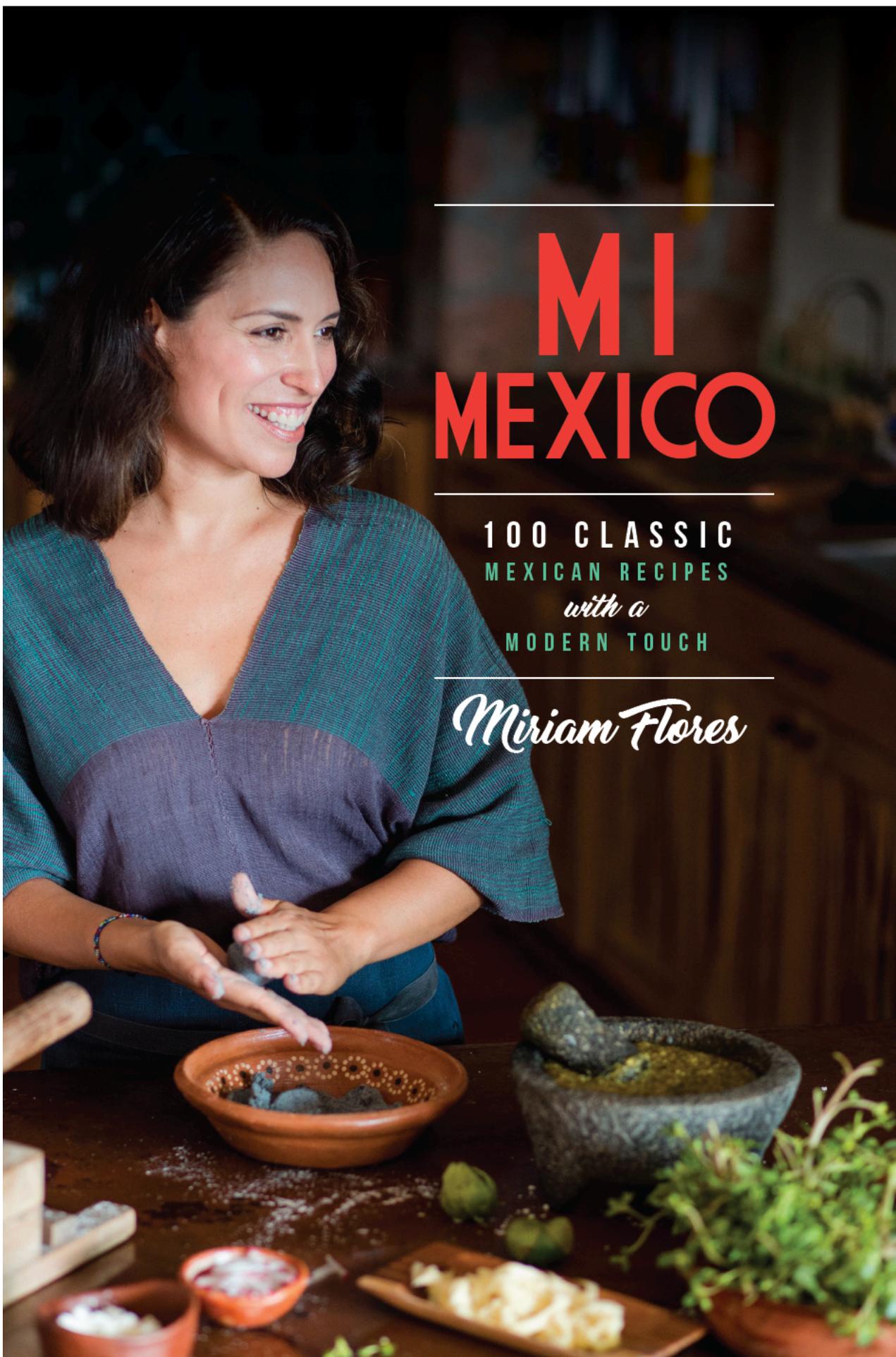

MI MEXICO

100 CLASSIC
MEXICAN RECIPES
with a
MODERN TOUCH

Miriam Flores





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MY FAMILY

In my family, we never said: “I love you.” This does not mean that I felt unloved by my family. We show love by sharing food and cooking for each other. This was always our primary way of demonstrating that we care; it is also how we display affection and generosity towards each other.

Even though I am not a writer, I wanted to write this book because I feel that I have a unique culinary experience to share. Also, I have a burning desire to pass on my passion for the Mexican food I grew up with, my family traditions, and our cooking techniques.

This book is a collection of recipes from my family, my culture, and my travels, and also a kind of autobiography. This is not just about passing on tradition and food wisdom; nor are these recipes simply a product of skills learned by growing up in rural Mexico; they are a vehicle which I can use to wander through my memories. In my life, I have learned to achieve flavor balance by instinct, built plate upon plate of beautiful food, dined in exquisite restaurants and even opened my own, but in my heart I am still a Mexican village girl with a large family who wants to keep learning and exploring more.

In this book, I include recipes from the land and the sea. By the land, I mean the roots, dirt, soil, ground, or simply, my homeland. These are the meals that represent the kind of food I learned to cook with my family by living in the hills of the Sierra Madre and also traveling through the rest of Mexico. These recipes are inspired by the foods that come from the rich soil of my land.

Mi familia

The sea is also important to me because I have always been drawn to the water and my fondest memories are the ones spent with my family on vacation eating seafood together around a wood fire. Today, I live steps away from the Banderas Bay of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and I am able to enjoy seafood almost every day.

I like to focus on the beautiful ingredients that we have in Mexico, many of which we export and share with the rest of the world; like chilies, avocados, vanilla, and cacao. In short, this book contains a collection of family recipes from my childhood, living at the beach, and my travels exploring the rest of Mexico.

My method of recipe development is to taste every style of Mexican food and then try to understand why it is so delicious and how I can make it better by using my modern culinary training along with old tried and true family tips. My desire is to make classic recipes more nutritious and vibrant, yet still have a ‘wow’ factor. My goal is to present Mexican food in a way that represents me without losing its traditional essence. I aim to shine a light on what makes Mexican food so extraordinary, by focusing on the way we eat, and applying traditional cooking techniques that anyone can use in their own kitchen.



THE FLAVOR

When I think about making flavorful and delicious food, I think about my grandma because I was always so impressed by how she could make “something out of nothing.” She was one of those cooks who could go into a kitchen and magically prepare something wonderful every time, and so I always wondered how she did that. I thought: is this an ability that she was born with? Is this a technique that she was taught? Was it a lot of trial and error? Now I know that it was a combination of all three.

One essential insight that I have acquired from her is that cooking is a skill that you learn and improve upon the more you try and fail. Another tip I learned from her is to use fresh herbs and whole spices to make food more nutritious as well as more flavorful. She would pick herbs from the back garden as needed, and she would grind whole toasted spices in the Molcajete for almost every meal.

The importance of using whole spices is something that I expand upon in my cooking classes, hoping that my guests will go home and toss their ancient pre-ground spices and replace them with fresh whole spices. If nothing else, I hope that they take away the idea that using whole spices and grinding them fresh makes better tasting food.

My cooking style is based on taking flavors I recognize and blending combinations based on taste and textures. Here are some examples of these five main flavors most people can identify.

El sabor

Sweet: honey, fruit, molasses, sugar, agave, maple syrup.

Sour: citrus, fruit, yogurt, vinegar.

Salt: salt, anchovies, cured meat, soy sauce.

Bitter: coffee, chocolate, spices, herbs, beer.

Savory: meat, mushrooms, celery, onion, garlic.

Understanding and using these five main flavors in balance means that every dish you create can be more dynamic. This is why a sweet lime margarita with a salt rim can be so addictive. These flavors, in the right amount perfectly complement and enhance one another.

My grandmother cooked with all of her senses, and I have followed this style of cooking too. I developed the ability to use my senses to detect when something is ready, and what exactly it needs to be a finished dish. This can be manifested by sound, sight, smell, touch and, of course, the taste. I believe that, with practice, everyone can develop this ability.

Try this technique and focus on what your senses can detect while cooking. Think about how your senses come into play when you are eating. Think about a simple seafood tostada. The color of the fish, the creamy texture in avocado, the aroma of the sea and the zing of a squeeze of fresh lime juice that makes your mouth water. The crispness of the tostada is felt in your hand, but you also hear the crunch in your ears when you take a bite. Having a balance of texture as well as flavor is what makes eating such a memorable experience.



MAHI MAHI CEVICHE

Ceviche de Dorado

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb raw mahi-mahi or dorado, boneless, skinless

3/4 cup fresh lime juice

1/8 teaspoon salt to taste

1/2 cup ceviche broth (recipe below)

GARNISHES

1 thinly sliced jalapeño, to taste

2 thinly sliced radishes

8 cherry tomatoes, cut in half

1 bunch cilantro

1 avocado, sliced

2 tablespoons cured red onion (see the salsas section)

2 limes, cut in half

BROTH

1 orange, juiced

1/2 habanero, deseeded

1/4 cup white onion, rough chopped

1/4 cup carrot, rough chopped

1 Mexican oregano leaf

1 cup key lime juice

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

1/2 cup celery, chopped

1 cup pineapple, chopped

2 tablespoons fresh ginger, peeled and chopped

1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

The best ceviche is made from fish just caught from the sea: filleted, sliced, quickly cured, then served on the spot. The sweet-sour-savory marinade and sashimi-style cut fish is what makes this style of ceviche so exceptional. It really showcases the freshness of the fish.

CEVICHE METHOD

1 Keep the fish cold while you are preparing it. You can place the cut pieces in a glass bowl over ice.

2 To cut the fish for ceviche, position the fish horizontally on a cutting board in front of you.

3 Using a sharp knife, position it so that you will be cutting against the grain of the fish, creating a 45-degree angle. Angle down and away from you.

4 Cut each piece to about 1/8 inch thickness from left to right until you have sliced the entire fillet. While you are cutting, remove any fat, bones, or tough skin. You can also scrape the white flesh with a spoon which will give you a different consistency but it is easier and still delicious.

5 Add the 3/4 cup fresh lime juice and salt to the sliced fish. Stir to coat fish evenly, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 10-15 minutes.

6 Once the fish has cured in the lime juice and salt, it should look mostly opaque.

7 Strain the lime juice from the fish and add the 1/2 cup of ceviche broth, just enough to cover the fish.

8 On a plate, lay out the thin slices of fish in a single layer then top with your desired garnishes.

Note: Add height and color with slices of avocado, cherry tomato cut in half, cilantro leaves, thin slices of radish, red onion, jalapeño, or chili oil.

BROTH METHOD

Blend all broth ingredients in a blender until you have a very smooth consistency. Pass through a fine mesh strainer while pushing down with a ladle to press out all the juices from the pulp. You will need 1/2 cup for this recipe and can freeze the rest.



SHRIMP EMPANADA

Empanadas de Camarón

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups shrimp, peeled, deveined, and cut into 1/4 inch pieces**
- 1 sheet of puff pastry**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 1/2 medium white onion, finely chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped**
- 2 cups Roma or heirloom tomatoes, skinned, deseeded and finely chopped**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 1 jalapeño, deseeded, and minced**
- 8 green olives, finely chopped**
- 2 tablespoons capers, finely chopped**
- 1 tablespoon parsley, finely chopped**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tablespoon water**

Empanadas are now classic all over Latin America. Empanadas are pastries that can go a long way as an appetizer or as a meal because they can be luxurious with lobster or simply filled with cheese and potato. You can also exchange the portion of shrimp with an equal portion of chicken, pork, or beef. If you like to prepare for dinner parties in advance, make them the night before, then wrap them with plastic wrap and store in the fridge. On the day of your party, bring them to room temperature, bake, and impress away!

METHOD

- 1** Bring a large sauté pan to medium heat and add the oil. Sauté the onion, garlic, and tomato together until soft and slightly caramelized.
- 2** Add the bay leaves, jalapeño, olives, shrimp, capers, and then season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook for about 3-5 minutes or until the mixture has combined and the liquid has evaporated. Let the ingredients cool on a flat plate and remove bay leaves.
- 3** Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees°F. Grease a sheet pan with a light smear of oil.
- 4** Lightly dust the cold dough with flour and roll with a rolling pin to about 1/8-inch thick. Cut out circles with a cookie cutter (about 2 inches wide), or into squares with a knife.
- 5** Fill one half of each circle with the filling, fold the empty half over and bind the edges over one another by pressing the edges with a fork.
- 6** Brush the tops with an egg wash (whisk 1 egg with 1 tablespoon water) and bake for 15–20 minutes or until golden brown.



GRANDMOTHER'S TORTILLA SOUP

Sopa de tortilla de la abuela

SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large white onion, chopped
7 fresh Roma or heirloom tomatoes, cut in half
2 cloves garlic
1/2 jalapeño, deseeded
2-3 guajillo chilies
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
3 tablespoons tomato paste
5 cups chicken broth
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
5 fried tortillas, or tostadas broken into small pieces
2 teaspoons coriander seed, ground
Salt and pepper
3 leaves epazote or two bay leaves

GARNISHES

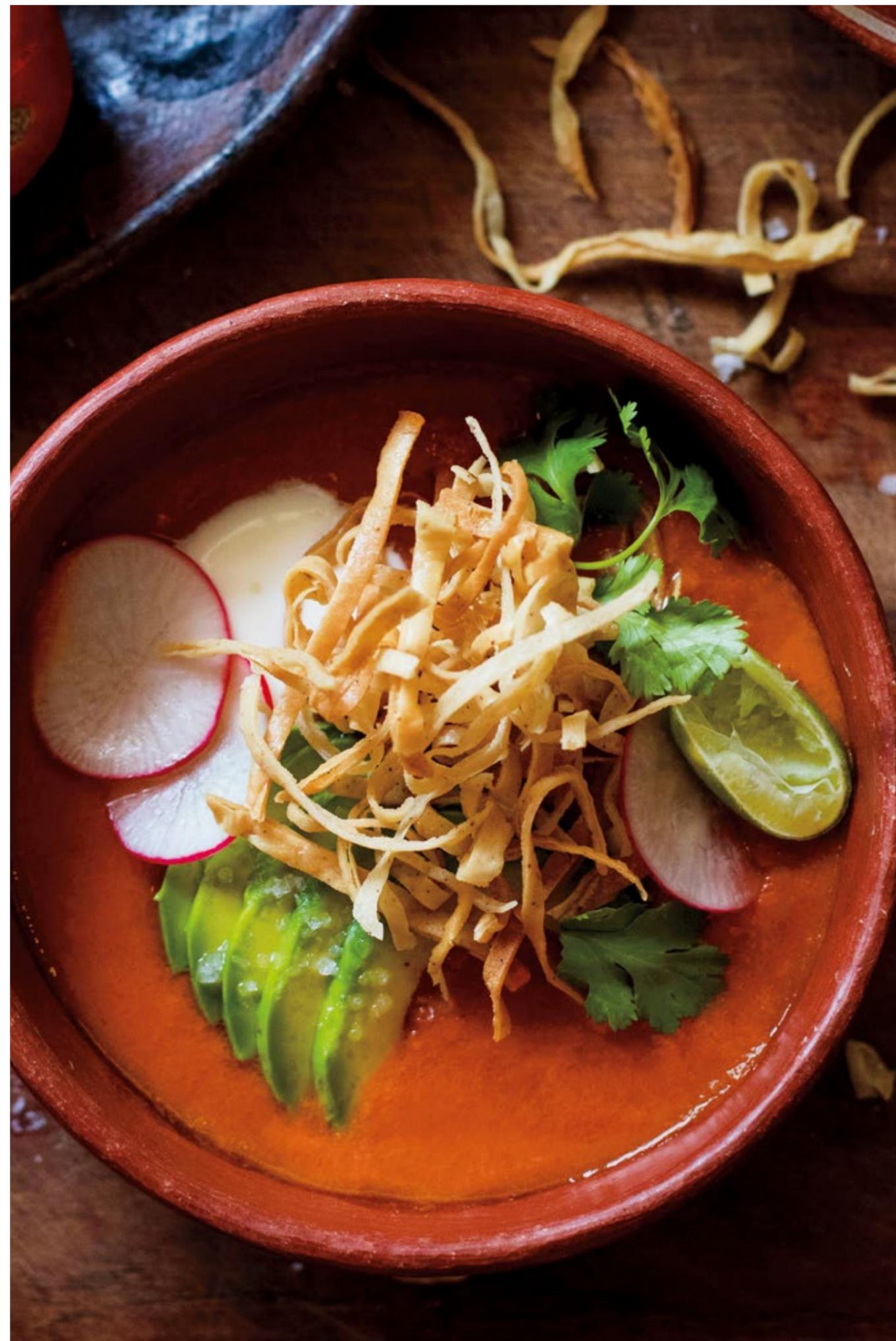
Thinly cut and fried tortilla
Sliced avocado
Shredded cheese
Spring onions
Crema.

I owe a great friendship to this recipe. One of my dearest friends, Graham Mattock, who is now the godfather of my daughter, used to come to a restaurant I was cooking at before we knew each other. It was on the beach in Vallarta.

He continued coming because he loved my tortilla soup. Not long after I left that restaurant and opened my own place, we were introduced and have been friends ever since. Only after a couple of years did he realize that it was I who had been cooking his favorite tortilla soup.

METHOD

- 1 Add 2 tablespoons olive oil to a medium pan and sauté the onion, tomatoes, and garlic until the vegetables are soft, golden, and with slightly charred edges.
- 2 Stir in fresh and dried chilies, oregano, and coriander seed and heat through, releasing the fragrant oils. Add the tomato paste, stir, and cook for another 2 minutes.
- 3 Add sautéed ingredients to a blender along with the tortillas and the broth, blend till smooth.
- 4 Pour the mixture into a pot and add the epazote leaves as you would a bay leaf and simmer for 10-15 minutes, adding salt and pepper to taste.
- 5 Remove the epazote and serve the soup in individual bowls with your favorite garnishes, or serve the soup and provide the garnishes separately for your guests to choose.



PINK MOLE WITH TURKEY

Mole rosa con pavo

SERVES 4-6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SAUCE

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 red pepper, roasted, skin off
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/4 cup almonds, blanched
- 1/4 cup pine nuts (or pink from Taxco)
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 chipotle in adobo
- 1-2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1/8 cup white Mezcal
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 1/4 cup of cooked beetroot, diced
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt



I've treasured this recipe for years, and have only seen a few that are similar, but not better. This one is more simple and nutritious, similar to mole blanco but at the end has a spicier and smoky finish. I was intrigued by this recipe when I first tasted it in Taxco, Mexico. I learned to appreciate its complexity and history. One story of where it comes from is that it is inspired by the pine nut, the new "fancy" ingredient brought by the Spanish along with almonds. The strange part is that the pine nut naturally grows pink while planted in Mexican soil. The almonds and pine nuts are used as the natural thickening agent, and the spices along with the chilies add lots of flavor. The colorful impact will impress your friends!

INGREDIENTS FOR THE TURKEY

- 2 turkey breasts
- 1 tablespoon corn flour
- Salt and pink pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter

GARNISHES

- Parsley leaves
- 1/8 teaspoon pink peppercorns
- Pink rose petals

METHOD FOR THE SAUCE

- 1 Roast the pepper on an open flame until the skin is charred black, then place in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap and let it sweat for 10 minutes. Peel the skin off the pepper, cut off the stem, and scrape the seeds out.
- 2 In a pan, on very gentle heat, add the butter and sauté the onions, garlic, almonds, and pine nuts lightly until the onions are soft, but not brown.
- 3 In a separate skillet on medium heat, add the pink peppercorns, coriander seeds, and cloves to lightly toast them. Swirl gently to bring out their aroma, but not to brown them. Otherwise, they will discolor the pink sauce.
- 4 Add the chipotle, sugar, and vinegar to the pan and deglaze the pan with the Mezcal. Add the sesame seeds and the red pepper. Let the alcohol evaporate for about 3 minutes, turn off heat, and then add the cream.
- 5 Add the sauté mix to a blender along with the stock, the beetroot, and salt, and blend until smooth. Pass through a sieve into a sauce pot and let it simmer gently for about 10 minutes until the sauce thickens to a gravy consistency. Adjust seasoning to taste.

METHOD FOR THE TURKEY

- 1 Place the turkey in a bowl and dust with corn flour, salt and pepper, until it is coated.
- 2 Place the turkey breast on plastic wrap and cover it loosely. With a meat mallet or a rolling pin, lightly pound it flat to a thickness of 1/2-inch. Repeat process for the second turkey breast.
- 3 Heat a sauté pan to medium-hot heat and drizzle 1 tablespoon of olive oil, and sauté the turkey breasts to a golden brown. This should take about 3-5 minutes for each side or until cooked through. Turn the heat off and add the butter until it melts and coats the meat. Place on a cutting board and rest for 3 minutes and cut into thick slices.
- 4 On a serving platter, spread out the pink mole sauce, place the turkey breast slices on top and garnish with the pink peppercorns, rose petals, and parsley.

EASY COFFEE AND VANILLA FLAN

Flan de café y vainilla

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup sugar

4 large eggs

1 (13 oz) can sweetened
condensed milk

1 (13 oz) can evaporated milk

1/2 vanilla pod, seeds scraped

1 tablespoon Mexican coffee
espresso

The Spanish brought us the art of making flan and we contributed the vanilla, which is native to Mexico. So you can call this a match made in heaven. Natalie, my daughter will always beg me for some flan after dinner.

METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 325°F. You will need 6 ramekins and a large baking pan to put them in.
- 2 Pour 1/2 cup sugar in a pan over medium heat along with 2 tablespoons water. Keep a close eye on the sugar until it browns and becomes caramel, tilting it around the sides but do not stir it.
- 3 Pour approximately a tablespoon of caramel in each ramekin and let cool.
- 4 In a blender, add the eggs, milks, espresso, and the vanilla seeds. Blend until smooth. Pour custard into caramel-lined ramekins. Place ramekins in a large glass or ceramic baking dish and fill with about 1-2 inches of hot water. Cover all with foil.
- 5 Bake for 25-35 minutes in the water bath and check if they are ready by taking one with oven mittens and giving it a little shake. If the edges are firm and the center still has a wobble, it's ready.
- 6 Carefully remove each ramekin from the water bath and cool in the refrigerator for 1 hour. Invert each ramekin onto a small plate. The caramel sauce will flow over the custard.



PIÑA COLADA

Piña colada

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz caramelized coconut syrup
- 1 1/2 oz white tequila (I like Don Julio)
- 2 oz fresh pineapple juice

INGREDIENTS FOR COCONUT SYRUP

- 2 coconuts (medium soft flesh)
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 key limes
- 6 dashes angostura bitters
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

METHOD FOR COCONUT SYRUP

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2 Cut or peel away any brown skin on the coconut leaving only the white part. Toss it with half the sugar and bake on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper for about 30 minutes or until the edges have caramelized.
- 3 With a spatula, scrape the coconut away and place into a blender with 1 cup of water, zest of 2 limes, bitters, 1/2 cup of sugar, and nutmeg. Liquefy and strain through a fine mesh sieve.

Note: The caramelized coconut syrup that you don't use on the day you make this recipe needs to be frozen since it spoils quickly. I freeze it in cube trays and then place it in a zip lock bag to use on the days I want to feel like I am on vacation. You are welcome to replace the tequila with rum too.

METHOD FOR COCKTAIL

In a blender, blend: 1/2 cup of ice, coconut syrup, tequila, and fresh pineapple juice until frothy and serve.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would have not been possible without the love and support of my photographer friend Elizabeth Lloyd and her dedication to creating the amazing images that accompany these recipes, and which took countless of hours to produce. All of the photography here is shot using only natural light. I admire her passion and dedication to her craft, and how she never gave up on this project.

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