

majority of Mexican cooks concentrated on international cuisines and largely ignored traditional dishes, many of which were made with corn and were for that reason stigmatized as being foods for the lower class. In fact, Pilcher has written that some cookbook authors prior to Josefina explicitly referred to tamales as food for the "lower orders" and lumped dishes like gorditas (puffy masa cakes) and posole (pork and hominy stew) under the heading "indigenista". In the preface to *Platillos regionales*, Josefina declared that talented Mexican cooks had created some of the world's most exceptional and refined dishes.

*Platillos regionales* was only the beginning; Josefina's trips yielded many other books

#### RECIPE

### Aquacates Tampico

(Tampico-Style Avocados)

SERVES 6

Seafood is so popular in Tampico, a prosperous port city on the Gulf of Mexico in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, that locals are known as *jaibos*—crabs.

3 ripe hass avocados, halved and pitted  
1 cup shredded crabmeat, picked over  
2 leaves lettuce, chopped  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 hard-cooked egg, peeled and chopped

**1.** Scoop out some of the avocado flesh from each avocado half, making a slightly larger cavity than was left by the pit, into a medium bowl. Add crabmeat, lettuce, and mayonnaise and gently stir until well combined. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**2.** Divide crab salad between avocado halves, mounding it in each avocado cavity. Arrange avocados on a lettuce-lined serving platter, if you like. Garnish avocados with chopped eggs.



**Aquacates Tampico (Tampico-style avocados) are a typical dish of the port city of the same name, famous for its fish and shellfish dishes.**

that are, to this day, essential reading for anyone interested in authentic Mexican cuisine. Diana Kennedy, the celebrated Mexico-based British authority on Mexican cuisine, considers one of Josefina's notable achievements to have been her bilingual book *Mexican Cook Book Devoted to American Homes*, published in 1947, which made authentic regional Mexican food accessible to an English-language readership for the first time (a soulful vermicelli soup and citrusy pompano baked in parchment paper are

pes that I was taught to the ones I later found. And then it occurred to me alone in this regard: most cooks and lovers of Mexican food have palates and perceptions like Josefina—whether they know it or not.

**THE PANTRY, page 106**  
(Mexican vermicelli) no  
chipotles in vinegar, Mexican  
Mexican oregano, and cumin