

THE STORY

Behind the

RECIPES

*Eight Cabo chefs
open up their
kitchens to share
their favorite recipes.
Part Two of
a two-part series.*

-by Joan Tucker & Paul Papanek | photos by Paul Papanek-

Chefs. We imagine them as little kids in their mother's kitchen, helping to prep, standing on step stools at the stove reaching way over a pot to stir lovely soups and stews, and trying to put the finished meal on a plate without spilling. They're absorbing their family recipes and are falling in love with cooking – all the great smells and the happiness and satisfaction of sharing food with the family. Their life's path is being formed before they learned how to read and write.

Convinced of this, we asked eight chefs in Los Cabos to come up with – and cook - a recipe that had a very personal meaning to them. Not that our fantasy was totally off base, but these chefs had a lot more to share with us. Many of the recipes they shared spoke to tradition, availability of local ingredients,

comfort, and family - the dish varying from household to household, influenced by the passage of time and interpretation. Others were formed through travel and learning about other cultures, and then fusing those new flavors with the food they grew up with. There's always a story behind the recipe.

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Chef Andres Bracamontes
Executive Chef – Bar Esquina and Bahía Cabo

Picture this: a 7-year-old Andres, fascinated with watching his mother and two grandmothers cook and, finding it very easy to understand what they were doing, started making eggs and pancakes for his younger brother and sister while his schoolteacher parents were busy working. One day, he went to the market in his small town of Ciudad Guzman, bought some flavored yogurt, plastic cups and stir sticks, and made frozen yogurt popsicles covered in chocolate which he sold out of the kitchen window. Not only did he find the passion to become a chef at such an early age, but he made enough pocket change to start thinking that there “could be something in this cooking business.”

Chef Andres took us through the rest of the story – going from pancakes and popsicles to becoming, at 25-years-old (he’s 32 now), the Executive Chef for Bar Esquina and the Bahía Group.

After graduating from Colegio Gastronómico Internacional in Guadalajara, this fearless and independent kid moved to Mexico City with only 3,000 pesos in his

“My food is about comfort with modern and international accents that’s always changing.”



pocket and knowing no one. He took the first restaurant job he could get and, not having enough money for rent, slept in the place for two months. On his days off, he kept showing up at the door of Biko - considered the best restaurant in Mexico City at that time - until they finally hired him. That was the real start of his career and opened the door that took him to the kitchen of 3-Micheline-star Chef Danny Garcia in Spain. Traveling and cooking throughout the world with Garcia opened his mind to other techniques and ingredients which propelled his cooking to another level.

A friend asked him to come back to Mexico to open a project in Cabo but before it happened, Bahía Group hired him away and he’s now been there for seven years.

“My food is about comfort with modern and international accents that’s always changing. Every year, your way of cooking develops. You get more mature, and there are always new ingredients. But if you don’t overthink the ingredients, sometimes it’s better because you’re free to make whatever you want. That’s when you create the best dishes.”

The recipe he chose to prepare - ash-blackened tuna - is a perfect example of that. It’s a delicious mix of Mexican and American food with its green tomatillo salsa and celery root puree. “But the black ash made from roasting leeks and guajillo and ancho chili peppers until they disintegrate? Seriously?” we asked him. He laughed and said, “It’s not that hard! Just go for it!”

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Ash-Blackened Tuna with Celery Root Puree

Serves 2

Ingredients for the Fish:

- 12 oz bluefin tuna divided into 2 steaks
- Juice of 1 lime
- Fresh dill
- Salt

Ingredients for Tomatillo Sauce:

- 9 oz green tomatillos
- 2 garlic cloves – peeled
- 1/2 white onion – halved
- 1 jalapeño
- 1/2 bunch cilantro
- Salt to taste

Ingredients for Celery Root Puree:

- 14 oz fresh celery root
- 10 Tbsp butter
- Salt to taste

Ingredients for Blackened Seasoning:

- 1 leek – medium – cut into small pieces
- 2 oz dry guajillo pepper
- 2 oz dry ancho pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp fresh rosemary – finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tsp fresh thyme – finely chopped
- Sugar and salt to taste

Make the Green Tomatillo Sauce: Preheat oven to 425. Arrange tomatillos, garlic, onion, and jalapeño on a non-stick baking sheet and roast until soft. Puree in blender with the cilantro and salt. Set aside.

Make the Ash: While the oven is still at 425, place the leek pieces and peppers on a baking sheet and roast until burned. We’re creating ash. If you have an outdoor grill, you may want to do this part there. When done, mix together into a fine powder and combine with the chopped herbs. Add sugar and salt to taste.

Make the Celery Root Puree: Wash and peel the celery root and cut into chunks. Put the chunks in to a pot of boiling water and cook until soft. Remove, drain, put into a food processor with half the butter, and pulse to puree. Add more butter as needed to make smooth and shiny puree. Add salt to taste. Set aside.

To Serve: Slice the tuna into medallions and move to the plate, then ladle a small amount of tomatillo sauce on top and garnish with avocado cubes, dill, and cucumber slices. Spoon the celery root puree onto the plate.



When Chef Orli was hired as executive sous chef at Comal at Chileno Bay, they moved to Cabo where, she says, Yvan Mucharraz, the Executive Chef, “recognized a kindred spirit.”

Chef Mucharraz envisioned the new YaYa as Mediterranean – but not just classic Italian and Spanish. He wanted to include Middle East Mediterranean. He asked Chef Eliana to come on board and they talked about those cuisines, working together to come up with unique recipes that included those ingredients and spices. “I’m kind of like a nerd,” she confessed to us. “When Chef Yvan and I started to talk about the project, I bought all the books that I could and started doing my research into Middle Eastern cooking. I read everything I could find!” At YaYa, she has created a menu that reflects all those flavors, offering many dishes that combine tastes and vibes that feel both Mexican and “New Med.”

The fresh pasta with Pacific clams and local Baja tomatoes recipe that she chose to cook for us is as fresh and bright as she is.

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Eliana Godinez

Chef de Cuisine - YaYa at Chileno Bay Resort

Mexican and Italian - what could be better? These are the roots of Chef Eliana Godinez, Chef de Cuisine at YaYa - Chileno Bay's new modern Mediterranean restaurant. YaYa - a term of endearment for *grandmother* in Italian, is close to her heart. Born and raised in Mexico City, Eliana's paternal Mexican grandmother was a wonderful cook and hostess who would gather the family around the table for any and all occasions. Her mother's family is Italian which means that she grew up immersed in the perfect blend of food and fun and the warmth of family and friends eating together.

She studied gastronomy in Mexico City for several years but the longing to explore her Italian roots led her to Italy where she cooked with the famous Chef Massimo Baturra for two years. It was there in Modena she found the sophistication and ease in the Italian style.

After returning home to Mexico, she cooked with Chef Jorge Vallejo at Quintonil, one of the most respected restaurants in Mexico City. It was there, she met her husband-to-be – Chef Orli del Angel - and they cooked together for several years, developing their individual skills and techniques.



Tagliatelle with Clams and Parmigiano Reggiano Sauce

Serves 4

The Sauce:

- 1 1/2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 cup 1% low-fat milk
- 1/2 cup freshly shredded Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- Zest of 2 lemons

The Pasta & Clams:

- 16 oz tagliatelle pasta
- 8 oz Parmigiano Reggiano sauce
- 1 bunch fresh chopped parsley
- 16 heirloom cherry tomatoes - halved
- 24 fresh clams

Make the Sauce: Melt 1 1/2 tbsp butter in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle 2 tbsp flour into melted butter, whisking constantly. Cook, whisking constantly, 30 seconds to 1 minute or until mixture is golden and lumpy. Gradually whisk in 1 cup low-fat milk and bring to a boil. Cook, whisking constantly, 1 to 2 minutes, or until thickened.

Add 1/2 cup freshly shredded Parmesan cheese, 1/4 tsp. each salt and pepper, and the lemon zest, whisking until smooth. Remove from heat and set aside.

Make the Pasta: Cook the pasta according to the desired texture, ideally “al dente.” While the pasta is cooking, start to re-heat the sauce on low. To cook the clams, heat a cast iron skillet (any skillet will do) add some butter and oil, add the clams and some white wine. Let the clams cook for 2 minutes, then cover until all the clams have opened.

Drain the pasta and mix it into the pan with sauce until well combined. Add the cherry tomatoes and toss. If sauce is too thick, add a splash of milk. Then add the clams. Serve in a bowl and top with the chopped parsley.



Benito Molina
Chef / Owner – La Revolución

One night, while in his early 20's and unhappy with the drudgery of his 6am to 5pm job in a bank, Benito Molina was staring up at the stars when they spoke to him. "What are you doing?" they asked him. "You love food! You love cooking!" What are you doing?"

The next day, he resigned from the bank, walked away from studying economics at the university and knocked on the door of Maxim's de Paris, a very formal French restaurant in Mexico City where, when he was 15 years old, he had spent a summer being a food runner. At that time, he noticed that everyone in the chaotic kitchen looked like they were having a lot more fun than the tuxedoed waiters in the dining room. He wanted to cook and, because he spoke fluent French, they hired him on the spot. On his first day, he knew that this is what he wanted to do for the rest of his life.

After a year there, he enrolled at New England Culinary Institute and after only six months, was sent to cook in Brittany, France. That's where he developed his love for seafood. "It's the best in France," he told us.

After graduating, he was hired by Chef Todd English to cook in his famous Boston restaurant, Olives. "It was a culture shock. I was completely French trained, like a little soldier, perfect uniform, and I get to this place where everyone was tattooed and listening to the Beastie Boys. It was crazy," he told us. "But at five o'clock when service

started, it was like going into battle. They turned off the Beastie Boys, and the chef jackets came out. Olives completely changed my view of food because it was more Mediterranean and Italian – which is more similar to Mexico than France. I mean, the tomato came out of Mexico, right?"

The cold Boston winters forced him back to Mexico City a year and a half later and, after cooking at and developing several restaurants, in 1987, he was hired by Hugo D'Acosta – of one the most influential winemakers in Mexico – to come to Valle de Guadalupe in Baja to run the restaurant at Santo Tomas Vineyard. It was there that he met his chef-wife, Solange Muris, and three years later they opened Manzanilla in Ensenada. They pioneered the concept of chef-owned restaurants and totally changed the restaurant scene throughout the area. Their menu is based on all locally sourced ingredients. "We have the best sustainable fish, the best alcohol, the best wine, so it's perfect!" he said. "It's every chef's dream to live in a place like this."

He and Chef Solange opened La Revolución in San Jose del Cabo in 2018, bringing with them all the sensibilities that continue to make Manzanilla so successful. The dish that he cooked for us – Fish with Dry Fideo and Black Beans - is emblematic of everything he believes in: respect for the ingredients and keeping it simple.

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Fish with Dry Fideo and Black Beans

Serves 4

Ingredients:

2lbs flaky white fish filets (halibut, Mexican sea bass, etc)

Pureed black beans (OK to use canned)

8 oz angel hair pasta

4 medium tomatoes

1 white onion - chopped

3 garlic cloves

1 hoja santa leaf or bay leaf

Cotija cheese

1 avocado – cut into small cubes

Olive oil

Chili powder

Ground herbs (oregano, basil, etc)

Salt & pepper

Make the Tomato Broth: In a pot of boiling water, cook the tomatoes, garlic, and onion until the tomatoes are soft. Then drain. Remove the skin from the tomatoes and combine with the garlic and onion in a blender and puree. In a pan, simmer the tomato broth with the hoja santo leaf for 15 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste and set aside.

Make the Fideo: Heat a skillet to medium-high and add olive oil. When shimmering, add the pasta and sauté until light brown. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate.

Make the Fish: Cut the fish into 8oz portions, season both sides with chili powder, herbs, pepper, and salt. Heat a skillet on medium-high, add olive oil, and when the oil shimmers, begin to cook the fish. When seared, lower heat to medium and continue to cook until just done. Time will vary depending on thickness of filets. While the fish is cooking, add the pasta to the tomato broth and cook on low for 5 minutes. If the puree is thick, add small amounts of vegetable stock or chicken broth. Heat the pureed black beans.

Assemble the Dish: Transfer the filet to the plate. Using a fork, gather up a portion of the pasta and spin it around the fork. Slide the pasta off the fork onto the plate into a little mound. Sprinkle the cotija cheese on the pasta and add the avocado cubes. Finish with some torn fresh herbs. Add the black bean puree and serve.



Arturo Rivero
Executive Chef – Acre Resort

“If I had it to do over again, I might have had second thoughts. Who, in their insane mind, would study for a job that will have you standing 18 hours a day with no break,

in the heat, with people yelling at you?” Acre Resort’s executive chef Arturo Rivero wondered aloud. “But” he continued, “Once the journey started, I never stopped working. I love it!”

Arturo’s parents were both busy dentists in Mexico City and his mother traveled a

lot. She would make a big pot of meatballs with tomato paste and some powdered chicken bouillon and freeze them for Arturo, his sister, and their father to heat up while she was away. When he was 12 years old – and had finally had it with the frozen meatballs - he said to his mother “Just leave the ingredients and I’ll see what I can do!” This seemingly minor act of self-preservation really improved those meatballs.

Throughout high school, he set his sights on becoming a doctor but because there were just a few hundred places for over five thousand applicants, he didn’t make it in. He found himself wondering what to do next.

One day, his mother told him that she had enrolled him in a baking class saying “Well, you love to cook!”

When he reluctantly attended his first class and saw all the cute girls baking cookies, laughing, and joking around, he silently thanked his mother and settled in. Several weeks later, he brought home some cookies that he had made, and his mother immediately became his agent, proudly putting the word out that her son was now a baker and the orders from her friends started pouring in. Thrilled with his own success, he enrolled in more baking and pastry classes and, ultimately, culinary school.

After ten crazy years in Mexico City, opening his own bakery and pastry shop and being head chef for sixteen different projects, he felt that he needed a break and a change of pace. He moved to Todos Santos and opened Briqueta, a funky BBQ place with only six items on the menu. Hurricane Olof ended that chapter and around that time, he got a call to come to Acre Resort as sous chef for the summer. He was asked to stay on and was soon promoted to executive chef. Embracing Acre’s concept of farm to table – from Acre’s own farm – he now has the freedom to create new and exciting dishes that honor those ingredients.

Today, however, he chose to honor his mother – who set him on his path – by cooking her meatballs for us – though it’s definitely his spin. Sometimes mothers do know best. **El Fin!**



Arturo’s Mom’s Meatballs

For the Sauce:

- 2lb medium tomatoes
- 1 onion
- 5 garlic cloves – peeled
- 5 dry pasilla peppers
- 2 avocado leaves (substitute bay leaf)
- 4 hoja santa leaves (substitute bay leaf)
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 1qt beef broth
- 1 cup olive oil

For the Meatballs:

- 1lb ground beef
- 1lb ground pork
- 5 oz white bread
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- Salt to taste
- 4 oz coarsely grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 garlic cloves – chopped
- 1 bunch parsley – chopped
- 1/4 cup uncooked rice
- 3 hard-boiled eggs - cubed
- Flour

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place the peppers, the 5 garlic cloves, onion, and tomatoes on a baking sheet and roast until soft. When done, combine them with the beef broth in a blender and puree. Set aside.

Soak the bread in milk and drain. In a large bowl, thoroughly mix the beef, pork, soaked bread, raw eggs, parsley, rice, and Parmesan cheese. Taking about 3 ounces of the mixture, fold it around a piece of hard-boiled egg and form into a ball. Repeat with rest of the meat and egg. Lightly coat each meatball with flour. Heat a large high-sided pan to medium-high and pour in half of the olive oil. When shimmering, brown the meatballs. We’re just going for searing, not cooking through. Add more oil if needed. When browned, remove and set aside.

Pour the broth mixture into the pan, keeping the leftover oil and other bits. Add the leaves and bring to a boil. Add the meatballs and cook for approx 15 minutes until they reach an internal temperature of 160°F.

Serve in a bowl and garnish with chopped cilantro.

