Carmen Castro interviewed by Chris Graves
October 16, 2019
Bronx, NY

Chris Graves: My name is Christopher Graves and I am interviewing

CC: Carmen Castro

Chris Graves: In Bronx, NY and on the date of October 16. Do you give me permission to record this oral history?

CC: Yes

CG: So, carmen where did you grow up?

CC: In Puerto Rico

CG: Ok, Specifically where?

CC: In the county named Santo Domingo

CG: So, can you describe your favorite meal growing up?

CC: Rice and Beans

CG: Why was that food significant to you?

CC: Lunch Breakfast and Dinner

CG: Was there meaning beyond the food itself? Like why did you like rice and beans so much?

CC: Because that's what I learned, when I was born and all I seen was rice and beans.

CG: So, my next question is does a certain food reminds you of loved ones? Like It can be todays food or in the past?

CC:  Like Christmas?

CG: Yeah

CC: Like Thanksgiving?

CG: Yeah

CC: The turkey

CG: The turkey, so why the turkey?

CC: First it tastes good and we all together, we all together eating turkey

CG: Ok, do u have any memories in regards into preparing meals with and elder?

CC: No

CG: So, what is your favorite meal to eat? And also, to make right now?

CC: Corn meal

CG: Why corn meal?

CC: Because it's easy to make and you can eat it with plenty milk.

CG: Does the food carry any significance beyond the food itself?

CC: Because I remember my mother and father and my whole family.

CG: So, my fourth question is, is there any food that you will not eat?

CC: Shrimps…

CG: Seafood?

CC: Yes

CG: Seafood ok. So, do you abide by any dietary restrictions because of your culture, or religion or politics? The question is asking since you don't like seafood, is it because of the culture that you lived in or the religion or the politics?

CC: I never learned how to eat that...

Chris: Ok, my fifth question is are their certain food that you would eat on special occasions?

CC: On special occasions only on Christmas day, a lot of salad.

CG: A lot of Salad? So, why salad?

CC: Because there's too many things to eat tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers and all that junk you eat in the house.

CG: My sixth question is who in your life cooks the best meal?

CC: In my family? Me.

CG: (laughs) Besides that?

CC: My mother?

CG: Why your mother? And what food did they cook?

CC: She cooks everything because whatever comes first, we eat like potatoes, rice, beans whatever.

CG: What does eating well mean to you?

CC: Chicken soup (laughs)

CG: (laughs)

CC: Eating well means that you grow up a little bit more healthy and grow up to learn a little bit more about life

CG: My eighth question is do you have a favorite restaurant? And what do you order from there?

CC: Frankfurter, hamburger, McDonalds it's an easy one.

CG: And what do you like from McDonalds? I know you don't eat a lot from there

CC: I can eat maybe a hamburger.

CG: that's it?

CC: Maybe french fries that's it good enough.

CG: My ninth question is how does the food you eat and cook make you the person you are today?

CC: The food that I cook and eat?

CG: Ok ima ask you the question again. How does the food you or cook make you who you are today?

CC: I'm the best cooker

CG *laughs*

CC: Today? I don't know

CG: So, following up with that question. Is there a food that reminds you of home?

CC: Yes

CG: And what was that food?

CC: Pasteles

CG: Pasteles, ok. Do you observed certain foods or tradition regarding foods and drinks?

CC: Drinks? Foods? There are the same

CG: Is there a certain tradition you have in terms of foods?

CC: We don't like um I don't like too much fish, but we have to make it in good Friday, good Friday because we don't have no meat.

CG: What about the drinks?

CC: Water, because I can't drink no wines.

CG: My eleventh question is if you can go anywhere in the world to try out new foods where would you go and why?

CC: To me I should go to Hawaii because I like the country, the city and it's a beautiful place and since its hot I can have coconut water

CG: (Laughs) A lot of coconut water

CC: A lot of coconut water

CG: My twelfth question is what is a meal/snack can you eat all the time and not get tired of?

CC: Snack?

CG: Yeah like snack or meal and not get tired of it

CC: To tell you the truth not that much just put what I really feel rice

CG: Rice?

CC: Rice and beans

CG: And you'll never get tired of it?

CC: No

CG: So, my fourteenth question is how does the environment or community impact the food that you eat? Well so to make it more close to home how does the Bronx impact the food that you eat?

CC: Because we have, in the Bronx we have a lot of my people live here and also, we have more people around from another country but they half of them, most of the time, half of them are all Spanish I mean I don't speak English

CG: So, my fifteenth question is how does food options in your community influence you on how you eat?

CC: The market

CG: Ok

CC: Because when you go you see all the kinds of fruits, they have they coconut rice they have everything I like

CG: So, my sixteenth question is what foods do you make on certain holidays?

CC: On Christmas we make peneil and Food Friday we make fish and Thanksgiving we make turkey

CG: My seventeenth question Is how does your income impact your food choices?

CC: My income?

CG: Yes, impact your food choices

CC: That isn't a problem well sometimes you buy, you eat whatever you can buy sometimes you can't eat food is whatever you like cost too much money then you can't buy that.

CG: Ok so my eighteenth question is how do you feel about fast foods?

CC: Fast foods?

CG:  How do u fell about it?

CC: You should answer that question

CG: (laughs)

CC: Well sometimes when it's hot or you're tired you don't feel like cook so can go out and have a sandwich a frankfurter or a hamburger that's good enough.

CG: And my last question how do you think about health when it comes to food?

CC: That's very bad, you can eat everything you want to that's one thing because the food you like its not healthy for you or you want to eat but he best is chicken, turkeys, turkey meat because pork is no good only birds, birds is animals ok well to tell you the truth turkey that's it.

CG: Ok so we are done for today and thank you Carmen for the interview and once again this is Christopher Graves interviewing Carmen Castro and Carmen, I hope you have good day.

CC: Ok. thank you very much.