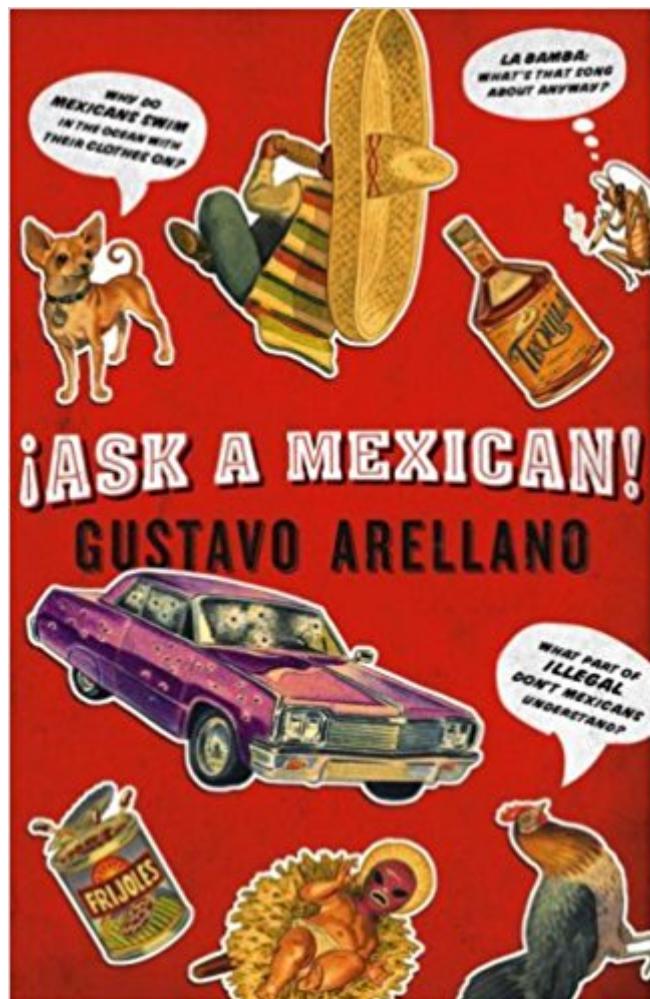


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# Ask A Mexican



## **Synopsis**

An irreverent, hilarious, and informative look at Mexican American culture is taken by a rising star in the alternative media, as well as a new kid on the block in such mainstream venues as NPR, the Los Angeles Times, Today, and The Colbert Report. Gustavo Arellano has compiled the best questions about Mexican Americans from readers of his Ask a Mexican! column in California's OC Weekly and uses them to explore the clichÃ©s of lowriders, busboys, and housekeepers; drunks and scoundrels; heroes and celebrities; and most important, millions upon millions of law-abiding, patriotic American citizens and their illegal-immigrant cousins who represent some \$600 billion in economic power. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

If you like your humor smooth as flan or comforting as a big abrazo from your abuelita, do not read Gustavo Arellano's first book, "Â¡Ask a Mexican!" (Scribner, \$20 hardcover). However, if biting satire is your cup of canela tea, Arellano is the man for you. In his book, he brings together the best of his nationally syndicated column of the same name, with some new material thrown in for good measure. For the uninitiated, Arellano lives in Orange County, Calif., and is a staff writer and a news editor for the OC Weekly, an alternative newspaper serving the region. Arellano's column began almost as a joke a few years ago between him and his editor, Will Swaim. Swaim, it seems, had an idea for a one-time column (to fill some space) in which Arellano would answer questions about Mexicans. As Arellano explains in his characteristically in-your-face introduction to the book, Swaim

turned to him "not only because I was the only Latino on staff and mowed the lawn on the side, but because my background -- child of Mexican immigrants (one illegal!), recipient of a master's degree in Latin American studies, a truthful beaner -- put me in a unique position to be an authority on all things Mexican." So Arellano "slapped together" the first Q&A: Question: "Dear Mexican, Why do Mexicans call white people gringos?" Answer: "Dear Gabacho, Mexicans do not call gringos gringos. Only gringos call gringos gringos. Mexicans call gringos gabachos." It was an immediate hit with readers, and questions started pouring in -- much to Arellano's amazement. This one-time lark became a regular column.

I came across this book looking for something less serious to break things up a bit. You know, a piece of intellectual candy. It seemed innocent enough: Ask a Mexican a question about Mexican culture and get an answer. Maybe I can get a perspective about our immigration problems from the Mexican viewpoint? I expected some light-hearted responses, perhaps a few jabs at Los Estados Unidos, and not much more. For starters, Sr. Arellano begins by listing a dictionary of Mexican slang terms. For example, did you know that Mexicans do not call those of us north of the border 'gringos' like most of us believe? Instead they call us 'gabachos'. Though not explicitly stated, something tells me that this is a derisive term. In fact, most of the slang dictionary, as short as it is, involves Mexican verbiage for rather vulgar invectives! Imagine that! Who would've thought that about our 'south of the border' neighbors? Well, I found myself pretty well entertained with Gustavo's Mexican candor until I got about a third of the way through the book. I then realized that all of the Q/A involved some variation of the theme: Q: Can you explain some particular aspect of Mexican culture? A: Mexicans do what ever they want to do and if it annoys you gabacho's, so much the better! Throw in some vulgarity in the response and you get the idea. While the above mentioned format became somewhat tedious, I did find myself drawn to read on. And, as I did, I began to understand how the Mexican mind set works. They are pretty much a culture bound together with the common goal to find a better life here in the U.S., or wherever, with whatever it takes.

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