

Latina Baker with Chicharrones de Puerco

By Paulina Hermosillo

Professional photographer Paulina Hermosillo took this ca. 2000 photograph of a woman working at the *Panaderia San Gabriel*, a bakery in Independence, Polk County. The baker is holding a tray of *chicharrones de puerco*, or pork rinds.

Mexican agricultural laborers first migrated to Independence during World War II, as part of the *Bracero* Program – an agreement made between the American and Mexican governments that brought seasonal farm workers to the United States. After the war, Mexican men, women, and children continued to travel to farms in Oregon and throughout the West to thin and harvest crops in a seasonal circuit. In Independence, many picked hops during the August and September harvest.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Mexicans and other Hispanic immigrants began to settle permanently in Independence. They also settled in other Willamette Valley towns and in Malheur County, located in southeastern Oregon. Hispanic immigrants took English classes, bought homes, and started businesses. They also formed community groups and established local festivals to celebrate their art and culture.

In recent years, Oregon's Hispanic population has increased dramatically, and grown more diverse. In 2000, the U.S. Census reported that Hispanics comprised thirty percent of the population of Independence. Hispanics made up eight percent of Oregon's population, with eighty percent of that group claiming Mexican heritage. Oregon Hispanics also include immigrants from Cuba, Puerto Rico, a number of Central and South American countries, and non-Spanish speaking Indian groups from Mexico.

Further Reading: Nusz, Nancy and Gabriella Ricciardi. "Our Ways: History and Culture of Mexicans in Oregon." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, 2003: 110-23.

Gamboa, Erasmo and Carolyn M. Buan, eds. *Nosotros : the Hispanic People of Oregon : Essays and Recollections*. Portland, Oreg., 1995.

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