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New title from Wings Press

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The Holy Tortilla

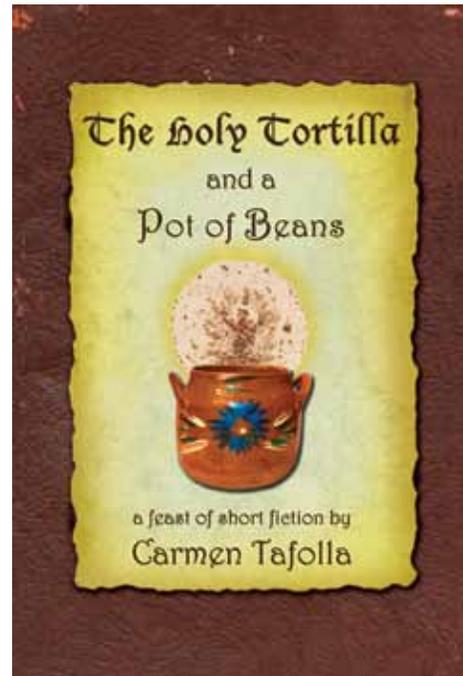
and a
Pot of Beans

a feast of short fiction by

Carmen Tafolla

Recipient of the 2009 Tomás Rivera Award
for Mexican-American Young Adult Fiction

ISBN: 978-0-916727-49-9
\$16 • 136 pages • trade paperback
Publication: June 2008



“These stories are wonderful. They are poignant; they are funny; they make you think. Carmen Tafolla is full of pep, full of love and experience. *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans* is just plain delightful. I love the lingo and the boistrous attitude. *Saludos* to the Queen of Mean, the obstreperous young girl who marries her priest, the lady bawling at the wrong funeral, and Elfiria with a hickey on her neck: They are all just popping with life, and so is this book. Read it and laugh; read it and weep; read it and feel so much better than you did before you opened to page one and got sucked right into the magic by Chencho’s cow. ¡*Qué obra más maravillosa!*”

– John Nichols, author of *The Milagro Beanfield War*,
The Empanada Brotherhood, et al.

This is a powerful and moving collection, full of fascinating and enchanting characters. . . . Carmen Tafolla is one of the best writers in Texas.

– Rudolfo Anaya, author of *Bless Me, Ultima*

From *School Library Journal* (September 2008):

Adult/High School Readers will be rewarded by the wisdom, wit, and hope in these 16 short stories. The selections range from the mystical appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe in “The Holy Tortilla” to the haunting yet empowering story of a victim in “The Stuff to Scream With.” Other stories include the importance and power of cultural heritage in “Inheritance”; a frisky housewife and doubting husband in “Federico and Elfiria”; and the strong sense of community in “Black Leather Lu.” What all of these stories have in common is the optimism that comes from taking emotional risks and forming relationships with family, friends, and community. Most of them take place in San Antonio and are peppered with Spanish words and phrases, giving the stories an authentic feeling of place. A well-organized glossary is provided. This collection will be sought after by both teens and teachers looking for strong characters and an eloquent voice in Chicana literature. While regional appeal will certainly drive purchase of this book, libraries looking to diversify and modernize their story collections will also want to consider adding this worthy title.

– Lynn Rashid, Marriots Ridge High School, Marriotsville, MD

From *El Paso Times* (June 29, 2008):

“Over the years, Carmen Tafolla has cultivated a reputation as a folklorist of the Chicano-Mexicano community, very much in the tradition of Zora Neale Hurston, whose writings also captured the range of regional speech patterns and the everyday lives of working class people. With the release of *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans*, Tafolla solidifies that role, proving that she has maintained a perceptive hand over the pulse of San Antonio.

“Gesturing toward the realm of allegory and fable, the opening quartet of stories demands that the reader suspend disbelief, which is done rather easily with Tafolla’s distinctive prose – a combination of colloquial language and small-town wisdom that exudes honesty and authenticity. . . . Few writers can achieve such richly-textured stories like Carmen Tafolla can. Her work continues to teach and entertain. The love and respect for the people she writes about fills every sentence with ‘an emotion that leaves its shadow there.’ *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans* is storytelling at its best.”

– Reviewed by Rigoberto González

About the Book:

Called a “world-class writer” by Alex Haley, Carmen Tafolla is the author of numerous works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction for both adults and children. Her work has appeared in over 200 anthologies, and she has performed her one-woman show, “My Heart Speaks a Different Language,” all over the world.

Known mainly as a poet – hers was an important voice in the Chicano Movement – Tafolla’s fiction appears here for the first time in book form. As the title indicates, *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans* is a literary feast. Tafolla skillfully combines the spiritual mission of a magical tortilla with that of a heart-transplant patient’s bedside marriage, and the blessing of a handful of dirt with that of a cross-dressing streetperson.

Spiced with the specific flavors of bilingual/bicultural South Texas, *The Holy Tortilla* takes on hypocrisy, prejudice, institutional pomposity, and other modern myopias with a fresh humor and a deep understanding of the human spirit. This is the human comedy. Welcome to the feast!

About the Author:

Dr. Carmen Tafolla is the author of numerous books of poetry, nonfiction works, short stories, and books for children. She is among the most anthologized of all Latina writers. Called a “world class writer” by Alex Haley, Carmen Tafolla’s latest books include *Sonnets and Salsa*, a widely-praised collection of poetry now in its third printing, and several books for children, including *That’s Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca’s Struggle for Justice / ¡No Es Justo! La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia* (written with Sharyll Teneyuca), *Baby Coyote and the Old Woman / El Coyotito y la Viejita*, and *What Can You DO With A Rebozo?* She is also the author of *Sonnets to Human Beings & Other Selected Works*, which includes not only the title selection (winner of the University of California at Irvine’s 1989 National Chicano Literature Contest), but a large selection of Tafolla’s poems and short stories, as well as several essays on Tafolla and her work. Tafolla’s poems and short stories are included in many anthologies and in dozens of textbooks, at every level from elementary through college.

Born and raised in San Antonio, many of Tafolla’s early poems employed the bilingual idiom of the city’s westside. She has long been regarded as one of the masters of this type of poetic code-switching. *Curandera* (1983) is considered something of a core document in this regard. In the 1970s, Tafolla was the head writer for *Sonrisas*, a pioneering bilingual television show for children. Her dramatic talents make her readings both lively and of profound emotional impact.

Tafolla received her Ph.D. in Bilingual and Foreign Language Education from the University of Texas in 1982. She has held a variety of faculty and administrative posts at universities throughout the Southwest, including Associate Professor of Women’s Studies at California State University at Fresno, and Special Assistant to the President for Cultural Diversity / Visiting Professor of Honors Literature at Northern Arizona University. She was the first Chicana faculty member to direct a Chicano Studies Center in the U.S. (Texas Lutheran College, 1973). She has been a freelance educational consultant on bilingual education, writing and creativity, and cultural diversity issues for over three decades.

A scholar of note, Tafolla is the author of *To Split a Human: Mitos, Machos, y la Mujer*

Chicana, and is a dynamic, much sought-after speaker. Her one-woman show has been performed in London, Wellington, Christchurch, Madrid, Malaga, Mexico City, Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, and throughout the U.S.

Tafolla currently lives in the city of her ancestors, San Antonio, in a 100-year-old house called *Casa del Angel*, with her husband, Dr. Ernesto M. Bernal, her son and daughter, Carmen's mother, three cats, a dog, and a multitude of manuscripts, *molcajetes*, and books.

In 1999, she was presented with the Art of Peace Award for writings which contribute to "peace, justice, and human understanding."