

. De Español y Negra. Mulato.





BY FRANCES LEVINE

Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche
faces the Inquisition for the sin
of chocolate consumption

"So Dreadful a Crime"



I, Licenciado Don Juan de Ortega Montañés, prosecutor for this Holy Office declare that this lady, not fearing God, and at grave peril to her conscience, neglecting the obligations of a true, faithful, and Catholic Christian, and forsaking that faith, has followed and does follow the ceremonies of the superseded law of Moses, carefully putting on clean clothes on Fridays, first washing her feet, and not attending mass on the days of obligation, even in fine weather ... committing so dreadful a crime against what the holy faith of the Gospel teaches ... by the evidence I present with due solemnity so that her criminal behavior may be stopped and punished.¹

With this dramatic opening statement, the Holy Office of the Inquisition began proceedings against Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche, wife of New Mexico governor Bernardo López Mendizábal, on charges of practicing Judaism. Local officials in Santa Fe arrested the governor and his wife in late August 1662, and they were transported to Mexico City to stand trial before the Inquisition. As they traveled

José de Alcívar. *De Español y Negra, Mulato* (*From Spaniard and Black, Mulatto*). Mexico, ca. 1760. Oil on canvas. 31 x 38¼ in. Courtesy, Denver Art Museum, Collection of Frederick & Jan Mayer. Photo by James Milmo. *Casta* paintings were popular in Spain and the New World during the colonial period, feeding a fascination with racial purity and miscegenation in the New World, and a curiosity about its flora and fauna. This painting depicts a mixed race family: a Spanish man; his wife of African descent, who is whipping chocolate in a copper pot with a molinillo; and their child, who holds a brasero with burning embers so that the father can light his tobacco. *New World Cuisine: The Histories of Chocolate, Mate y Más*, at the Museum of International Folk Art, includes examples of the brasero, copper pot, and molinillo on exhibit. The artist also painted *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1783), the altar screen at El Santuario de Guadalupe in Santa Fe, probably in Mexico and then sent to Santa Fe via El Camino Real.

Below: This copper pitcher (*jarra*) is from nineteenth-century Mexico. International Folk Art Foundation Collection, FA.1971.15.60. The wooden chocolate beater (*molinillo*) is Lacondón Indian from Chiapas, Mexico, late nineteenth to early twentieth century, International Folk Art Foundation Collection, FA.1971.71.48. On exhibit in *New World Cuisine: The Histories of Chocolate, Mate y Más*, at the Museum of International Folk Art. Photograph by Blair Clark.

down the Camino Real, the journey itself an ordeal of nearly six months, they incurred further humiliation at the hands of their guards, who displayed and ridiculed them as Jews, sodomites, and infidels in towns along the trail. The governor was chained in a jail cart, and although Doña Teresa rode in a carriage, she claimed to have arrived in Mexico City almost maimed. Four of her maids died en route from maltreatment and the ordeal of their transport.

In her own defense, Doña Teresa wrote heart-rending details about her difficult household arrangements in the *casas reales* in Santa Fe, and their horrendous journey to cells in the Inquisition prison where her husband died and where she anguished over the charges against them. In a previous issue of *El Palacio* (118[3], fall 2011), Gerald González and I reviewed the details of the case against the governor and Doña Teresa as well the remarkable defense that she penned while in custody for nearly two years in the Inquisition prison in Mexico City.

Among the more than 250 accusations leveled at the governor and the 41 accusations against Doña Teresa was a recurring theme: their consumption of chocolate at inappropriate times, focusing particularly on the events of Good Friday, 1662. Beyond the question of how their chocolate drinking fit into the litany of sins they might have committed is an intriguing history of how foods crossed from one culture to another during the colonial



period. The adoption of chocolate by Spanish settlers in Mexico so vexed the Church that it took more than two centuries of ecclesiastical debate to determine if chocolate was a socially acceptable drink, an aphrodisiac, or a medicine, or whether as a food its consumption violated the required fast on holy days.

A Household Filled with Intrigue

When Governor Mendizábal and Doña Teresa established their household in the Palace of the Governors in the summer of 1659, they anticipated that they would enjoy success commensurate with their station in life and that they, like other colonial governors, would personally profit from their service. They established a store in the *casas reales*, and among the items they brought for sale were exotic imports and delicacies that were not available in Santa Fe—shoes, hats, imported European textiles, sugar, and chocolate. By the time they were brought before the inquisitors three years later, their extravagant lifestyle was over. Their first audience with the Inquisition officials began with a reading of the charges, and in each of their lengthy trials the court listened to the charges brought against the governor and Doña Teresa by former neighbors and associates, clerics, and their own household help. The accused, on the other hand, had no right to confront their accusers or even to know who they were. They answered the charges by launching their own accusations against those whom they assumed might have testified against them.

Although ten witnesses testified about the events that took place on that fateful Good Friday, only one was an eyewitness. Antonia Isabel, a forty-year-old Mexican Indian, native of Santa Fe, cooked and served in the residence. She gave her testimony on October 27, 1661, in Santa Fe before Fray Alonso de Posada, the same friar who had presided over the arrest of Doña Teresa two months earlier. She recalled that on Good Friday at about 3 p.m., when she brought in an afternoon cup of chocolate, Doña Teresa was seated at her husband's bedside. Subsequently, two unbaptized Apache girls, elsewhere identified as Isabel and Inés, came in to

report that a religious procession was passing by. Doña Teresa rose rapidly, crossed to a chest in the room, and took out a clean bonnet that she placed on the governor's head while speaking words to him that the cook could not remember precisely. Antonia Isabel concluded her testimony to Fray Posada, noting that the timing of these actions—drinking chocolate, changing his cap, and perhaps the words that Doña Teresa spoke—seemed like a kind of wicked ceremony.

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The other witnesses embellished this account so much that even the inquisitors labeled it hearsay. The most elaborate of these third-hand retellings was that of Ensign Pedro Arteaga, who also resided in the Palace. His account was based entirely on the events described to him by his wife, Josefa de Sandoval, another Palace servant, who heard it from Antonia Isabel.

On Holy Saturday last, his wife came from the said Don Bernardo's house, she told him that a Spanish-speaking Mexican Indian servant called Antonia had just told her that the day before, which was Good Friday of this year, at about 4 p.m. [other reports put the time at 3 p.m.], as the said Antonia was serving chocolate to Doña Teresa, the said Doña Teresa said, "Is the procession going by?" And the aforesaid Antonia replied that it was; and without taking her chocolate, Doña Teresa rushed to a chest of linens that stood in the room, from which she brought forth a bonnet or white cap and went to the bed where the said Don Bernardo was lying, and removing another cap that he had on his head, the said Doña Teresa said the following words to him: "Take off that filthy cap, Sir Lazybones, and put on this one, which is clean." And she threw the dirty one that she took from him into the middle



Top: *Mancerina*, eighteenth century, silver, Mexico. The circular piece, with small angels holding swags of leafy garland, was designed to hold a *jícara* (a small cup), which also would have been silver. Most mancerinas no longer have their cups—it is very hard to find an original pair. Don Pedro Álvarez de Toledo, marqués of mancerana and viceroy of Peru between 1639 and 1648, designed the mancerina with the help of his metalsmith, to prevent the chocolate from spilling from the *jícara*. It is a totally New World design. On exhibit at the New Mexico History Museum in *Telling New Mexico*.



of the room. The servants and attendants of the house were much struck by the fact that this action was reserved for the time and occasion when the procession of the Lord's Burial was passing by; and that although she could have put the said cap on him in the morning or wait till evening when they changed their clothes, it should be done at that time; and they also noted the speed with

Mixed with menstrual blood or bathwater, chocolate was said to produce a highly potent aphrodisiac that would make the most wayward man return to his home, hearth, and bed.

Top: This detail of the Imari porcelain chocolate cup, pictured in full on page 58, shows gilding similar to the lost decoration on a blue Chinese chocolate cup, sherds of which were unearthed in the Palace of the Governors (opposite page). Photograph by Blair Clark.

which the said Doña Teresa got up, even though on every other occasion she moved slowly, since at present she suffers a certain ailment, and that she should also fail to drink her chocolate, when this was something of which she was so especially fond that on other occasions when she was drinking it, although she might be asked for the keys or there might be something else to do, she would first finish drinking her chocolate.

In her own statement, Josefa de Sandoval, whom Doña Teresa surmised correctly had testified against her, added

... that the said Don Bernardo had little or no scruple about eating meat on Fridays, Saturdays, fast days, and Lent, and that when they fasted they did not change their way of drinking chocolate, because just as he drank it on days when meat is permitted, with two large slices of toasted bread in the morning and the same in the afternoon, he drank it on fast days, and so did Doña Teresa de Aguilera his wife.

Like a game of improvisation, seven more witnesses added their own details to the story, until in some tellings the governor and Doña Teresa donned long robes, or smocks and large white caps, and exchanged special words, all of which

amounted to a dreadful crime. Why drinking chocolate was a special infraction of the social order, and the basis of one of the Inquisition claims against Governor Mendizábal and Doña Teresa, is part of the fascinating journey of food history.

Crossing Cultures with Food and Drink

Elsewhere in this issue, Patricia Crown reviews the evidence for chocolate consumption in archaeological contexts in Chaco Canyon, where residue of a beverage was found inside cylindrical jars buried in a cache. Crown concludes that these contexts indicate that chocolate was consumed by groups of people practicing rituals. This is consistent with the first instances of the use of chocolate that Spanish chroniclers observed in Mexico in the early sixteenth century, when they first had contact with Mayan and Aztec peoples.

In letters written in 1519 to the king of Spain, Hernán Cortés described the value placed on cacao beans in Mexico, so important in trade that it was used as money and collected in tribute payments. Some fifty years later, Bernal Díaz, an eyewitness to the fascinating mix of warfare and ethnographic discovery that characterized the first years of Spanish rule, wrote *The Conquest of New Spain*. He recalled the ritual of preparing a frothy cacao drink consumed during elaborate feasts that were offered daily to the Aztec leader Moctezuma (Montezuma).²

Chocolate as prepared by the Mayas and the Aztecs was not immediately adopted into their New World cuisine by Spanish settlers and does not seem to have been exported to Spain until at least a generation or more after conquest. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Church began deliberating its proper use. Reportedly, Spanish women had a particular passion for the bitter drink, and its deep brown color cast it among foods that were considered offensive, if not downright sinful, and therefore forbidden. For a time Jesuits ruled chocolate a drink, and therefore not forbidden during Lent or days of fasting. Dominicans took the opposite view. Franciscans, through the works of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, reported in detail on the Aztec use of cacao and chocolate.

By 1636 the properties attributed to chocolate had become the subject of rousing debates after publication of a treatise in Spain on chocolate's properties, preparations, and moral effects. It was considered food if it was prepared with milk, eggs, or maize, as these ingredients added nourishing substance to a mere beverage. Another round of debates in the mid-1640s permitted maize but not breadcrumbs, chickpeas, or other species of beans. If water was the only ingredient added, chocolate was to be treated as a beverage, like wine, and therefore was permitted during days of fasting. This still did not end the theological discussion. In the 1730s, an unnamed Carmelite theologian raised the issue of intent.³ If, this treatise argued, chocolate made with water was taken to quench thirst or for medicinal purposes, it was not seen as breaking the fast. But if chocolate was taken as a form of nourishment, then indeed the fast was broken, and it was therefore sinful. While the Carmelite argument noted that chocolate was known to have medicinal properties, the author was more disturbed that chocolate aroused sensuality.

Unruly Women and Chocolate

The Church ultimately settled the issue. Drinking a simple mixture of chocolate and water during certain hours with the right intent was not a sin, but the Church and Inquisition officials took a different view of women who became disruptive or volatile after drinking chocolate, or those who used it for immoral purposes. From the earliest descriptions of Spanish women's exposure

Below: These cobalt blue sherds of a seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain chocolate cup were excavated at the Palace of the Governors by Cordelia Thomas Snow in 1975. "This was a rare type of Chinese porcelain even then," says Snow. "I like to think Dona Teresa could have sipped chocolate from that cup." The pale, lacey lines in the ceramic glaze are left after the gilding has weathered away. Compare this cup with the eighteenth-century Japanese porcelain cup from the New Mexico History Museum that has its gilding intact (opposite page). Sherds courtesy of the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, Catalog Number 51764. Photograph by Blair Clark.



Below: Imari porcelain chocolate cup, Japan, early eighteenth century. Small handle-less cups of Japanese and Chinese porcelain were used in Spain and the colonies for drinking chocolate. This cup is typical of the goods that came to New Mexico by way of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade route, and then north via El Camino Real. On exhibit at the New Mexico History Museum in *Santa Fe Found*. History Collection NMHM, DCA 2011.58. The copper and iron chocolate pot (*chocolatera*), is from Spain, 1750–1800, courtesy Josef Díaz and Malcolm Purdy. On exhibit in *New World Cuisine: The Histories of Chocolate, Mate y Más*, at the Museum of International Folk Art. Photograph by Blair Clark.

to chocolate, there was a persistent suggestion that chocolate was to blame for unruly and lascivious behavior.

One fascinating study of Inquisition records from seventeenth-century Guatemala was able to demonstrate that among women of color—primarily mixed-race European and Mayan, and black women who were tried for crimes of sorcery and witchcraft—chocolate appeared as a medium for producing spells and controlling the behavior of others.⁴ Spanish and criolla (Europeans born in the New World) women shared chocolate recipes and turned to their cooks and maids for these powerful concoctions. Mixed with menstrual blood or bathwater, chocolate was said to produce a highly potent aphrodisiac that would make the most wayward man return to his

home, hearth, and bed. Another woman used this chocolate concoction, ground with worms, to keep her man from straying. One Guatemalan *mulata* was accused by her husband of using chocolate to bewitch him into performing household duties that were normally assigned to women, such as cooking her food and boiling water for their daily chocolate drinks.

In other cases, women using chocolate drinks became publicly unruly, abusive, and even violent toward their men and toward authorities.

In a well-known mid-seventeenth-century case, the bishop of Chiapas tried to stop women from drinking chocolate during Mass and was beaten severely by a group of angry women. Apparently, when he again attempted to enforce the restriction, they poisoned him. Civil authorities joined the



Church ban prohibiting chocolate consumption in church.

Casta paintings from the late colonial period are important source materials for understanding the social order of the colonies. In several sets, upper-class Spanish, criollo, and mestizo household members are shown drinking chocolate from dainty cups. The cups are held in silver or porcelain wide-lipped plates that were called *mancerinas*, after the marqués of Mancera, who commissioned their production in Lima to protect women's clothing from being stained by chocolate spills. In several sets of the paintings, mulatta and other mixed-race women are shown stirring copper chocolate pots with *molinillos*, or hand beaters. In some of these paintings, the women are also shown beating men and looking rather disheveled, clearly depicting unruly behavior attributed to drinking chocolate or stronger alcoholic beverages like *pulque*.

Doña Teresa's Defense

Doña Teresa answered the inquisitors with a detailed account of why the chocolate she and the governor drank on Good Friday did not violate their holy obligations. She countered that the chocolate contained only water and not water mixed with *atole* (cornmeal). Further, she consumed only a bit of toast made from loaves that her cook baked with lard, perhaps a signal to the court that this too proved she was not practicing the Jewish faith. She denied washing her hair and feet with special ceremony, dismissing the accusations as gossip. She went to great lengths to explain to the inquisitors that her personal hygiene changed seasonally. In response to a question about the extraordinary amount of time she spent coiffing her hair, she said it was due at times to the great pains she suffered in her arms. Here she could have defended herself with the list she wrote of her ailments on a paper confiscated during her arrest. It seems that drinking chocolate was one of her medicines. And perhaps the Inquisition or the prison management agreed with her claim that some of her chocolate consumption was innocent. Prison records show that Doña Teresa was allotted a monthly ration of chocolate and sugar while incarcerated, but—ever

rebellious or ingenious—she attempted to have an assistant warden sell a portion of it in order to buy her embroidery thread, and consequently it was recommended that her ration be curtailed.

The Inquisition ultimately suspended the trial at the end of November 1664, and Doña Teresa was released. She was warned to maintain secrecy concerning all that was connected with her imprisonment and to meet the obligations of a good Christian. When she walked out of that prison, she took with her the knowledge of women's powerful domains in food ways and folkways, and likely a few more uses for chocolate. ■

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Notes

1. This and all translations in this article were taken from the extensive work prepared by María Magdalena Coll, Heather Bamford, Heather McMichael, and John H. R. Polt for the Transcription and Translation Project of the Cibola Project, University of California, Berkeley. The originals are part of Ramo Inquisición, Vol. 596, Archivo General de la Nación, México. Thanks to María Magdalena Coll and Project Director Dr. Jerry Craddock for this monumental work and for permission to use the transcript.
2. Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 96–7.
3. Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, "The Good and Evil of Chocolate in Colonial Mexico," in *Chocolate in Mesoamerica*, by Cameron L. McNeil (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009), 273–88.
4. Martha Few, "Chocolate, Sex, and Disorderly Women in Late-Seventeenth and Early-Eighteenth-Century Guatemala," *Ethnohistory* 52 (4, fall 2005): 673–68.

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Top: Unknown Artist, *Woman Carrying a Mancerina*, eighteenth century, glazed ceramic tile panel, Alcora, Valencia, Spain, 11¹³/₁₆ x 8⁵/₁₆ in. Courtesy Museo de Cerámica, Barcelona.