

Food as an Imagery in *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel

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Food is one of the essential needs of a living being and it always plays an interesting role in every individual's life. Without food one cannot lead a happy and peaceful life. The daily process of a person depends on the food one consumes. The preparation of food also differs from every individual. Mother is the first person who is always remembered by every person. The food prepared by mother will be delightful and sometimes plays the role of medicine to cure the disease. It provides unforgettable memories and long lasting happiness. Food is always a captivating factor. The aroma, the sounds during preparation, the addition of different flavours, and the final presentation has the ability to convert a disturbed mind to a peaceful one.

Food is used in literature to convey the importance of culture, tradition, ethics, the power, individuality, innovation, and the responsibilities too. Around the world food is been widely prepared by women. There is some magical element being hidden in the food prepared by them. A common tradition has been revolving that women should prepare food than do any other work. Laura Esquivel has portrayed this practice in her novel *Like Water for Chocolate*. She conveys the relation between food and emotion. This novel carries food as an element that becomes the main world in which women are able to expose their desires with complete fulfillment and without any restrictions from the family and by the formal ethics. It is like a one way conversation between the woman and the food.

The novel displays the Mexican tradition through the character Tita De La Garza. The major role of food and tradition in the Mexican culture is also depicted in the novel. Mexico was ruled by Spain for 300 years and after independence it has left its mark on the culture and cuisine of Mexico most importantly. Mexicans prepare very different and delightful dishes normally and for special occasions. They put a good concentration to prepare varied dishes that taste good and unique.

Esquivel concentrates on Tita's restricted desire to marry her beloved as its against their culture. According to their customs the youngest daughter should remain unmarried in order to take care of their mother at their old age. It portrays the perfect image of a Mexican young woman who has the desires that every young girl has. Though she is been restricted she never

shows her disappointment deliberately, but it's been hidden displayed through the food she prepares.

Each chapter in the novel starts with a recipe that depicts the effects caused by few incidents in Tita's life. Her imprisoned desires and emotions is been carefully carried into the recipes that she prepares throughout the chapters. It begins with Tita's birth in the kitchen. Her mother Mama Elena is not able to take care of her daughter because of her husband's sudden death. She is been cared by Nacha, the head cook. Tita is also used to the aroma, the flavours and their varied purpose, the culinary sounds, and every other aspects of kitchen completely like an expert. This enables her to learn cooking and the very minute aspects very clearly from Nacha and this makes her the next cook after the death of Nacha. This provided the liberation that she longed for.

Magical realism is the important aspect used by Laura Esquivel in her novel. She has employed this to bring out the in depth yearning of a woman to satisfy all her desires and to make a unique identity in her life. Only Nacha and Tita are well versed in cooking. Mama Elena and her other daughters lack their ability in cooking. From the day of her birth till her death, Tita is been closely related to food. This magical realism helps Laura to display the emotions of Tita when her wish to marry her beloved Pedro Muzquiz is been forbidden by her mother and in various other events. This happens like a chain reaction. Initially the recipe is been prepared. It consists of certain texture, flavours, and the mindset of the woman who prepares the food. This is been infused into the recipes that are prepared. This induces the emotion to the person who consumes it. Through the flavour of the food she exposes her happiness, disappointments, and sometimes her active thoughts.

Through the wedding cake that she is compelled to prepare on her sister's wedding with her beloved she pours out her sorrows that is one of the drops of tear falls into the icing. The cake carries the sorrow completely and the initial bite makes the guests to cry heavily and this makes Mama Elena who didn't cry even in her husband's death. Thus, the power of a cook could be visibly seen through the first strong chapter. Tita cannot bear the pain of seeing her beloved getting married to her sister. Similar incidents depict the power of Tita's emotions. This spell is employed as magical realism by the author. She is not taking revenge in any situation instead prepares delicious food.

The recipe of rose petal and quail brings a twist in Gertrudis' life. Pedro bought roses for Tita after his marriage with Rosaura. As Mama Elena objects their conversation Tita is worried but she plans to prepare a dish with roses. This is prepared with Tita's complete love and sensual interest towards Pedro. The recipe turns out to be very sensuous. This is deeply felt by Pedro and

Gertrudis. Both Pedro and Tita share their gazes but Gertrudis loses her control. Through the quail, she entered into Pedro completely. Gertrudis is disturbed by the essence of the dish. She was aroused and started sweating. She imagines of Pancho, whom she met a week before. She eloped with him. Food here has nourished both body and passion. Later She also feeds her nephew, Roberto as Rosaura does not. Rosaura is not loved by Pedro as he loves Tita. This makes her weak in caring her son. But Tita loves Roberto as Nacha did and feeds him with good enrichment with complete love and affection. As Mama Elena didn't shower the love of a mother, she knew the pain and yearning. With Roberto she was happy.

Tita was very dedicated towards her work. She cooked very carefully and with all concentration. She prepared the recipes with the actual formulas. Sometimes she missed Nacha's presence in the kitchen. Nacha was the only person who was concerned about the well-being of Tita. She made her passion to be true. Throughout the novel the readers can witness various other recipes used in different situation like to express love, to cure the disease etc. Chenchu prepares Ox tail soup for Tita's sickness. Thus, it also plays the role of a doctor in individual's life. Tita makes kitchen as her restricted world where she could reign completely. Mama Elena doesn't know to cook but she instructs others to cook for her. Through the character of Tita one could deliberately visualize the hidden world of a woman. Tita is perfect in cooking and she enjoys her time by preparing delicious dishes with Gertrudis. Though she doesn't know cooking, she had fun with Tita. Her creativity and passion towards innovating dishes is been displayed by the author cleverly. Tita created a path for her sister's liberation. But she is happy that Gertrudis is out of the regular norms made by her mother.

Though Gertrudis has become a part of the brothel, later she joins men as a part of becoming soldier and she also brings them to the ranch once to experience the inbuilt talent of her sister and to show them the reason of her transformation that was raised from a gentle flower, Rose. This is an ironical scene in the novel.

Mama Elena sends the small family to San Antonio, in order to separate Tita and Pedro completely. This affects Roberto's health; he becomes weak and was dead. On hearing this news in between a preparation of the sausage, Tita and Chenchu got tears, but it's been ordered by Mama to control as it might affect the taste of the food as it happened before in the Chabela wedding cake. But they shed tears and Mama Elena attacks Tita fiercely. This shows her dominance towards the women who cook in the ranch. The sausage comes out worst with worms. In this particular scene, the author conveys the result of a food being prepared out of disinterest and disappointment. Thus, food carries emotion and the thought of the person who prepares it. There is a belief that while lending a glass of water; the person's thought is also lent through the water. Thus, it carries the current ideas and opinions naturally.

Women were able to find the medicinal abilities hidden in the food elements. When Tita is been asked to take to an asylum by her mother, she is been taken good care by the doctor, John Brown. She is in his laboratory and is been transformed to normal with the help of a lady who is believed to be the ghost of grandmother of John. This lady is well versed in finding the medicinal facts about the food elements and had once cured the great grandfather of John.

Tita feels Nacha in the place of Chenchu. Both share affectionate love and caring. Her Ox tail soup cures Tita and brings back to her normal form. This is been astonished seen by John as he provided her with different American soups. John realised what the actual ability of a food will be. He remembered about his grandmother who could transform food to a medicinal factor. When Chenchu returned from Tita, the candids were attacking the ranch and she was raped by them, Mama Elena was attacked badly and became paralysed down her waist. During this inability, Tita is the person who took care of her mother. But Mama was very doubtful of Tita and her food. She believed that Tita was adding poison to food that she gave for her. Her cruel thoughts made her feel that the food was bitter though it tasted good for others. She also attacked Chenchu through her words. Mama couldn't accept Tita's relationship with the doctor. She dies soon with all her hatred in her.

As the culture and tradition is been carried from one generation to other, similarly Tita's love and passion towards cooking is also found in Pedro's second child, Esperanza. She wishes to be with Tita in the kitchen than any other rooms in the house. The recipes prepared to bring Rosaura's health to a good condition makes her understand that she must not have the thought that she had before regarding Tita. This brought a good understanding between them and this did not last long as Tita believed that she has become pregnant because of Pedro.

When Tita was preparing the chocolate and the bread, she was yearning to have Nacha, Gertrudis near her. She only had good memories with them and not them at present. But this thought of Tita brought Gertrudis home. This was quite magical but was true. She came along with her husband Juan and felt home after long time. Both the sisters were happy for Gertrudis' presence. She strongly said that Tita would prepare this particular recipe at this time. Gertrudis wants the secret talent of cooking to live long in Tita and should be carried on to the next generation.

Esperanza is been protected from becoming the daughter who takes care of the mother like Tita by Tita and Pedro. She is introduced to Alex by Tita during their secret conversation in the kitchen. Tita was trying hard to give a good future to Esperanza and not the one like Tita's. In

her wedding she prepares chilies in walnut sauce which is been appreciated more by the guests as usual. This also creates a sensual effect for everyone.

The character of Tita is very different and a unique one. The author has expressed the very deep thought and the passion of a woman throughout her life. Tita's character shows how deep a person could love their passion. The food is used to carry on the longing, desires and the very deep wishes of a woman. It also helps to create sustainable memories and remarkable moments in one's life. Though it includes several recipes it actually has some memory, and it brings the people back to Tita whenever she is need of them to help her balance her thought psychologically. Laura Esquivel's idea of creating this book raised when she was cooking one of her dishes that she learnt from her elder.

Work Cited

Christensen, Carol, and Thomas Christensen, translators. *Like Water for Chocolate*. Black Swan, 1993.

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