that the event raised approximately USD 5,000 in 1978 and about USD 45,000 in 2009. After costs, a profit of USD 28,000 was equally distributed among eight.

Marilú, a representative of the *Villa Infantil* orphanage in Chapala Lakeside, was volunteering as an exhibitor at the Cook-off because of the affection she feels for the orphanage’s children and their need for help and support. She described how the Chili Cook-off in Ajijic gathers many charities together in its grounds enabling charity representatives to talk directly to each other to learn what donated items each charity needs and what they have in surplus to exchange among themselves. The relation with foreign charities is also important. Marilú explained how some time ago a Christian organization from the US attended the Cook-off and met representatives of another Chapala Lakeside charity, *Misión San Pablo*. After visiting its facilities they decided to help and have formed a long-term relationship, periodically donating money and items from the US.

In the accounts of peoples’ support for charity, we can see how food can help build relationships, using people’s sense of being-in-the-world to become part of the local public. This process has contradictions, but it is through these connections that people and things become part of the public, with charity becoming a specific kind of civic action that gives meaning to life connections in the world.

### Chili, taste and judgment

The Cook-off reveals people’s feelings towards food (of attachment, sympathy and affection), which are bound to their bodily senses (the smell and taste of Chili and hearing the Mariachi). Of these senses, that of taste yields significant influence over the social dynamics

around a central activity of the Cook-off, namely the judging of competing Chili dishes. According to interviewees, the judges' taste is such an important issue not only because it identifies the winners but because how they vote can influence the number of competing cooks and visitors attending the event, with consequent impact on the level of charitable donations that are raised. In particular, the judges' taste affects the number of Mexican cooks and visitors that come to the Cook-off because how they vote can reveal preferences for flavors that people are most familiar with in their everyday lives.

According to the Ajijic National Chili Cook-off website, "Chili is defined as any kind of meat or combination of meats cooked with chili peppers, various other spices and other ingredients. Beans are acceptable." Major considerations for judging the chili are: good chili flavor, texture of the meat, consistency, blend of spices, aroma and color. So judges at the Cook-off, some of whom have long experience evaluating dishes at international cook-off events, make their judgment based on these criteria. During the tasting itself they cannot deliberately favor a particular competitor because the dishes are numbered anonymously, creating the impression that it is only the judges' taste that matters and determines who wins. This taste, however, is not "objective"; local Mexican participants allege that they lose the competition because Mexican cooks' dishes are influenced by the Mexican "Carne con chile", whereas the ICS judges in Ajijic are mostly foreigners who demonstrate a bias for the US "Chili con Carne" (for example, in 2008, 11 out of 13 judges were non-Mexican).

Over time, allegations of bias demotivated local Mexican inhabitants of Ajijic to attend the competition. However, this changed when the "People's Choice" category of dish was introduced because Mexican visitors to the event could vote, using their tasting kits, and tend to favor dishes that taste more like "Carne con chile". The move to incorporate Mexican tasters from the public brought more Mexican competitors and visitors, which led to higher charitable donations. In this example, a bodily sense integral to the pleasure of food stimulates people's agency in terms of how they engage with the Cook-off Competition.

Beyond the sense of taste, people's engagement with their bodily sensations and feelings of affect for the Chili Cook-off's symbols are significant: people's feelings of nationalism for chili and Chili, feelings of sympathy and affection for the needy, the feeling of enjoyment gained by listening to Mariachis or by seeing the performance of the Ballet Folklórico, the enjoyment foreigners gain from the "Mexican touch" or local inhabitants from being reminded of the "Mexican life" have each been central to bringing organizers, participants, and visitors together at the event. This includes feelings of affect, which encourage many people to volunteer to raise funds for local charities. As "Anita" said, "The Chili Cook-off would not exist without the good feelings that motivate people to volunteer for the Chili Cook-off... This event is organized and carried out by volunteers." This volunteering has been the galvanizing force that has kept the event running for 38 years (to date in 2016) generating the capacity to transform Ajijic, and, in particular, the life of people dependent on local charities.

The way food stimulates senses that embody people's engagement with the Chili Cook-off draws the public to the event and shapes the practices and relations between people and between people and things during the course of the competition. In this respect, we witness the capacity to affect and be affected by the senses, amalgamating the cultural and the material, with agency granted to nonhuman entities. This can be seen for example through the way Chili "brought" someone to the event, or through the culinary traditions in which the flavors of competing dishes has an effect on the judges' bodies through their sense of taste,

and makes them declare one dish or another the winner. Such bodily food-affect-resonances have been essential for the growth of the competition and its contribution to Ajijic through millions of pesos donated to Chapala Lakeside charities.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

In this chapter we have considered how food is embodied within lived experience in ways that interconnect affect and corporality, the social and the material, giving expression to the public through lives shared around food. The case of the Chili Cook-off competition in Ajijic, Mexico, was used to demonstrate how a food lifeway emerges in a way that is both specific and continuously evolving, as foreign retirees and different groups of local inhabitants build lives and relationships within the locality of Ajijic. The Chili Cook-off gives expression to the relationships people hold to one another and to nonhuman elements of which, most obviously, chili peppers and the dish Chili con carne/Carne con chili are central players. Bodily being in the world is integral to this process, as expressed through organoleptic experience as different tastes for Chili emerge from a leaky corporality that exposes wider social relational fault-lines within Ajijic and across transnational boundaries.

A focus on the Chili Cook-off has served to show how food becomes embodied in a public event that acts as an intersection between food, people and things, generating sociability and on-going public action (charitable giving). Within the food lifeway, the Cook-off acts as a carrier of affect about culinary traditions that stimulates bodily agency, emerging as something that is material and sensorial and always present in the making of the event. Such agency, and the inter-subjectivity it implies, is partial and exists in real time through the unfolding materiality of bodies within a food lifeway. By implication, the embodiment of food is not a simple extension and accumulation of actors' experience, of discourses or a determination of the past over the present. It is the bodily being-in-the-world that facilitates awareness of what we are as quotidian entities, reminding us that we are not fully aware of how we become what we are. Beans, chilies, taste, touch, sound and charitable sentiment become woven into entities that form an embodied sociality giving expression to public food practices.

The Chili Cook-off competition provides one opportunity to think about food and agency as partial forces; the vibrancy of life makes it an active combination in the process of embodiment of social, political and transformational analysis in promoting social and political change over the boundaries of nation states and the institutional forces seeking to establish a neo-liberal matrix of individualization and power. We have showed that other forms of sociability across state borders are possible and with this comes the organization, agency and creativity of quotidian materialities that stimulate the hegemonic forces of capitalism to reconstruct themselves, establishing new relations of intimacy, intra-subjectivities and affect through stimulating the emergence of innovative public engagements that have the potential to create new ways of understanding and changing the world.

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