

CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Fifth session
Nairobi, Kenya
November 2010

NOMINATION FILE NO. 00400 FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN 2010

A. STATE(S) PARTY(IES)
<i>For multi-national nominations, States Parties should be listed in the order on which they have mutually agreed.</i>
Mexico
B. NAME OF THE ELEMENT
B.1. Name of the element in English or French
<i>This is the official name of the element that will appear in published material about the Representative List. It should be concise. Please do not exceed 200 characters, including spaces and punctuation. The name should be transcribed in Latin Unicode characters (Basic Latin, Latin-1 Supplement, Latin Extended-A or Latin Extended Additional).</i>
Traditional Mexican cuisine - ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm
B.2. Name of the element in the language and script of the community concerned, if applicable
<i>This is the official name of the element in the vernacular language corresponding to the official name in English or French (point B.1.). It should be concise. Please do not exceed 200 characters in Unicode (Latin or others), including spaces and punctuation.</i>
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B.3. Other name(s) of the element, if any

In addition to the official name(s) of the element (B.1.) please mention alternate name(s), if any, by which the element is known, in Unicode characters (Latin or others).

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C. CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ELEMENT**C.1. Identification of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned**

According to the 2003 Convention, intangible heritage can only be identified with reference to communities, groups or individuals that recognize it as part of their cultural heritage. Thus it is important to identify clearly one or several communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned with the nominated element. The information provided should allow the Committee to identify the communities, groups or individuals concerned with an element, and should be mutually coherent with the information in sections 1 to 5 below.

Collectives of cooks and other practitioners devoted to raising crops and rescuing traditional cuisine particularly in the midwestern state of Michoacán but also in preeminent areas of the states of Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Yucatán and other states in Mexico. The work carried out by female cooks in numerous communities in Michoacán comprises the central framework for this document, due to their participation in the design of the rescue model that needs to be applied to safeguard and promote local cuisines in other communities throughout the country. Particularly noteworthy projects established in that region of Michoacán, in midwestern Mexico, include Santa Fe de la Laguna, San Juan Nuevo, San Lorenzo, Tzurumútaró, Uranden, Oponguio, Calzontzin, Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro, San Francisco Úrico, Tarecuato, Janitzio, Chilchota and other lakeside villages, the Meseta Purépecha and the Cañada de los Once Pueblos (see attached map). The other hubs of culinary knowledge identified in the safeguard plan proposed in this initiative are in communities in other regions of the country (see attached map). It can be clearly stated that a rescue and safeguarding paradigm based on the participation of groups of collectives of cooks, producers and other practitioners has been created in Michoacán and can be applied by communities in different areas throughout the country, since the model has already proven to be efficient in the preservation and appreciation of traditional culinary community culture.

C.2. Geographic location and range of the element and location of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned

This section should identify the range of distribution of the element, indicating if possible the geographic locations in which it is centred. If related elements are practiced in neighbouring areas, please so indicate.

The rescue model is underway in the lake areas, the Meseta Purépecha, the Cañada de los Once Pueblos and other pockets within the state of Michoacán where traditions are highly conserved. The pilot plan will be applied in communities throughout the country identified as hubs of culinary knowledge in need of protective measures. These communities are classified (A, B, C) in the action plan included in this file. They also appear on the map indicating the type of actions required by the various communities, according to the problems and threats they face (see attached map).

C.3. Domain(s) represented by the element

Identify concisely the domain(s) of intangible cultural heritage manifested by the element, which might include one or more of the domains identified in Article 2.2 of the Convention. (This information will be used primarily for visibility, if the element is inscribed.)

Traditional cuisine in Michoacán and other communities in the country has been preserved since ancient times through oral transmission of skills and knowledge between generations; through symbiosis among cookery, cosmogony and environment, and also due to its essential role in the complex cultural system encompassing rituals, ceremonies and celebrations that is a powerful factor in social cohesion and national identity. The key moments in the natural group and individual lifecycle –birth and death, community, festive or labor activity– are closely related with cooking and turned into an expressive focus for artistic and artisanal creativity and the rest of the cultural network.

D. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENT

The brief description of the element will be particularly helpful in allowing the Committee to know at a glance what element is being proposed for inscription, and, in the event of inscription, will be used for purposes of visibility. It should be a summary of the description provided in point 1 below but is not an introduction to that longer description.

Traditional Mexican cuisine –and in this case, the Michoacán paradigm– is an integral part of the ancient cultural system based on corn, beans and chili. This trilogy, along with numerous other associated original crops, has been a communal diet and at the core of ritual and ceremonial life. It is related to secular practices and techniques –sometimes millenary– that are still in use, such as nixtamalization (cooking process that increases corn's nutritional value). Likewise, unique farming methods like the milpa (self-sustainable field of corn and other crops) and chinampa (man-made farming islets in lake areas), as well as singular utensils including metate grinding stones and molcajete stone mortars, are still in general use. Besides its originality, its ancestral, collective and communitarian nature, clearly observable in the traditional cooks project in the highly-preserved Michoacán areas, presented herein, makes its preservation imperative. That wise system encouraged the development of great Mesoamerican civilizations and its continuation ensures ongoing historic continuity in both indigenous and ethnically mixed communities. Protecting it involves reviving products, procedures and techniques through transfer of knowledge and insertion in circuits of sustainable development. There is a pressing need to transfer the model in place in Michoacán to hubs of traditional culinary knowledge in communities experiencing similar circumstances and threats.

1. IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITION OF THE ELEMENT (CF. CRITERION R.1)

This is the key section of the nomination to satisfy criterion R.1: “The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention”. A clear and complete explanation is essential to demonstrate that the nominated element meets the Convention’s definition of intangible heritage. This section should address all the significant features of the element as it exists at present, and should include:

- a. an explanation of its social and cultural functions and meanings today, within and for its community,*
- b. the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners of the element,*
- c. any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities towards the element,*
- d. the current modes of transmission of the knowledge and skills related to the element.*

The Committee should receive sufficient information to determine:

- a. that the element is among the “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith —”;*
- b. “that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize [it] as part of their cultural heritage”;*
- c. that it is being “transmitted from generation to generation, [and] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history”;*
- d. that it provides communities and groups involved with “a sense of identity and continuity”; and*
- e. that it is not incompatible with “existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development”.*

Overly technical descriptions should be avoided and submitting States should keep in mind that this section must explain the element to readers who have no prior knowledge or direct experience of it. Nomination files need not address in detail the history of the element, or its origin or antiquity.

Traditional Mexican cuisine is a comprehensive cultural model comprising farming, ritual practices, age-old skills, culinary techniques and ancestral community customs and manners, whose deeply embedded roots continue to be vital in the 21st century. The system has put food on the Mexican table for thousands of years and continues retaining authenticity –a desire not to falsify the roots–, meaning that communities still prepare food using the time-tested methods. This is made possible by collective participation –illustrated here by the female cooks in the Michoacán project– in the entire traditional food chain: from planting and harvesting to cooking and eating.

Within community life, eating tends to maintain a sacred nature related to the cosmos and the gods (as among the Huichol today) or the Christian God (like St. Isidore the Farmer’s Day). The act of cooking plays such a fundamental role in the life of the group, comprising the most revered local and national heritage, a legacy handed down through the generations since corn was first domesticated. (See live testimonies of traditional cooking encounters in Michoacán).

The milpa, where corn grows protecting other crops in the same furrows, is a complex ecosystem whose plants share nutrients. This farming method adapts to all climates and is environmentally friendly, because the interaction among the plants naturally staves off pests and weeds while the spent plants compost the soil after the harvest.

This bespeaks the all-embracing dimension of the dietary pattern, described in this document through the Michoacán model, and prevailing since antiquity across national territory. It also explains why historically, eating corn, beans and chili peppers (all autochthonous ingredients domesticated thousands of years ago) has always been the most powerful factor of Mexican cultural identity observable in Mexican hubs of cultural concentration, as in Michoacán. The example is profusely illustrated in this file.

The entirety of prevailing practices and customs associated with traditional Michoacán cuisine now constitutes one of the most dynamic manifestations of Mexico's rich intangible heritage, far surpassing the mere dietary, nutritional and gastronomical aspects.

The extensive variety of dishes communities make is a reflection of the wide diversity of cultures and geographic biodiversity. Within Michoacán are manifestations of meseta, coast, lake zone and other regions with vast dietary diversity. Yet despite the variety, the basic structure of corn, beans and chili pepper is unalterable, remaining the trunk from which a myriad of highly nuanced dishes from the country's complex gastronomical wealth branch off. All sorts of native ingredients are added to the basic trinity, among them an array of types of tomatoes, squashes, avocados, cocoa and vanilla.

Along with these ingredients, vernacular techniques and usages stand out that actually revolutionized their nutritional benefits. Nixtamalization, a case in point, pre-cooks corn with lime, making the grain that is the basis of the Mexican diet more digestible and nutritious for human consumption. The process reflects the very birth of Mexican culinary culture and has provided a healthy balanced diet for its peoples for thousands of years.

To this day, the native peoples conceive the universe in terms of food. Humankind was shaped from corn, and food is the vehicle for interaction between people and the deities, as well as with the rest of the community. Ritual and ceremonial offerings always eloquently focus on local foods, while also implying an equally powerful way to demonstrate reciprocity among the living and between them and their ancestors.

The daily tortillas and the tamales, both made of corn, provide the prime support for one of the most elaborate and symbol-laden gastronomic systems that live on in local and regional kitchens (for example, their unwavering inclusion on Day of the Dead offerings in homes and cemeteries, on the very tombs of the departed, as happens overwhelmingly in Michoacán). There, as in other regions in the country, awareness is increasing as to the fundamental role of the nation's cultural heritage and represented by traditional cuisine, not only as a legacy and model but as a means of sustainable development. This model encompasses ancestral rituals and customs, products, uses, expressions, knowledge and techniques, as well as uniquely particular implements and utensils that express community identity. The Don Vasco Route, a socio-cultural development project operating in Michoacán, showcases the realization of the goals set forth in this file: to safeguard the intangible heritage through collective memory conservation, transmitting knowledge and creating infrastructure for community development in this realm.

Recovery of traditional Mexican and Michoacán cuisine means not losing effective ancestral customs such as the generalized consumption of corn and other produce grown in the milpa. At the same time, across the immense territory that houses the broad diversity of Mexican cultures, as occurs in Michoacán, in those places where traditional culinary practices are carried out with more notably vibrant authenticity, their ongoing use must be retained, despite the invasion of other customs and the battering of the market, which generally breaks down the traditional system without contributing healthy benefits to the community.

Safeguarding traditional cuisine is not a pretentious whim of gastronomes and specialists but an urgent necessity with social and economic implications. Understood as a cultural system in which nature, agriculture and culture; customs, manners, ritual and spiritual life; social cohesion and community bonds, and national identity are all interrelated, a people's lifestyle depends on eating patterns.

To salvage this culinary system as a unit, concentrated efforts must be made in communities in Michoacán and other hubs of culinary knowledge: Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, Huasteca, Valle de México and other community enclaves equally in need of protective measures. They must be specific actions inspired by accomplishments made by the safeguard pilot project of traditional cooks in Michoacán proposed here.

**2. CONTRIBUTION TO ENSURING VISIBILITY AND AWARENESS AND TO ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE
(CF. CRITERION R.2)**

The nomination should demonstrate (Criterion R.2) that "Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity".

Please explain how the element's inscription on the Representative List will contribute to ensuring visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and will raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of its importance. This section need not address how inscription will bring greater visibility to the element, but how its inscription will contribute to the visibility of intangible cultural heritage more broadly.

Explain how inscription will promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity, and will promote mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals.

Traditional Mexican cuisine –that of Michoacán as an example– is a vital element in the ongoing development of a nation that has managed to perfect it throughout its history. Inscription on the Representative List of Intangible World Heritage thus takes on strategic importance to the extent that it contributes to assuring continued vitality and use. By extolling their qualities and spotlighting their advantages over exogenous dietary models, the communities that follow traditional culinary models actually defend a comprehensive cultural system fundamentally expressed through dietary customs. These communities also admirably manifest the self-esteem and values upheld by a structure anchored in reciprocity and collective work.

Recognition of traditional Mexican cuisine, by means of the example of Michoacán, entails accepting the specifics of a culture whose singularity is distinguished by a 7,000-year history; original farming crops such as corn, beans and chili peppers that have remained strong national staple foods, displaying amazing historic continuity; food's everlasting identification with communities' religious, ritual and ceremonial dimension, and its ability to reinforce social bonds and build a stronger local, regional and national identity. This turns it into a major factor of cultural diversity on the world scene and an example of the strength of self-identity, as well as interaction with other culinary cultures.

It is essential to preserve the unique culinary heritage of Michoacán and other Mexican communities to maintain the relevant distinctive features of a native culture with specific traits, able to contribute to intercultural dialog, that is now, more than ever, necessary within the framework of worldwide cultural diversity. Failing to undertake measures to safeguard those singularly distinctive manifestations, as undertaken by the Michoacán model –and applicable to the rest of the local culinary hubs and globally–, they will be destined to join the ranks of undifferentiated food. This file is, consequently, clearly a valuable contribution to communicating the importance of a living, vital heritage through concrete safeguarding methodologies, such as those applied in the Michoacán case.

Assuring visibility of demonstrably effective culinary customs that have kept a nation well fed throughout time further means preserving the sustaining cultural system. This will be achieved by preventing breakdown between food production and preparation, as well as through respect for the means of environmental management already established and farming practices that have historically proven their self-sustaining capacity. Observing culinary customs in Michoacán may suffice.

Including traditional Mexican cuisine, and its Michoacán paradigm, on the Representative List will increase appreciation of the specific elements that distinguish those culinary traditions in local communities that have achieved remarkable creativity in preparing food from the diversity of crops and products at their disposal. In this sense, and based on the Michoacán cooks program, it is necessary to proceed to rescue and safeguard products, procedures, recipes, techniques, skills, traditions and knowledge in every region where community cooking know-how maintains its vitality, despite being exposed to the risk of losing its culture-specific traits due to globalization. Local cuisines are one factor that incites intercultural respect and recognition nationally and internationally.

Consequently, a cuisine, like that in Michoacán, interwoven with community life and the cultural network that preserves it, requires all the appropriate ways and means to safeguard and develop it for the future. Designing suitable policies and actions will, therefore, enable its protection and provide visibility to means that illustrate the importance of intangible heritage preservation globally.

This is not a utopian pipedream: the already fruitful Michoacán model must be applied to other regions. Inscribing Mexico's traditional cuisine on the Representative List will push that purpose forward tremendously via an action plan founded on the premises expounded throughout this document. The goal is to make the most of that element of intangible heritage inclined like few others to strengthen dialog across the culturally diverse world map.

Visibility of the Michoacán program, achieved by carrying out concrete development projects based on agricultural production and cooks' skills, enables envisioning the viable reactivation of the broad productive chains that work in conjunction with culinary activities in other regions. Increased production brings more jobs, improved training and education requirements, growth in cultural tourism and, on the whole, better quality of life to the communities.

The visibility effect readily evident in the Michoacán Female Traditional Cooks Project can be reproduced in other enclaves where culinary customs subsist that are essential for the survival of the peoples who practice them. Areas throughout Mexico and elsewhere that are facing serious problems need to be spotlighted. Threats include environmental deterioration, lack of farming incentives, chronic emigration and broken families. Despite some breakdown within the cultural system, it has managed to retain its traditional essence thanks to customs related to food preparation and consumption still widely observed by some of the groups that have the most basic kitchen facilities.

Visibility of those enclaves is the factor that will set off action to gradually apply measures highlighting the importance of the intangible culinary heritage in other communities with similar living conditions. The concrete action plan proposes a prioritized order for carrying out projects in the hubs of culinary knowledge (Priorities 1, 2 and 3 on the map).

The methodology followed in Michoacán has led to actions that encourage socioeconomic development and exchange of knowledge, as well as dialog among different communities and cultures. The influence of the Michoacán project can, therefore, be observed in other Latin American regions that have created a network for delving into and expanding the preservation model for such cuisines.

3. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES (CF. CRITERION R.3)

Items 3.a. to 3.c. request the elaboration of a coherent set of safeguarding measures as called for in Criterion R.3: "Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element". Such measures should reflect the broadest possible participation of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned, both in their formulation and in their implementation.

3.a. Current and recent efforts to safeguard the element

Please describe the current and recent efforts of the concerned communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals to ensure the viability of the element. Describe efforts of the concerned State(s) Party(ies) to safeguard the element, taking note of external or internal constraints, such as limited resources.

The Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture, an NGO and UNESCO consultant, hosted six congresses, in an organized approach to rescuing and promoting traditional cuisine, supporting research projects on production of native foodstuffs and assessment of local cuisines as an essential element of the intangible cultural heritage. The state of Campeche produced "Traditional Cuisine as Cultural Heritage: Criteria and Definitions", a document with recommendations by Mexico and South American and European countries (submitted to UNESCO): promotion of public policies supporting traditional cuisines, native dietary resources and their relationship to the environment, development programs based on culinary heritage and

dietary transversality in sustainable development; inclusion and protection of traditional cuisines in tourism routes. Another outstanding action is the 55-title collection on indigenous cuisine in Mexico (La Cocina Popular e Indígena de los Pueblos de México), among other safeguarding initiatives. It was at the 1999-2005 Puebla meetings, though, where the need for systematic rescue of cuisines within the context of their cultural origins was highlighted. Direct contact and communication was made between experts and academics and traditional cooks working in rural and urban communities: the rootstock and backbone that keep traditional cuisine alive. A methodical approach was also made to defining that cookery as an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. But the community-backed incorporation of the cooks clearly creates new leadership in the defense of that heritage, making the difference in rescuing their living roots.

The Michoacán project came about to specifically attack the problem, whose social characteristics and communal customs have enabled constructing –with full participation of the cooks– a model that can protect and create appreciation for other systems for communities with similar heritage.

Since 2004, the Michoacán Traditional Cooks Project has been focused on theoretical and practical aspects of gastronomies considered as a cultural system, turning into a test bank for building the pilot plan. Organized by the Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture and the Michoacán state government, it places community cooks in leading roles at the center of the process. Annual meetings are organized to exchange experiences and information about activities that are carried out throughout the year. During that interannual period, infrastructure construction for the public realm is planned, leading to the conditions necessary for cooks to be able to pass their knowledge on to younger generations and their own family members. Therefore, plans are drawn up for sustainable marketing of products and training courses given to the tourism sector along culinary heritage routes. The creation of small food companies is promoted through training in several fields. Publicizing such actions makes the cooks' traditional knowledge visible at home and abroad. The achievements and prospects of Michoacán's Traditional Cooks Project have turned it into a true lever for community development, and its start-up is expected in other culinary hubs.

3.b. Safeguarding measures proposed

For the Representative List, the safeguarding measures are those that may help to solidify the element's current viability and to ensure that its viability is not jeopardized in the future, especially as an unintended result of inscription and the resulting visibility and public attention.

Identify and describe the various safeguarding measures that are elaborated that may, if implemented, protect and promote the element, and provide brief information concerning, for example, their priority, scope, approaches, timetables, responsible persons or bodies, and costs.

Inscribing Traditional Mexican Cuisine and its Michoacán paradigm on the Representative List of Intangible World Heritage will surely further the efforts to perpetuate an intricate yet vital heritage asset within those communities where it lives on. Protective measures, though, are inevitably needed to counter all kinds of obstacles: cultural, environmental, agricultural, commercial and other issues linked to structural changes in the domestic and international framework.

Traditional cuisine, with the cultural underpinnings that protect it, calls for a programmatic framework that guarantees the continuity of indigenous and rural community traditions, expressed through customs and culinary products that have historically supported the life of groups within their natural context.

Based on the regionalization illustrated on the map of Mexico, with the major hubs of culinary knowledge, the model program applied in Michoacán, is proposed as an action plan toward safeguarding the traditional cuisine of numerous communities nationwide, using the criteria of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as a reference. Thanks to it, conditions started to appear that are conducive to governmental and non-governmental institutions and other actors committing to safeguarding the intangible heritage and, within that context, traditional culinary heritage.

The Michoacán Model highlights an imperative need to meet the challenges by adopting

measures already used in the field: rescuing traditions, farming and culinary practices, technical and administrative training and insertion in economic circuits that encourage local development. It is also necessary to protect traditional crops and products, consolidate programs to spread knowledge regarding hygienic food handling and respond to tourism demand without altering the cultural context, characterized by adherence to customs and working as a community.

The project calls for the cooks from the communities in Michoacán and their families to attend the Annual Encounter and present their specialty dishes. With everyone dressed in the traditional outfits they wear every day, work teams made up of mothers, grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters divide up the highly codified tasks. They decorate their stands as if they were their own kitchens; build a stone and clay hearth; arrange their utensils and equipment, handcrafted table and pantry and, with all that done, set to cooking. An essential aspect of every occasion, aesthetics are always respected, in or out of the home. Cooks further participate in conferences and courses that also benefit local and foreign visitors, who attend to observe and learn traditional practices. The encounter represents the culmination of ongoing program work that includes courses, workshops, demonstrations and other activities throughout the year. In 2009, the establishment of several eateries was noteworthy in Santa Fe de la Laguna, Tzurumútaró, Tzintzuntzan, Pátzcuaro and other communities in the Purépecha zone (See map).

The Action Plan necessitates that government at all levels, NGOs, private and public institutions and international organizations cooperate in undertaking a complex, strongly heritage-based initiative that incorporates all aspects of development.

Safeguarding Plan

Priority A

- Michoacán: Designed by the Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture and the communities themselves in association with the Don Vasco Cultural and Tourism Route project, the program proposes to continue setting up small enterprises and providing training in business administration, hygiene and marketing. Objective: to develop and perfect the Traditional Cooks model that will be applied to the rest of the country's culinary hubs. Duration: Two years. Cost: Four hundred thousand U.S. dollars.

- Other culinary hubs with a high degree of conservation within community life and in need of measures to overcome serious challenges: to rescue indigenous cuisines, carry out inventories, train, develop and propagate small businesses. Objective: integration into local development circuits. Location: Oaxaca, Puebla, the Huasteca Region (Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Veracruz), Chiapas, Yucatán, Campeche, Tabasco and the Valley of Mexico.

Priority B

- Culinary hubs with a good level of authenticity and conservation but in need of recognition and self-assessment through community aid projects, safeguarding of recipes and practices, research and studies of local food chains. Objective: to position cuisines so they are promoted and contribute to the cultural and economic development of the localities. Location: Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima, Sinaloa, the Bajío Region (Guanajuato and Querétaro), Durango, Zacatecas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala and Morelos.

Priority C

- Sites in need of assessment and rescue measures by means of memory and traditional knowledge recall, research and knowledge transmission. Objective: recovery of self-esteem; identity values and appreciation of local cuisines. Location: Quintana Roo, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Aguascalientes.

Responsible Organizations:

The Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture is fully in charge of carrying out the action plan based on the Michoacán model and adapted to the specifics of each site. It, together with government officials, educational and research institutions and local NGOs, will aid the communities involved. General objectives: For category A, actions are aimed especially at encouraging inter-community organization, since, given the similarities to the Michoacán case, existing programs can be easily adapted. Additionally, all the states in the country are being urged to declare their local cuisine an Intangible Cultural Heritage subject to protective

measures, just as Oaxaca already has. As for categories B and C, during the first two-year period, the programs' first step will be to categorize and diagnose each site's features and then develop corresponding community-specific programs of action for them. Duration: Two-year programs are proposed in all cases. Cost: calculated in accord with the provisions for Michoacán but referenced to the particularities of each case.

3.c. Commitment of communities, groups or individuals concerned

The feasibility of safeguarding depends in large part on the aspirations and commitment of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned. This section should provide evidence that the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned have the will and commitment to safeguard the element if conditions are favourable. The best evidence will often be an explanation of their involvement in past and ongoing safeguarding measures and of their participation in the formulation and implementation of future safeguarding measures, rather than simple pledges or affirmations of their support or commitment.

The communities involved in the Michoacán Traditional Cooks Project have participated from 2004 to 2009 in a program that includes annual gatherings, as well as demonstrations and educational and business training activities developed throughout the year. The cooks attend the gatherings, where they interact with experts, culinary professionals, food producers, other groups and institutions that share an interest in preserving and safeguarding the culinary framework. The cooks' clear commitment is readily evident in the practical activities, as well as those dealing with future project development planning. The most recent evidence of their dedication is seen in the appendix material documenting the latest encounter, held on December 3-6, 2009 in Morelia, Michoacán. The appendix also contains the Declaration of Traditional Cooks for the Recognition of Traditional Cuisine from Michoacán as Intangible Cultural Heritage. It further includes signatures of many representatives from the various communities and audio-visual materials giving eloquent testimony to the degree of community involvement in the process, which to date, provides the best evidence of the results presented in this file.

3.d. Commitment of State(s) Party(ies)

The feasibility of safeguarding also depends on the support and cooperation of the concerned State(s) Party(ies). This section should provide evidence that the State Party concerned has the commitment to support the safeguarding effort by creating favourable conditions for its implementation and should describe how the State Party has previously and will in the future demonstrate such commitment. Declarations or pledges of support are less informative than explanations and demonstrations.

Attached to this file are support statements from state and local governments, academic institutions, ONGs, individuals and professionals who have participated in the Michoacán project and now back expanding the pilot program, statements of local cuisines as cultural heritage, as well as adherence to the program described in the action plan within this proposal.

4. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT IN THE NOMINATION PROCESS (CF. CRITERION R.4)

This section asks the submitting State Party to establish that the nomination satisfies Criterion R.4: 'The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent'.

4.a. Participation of communities, groups and individuals in the nomination process

Describe how and in what ways the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have participated actively in the nomination process at all stages, as required by Criterion R.4. States Parties are further encouraged to prepare nominations with the participation of a wide variety of other concerned parties, including where appropriate local and regional governments, neighbouring communities, NGOs, research institutes, centres of expertise and other interested parties. The participation of communities in the practice and transmission of the element should be addressed in point 1 above, and their participation in safeguarding should be addressed in point 3; here the submitting State should describe the widest possible participation of communities in the nomination process.

Since 2004, the Michoacán Traditional Cooks Project represents the most important field experiment on which to build the case for nominating Traditional Mexican Cuisine to the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible World Heritage. Starting with the work done by the communities themselves, the process has evolved in conjunction with numerous initiatives aimed at researching and promoting traditional cuisine undertaken by public and private institutions. Outstanding among them are Mexico's National University, the Claustro de Sor Juana University and cultural, tourism, and social development agencies in a number of state governments. Culinary groups and creators have joined forces with the institutions to organize encounters, congresses, courses and other projects key to fashioning a theoretical foundation on which to build the argument in favor of traditional Mexican cuisine.

Noteworthy at the congresses in Puebla, direct precursor to the Michoacán Cooks Project, was the involvement of individual practitioners, groups and representatives of communities that participated in the initial formulations that would lead to the creation of a specific project to deal with the specific problems of traditional culinary culture. One outcome of those congresses is the series of 14 Cuadernos sobre Patrimonio Cultural, Desarrollo y Turismo (Notebooks on Cultural Heritage, Development and Tourism), published by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, containing the practical and theoretical work done in the field, between 1999 and 2005.

Besides Michoacán, several entities, such as Campeche, Oaxaca, Puebla and the Federal District, have initiated similar projects aimed at rescue, sensitization and promotion. The exemplary results of such cook-centered initiatives are essentially due to the authenticity of practices and experiences in harmony with the communities' environmental surroundings.

From the outset, the commitment of the women in the Traditional Cooks Project was expressed enthusiastically by participating in preparing the intangible cultural heritage case. Concurrently, they have begun other development initiatives by founding food and lodging businesses –always with community participation– in Santa Fe de la Laguna, Tzurumútar, Tzintzuntzan, Zirahuén

and other heritage sites along the Don Vasco Route. This cultural development and tourism project is inspired in the work of 16th-century Spanish humanist Vasco de Quiroga, who left a highly social and cultural legacy through his foundations, which continues to bear fruit today. The most visible part of that community organization lies in multiple handicrafts and collective lifestyles, including food-related customs.

Cooks have become decidedly involved in this project based on the free and informed consent of community members, who essentially coincide with the objectives of safeguarding their traditions and customary practices. An attached document signed by members of several communities, attests to their commitment.

At different stages in the project, cooks from various towns have come up with a broad spectrum of highly original dishes as varied as the places they come from and the degree of their creativity. A few are listed, in their original indigenous language –mostly Purépecha and Náhuatl–, since that is how they are identified (with their respective glossary attached) in gastronomic settings outside of the region: cabbage, nopal cactus pad, meat and cheese atápakuas and turkas; all sorts of corundas; harvest, wedding and fiesta churipos; a similar assortment of xandúcatas; ash or lard charicurundas; many kinds of huchepos, tamales and papákatas; red and green mole and pipián sauces, made with an array of chili peppers; all kinds of hominy and even bean pozoles; a rainbow of colored corn tortillas; atole corn gruels and drinks, and singular pastries and breads.

This short list of dishes from an area comprising only a tiny fraction of the vast Mexican territory gives some indication of the vitality and diversity of culinary culture throughout the country. Efforts to preserve the cuisine in this small area have been met with convincing community support for courses on sanitary food handling, oral transmission of dietary culture or know-how, discussing problems they face in defending the purity of their traditions and finding ways to overcome their isolation and paralysis of activities, which are in need of greater spaces to expand and develop.

In this vein, the joint promotional work of government and private agencies, NGOs and experts with the cooks is aimed at broadening perspectives and creating joint commitments that reinforce the sound arguments for inclusion on the UNESCO Representative List.

At the same time, all the parties are committed to starting up the Action Plan as a means to achieving the objective of protecting Mexico's traditional culinary cultural heritage by rescuing, safeguarding and promoting it.

4.b. Free, prior and informed consent to the nomination

The free, prior and informed consent to the nomination of the element from the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned may be demonstrated through written or recorded concurrence, or through other means, according to the legal regimens of the State Party and the infinite variety of communities and groups concerned. The Committee will welcome a broad range of demonstrations or attestations of community consent in preference to standard or uniform declarations..

Please attach supporting evidence demonstrating such consent and indicate below what evidence you are providing and what form it takes.

Testimonies from the communities confirm that, since 2004, the cooks' efforts to promote Michoacán's cuisine have brought notable progress. This tangibly effective preservation of culinary heritage and sustainable community development has been realized by a coalition of forces, including most prominently the women of the communities, state government agencies and food and gastronomy experts and professionals.

Coincidentally, the Michoacán Traditional Cuisine Project's progress and the preparations for filing for UNESCO nomination helped spread the word about the Michoacán cooks among gastronomic circles in Mexico and abroad. Such an accomplishment bespeaks the authenticity of the cooks' practices and their manner of communicating their skills and know-how, congruent with a way of life based on sustainability and faithfulness to their cultural and natural surroundings.

Traditional cuisine's link with handicraft creation, cultural landscapes and environmental concerns is one of the intrinsic emblems of each community's identity. Thus, with their distinct yet shared features, all of them together make for a flourishing cuisine throughout the country. Certain communities, towns and cities stand out for their assiduous commitment to the Michoacán Project's diverse stages: San Lorenzo, Angahuan, Zacán, Charapan, Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro, San Salvador Combutzio, San Ángel Zurumucapiuo, Chilchota, Acachen, Santo Tomás, Huáncito, Carapan, Acachén, Cherán, Aranza, Paracho, Santa Clara del Cobre, Janitzio, Opongui, Tzurumútaró, Cuanajo, Tarerio, Tzintzuntzan, Quiroga, Santa Fe de la Laguna, Erongarícuaro, San Jerónimo Purenchécharo, Urandén, Ziracuaretiro, Uruapan, Coahuayana, Zitácuaro, Ciudad Hidalgo, Apatzingán, Zamora, Cuitzeo, Playa Jardín, Playa Eréndira, Caleta de Campos and other places in the state.

Despite the anonymity of culinary work, among the many undertakings fostered by the project, certain cooks have mobilized their families and participated so outstandingly that they have received recognition, awards, backing for their own enterprises and even work-related trips within Mexico and abroad. Special mention goes to Benedicta Alejo Vargas, Margarita Morales, Gloria Mejía, Antonina González, Timotea Cervantes, Victoria Cervantes, Juana Bravo, Basilia Amescua, Carmen Vidales, Berta Alicia Cruz, Ángeles Alfaro, Incolaza Isidro Chávez, Vitalina Gallardo, Genoveva Alejo and many others. Male cooks from places renowned for their traditional gastronomy have also participated.

It must be emphasized that community members have, at all times and in keeping with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, expressed their free and informed consent to seek to strengthen culinary customs as a cultural means to achieving socioeconomic development.

Explicitly and implicitly, the primary custodians of Mexico's traditional culinary heritage are and will continue being its cooks, insofar as safeguarding measures are fully incorporated into their communities' way of life. Nevertheless, these rescue and safeguard measures necessarily require backing in the form of mechanisms and plans that, after much research and discussion, end up acknowledging traditional cuisines as an essential element in a people's cultural heritage.

Attached is the Declaration of Traditional Cooks for the Recognition of Traditional Cuisine from Michoacán as Intangible Cultural Heritage signed by the major representatives of the communities participating in the Michoacán communities program.

4.c. Respect for customary practices governing access

Access to certain specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage is sometimes restricted by customary practices governing, for example, its transmission or performance or maintaining the secrecy of certain knowledge. Please indicate if such practices exist and, if they do, demonstrate that inscription of the element and implementation of the safeguarding measures would fully respect such customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage (cf. Article 13 of the Convention). Describe any specific measures that might need to be taken to ensure such respect.

Since it began, the Michoacán state government's departments of culture and tourism, in association with the San Nicolás de Hidalgo Michoacana University and other educational institutions have provided their committed support to the Traditional Cooks Project, for its valuable contribution to the defense of the state's cultural heritage. It and other initiatives attempt to contribute to community development, adopting the premise of respect for customs, especially when a community's dietary system has been exposed to external forces such as business and tourism, which, while benefiting its social welfare on the one hand, may also endanger the community's authentic heritage.

To face these challenges and achieve the objectives of the Traditional Cooks Project for local, regional and national social and economic development, access to the customs-based culinary heritage must be backed by educational, training and sensitizing programs and plans. Such programs must, in turn, be well linked to the country's other socioeconomic development sectors. Interdisciplinary methods must be used to illustrate the implications of a deficient

respect for cultural heritage, seeking above all to improve a people's living conditions, while not denigrating its original traits.

Protecting and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is a necessary pre-condition to enabling future generations to adopt appropriately respectful attitudes toward community culinary customs and practices.

In this context, the objectives of the Don Vasco Route project, comprising cultural itineraries to the foundations established by Vasco de Quiroga, are informative. The eminently social and cultural work accomplished by the 16th-century Spanish humanist is still flourishing nearly 400 years later, thanks in large part to his community organization around guilds and trades, particularly handicrafts, and which are still fully operating and providing people with a viable living. Before opening the route to tourism, a series of arrangements had to be made, such as providing information to the major figures, in other words the cooks, but also the tourism network operators and students. It was also necessary to raise tourist consciousness so as not to belittle the authentic native traits of the communities included on it or others with similar features. Since traditional cuisine is a major aspect of the cultural tour, those in charge of the project have promoted a program of lodging and eateries that allows cooks to work within their field and improve the conditions in which they can offer their dishes without affecting their authenticity.

The core steps taken by the program to safeguard and promote traditional Michoacán cuisine are perfectly applicable to other regions in Mexico whose historically rooted dietary systems are similarly challenged. Consequently, initiatives inspired in this model that has already been developed and proven effective in responding to such threats, must be encouraged.

Including Traditional Mexican Cuisine on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity will enable the Michoacán cooks' experience to deepen and broaden, while also replicating the model throughout Mexico's culturally and geographically diverse territory, wherever communities are facing similar threats and difficulties in defending their cultural heritage and especially their traditional cuisine. Now is the time to take appropriately respectful steps to assure that communities that have and are re-creating it continue to harmoniously express their cultural and natural diversity.

For Mexico, defending its traditional cuisine takes on strategic and transcendental meaning. Safeguarding it can be made viable, becoming a powerful engine for sustainable development thanks to UNESCO recognition of its cultural worth.

5. INCLUSION OF THE ELEMENT IN AN INVENTORY (CF. CRITERION R.5)

This section is where the State Party establishes that the nomination satisfies Criterion R.5: "The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) as defined in Articles 11 and 12".

Identify the inventory in which the element has been included and the office, agency, organization or body responsible for maintaining that inventory. Demonstrate that the inventory has been drawn up in conformity with Articles 11 and 12, in particular Article 11(b) that stipulates that intangible cultural heritage shall be identified and defined "with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations" and Article 12 requiring that inventories be regularly updated.

The nominated element's inclusion in an inventory should not in any way imply or require that the inventory(ies) should have been completed prior to nomination. Rather, a submitting State Party may be in the process of completing or updating one or more inventories, but has already duly included the nominated element on an inventory-in-progress.

The Mexican government signed the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2005. Its commitment has been expressed through its support of institutional and community initiatives to inscribe intangible cultural heritage elements on the Representative List, as well as on the Urgent Safeguarding List.

For this reason, the Working Group for the Promotion and Safeguarding of Mexico's Intangible Cultural Heritage was created (2002). It put together an initial estimated inventory of intangible cultural heritage elements in 2008. "Traditional Cuisine in Mexican Culture" was inscribed on that

inventory as a heritage asset subject to protection by the Mexican government.

Strategies and procedural methods had to be specified prior to creating the Inventory. Concepts and criteria needed to be defined and methodology established that would enable identifying pertinent cultural items, indicating how and what information to gather and also deciding what portion of the information should actually go into the Inventory, in light of the fact that it must satisfactorily reflect the necessity of the subject in question being evaluated and acknowledged as an intangible cultural heritage.

The Work Team had, therefore, to encompass culturally attuned, competently skilled and trained individuals with backgrounds in the various fields, practices, uses, history and traditional customs, as well as cultural knowledge and skills, so as to contribute to the mission's greatest accomplishment, collecting all the expressions and manifestations that represent the country's cultural groups.

Consequently, the main tasks of the Committee of Specialists formed are:

- Designing the Inventory's conceptual foundation;
- Developing methodological instruments to identify and register the intangible cultural heritage;
- Evaluating the information gathered for its inclusion in the Inventory and recommending the best organization and systematization framework.
- Consulting in the development of complete files and safeguarding plans.

Throughout the work year, criteria to conceptually structure the Inventory as well as the framework for classifying Mexico's Intangible Cultural Heritage were defined within the strictures outlined by the Convention yet aligning them with Mexico's cultural reality. It should be noted that the specialists were chosen based on anthropological experience in the communities, meaning that they had to have a solid academic foundation seasoned with sensitivity obtained from direct contact with the heritage bearers; a combination of competencies to bring about systematization of the Intangible Cultural Heritage with which the communities could identify and feel represented.

Furthermore, an Inventory data registry card was devised which attends to the aspects required by the UNESCO Representative List Nomination Form, along with other key factors for safeguarding and tracking, such as the historical process and the current detailed evolution of the element in question.

The data card for "Traditional Mexican Cuisine: Authentic, Ancestral and Ongoing Community Culture", along with all the 245 registries in the Mexican Intangible Cultural Heritage obtained to date, was formulated by researchers and specialists in the various Intangible Cultural Heritage environs, who merely systematized the information gathered from direct fieldwork with the heritage bearers and practitioners. Their work is documented in audio and video recordings.

Presently, the state outposts of the General Office of Popular Cultures (CONACULTA) are conducting workshops and seminars on the importance of intangible cultural heritage and training community cultural disseminators so that they can function as guides in their respective communities and be the ones to formulate the Inventory data cards.

DOCUMENTATION

a. Required and supplementary documentation

Required documentation provided.

b. Cession of rights including registry of items

Required cession of rights provided.

c. List of additional resources
<p>Bartolomé, Miguel A. "El mundo maya del maíz", en Susana González Aktories (coord.), <i>Rituales del maíz</i>, Artes de México, núm. 78, 2006.</p> <p>Benítez, Ana M. <i>Cocina prehispánica</i>. México, Euroamericanas, 1974.</p> <p>Brandes, Stanley. "La comida ceremonial en Tzintzuntzan", en <i>América Indígena</i>, vol. XLVIII, núm. 3, julio-septiembre de 1988.</p> <p>Carrasco, David. "Cosmic Jaws: We Eat the Gods and the Gods Eat Us", en <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>, vol. 63, núm. 3, otoño, 1995.</p> <p>Casillas C., Leticia E. y Luis Alberto Vargas, "La alimentación entre los mexicanos", en Fernando Martínez Cortés (ccord.). <i>Historia general de la medicina en México</i>, tomo 1, 1984.</p> <p>CONACULTA. <i>Pueblo de maíz. La Cocina Ancestral de México. Ritos, Ceremonias y Prácticas Culturales de la Cocina de los Mexicanos</i>. Expediente técnico para la postulación como Obra Maestra del Patrimonio Oral e Inmaterial de la Humanidad de la UNESCO. Gloria López Morales (dirección editorial), Sol Rubín de la Borbolla (coord. Editorial), José Hernández Reyes (editor responsable), CONACULTA, 2004.</p> <p>García Acosta, Virginia. <i>Los señores del maíz. Tecnología alimentaria en Mesoamérica</i>. México, CONACULTA/Pangea, 1990.</p> <p>Good Eshelman, Catherine. <i>Comida y vida ritual en la construcción de la identidad mesoamericana</i>. Ponencia a la XXVIII Mesa Redonda de la Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 10 de agosto de 2007.</p> <p>Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. <i>Atlas cultural de México. Gastronomía</i>. México, SEP/INAH/Planeta, 1988.</p> <p>Iturriaga, José N. <i>Las cocinas de México</i>. México, FCE, 1986.</p> <p>Long-Solís, Janet. <i>Capsicum y cultura: la historia del chilli</i>. México, FCE, 1986.</p> <p>_____ y Luis Alberto Vargas. <i>Food Culture in Mexico</i>. Greenwood publishing Group, 2005.</p> <p>Novo, Salvador. "El maíz, nuestra carne", en <i>Mitos del maíz</i>, Artes de México. Núm. 79, 2006.</p> <p>Pérez San Vicente, Guadalupe. <i>Repertorio de tamales mexicanos</i>. México, Conaulta/Culturas Populares (Cocina indígena y popular, 15), 2000.</p>

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Date: 27 January 2010

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