

What did the Aztecs eat?



The principal food of the Aztec was a thin cornmeal pancake called a tlaxcalli. (In Spanish, it is called a tortilla.) They used the tlaxcallis to scoop up foods while they ate or they wrapped the foods in the tlaxcalli to form tacos. They hunted for most of the meat in their diet and the chief game animals were deer, rabbits, ducks and geese. The only animals they raised for meat were turkeys and dogs.

The Aztecs also ate tomatoes, avocados, squash and atole (a type of porridge), and tamales, a kind of envelope made from steamed maize stuffed with vegetables or meat. The Aztec also used a variety of chili peppers to flavor foods. Ants, grasshoppers, maguey worms, and jumil bugs, were also important to the Aztecs and provided protein. Commoners gathered tequitlatl (blue-green spirulina algae) in large fine nets to provide large harvests of protein. But these were not the only aquatic goods consumed by the Aztec. They also ate tadpoles, frogs, and tentnonmichin (thick, large-mouthed fish) along with newts and acocilin (shrimplike crustaceans).

The prickly pear cactus was a popular food in the Aztec diet. The fruit from the cactus could be eaten cooked or raw and was often served as a dessert. The Aztecs have also been credited with the discovery of chocolate. The Aztecs made chocolate from the fruit of the cacao tree and used it as a flavoring and as an ingredient in various beverages and desserts.

Now it's your turn. Create a recipe using some of the foods that the Aztec ate. Remember the resources and tools they had available.