

# FOOD



PARTIES

## DON'T BLOW YOUR DIET

Worried about the number of calories lurking behind those party invites and family gatherings? With these tips from EatingWell.com, you can enjoy all the fun without any of the guilt.

**Choose wisely:** Choose your first snacking options wisely. Research suggests that you'll consume the largest quantity of the foods you eat first, so start with healthy choices like fresh veggies and hummus.

**Trick your brain:** According to the Calorie Control Council, the average number of calories eaten at a holiday dinner — not counting pre-dinner snacking — is 3,000. Select a smaller plate to trick your brain into thinking you are eating more.

— Brandpoint



FOOD MYTHS

## HOW MUCH WATER TO DRINK?

Although drinking plenty of water every day will help keep you hydrated, drinking eight glasses of water per day should be a guideline instead of goal. For years, some doctors have recommended that people should drink at least 64 ounces of water per day, but experts now say there is no uniform rule for how much water a person should drink. Because the body and mind can require more or less than the average recommendation of water on any given day, nutritionists suggest that you should calculate your body weight into ounces and then divide the ounces by half to give you a guideline of how much water to drink per day.

— More Content Now

TASTE OF TRAVEL

# Magic in Mexico

## Luxe resort offers healing through food

By Charlene Peters  
More Content Now

Not so long ago, central and southern Mexico suffered headline-making earthquakes and hurricanes, so it was with some trepidation that I headed to Puerto Nuevo. As I landed in nearby Puerto Vallarta, it was clear that this popular resort area was blissfully untouched by disaster.

The 20-minute ride to Puerto Nuevo brought me to a cul-de-sac of resorts in a location known as Riviera Nayarit, and to the al fresco reception lounge of the Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit. There, I stood before a 10-foot wizard seated next to a book, whose inscription hinted at the mission of this resort: The Magic Begins Here. I would soon learn that was 100 percent on target.

First things first; I was ravenous, and dinner at Frida, the resort's on-site restaurant, was on my agenda. Barely 10 minutes after checking in, I honored my reservation and took my seat for a table-side treat of guacamole preparation with a choice of crispy toppings: Maguey worms (found on agave leaves), grasshoppers and Chicatana ants. Yikes! A vibrant array of authentic regional dishes followed, including a twist on tradition — beet tamale with goat cheese (recipe below).

Tamales aside, what originally fueled my curiosity about visiting Grand Velas was its "Wellnessing Weekend," which included a juicing class led by Chef Yogui (aka Mariano Garcés) and an Ayurvedic — or healing — dinner accompanied by an enchanting "singing bowls" performance in a candlelit room. The resort's dual-level Wellness Suites offer a cocoon of solace. The ground floor features patio views over verdant gardens



The magic truly does begin at Grand Velas resort. Everything about the author's "Wellnessing Weekend" was a delight. [CHARLENE PETERS PHOTOS]

### Root Beet Tamal



- Serves 8-10
- 1 pound blue flour
  - 2½ cups beet puree
  - ¼ pound lard
  - Pinch of salt
  - 1 plantain leaf or corn husk
  - Goat cheese, 1 oz. per tamale
  - 1 tomato
  - 1 serrano chile
  - 1 onion
  - Coriander
  - Lemon juice
  - Extra-virgin olive oil

For the dough, mix the first four ingredients very well with your hands.

Soak the corn or

plantain leaves in water for 10 minutes, then add a thin rectangular layer of dough. Fill with goat cheese to your liking, and top with a thin layer of dough. Fold the leaf closed (you can use string if needed).

Cook the tamales for 45-60 minutes in a bamboo steamer. Remove the leaf and garnish with mixed diced tomato, chile, onion, coriander, lemon juice, salt and olive oil.

— Courtesy of Frida Restaurant, Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit

and an infinity pool that appears to flow into the Pacific Ocean. The second floor provides private

access to a Jacuzzi, outdoor bed, massage table and umbrella'd dining table. The most powerful

moments of this enchanting weekend of wellnessing were an elaborate aromatherapy massage that left me pliant and peaceful, and an Ayurvedic dinner conducted by Jorge Lupercio. With cellphones and footwear collected, our group of wellness enthusiasts was summoned outdoors, and like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, we followed Jorge in a procession that circled the resort lawn, all while chanting the So'Ham Meditation via a series of inhales/exhales. The goal was to be fully present before heading back indoors for a team- and memory-building game of ball toss.

With instructions from Jorge to be conscious of what we were about to savor, the meal began with a juice that tasted of apples yet was made of tamarind, lemon, salt, ginger and serrano chiles. After a red pepper salad, we were served an onion tart with a smear of beet and chickpeas on the plate. At evening's end, I was acutely aware that I had just eaten dinner without wine, carbs or chocolate. Truth be told, I intended on ordering a room service hamburger afterward, but opted for a restful night's sleep, totally in sync with the concept of wellnessing.

## Will New Year's Special bring pot of gold?



Prudence Hilburn

After all the big meals and the many parties we have enjoyed from Thanksgiving through the end of the year, I'm not sure that I'm ready for a big meal on New Year's Day.

Of course, when I was growing up in the South, Mother always included turnip greens and black-eyed peas on the menu because those dishes are supposed to make the year prosperous. There are many who still carry on this tradition rather than take a chance on missing out on that "pot of gold" at the end

of the rainbow. For those believers, I put together a simple casserole called my New Year's Special.

No more rich desserts for a while, so I decided that my Angel Food Cakes of Many Flavors will be perfect. This can be enjoyed with no guilt and will be a good start on a healthier life style for those of us who usually make that resolution for the new year.

### New Year's Special

- 1 can (27 oz.) seasoned turnip greens
- 2 cans (14.5 oz. each) black-eyed peas
- 2 cans Rotel tomatoes and chilies
- 1 lb. smoked sausage cut crosswise in ¼ inch thick slices

Pour turnip greens into slow

cooker followed by peas and then Rotel. Top with sausage slices. Cover and cook on high for 2 to 3 hours.

### Angel food cake of many flavors

- 1 ¼ cups confectioners sugar
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 ½ cups egg whites (12 to 14 egg whites)
- 1 ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon banana liqueur
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In small bowl, stir together confectioners sugar and flour; set aside. In a large bowl, add egg whites, cream of tartar, banana liqueur, vanilla and almond extracts and salt. With mixer on high, beat until

well mixed. Beating at high speed, add granulated sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time. Beat just until sugar dissolves and whites form stiff peaks. Do NOT scrape bowl during beating. With rubber spatula, fold in flour mixture about ¼ cup at a time just until flour disappears. Pour into ungreased 10-inch tube pan and with spatula, cut through batter to break any large air bubbles. Bake 35 minutes until top of cake springs back when lightly touched with finger. Any cracks on surface should look dry. Invert cake pan on a funnel and cool completely before removing cake from pan. With spatula, loosen cake from pan and turn out onto plate. Makes 12 servings.

**NOTE:** 1 teaspoon banana flavoring can be substituted for the liqueur, but it is not quite as good.