

Toyon Literary Magazine

Volume 67
Issue 1 *De Dos Lados*

Article 4

2021

Tortillas

Theressa Lopez
Humboldt State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lopez, Theressa (2021) "Tortillas," *Toyon Literary Magazine*: Vol. 67 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon/vol67/iss1/4>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Toyon Literary Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

Tortillas

Theressa Lopez

(16)

“Because mine won’t be pretty.” She gives the same answer as before. “They always come out in funny shapes. I can’t get them round enough.” my mother said as she set down the bag. She rips along the plastic’s perforated edge, and pulls out a stack of frozen tortillas. The back burner glows red and she dials it back, waits for the comal to return to warmth, peels the first flat grey circle from the stack, and sets it on the stove.

It bubbles like the ones Nana made.

(3-10)

Nana made them from scratch. flour, water, salt, and lard
She removed her rings
and mixed it by hand
Once she kneaded the dough enough,
she pulled out the wooden cutting board,
and coated it with a thin layer of flour
From the big glob of masa,
she collected little masa balls,
and pressed them into the board
She used an inherited piece of an old pipe as a rolling pin, but she
didn’t call it that.
I don’t remember her word for it anymore.
I miss hearing it hit the wooden board. roll, roll, roll

she stopped to flip the masa
roll, roll, roll
flip

and again and again until it's a flat, perfect circle.
She placed this circle on the warm comal
and it bubbled
flip
the circle was white with brown spots it bubbled and lifted

she picked it up with her hands and set it to the side
I reached for it--
she tapped my hand away then placed a glob of masa in my palm it
was play-dough in my hands
If you give away the first tortilla, you have to make them forever.

(12-15)

My mom flips the tortilla with a butter knife.
It is white with brown spots. It bubbles and lifts.

She picks it up with the knife, and sets it aside.

(17)

I use the packaged tortillas, like my Mom. I set one on our comal. It
bubbles, lifts. I flip it with my hand, and set it to the side. My sister
reaches-- I tap her hand away. "It's too hot." I know now. We don't eat
the first tortilla
In my mind I ate the first one Nana made.

(20)

My mom makes everyone's favorite foods for Christmas.
This year I ask for homemade tortillas again.
"They're a lot of work, you better help me so we can make the other
foods too."
We made this agreement the past two Christmases, before I ended
up picking different dishes. This year I won't change my mind.
I'm in charge of the shopping list. I ask about the rolling pin.
Do we still have it?

IO TOYON

“Rolling pin!? C’mon don’t act like you don’t know what it’s called.

I wait silently for the memories of sentences Nana spoke.

“You remember, the palote!”

The word wraps around me like one of Nana’s old sweaters and paints more details into my memories.

With a single word my soul is a step closer to hers.

Tortillas

Theressa Lopez

Translation by Kirk Lua

(16)

Because mine won’t be pretty. Ella da la misma respuesta que antes. They always come out in funny shapes. I can’t get them round enough. Dijo mi mamá mientras dejaba la bolsa. Rasga el borde perforado del plástico y saca una pila de tortillas congeladas. El quemador trasero se brilla rojo y ella lo pone para atrás, espera que el comal vuelva a calentarse, jala el primer círculo gris plano de la pila y lo pone en la estufa.

It bubbles like the ones Nana made.

(3-10)

Nana los hizo desde cero. Harina, agua, sal y manteca de cerdo

Se quitó los anillos

y lo mezcló a mano

Cuando amasó la masa lo suficiente,

ella sacó la tabla de cortar de madera,

y lo cubrió con una capa fina de harina.

De la bola grande de masa,
ella recibió bolitas de masa,
y los presionó en la tabla
Usó un pedazo de una pipa vieja que heredó como rodillo de
amasar, pero no lo llamó así.
Ya no recuerdo como lo llamaba.
Extraño escucharlo golpear la tabla roll roll roll

Ella paró para voltear la masa
roll roll roll
flip
y una y otra vez hasta que sea un círculo plano y perfecto. Ella puso
este círculo en el comal caliente y burbujeó
flip
el círculo era blanco con manchas cafés, se burbujeaba y se levant-
aba.

Lo tomó con las manos y lo dejó a un lado.
Lo alcancé--
Ella me dió un golpecito a mi mano y luego puso una bola de masa en
mi palma, era plastilina en mis manos.
Si regalas la primera tortilla, tienes que hacerlas por siempre.

(12-15)

My mom flips the tortilla with a butter knife.
It is white with brown spots. It bubbles and lifts

She picks it up with the knife, and sets it aside.

(17)

Yo uso las tortillas empaquetadas, como mi mamá. Pongo una en
nuestro comal. Burbuja, se levanta. Lo volteo con la mano y lo dejo a
un lado. Mi hermana la alcanza-- le doy un golpecito a su mano. It's

too hot. Ya lo sé. No comemos la primera tortilla.
En mi mente me comí la primera que hizo mi Nana.

(20)

Mi mamá prepara las comidas favoritas de todos para Navidad.
Este año vuelvo a pedir tortillas hechas a mano.
They're a lot of work, you better help me so we can make the other
foods too.
Hicimos este acuerdo las dos últimas navidades, antes de que ter-
minara escogiendo platos diferentes. Este año no cambiaré de
opinión.
Estoy a cargo de la lista de compras. Le pregunto por el rodillo. ¿To-
davía lo tenemos? Rolling pin?! C'mon don't act like you don't know
what it's called.

Espero en silencio por los recuerdos de las frases que dijo Nana. You
remember, the palote!
La palabra me envuelve como uno de los viejos suéteres de Nana y
pinta más detalles en mis recuerdos.
Con una sola palabra mi alma esta a un paso más acerca a la de ella.