

Mexico, Tamayo's menu reads like a Spanish lesson book. Tacos de camarón al pastor (small shrimp with salsa on petite flour tortillas), queso fundido (melted cheese, flour tortillas and chile morita salsa) and ceviche de halibut (halibut in citrus-tamarind with cucumber, mango, jicama and cilantro) are among the finest first-course choices. Sopas y ensaladas (soups and salads) are followed by platos fuertes (entrees) that all come with bowls of rice and beans served family style. A variety of chiles, such as habenero, chipotle, poblano, ancho and morita add a delirious depth of traditional flavors, while foods such as cactus, pumpkin seeds and plantains provide unexpected tasteful textures. Postres (desserts) follow the same formula. Tres

leches bread pudding scented with Frangelico liquor and studded with candied pecans is served warm with ice cream and blueberry compote on the side.

Every dish is artfully presented and elegantly displayed. The three-inch flour tortillas come wrapped in a white napkin and resting in a silver bowl. Coffee is poured from an individual silver pot that remains on the table (covered with a white tablecloth, of course).

"This kind of food is what you find in really expensive, good restaurants in Mexico," says my dining companion who takes frequent trips to Cabo San Lucas. Now Denverites can save a plane ticket and enjoy Modern Mexican at home.

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TACOS DE CAMARON AL PASTOR

SERVES 4, 3 TACOS PER PERSON
BY CHEF/OWNER RICHARD SANDOVAL

FOR THE SHRIMP

- 26 to 30 shrimp, peeled, cleaned and deveined
- 1 cup adobo (recipe follows)
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 Tbsp sherry-wine vinegar
- ½ tsp honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a non-reactive bowl, mix together 1 cup of adobo, orange juice, sherry-wine vinegar, honey, salt and pepper. Add the shrimp and make sure the shrimp are covered with the mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 90 minutes. • Preheat a sauté pan and add the shrimp, turning occasionally, until cooked through, about 90 seconds. Avoid overcooking the shrimp to keep them moistened. Keep warm until serving.

FOR THE ADOBO, MAKES 1 CUP

- 3 guajillo chiles
- 1 pasilla chiles
- 1 chile de arbol
- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- ¼ white Spanish onion, sliced
- 3 small garlic cloves
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick (6"), broken into thirds
- 6 whole black peppercorns
- ¼ tsp cumin seeds, crushed
- ½ tsp Mexican oregano
- ½ Tbsp achiote paste
- 1½ cups chicken stock

Remove the stems, seeds and membranes from the chiles. Break the chiles into larger pieces and set aside. • In a medium saucepan or skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, cloves, cinnamon, peppercorns, cumin seeds, oregano and achiote paste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened and light golden brown, about 4 minutes. • Add the chiles and cook until darkened on both sides, about 1 minute. Add the chicken stock, covering the ingredients about halfway. Gently boil until reduced by half, 5–8 minutes. • Scrape into a blender and puree. Pour into a medium mesh sieve set over a bowl and press the solids with a rubber spatula or the back of a ladle to release the liquid. Discard the solids and let cool.

FOR THE TACOS

- 12 flour tortillas (4" each)
- 2 oz pineapple, grilled, julienned into 2" to 3" strips
- 1 cup white Spanish onion, chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 1 cup tomatillo salsa (optional)

TO SERVE

In a skillet, warm the tortillas. On 4 appetizer plates, arrange 3 tortillas. Divide the shrimp equally and spoon in the center of every tortilla. Arrange 1 pineapple strip on every taco. Sprinkle onion, cilantro and lime juice.