



Chamba Ware

La Chamba has been a center of cookware production since pre-Colombian times because the sandy nature of the clay found there is precisely suited to making this type of cookware: **A)** The porosity of the fired sandy clay assures that a pot will not crack while cooking even if an air bubble is imbedded in its walls. **B)** Burnishing both the inner and outer walls creates a relatively non stick surface and, **C)** makes a relatively impermeable vessel.

Because of the porosity of the clay, a piece that does not have a burnished inner surface will become waterlogged and will sweat until the pores in its body have been sealed by normal use. Vessels with small openings cannot be burnished on their inner surface since burnishing is done when the piece has been built and dried, before it has been fired. If the opening does not accommodate the passage of a child's hand, there is no way to shine the inner surface. One can seal such a piece before use by curing it in one of several ways: traditionally, a pot is cured by boiling whole milk in it, the fat content seeping into the walls and sealing the pores. The disadvantage to this method is that if the shape of the opening does not permit thorough washing of the inside (a **scrub brush** can and should be used to clean a **non burnished surface**), the residue will sour and give the content a bad taste and the pot a bad smell. The preferred method of curing is to let a rich mixture of water and molasses or, better yet, a thick liqueur, such as Cointreau, if the vessel is going to be used for alcoholic beverages, sit in it until it no longer sweats. If you notice white streaks on the outside of a vessel that has had liquid sitting in it a long time, that is normal, it is the mineral salts leaching from the body of the clay. Clean with vinegar to dissolve the salts.