

Leftovers

By Ashley O'Neill Prado (they/them)

Growing up, I remember the two sides of my family being starkly different. On one side, everyone has brutally honest; opinions on what everyone else is doing, loud glam metal guitar riffs blare, and there is little to no privacy. This is contrasted by Minnesota niceties (with whispers of honesty behind your back), almost being TOO accepting, and always knocking on doors before entering.

These days, I see infinitely more commonalities than I had ever anticipated. I think this is because I stopped listening to what other people and society have always implied of my ethnically mixed background. Yes, I am weird, but not because I am Mexican AND Norwegian. Also, white people aren't better than brown people, and I refuse to use my white privilege to erase my brown culture. As the fogs of cultural assimilation and stereotyping part, I notice how both sides of my family enjoy a good drink (for better or worse), are bent on family traditions and telling the same long stories about old pictures, and most importantly, we all absolutely love family gatherings centering food and feast! It really is no wonder I love food so frickin much.

On my Norwegian side, we gather to make massive amounts of lefse, a traditional Norwegian specialty made from mostly potato. Think: a cross between a tortilla and a crepe. On my Mexican side, my great grandmother's tamal recipe is by far the most sought after dish. These are the foods of my ancestors, recipes passed down over generations, the rituals changing slightly with technology, but the processes remaining mostly the same. And no matter what, a homemade lefse or tamal ALWAYS tastes better.

Last week, I found myself reheating an assortment of leftovers; some yellow rice I made to last through the week, a hodgepodge of vegetables, and a big slice of pork my dad had made in the pressure cooker and that I had frozen with high hopes of eventually making it into tamales. As I cooked, I realized I was fresh out of tortillas.

I could just eat it with a fork. ..

but...maybe toast? No.

A last look in the fridge had me face to face with a Ziploc bag holding the last remaining lefse from a batch I had made a few days earlier with my grandmother.

Could I ... ? Ok, but should I? Yes.

And I did. It was so beautifully odd and delicious that I am still thinking about it on the regular.

The "Norwegian tortilla" was a few days old and barely held the rice, veggies, pork, and cholula innards intact as I demolished every last bite.