

'Oh, near the Barclays Center.' Not 'near the Brooklyn Bridge' or 'near the Navy Yard.' The Barclays Center is the new heart of Brooklyn. My business will get something even from the vapors of it all."

—Ian Frazier

## DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE INDIGENOUS



One of the only farmers in New York City raising crops that are native to central Mexico is Gudelio García. His plot, called El Poblano Farm, occupies about an acre on Staten Island, in New Springville. It is part of Decker Farm, which has been cultivated since the early eighteen-hundreds. The herbs and vegetables that García grows he sells at farmers' markets and to restaurants such as Bear Restaurant and Bar, in Long Island City. Lonestar Taco, a stand at the New Amsterdam Market, near the Brooklyn Bridge, also used his produce at its pop-up restaurant in Williamsburg last month.

García grows papalo; pepicha; flor de calabaza, or squash blossom; quelites; jicama; chayote; epazote, a spicy herb that smells like gasoline; ejote; and three kinds of Mexican peppers—jalapeño, serrano, and poblano. Papalo and pepicha are similar-tasting herbs. They are used fresh, mainly in soups and tacos. Flor de calabaza is a yellow-orange flower used in quesadillas. Quelites are edible greens, and jicama is a root, something like a turnip. Chayote is a pear-shaped squash, epazote is an herb often cooked with beans, and ejote is a string bean. All of these plants are common in Puebla, where García comes from, and many would prefer more sun and heat than they receive in New York. This is the first year that García has planted chayote, and, to his delight, it thrived. So far, only two antagonists have appeared on the farm. One is deer, which arrive each night around nine, García says, and the other is wind, which recently blew down a lot of his blue corn. "The wind hit the corn and it broke," García said. El Poblano is surrounded by windrow stands of black

cherry, black walnut, oak, and elm, but it sits on top of a knoll, and the wind comes in hard off the water.

In 2010, through an organization called GrowNYC, García took a seven-week course designed to teach immigrants who know how to farm about the specifics of commercial farming in New York. The course was taught by a young man named Christopher Wayne, who paid García a visit recently. Wayne was joined by a young couple, Ken Kinoshita and Erica Dorn, who have taken an interest in García. Dorn works for Accion, a microlending outfit, and Kinoshita is an architect who was raised in Mexico City. García's English is serviceable but not fluent, and Wayne and Kinoshita translated his remarks.

García, who is forty-six, has a round face and a black mustache, and he was wearing jeans and a polo shirt and a straw hat with a broad brim. He said that he was brought up on a farm. At seventeen, he went to work at the gigantic Mexico City produce market La Central de Abasto. First, he hauled pushcarts, then he became a buyer and seller of papayas and watermelons. Twelve years ago, he arrived in the United States, and worked in restaurants and in construction. Mondays, he and his farmhand, Marvin Bonilla, pick

for the farmers' markets, and García and another helper, Yadira Godínez, spend the rest of the week selling. García sells at four markets: in the Bronx, at University Avenue and 181st Street, and on White Plains Road, in Parkchester; in Socrates Park, in Queens; and at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Boulevard, in Manhattan.

García pointed out pumpkins called chombo, which Mexicans grow mainly for their seeds, and he pulled aside some vines to reveal a dark-green melon about the size of a soccer ball. "Sugar-baby watermelons," he said. "I grew these in Mexico." After García extended his toe to point out some deer tracks, he, Wayne, Kinoshita, and Dorn went to sit in the shade in the corner of the field. There was a long table with a white tablecloth and chairs. Godínez, wearing shorts and a T-shirt, an apron, and a straw cowboy hat, put grapefruit soda on the table, along with bowls of salmon and chicken and flor de calabazas. There were tortillas warming on a propane hot plate. Dorn showed García photographs on her phone of La Central de Abasto. In one, some watermelons had been cut to reveal the fruit. "I did just like that," García said. "Only I made my cuts with the blunt side of the knife. It bruised the fruit and made it redder."

—Alec Wilkinson



"I think you're using lawnmower repair to avoid intimacy."