

Rose Marie Valdes Pangborn

Elevating your eating experience with science

Rose Marie Valdes Pangborn (b. 1932, Las Cruces, NM–d. 1990, El Macero, CA).

If you have a list of foods you deeply crave, you can probably thank Rose Marie Valdes Pangborn. She was born the eldest of four children in Las Cruces, NM, to Leo J. Valdes, a native of Chihuahua, México, and Rosalie Page, a native of Las Cruces.

From early childhood, she was known for her remarkable creativity, gusto, wit, intellect, and memory. At age four, she could quote passages from Shakespeare as easily as she could create delicious desserts, make dolls, or invent fun new games. As a teenager, she excelled in her classes with time left for leading roles in high school plays, clubs, and weekend parties.

But at her core, Rose Marie was most interested in two things: understanding how our senses shape our experience of food and helping her fellow classmates – and later her students – reach beyond their self-imposed limits to achieve what at first seemed impossible.



Rose Marie Valdes Pangborn

"What really blew me away was watching my sister and her friends study in the NMSU Library. When the girls didn't understand something, they would always ask Rose Marie. She didn't just tell them the answer, she explained the answer in a way that was easy to understand." – Bernadette Valdes



Leo Valdes (bottom right) next to his wife, Rosalie. Their children (left to right) Leo, Bernadette, Lorena and Rose Marie stand behind them.

Rose Marie was inspired by her father, who came to Las Cruces from Mexico and quickly became a pillar of the community.

"He didn't have much formal education. His mother died when he was two. He was raised by his older sister. He started working for a dealership here in Las Cruces, sweeping the car lots, at fifteen years old, and I think by the time he was twenty-five he owned it. He was very active in the community. He was friends with Roy Nakayama. He was on every board you could think of. He was really into politics." – Lorena & Bernadette Valdes, Rose Marie's sisters, speaking about their father.

Leo Valdes was president of the Mesilla Motor Company. He also served at various times as a state representative, county commissioner, and school superintendent in Las Cruces.

If Rose Marie was asked what she wanted to achieve in her life, she might have said, "I want to bring out the best possible tastes, smells, and textures of foods." In the end, that's exactly what she did! But first she had to invent the process for documenting our sensory responses to food.

After graduating from NMSU with a Bachelor's of Science in Home Economics, Rose Marie earned her Master's of Science at Iowa State University. From there she joined the faculty of University of California, Davis, where she advanced through the ranks to become one of the highest ranked professors at UC Davis. She quickly developed a rigorous research program and a reputation as a pioneering scientist, brilliant innovator, cherished professor, and beloved supervisor of graduate students in sensory science. She taught in the UC Davis

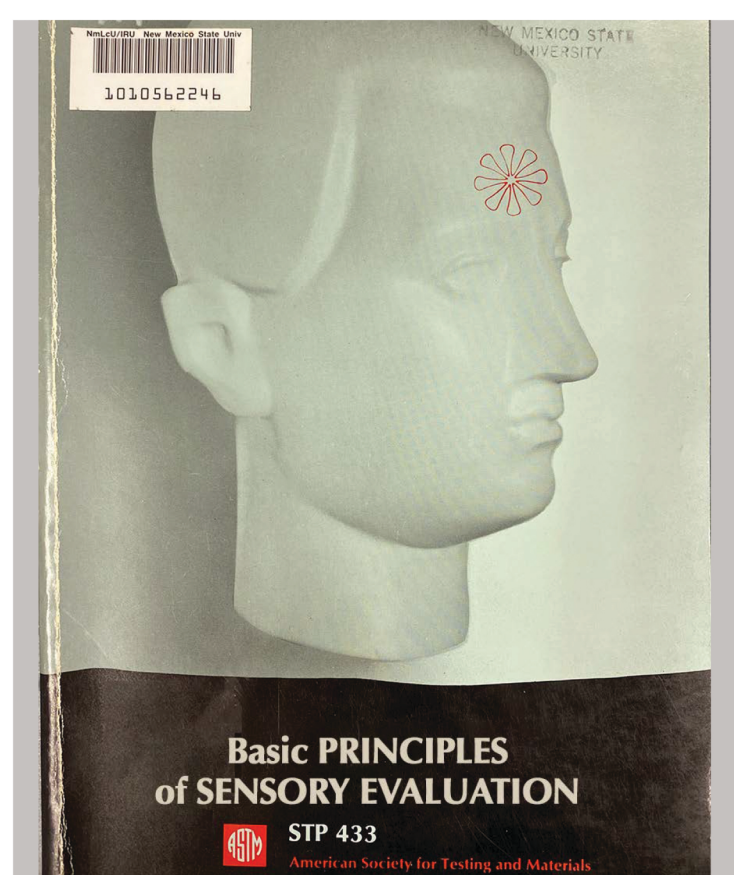
Food Technology Department for 35 years. She was also Associate Dean in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences from 1972 to 1974.

Pangborn published over 200 scientific articles, 10 of which she wrote in the last year of her life while fighting cancer. She co-wrote three textbooks that became the foundation of modern sensory science: *Principles of Sensory Evaluation of Foods*, *Food Acceptability and Nutrition*, and *Evaluación Sensorial de los Alimentos: Métodos Analíticos*. She was a Fullbright-Hay International Scholar, co-editor of the international journal *Appetite*, and served on the editorial boards of *Journal of Nutritional Education*, *Chemical Senses*, *Journal of Food Sciences*, *Journal of Texture Studies*, and others. Rose Marie's work in sensory science is still being used around the world.

She received honorary doctorates and similar awards from the University of Helsinki, Finland, Iowa State University, NMSU, and 10 international agencies. She was an invited speaker at conferences around the world. The Pangborn Sensory Science Symposium is named in her honor.

But perhaps her most enduring legacy was the impact she had on students. She was a demanding professor and advisor, beloved because she gave so much of herself. She kept in contact with hundreds of her former students, writing them personal letters every Christmas, even her last Christmas. She never forgot her students, and in turn they will never forget her.

For the rest of us, her research and discoveries left our dinner tables that much more delicious and satisfying. And it all started at the College of ACES at NMSU.



American Society of Testing and Materials publication that includes contributions from Rose Marie.



Rose Marie was known for her infectious laughter and good spirits.



Rose Marie with her husband, Jack Pangborn.



Rose Marie (smiling, center) during her time in Sweden.