



The Aztecs

15 October 2020 to 22 June 2021

MAIZE DEITIES AND TEQUILA

Savouring life like the Aztecs

Tomato, maize, cocoa, chilli: Mexican cuisine has enriched our life by so much more than just salsa and tacos. Many of these European staples were cultivated as long ago as the time of the Aztecs in the Mesoamerican realm. Traders and specialized agriculture associations contributed to a sophisticated economic system. Each town centre in the Aztec empire featured a large square where regional specialities were offered for sale at a weekly market or sometimes more frequently. The largest market in the country was held in Tlatelolco, where up to 50,000 people assembled every day. Local and exotic goods were provided in abundance. Most traders were local and had produced the goods and wares they offered themselves: farmers with corn or beans to spare were found alongside professional traders from the lowland regions selling cotton and cocoa. Mexican cities still typically feature large markets. From fresh tortillas, tamales and cocoa to fried locusts, all tastes are catered to on their squares and in their great market halls.

Aztec cosmology considered all things, animals and people to be part of a divine order; food held a special meaning. Sacrificial offerings were made to a number of maize deities as well as to Tlaloc, the god of rain, in order to ensure a successful corn harvest. Good yields were sorely necessary. The tributary payments to the Aztec rulers were enormously challenging for the farmers.

Hernán Cortés' conquest of the Aztec empire did not destroy its culinary culture, on the contrary: Despite the heedless policy of conquest a lot of the Aztec's food found its way to Europe and shapes our life and our menus until this day.

PROGRAMME & EVENTS

A programme of events will take place alongside the exhibition, with a particularly wide-ranging number of events available for children and young people.