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Appetite for Discovery

Professor Carolyn Nadeau's research reveals how — in history, culture and identity — we truly are what we eat.

Story by KATE ARTHUR & TIM OBERMILLER

Carolyn Nadeau's hunger for knowledge on the rich literary and cultural history of 16th- and 17th-century Spain has taken her to the great libraries of two continents. But lately she's made a wealth of discoveries closer to home. Turning the kitchen in her 100-year-old Bloomington home into a culinary laboratory, the Byron S. Tucci Professor of Hispanic Studies has prepared, then taste-tested recipes from one of Spain's most influential cookbooks.

In her decades-long fascination of Spanish literature, language and culture, Nadeau grew increasingly aware of the ways food connected class, culture and ethnicity. Research for another book led her to *Arte de cocina, pastelería, vizcochería y conservería* (the art of cooking, pie-making, pastry-making and preserving).

First printed in 1611, *Arte de cocina* was written by Francisco Martínez Montañó, who headed the kitchens of both King Philip III and IV of Spain. More than 25 editions of the cookbook have been published — by the 1800s, copies could be found throughout Europe and in the Americas. While little is known about Martínez Montañó's life, Nadeau feels she has gotten a sense of the author. "You really get to hear the voice of the cook," she explains. "You can feel his passion. At the same time, he wrote with a critical eye, often

complaining about the deficits found in other cooking manuals."

Preparing recipes, Nadeau says, has been among the most fun and challenging components in developing the first English translation and critical edition of *Arte de cocina*, to be published next year. Among those challenges was translating the cookbook's less-than-precise instructions. Instead of cups or teaspoons, Martínez Montañó suggests "a little bit" and "some." A step may be timed not in minutes, but by reciting three Hail Marys or the Apostles' Creed.

Nadeau also had to figure out how to convert "extremely hot embers" to the temperatures of an electric stove. She was stumped by his reference to heat "above and below" until her research revealed that Martínez Montañó used a pan lid that held hot coals.

The first of many *Arte de cocina*'s dishes that Nadeau prepared was green mutton stew, seasoned with *todas especias* ("all spices"), a combination of black pepper, clove, nutmeg, ginger and saffron used in many of the recipes. After sampling the stew and subsequent dishes, Nadeau and dining companions — including her husband (a professional chef) as well as friends, colleagues and students — would debate whether the clove seemed too heavy or the pepper too light. Still, she concedes, "We will never really know what's right. How do we know what the tastes were 400 years ago?"



Byron S. Tucci Professor of Hispanic Studies Carolyn Nadeau *delights in researching and preparing recipes from past centuries.*
(Photo by Marc Featherly)



A dish of minced rabbit baked in a hare-shaped crust was one of the recipes she prepared as background for her research.

Some of the book's recipes are as simple as poached eggs on a bed of spinach. Nadeau was surprised there was only one salad recipe, but lettuce was used in inventive ways, as a wrap or floated in soup. Certain ingredients are hard to find today, like cow udder and goat liver (organ meats were considered a delicacy). She was able to recreate a dough-encrusted hare, which her tasters gave a thumbs-up. Occasionally a recipe flopped, like the custard pie that was "too eggy" when she guessed wrong on the sugar.

When a recipe called for eggplant, Nadeau examined Spanish paintings of the era to determine which variety. She also found insights on Spanish cooking traditions in the markets and small towns of Spain. "There's a butcher in every neighborhood," Nadeau says. "You talk to the old ladies — the grandmothers. They always know more than everybody else."

Nadeau's research was funded in part by a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship and an American Philosophical Society grant. Her professorship, endowed by University Trustee Byron S. Tucci '66 in 2010, continues to support Nadeau's teaching and scholarly pursuits as well as that of other faculty and students in the Hispanic Studies Department — including Nathan Douglas '15, who accompanied Nadeau on one of her research visits to Barcelona's Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya.

Now a doctoral student at Indiana University, Douglas credits Nadeau for giving him "consistent nudges toward the field of Hispanic literature. Her support was, without a doubt, one of the reasons I decided to take the jump into the Ph.D. program. She encouraged me to take on bigger, more adventurous projects and was always available to provide detailed, critical feedback." Among those projects was another research trip to Barcelona, this time guided by Professor of Hispanic Studies Carmela Ferradáns and funded by a Mellon Foundation humanities grant for student scholars.

Douglas first met Nadeau as a frustrated freshman seeking help in Buck Memorial Library. A computer glitch prevented him from getting into his first-semester classes. Seeing Nadeau in her office, he introduced himself and explained his problem, "which I, of course, thought was dire at the time. She set aside what she was doing, invited me to sit down and helped me, a random student, redo my schedule. I recall her extreme patience in helping me out." By the time he left her office, Douglas says, he had both a class schedule and settled nerves.

Across oceans and next door

Helping students is rewarding to Nadeau, but getting them engaged in topics explored in her courses gives her the biggest satisfaction. What stands out most, says Hispanic Department Chair Christina Isabelli, is Nadeau's commitment to the University-wide goal of preparing students to engage and lead as global citizens. "That means not just communicating, but understanding and valuing the cultures of the people who live next door to us."

"Next door" includes local healthcare settings, where students in the Nadeau-designed course "Medical Spanish and Cultural Competency for Healthcare" gain firsthand experience. Community partnerships are key to another course Nadeau launched, "Spanish for Social Justice," as well as the new "Business Spanish in its Cultural Context," which she will teach for the first time this spring.

Opportunities to help shape the curriculum were partly what drew Nadeau to IWU when she joined the faculty in



At the 2011 Commencement, Nadeau was invested as the Byron S. Tucci Endowed Professor. Professorships provide a stipend that recipients can use for teaching and scholarly research as well as funding for their department.

1994. A passionate advocate for study abroad, she helped design and served as inaugural director for the University's London and Madrid programs. Speaking at the 2003 Honors Convocation, where she received the University's highest award for teaching excellence, Nadeau asked, "How many remember that anxiety of the unknown, the humility and pride of learning to communicate in a different language, the amazement of new landscapes and architecture, the thrill of meeting people and exchanging ideas with someone who you may never see again, or with whom you plant the seeds of a lifelong friendship?"

"I believe deeply that all students should study abroad," she continued. "This experience teaches students about the world and its people and helps them gain more mature perspectives on their own role in both their local and global communities."

A Washington, D.C., native, Nadeau herself studied abroad for a year at the University of Madrid while attending college at the University of Virginia. Her fascination with Spanish language and culture deepened during her master's studies at New York University in Madrid. She completed her Ph.D. at Penn State and developed her doctoral dissertation into the book *Women of the Prologue: Imitation, Myth, and Magic in Don Quijote I* (Bucknell University Press, 2002).

The book explores how *Don Quijote's* author, Miguel de Cervantes, created female characters that possess "a sense of freedom not often found in the literature of the time," says Nadeau. "One of my favorite characters in particular, Marcela, decides she doesn't want to get married and goes out and lives on her own, and that's basically unheard of. That kind of strength from those type of female characters that he paints in his novel really resonates with students today, both men and women."

To get a keener sense of Spanish women's lifestyles in the 1600s, Nadeau studied unconventional materials such as domestic manuals with etiquette tips, recipes and remedies for ailments from tooth cavities to breast cancer. Nadeau noted how the manuals, as well as the era's great literature, described food and culinary practices in ways that offered fresh perspectives on essential questions of class, culture and identity.



Nathan Douglas '15 assisted Nadeau on one of her research visits to Barcelona and returned to the city twice more as an IWU student.

"Food is what connects us," she says. "Really, food is the basis for our humanity, and it's a huge part of our identity. As immigrants, we can pick up a language and change our clothing, but food habits are the last to go. Food is fundamental to how we think about the world. It's a rarity if it's not in a work of literature." One memorable example occurs when Cervantes introduces Alonso Quijano, better known as Don Quijote, by describing his diet: "A stew made of more beef than mutton, cold salad on most nights, abstinence eggs on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and an additional squab on Sundays consumed three quarters of his income."

Says Nadeau, "The five phrases that make up that sentence pointed to food and class, and food and Jewish and Muslim history, New World products and religious fasting." The passage inspired her book *Food Matters: Alonso Quijano's Diet and the Discourse of Food in Early Modern Spain*, which explores how food and associated customs

are portrayed in classical works such as *Don Quijote* during a period when "Spain's Hapsburg empire dominated the world landscape and then lost that position, a time when the country produced dozens of literary and visual artists that are still recognized for their creative genius, a time when the country, like others in Europe, experienced a gastronomic revolution with dramatic changes in the foodstuffs and methods of preparation," Nadeau writes in her book.

In addition to *Don Quijote* and other literary works, *Food Matters* explores travel logs, dietary treatises, advice manuals and cookbooks of Cervantes' time (including Martínez Montañón's *Arte de cocina*).

Published this year by the University of Toronto Press, *Food Matters* was hailed as a significant work by scholars worldwide. Enrique García Santo-Tomas, a professor of languages and literature at the University of Michigan,

observed that Nadeau’s book offered “a reflection on how eating and drinking became symbols and makers of class, ethnicity, and what it meant to be ‘Spanish.’ This is interdisciplinary research that will delight the social historian and the literary critic in equal parts.”

Isabelli believes Nadeau’s book will have lasting impact on early modern Spanish studies. “It helps us to understand, among other things, the changing political circumstances of class and culture during specific time periods.”

Melissa Ramirez ’14 helped Nadeau translate 47 recipes from contemporary sources featured in the appendix for *Food Matters*. A first-generation Latina from California, Ramirez was surprised to see some familiar dishes among those recipes. “They were definitely variations of my mom’s cooking. It brought me a little bit back home,” says Ramirez, who hadn’t even planned on studying Spanish until she took a class with Nadeau and was hooked. She minored in Hispanic studies and now works in IWU’s Admissions Office, recruiting Spanish-speaking students.

Her mother, an undocumented immigrant, took a chance on traveling to Illinois for Ramirez’s graduation. The new graduate decided to throw a little dinner party, inviting Nadeau and Isabelli but never expecting they’d be able to make it. But they did, and the conversation lingered for hours.

“My mom was very impressed,” Ramirez recalls. “She said, ‘These are the professors you had? Can I be a student?’ My mom truly, truly valued this.”

Nadeau, in turn, values her students. That’s evident in her online biography, where she describes the courses she’s taught — including her 2015 Hispanic Studies senior seminar, “El individuo y la sociedad en la literatura picaresca.”

“A group of intellectually charged majors read, analyzed and discussed picaresque novels and themes of anti-heroism, crime and punishment and concepts of the self in terms of gender, race, religion and social norms. Students wrote fascinating research papers, and several presented their findings at the John Wesley Powell Research Conference.”

“I couldn’t wait to go to class,” Nadeau says of the seminar. “I would jump out of bed in the morning and wonder, ‘What’s going to happen today?’ Here we were, six of us, teasing out these works of literature from 400 years ago, what they meant then and why they’re important to us today.”

Learn more about [IWU's Department of Hispanic Studies](#).



To prepare Martinez Montino's recipe for sugar, cinnamon and honey quesadillas, Nadeau had to figure out what the royal chef meant when he wrote the dough should be shaped "like the points of an oil lamp."