

— LESSON THREE CONTINUED —



The nearly completed *brasero* in the *cocina*.



The completed *brasero*.

Some of the foods cooked at the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe included *nopales*, beef, chicken, beans, squash, fish, chilies, eggs, apples, pears, tortillas and hot chocolate.



A hot chocolate pot, a *molinillo*, and cinnamon and nutmeg used to spice the hot chocolate.

Hot chocolate was served at the first breakfast, along with coffee and *atole*. The second breakfast featured foods such as eggs, *chorizo*, onions, tortillas and refried beans.

Most of the food cooked at Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe was grown there. They grew grains, corn, beans, squash, and grapes. Fruit trees were also planted. In addition to the plants, they also raised cattle, horses, mules and chickens. Not all the animals were food, some were work animals, used for pulling carts or for riding by *vaqueros*. Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe is close to the Monterey Bay. The *embarcadero* was used to carry hides and tallow out to boats in the bay.

In the late summer or fall, there was a *matanza*, which was a round up of selected cattle for their hides, tallow and meat. The *matanza* was another occasion for a fiesta and lasted several days.



This image is not from the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe, but shows what it was like when there was a fiesta after the annual *matanza*. Source: Alexander Harmer (1856-1925).

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The Castro family would feed everyone who came to help with the *matanza*. It was an important event that included a lot of hard work in rounding up the cattle, branding them, and then deciding which ones to keep so that they could reproduce, and which ones to kill for their hides, tallow and meat.



Vaqueros killing a cow for the hide and tallow. Hundreds of cattle were killed every year for their hides and tallow. Source: *"The California Method"* by Edward Vischer, 1874.

Life at Rancho San Andrés was busy! There were native people who helped as *vaqueros*, cooks and housemaids; they took care of the livestock, the gardens, and everyday life! There was entertaining of guests throughout the year. From sunrise to sunset, and even into the night, the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe was a home that welcomed and entertained many guests.



The west side of the Castro Adobe, facing the Potter-Church Garden.

THE CASTRO ADOBE TODAY

Many different families have lived in the Castro Adobe since the Castros left in 1883. All these residents took care of the building over the years and that is why it is still standing today. The Castro Adobe suffered major damage in the Loma Prieta Earthquake on October 17, 1989. The family that lived in the house had to move out. After the earthquake, it was sold to the California State Parks in 2002. Due to the extensive damage to the building, new adobe bricks had to be made so that it could be repaired. Friends of the Santa Cruz State Parks helped volunteers make 2,500 adobe bricks. In addition to making new adobe bricks, the adobe had to be retrofitted so that it could be strong enough to withstand earthquakes and be safe for visitors.



Adobe bricks dry in the sun. These bricks would eventually be used in the restoration of the Castro Adobe.



Now the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe is a California State Historic Park. It is a building with a rich, interesting history in Watsonville, the Monterey Bay, and California.

— LESSON THREE CONTINUED —

ACTIVITIES

- Borrow a real *reata* made of rawhide and practice roping a chair.
- *Adobe* bricks are about 28 inches long, 14 inches wide, and 3 inches thick. What is the area of one adobe brick?
- *Adobe* bricks weigh about 75 pounds. How much would 2,500 adobe bricks weigh?
- Get some bones with a lot of hard fat on them from a butcher and boil them in water for an hour or so. Skim off the fat and let it cool. If you have enough tallow, perhaps 2 cups, melt it slowly and dip a wick into it, then dip the wick into cold water, then repeat the process many times, until the candle is as thick as your thumb. Place the candle on a ceramic or glass surface and light it.
- Here is a link that includes many earthquakes that affected this area and the rest of California from 1769-1879 (Museum of the City of San Francisco):
<http://www.sfmuseum.org/alm/quakes1.html>
- Make *atole*, a drink made of very finely ground corn meal. It was a common drink that people enjoyed during the rancho era.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup *masa harina* (*masa* flour)

5 cups milk or water, according to taste

1/4 cup *piloncillo* (Mexican sugar cones) chopped fine or 1 stick grated cinnamon (*canela*) or 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 vanilla bean (split lengthwise) or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Preparation:

In a large saucepan, whisk the water or milk into the *masa* flour little by little until completely mixed and free of lumps. Heat over medium heat, stirring constantly, until it just begins to thicken. Add *piloncillo* and cinnamon stick or ground cinnamon. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean into pan or add vanilla extract. Stir vigorously until sugar is dissolved, then bring to a boil, stirring constantly to keep it from becoming lumpy.

Remove cinnamon stick. Serve hot in mugs. Serves: 5-6

- Make Mexican chocolate:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKCVI9fbdzA>

- Learn about early Alta California music and dance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J8PJ0yJgW8>
- Learn a typical Mexican dance, such as the *fandango*. Contact Watsonville High School or Pajaro Valley High School to learn whether the Mexican *Folklorico* group is available to visit your school. If there isn't, contact Esperanza del Valle, and find out whether volunteers can come to school to teach the students a typical dance from the Rancho Era.
- Make "whitewash" out of diluted tempera paint, and paint an ordinary cement brick. Give it three coats, allowing the paint to dry between each coat. (Real whitewash made from lime is too caustic to allow children to use.)
- Most people know that the Mexicans that settled Alta California brought with them many foods that were cooked and enjoyed on the ranchos. Some of these foods were beans, squashes, cactus, beef and chickens. Another food that was used a lot was rice. It is well-known that rice was very popular in China and other Asian countries. Research how rice got to Mexico. Did it come with the Spanish? Did it come from China? When you find out, do some more research and put together a little cookbook of favorite Mexican recipes using rice.
- Have students grind corn or wheat or *chilis* on a *metate*.
- Give students California chili seedling plants or seeds to grow at home or in the school garden.
- Give students seeds of the "three sisters" – corn, beans, and squash – to grow at home or in the school garden.

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