

# Edible Hats



THE ICONOGRAPHY OF FOOD has long been my passion. It all began simply enough, when I started collecting postcards with food motifs and exchanging them with other collectors. I took delight in creating different categories: social attitudes, physical settings, types of food, seasons, cultures. But this activity didn't satisfy me completely—the food images had created in my mind an *empanada mental*, a kind of mental “pie.” This is a popular Spanish idiom that refers to a mass of ideas that can't easily be released on their own.

But one day it occurred to me that I could find an outlet for my passion. I would create my own gastronomic postcards, but in a new and different way. Being a feminine woman concerned with dressing well, I naturally made the connection between food and personal adornment. So here was my concept: edible hats. Now I had to get down to work.

From the first I understood that this had to be a collective task. I would orchestrate the activity of my collaborators and channel their creativity. By collaborators I had in mind not only people but also food. I went to the market and chose foods at random from the best seasonal products available. I placed them on my desk, and we stared at them, just waiting for them to speak. My models and collaborators were my young friends Mónica Crespo and Andrés Mengs, as well

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as my niece Bárbara Ortiz and the unforgettable Paco García de Paredes. We experimented with the various foods, considering their aesthetic possibilities and the structural resources that would be necessary to hold them in place. When it came time to photograph them, I chose the extraordinary Madrid photographer Alejandro Pradera for his perspective and use of light, his sense of color, the harmony of his backgrounds, and the humor of his compositions.

Throughout history puritanical cultures have rejected fancy foods as a frill that goes beyond food's primary purpose of sustenance. Although at first glance these hats may seem frivolous, I intend quite the opposite. Just as the goddess Athena was born winged from the head of Zeus, so these edible hats relate to the world of ideas, to the collective subconscious that arises from the head. These hats are, for me, like altars that bear the most sacred and peaceful offerings.

The hat on the left is composed of a *gallega*, a traditional large round loaf of wheat bread with a soft crumb and crisp crust. Here the *gallega* is filled with a harmonious blend of green and orange, yellow and white, obtained by using curly endive, tomato, cold cuts, hard-boiled eggs, and cheese. The model holds a raw egg in her hand, thereby making a gesture toward cause and effect. The pearls on her necklace and bracelet, along with her beautiful teeth, exponentially carry the theme of the egg to its most aesthetic conclusion.

In the hat on the right, a *gallega* skullcap serves as a support for uncooked strands of spaghetti, which in turn hold anchovies as if in an underwater world. These small fish are integrated with the model's brow and appear as silver adornments on his neck and ear.

I have made other postcards: a cold-cut and red pepper trousseau, a mourning headdress of mushrooms and radishes, a hair curled for a perm with carrot rollers. All of these images are meant to provoke delight, even as they emphasize the important role of food in our lives. ☺

