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## Mexican Stuffed Shells

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Kelly Haws

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### Mexican Stuffed Shells

I choose this recipe for the community cookbook because I think it is delicious. This recipe represents independence for me as well as growth in the kitchen. Mexican Stuffed Shells are a fusion dish with long histories in both of the cultures it represents. Along with a great taste it reminds me of family, college hardships, and good memories.

I came upon this recipe back in my sophomore year at Utah State, in 2011. Being a young, fresh, struggling college student, food became a hardship. Coming from a home with a mother who cooked daily, providing for myself was hard and intimidating at first. I missed the home cooked meals from my mom, especially when I found myself making my usual daily meal of a quesadilla. While scrolling through Pinterest I came upon the recipe of Mexican Stuffed Shells. Being from San Diego, California located right next to the Mexico border, there is a very strong influence on the food-ways we experience. Along with the familiarities that I found in this recipe I also felt as though it was my level of cooking, which at the time, was quite low. I took on the challenge of cooking and whipped up a pan of Mexican Stuffed Shells like a champion. Inviting my fellow struggling college student roommates to our dinner table, this was one of the only meals with my roommates that I actually remember the food we ate. It was a small step for our stomachs, but a huge leap for our independence and culinary futures. This meal had a huge impact on my confidence in the kitchen I can still remember how accomplished and proud I felt.

Just from the title of the dish one could see that it is a fusion dish. The “stuffing” it refers to is that of seasoned ground beef, usually found in tacos. The creation of tacos can be traced back to the early 1500s and were made with thin meat slices cooked over coals. Baked

pasta and shells can be found back in the Middle Ages and were used to show off creativity and practicality; using whatever is on hand. I think recipe is an example of how well foods can blend together.

Food can be a trigger for memories, and I can see that in this recipe of Mexican Stuffed Shells for me. I came from a house that had dinner cooked every night from my mom who is skilled in the kitchen. It was, and still is very rare that my own mother takes a recipe or piece of cooking advice from me. However, with this recipe, you should ask her how she got it. Let me answer for her, it was from me. This is a recipe that my mom not only took from my cookbook, but she makes regularly. When we travel home to see my parents in San Diego, my mom always has a pan of Mexican Stuffed Shells waiting to great our hangry bellies.

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