

# 'Slow food' fan seeks out good food in the D.F.

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Most guides to this city of 20 million people tend to offer a frighteningly superficial look at its food offerings, often recommending the same tight circle of usual suspects.

Longtime Mexico City resident, realist painter and slow food aficionado Nicholas Gilman has remedied that by producing a guidebook dedicated to the cuisine of the hemisphere's largest city.

Simply put, Gilman's book will allow even the most wide-eyed visitor to the Mexican capital eat like a seasoned local. And serious foodies will find "Good Food in Mexico City" as essential packing as their toothbrush.

Gilman has compiled an impressive list of haunts you won't find in any other guidebook.

I've lived here for almost three years and Gilman's book has opened up a whole universe of new food choices.

As Gilman writes, you can find it all in Mexico City, from Oaxacan and Yucatecan classics to chic fusion restaurants and

authentic Korean meals.

"Anyone interested in Mexican food could spend a lifetime exploring Mexico City," Gilman writes. "I've been eating here for 20 years and I still feel like a novice."

Gilman divides the book by type of establishment and his most valuable contribution may be his excellent chapter on street food stalls.

While locals know such humble establishments serve the city's best food, most tourists see them as scary bacteria traps.

Gilman offers up some common sense health tips (look for long lines and avoid food that looks like it's been sitting for awhile) as well as some highly detailed recommendations. (The best flautas in the city, for example, are at the fourth stand down from Nuevo León Avenue.)

Gilman also details Mexico City's fondas – small, cheap family-style places that can be found nearly everywhere – as well as off-the-beaten path places like Chamula's Bar, (a 15-minute taxi ride from downtown specializing in dishes

from Chiapas like pipián and sopa de chipilín) and Coox Hanal (a second-story Yucatecan joint offering some of the city's best cochinita pibil).

Gilman has another chapter on the capital's latest food obsession: "nueva cocina," which has taken traditional food high end with new presentations and cooking techniques.

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The movement has launched a series of superstar Mexican chefs and internationally regarded restaurants. Gilman suggests the salmon with a corn crust at Águila y Sol and the huitlocoche lasagna at Izote.

The book isn't just limited to meals: Gilman also searches out the city's best ice cream and hot chocolates, as well as bars, cantinas and pulquerías (specializing in a thick, fermented alcoholic drink made from an agave).

The book is eminently prac-

tical: An extremely detailed glossary will be invaluable for non-Spanish speakers looking to get the most out of their restaurant experience.

And he gives good descriptions of the city's neighborhood food markets and their specialties.

Gilman also has an excellent Web site with updates and new reviews as well as listings of closings. The updated information is well worth consulting even if you already have the book.

If any criticism can be leveled at the book, it's that it gives short shrift to the city's southern neighborhoods, focusing instead on the more tourist and ex-pat heavy neighborhoods of Condesa, Roma and downtown.

But despite that, Gilman manages to load his guide with dozens of overlooked gems sure to transform any trip to Mexico City into an adventure for the taste buds.

Good Food in Mexico City: A guide to food stalls, fondas and fine dining. Nicholas Gilman, Universe \$13.95 <http://www.mexicocityfood.net>