



Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, and Everyday Life in Central Mexico (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and L)

Maria Elisa Christie

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Throughout the world, the kitchen is the heart of family and community life. Yet, while everyone has a story to tell about their grandmother's kitchen, the myriad activities that go on in this usually female world are often devalued, and little scholarly attention has been paid to this crucial space in which family, gender, and community relations are forged and maintained. To give the kitchen the prominence and respect it merits, Maria Elisa Christie here offers a pioneering ethnography of kitchenspace in three central Mexican communities, Xochimilco, Ocotepec, and Tetecala. Christie coined the term "kitchenspace" to encompass both the inside kitchen area in which everyday meals for the family are made and the larger outside cooking area in which elaborate meals for community fiestas are prepared by many women working together. She explores how both kinds of meal preparation create bonds among family and community members. In particular, she shows how women's work in preparing food for fiestas gives women status in their communities and creates social networks of reciprocal obligation. In a culture rigidly stratified by gender, Christie concludes, kitchenspace gives women a source of power and a place in which to transmit the traditions and beliefs of older generations through quasi-sacramental food rites.



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