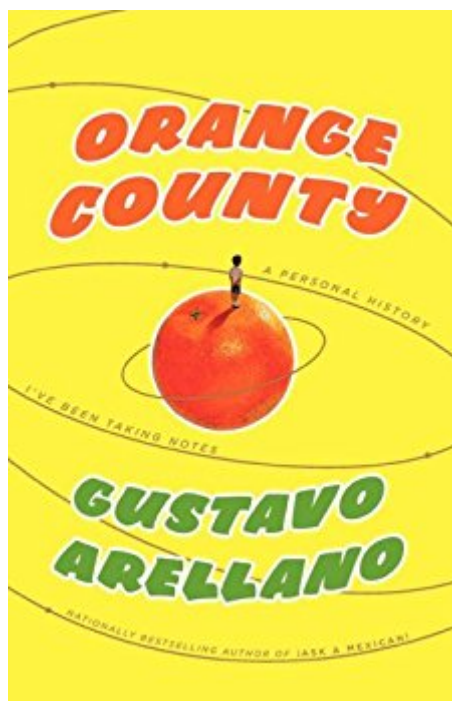


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# Orange County: A Personal History



## Synopsis

The story began in 1918, when Gustavo Arellano's great-grandfather and grandfather arrived in the United States, only to be met with flying potatoes. They ran, and hid, and then went to work in Orange County's citrus groves, where, eventually, thousands of fellow Mexican villagers joined them. Gustavo was born sixty years later, the son of a tomato canner who dropped out of school in the ninth grade and an illegal immigrant who snuck into this country in the trunk of a Chevy. Meanwhile, Orange County changed radically, from a bucolic paradise of orange groves to the land where good Republicans go to die, American Christianity blossoms, and way too many bad television shows are green-lit. Part personal narrative, part cultural history, Orange County is the outrageous and true story of the man behind the wildly popular and controversial column *Ask a Mexican!* and the locale that spawned him. It is a tale of growing up in an immigrant enclave in a crime-ridden neighborhood, but also in a promised land, a place that has nourished America's soul and Gustavo's family, both in this country and back in Mexico, for a century. Nationally bestselling author, syndicated columnist, and the spiciest voice of the Mexican-American community, Gustavo Arellano delivers the hilarious and poignant follow-up to *Ask a Mexican!*, his critically acclaimed debut. Orange County not only weaves Gustavo's family story with the history of Orange County and the modern Mexican-immigrant experience but also offers sharp, caliente insights into a wide range of political, cultural, and social issues.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While most writing and almost all journalism is attempting to make their subjects less complex Gustavo Arellano is accepting the complexity and relishing it. His book "Orange County" is a wonderfully complex story of his family, its migration, the towns where they settled, the history of the towns and the strange paradox that is Orange County, California. There are very funny repetitions of lists of Aunts (I think he's mocking Leviticus) the story of his being a nerd among the macho and constant jibes at the gabachos. My favorite part was the restaurant recommendations , one for each town except Leisure World. This is the perfect book to give as a Christmas gift to anyone with a sense of humor who lives in Orange County. It is a quick read, it has new data and will make you think again about the place you live. Well done!

As a native born South Texan, I never gave California much thought till I came out to teach here in the early 90s. Since then I have been blown away by the beauty and horrors of a magnificent state--staggered by its resources and its peoples, floored by its violent and surprising history. Gustavo Arellano's ORANGE COUNTY is one of those delicious, honest tomes that tells the various ugly, outrageous, AND beautiful stories of southern California with wit, vision, pace, and style. A unique book--one part memoir, one part history, one part investigative journalism--Arellano's volume explores the backstory of the Southlands, uncovering skeletons, crazies, and, of course, oranges along the way. Any student of contemporary writing will find much to learn from and ponder in this volume; Californiana aficionados will find that and more, as the all-too-often white-washed contours of the Californias are reborn in the electric writings of the man better known as Ask a Mexican.

I recently moved to Orange County and wanted to find a local history book. This popped up in a Google search. I have been laughing my way thru this book while learning quite a lot about the history and politics of Orange County.

This is a great history book for Americans, Californians, and Mexicans alike. I like the way Gustavo Arellano highlights the confluence of the various cultures of Orange County. I lived in southern

California for three years and Gustavo pointed several things I had missed. Because of this book, I watched the TV show *Arrested Development*, about which I have mixed feelings. I'm not sure if I should give Gustavo credit or blame for me watching the show.

Gustavo Arellano is one of my favorite young authors. He writes a regular column for the *OC Weekly* called "Ask a Mexican". Standing astride two distinct cultures in Southern California is not always an easy task, but Gustavo manages to do so with humor and bite. I loved the book, but I am familiar with all of the Orange County references as I live in the area. As other reviewers have mentioned, the book is divided into alternating chapters chronicling the family history of Gustavo Arellano and topics related to Orange County. I am a teacher at a high school with a large Latino student body. The personal story of Gustavo's family revealing warts and all was fascinating and I gained new insight (and some confirmation) into the lives of my students. I adored the chapters on Orange County, but you have to be a local to really appreciate some of the crazy things that have happened in the county. From the Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim during the 1920's to the current doggie fashion show at Fashion Island in Newport Beach, the book describes the eclectic OC lifestyle. Gustavo does have a liberal bent and is a little bit overbearing at times, but he is also FUNNY. Overall, a good read.

I read this book for my class on gentrification. It was a very enjoyable read and it was interesting learning about the commercialization of Orange County and its racial/political history. I would definitely recommend this book.

This is a book that's probably only going to be very interesting for people from Southern California, generally speaking. Especially people from the Greater Los Angeles area, for obvious reasons. There's some great historical information about Orange County, great depth into how the Catholic Church scandal affected Orange County and some interesting Arellano family history. I recommend it to all Southern Californians, people who have an interest Mexican-American history, people with an interest in Orange County and anyone who enjoys a fun, yet informative, reads.

If you've gotten into (and get the spot-on humor of) the "Ask A Mexican" column [...] that Arellano writes for the *Orange County Weekly*, then pick this up. Basically it's a memoir of Arellano's life growing up in Orange County but it's also a tale of how a village in Mexico became transplanted to the region and how Arellano developed his incredible style of writing. The short asides focusing on

the various cities that form the county are a great addition as are the one restaurant he picks in each as worth checking out. The only chapter that made my eyes glaze over was the one on religion. I know I should care about that topic but I just don't especially when it comes to the evangelical types who created drive-in congregations and are wealthier than most Third World nations. The author also understands that to truly understand racism, it has to be approached with this sense of absurd humor that Arellano just plain gets.

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