



# **A Tortilla Is Like Life: Food and Culture in the San Luis Valley of Colorado (Louann Atkins Temple Women & Culture Series) (Louann Atkins Temple Women & Culture (Numbered))**

*Carole M. Counihan*

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Located in the southern San Luis Valley of Colorado, the remote and relatively unknown town of Antonito is home to an overwhelmingly Hispanic population struggling not only to exist in an economically depressed and politically marginalized area, but also to preserve their culture and their lifeways. Between 1996 and 2006, anthropologist Carole Counihan collected food-centered life histories from nineteen Mexicanas—Hispanic American women—who had long-standing roots in the Upper Rio Grande region. The interviews in this groundbreaking study focused on southern Colorado Hispanic foodways—beliefs and behaviors surrounding food production, distribution, preparation, and consumption.

In this book, Counihan features extensive excerpts from these interviews to give voice to the women of Antonito and highlight their perspectives. Three lines of inquiry are framed: feminist ethnography, Latino cultural citizenship, and Chicano environmentalism. Counihan documents how Antonito's Mexicanas establish a sense of place and belonging through their knowledge of land and water and use this knowledge to sustain their families and communities. Women play an important role by gardening, canning, and drying vegetables; earning money to buy food; cooking; and feeding family, friends, and neighbors on ordinary and festive occasions. They use food to solder or break relationships and to express contrasting feelings of harmony and generosity, or enmity and envy. The interviews in this book reveal that these Mexicanas are resourceful providers whose food work contributes to cultural survival.

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