



As the Aztec population grew, more food was needed. To solve this problem, Aztec engineers created “floating” gardens. First, they built a series of rafts and anchored each to the lakebed. Vegetation and reeds were piled on top of a raft. Then, they piled on enough dirt to be able to grow crops. To further secure the floating gardens, mud retaining walls were built up around the raft to hold it in place. These also acted as walkways that connected the many floating gardens of the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan.

The floating gardens were quite successful. **The Aztecs used the gardens to grow chili peppers, squash, corn, tomatoes, and beans.**

The Aztecs created more land by filling in marshlands and swamps. They created even more by designing dikes to hold back the water.

Source: <http://aztecs.mrdonn.org/floating-gardens.html>

Centuries ago, Aztec gardening methods had a huge effect on how the history of traditional Mexican food would evolve. Aztecs lived in a valley region that allowed for a nice diversity of edible plants. They created floating gardens on the available water sources. The food gardens of the Aztecs included almost all the major foods seen today in authentic Mexican dishes, including:

- Corn
- Beans
- Chiles (of course!)

Other garden items that featured heavily in Aztec and Mayan cuisine include many ingredients that you'll see used today in traditional Mexican sauces like Mole sauce, and other foods commonly seen in authentic Mexican cuisine. Some of these are:

- Achiote seed (used as a paste)
- Amaranth (used both in religious ceremonies and as a daily food)
- Avocado (this was used as both a fruit and, strangely enough, a spice)
- Cactus (it was eaten both raw and cooked)
- Chayotes (a squash-like vegetable)
- Edible Flowers
- Squash
- Tomatillos (the same ones found in Mexican cuisine today, particularly in salsas)
- Yuca root (a tuber that is sort of like potato)

Source: <http://www.divinedinnerparty.com/history-of-traditional-mexican-food.html>