



LATIN RECIPES FROM TODAY'S HOTTEST ROMANCE AUTHORS



Hot in the Kitchen by Gabriella Hewitt
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Foreword

As far back as I can remember I have had a love affair with food and books.

My fondest memories were helping my dad and mom in the kitchen. Dad was the ultimate cook, preparing *arroz con pollo*, plantain chips, *lechon asado* (roast pig), and *bacalao* (salt fish), while Mom showed me how to make Trinidadian goat curry, dumplings and *pastelles*. Both were culinary masters in their own right who took the time to teach me their secrets and infused in me a love for my Latin and Caribbean roots.

My passion for cooking can only be rivaled by my passion for writing and reading romance novels. There in between the pages I can snuggle up and find myself transported to a place filled with balmy nights, cool tropical breezes, sweet drinks with umbrellas and hot cabana boys. I love being swept up into tales larger than life that have a happily ever after and a few loves scenes that make me blush.

When I write, I find that my memories of those tastes, sights, sounds, not to mention the occasional funny anecdote, sometimes slip into my stories. Some scenes are hot and spicy, others mild and saucy, but overall done in good taste, which is why I am proud to present *Hot in the Kitchen*, featuring some tastefully fun and romantic recipes with Latin flair.

Enjoy a book and a bite with these sumptuous excerpts and recipes from today's hottest romance authors: Gabriella Hewitt, Caridad Piñeiro, Josh Lanyon, M. Jules Aedin, Miranda Baker, Liz Fichera, Linda Gonzalez and Louisa Bacio.

Indulge in a little cooking and some sizzling excerpts spicy enough to heat up your appetite. ¡*Buen provecho!*

Sinceramente,

Gabriella Hewitt

Appetizers

Gabriella Hewitt

<http://www.gabriellahewitt.com/>

I was six years old the first time I crossed over the border from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico. I loved the outdoor markets that seemed to carry everything from fresh vegetables and fruit to leather goods and artistic wares. After a day spent shopping, we would stop at some small cantina and order the most delicious seafood and salads. Savory juices would dribble down our chins, as we dug in accompanied by the sounds of Mexican guitar players, who traveled from table to table. Finally, it was time to go home. We'd load up the car with all that we'd bought and make the trek back to the border. As we crossed, I'd look out the rear window and smile. *Hasta luego!*

GABRIELLA'S AZTEC SALSA

Serves 10

Ingredients

2 avocados, chopped
Olive oil
1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
1 can (11 oz) Mexican style corn
3 tomatoes, chopped
1 red onion, chopped
Lime
A dash of red wine vinegar (optional)
3 green onions, chopped
Diced jalapeño (optional)
Pinch cayenne pepper, salt and pepper



Photo Credit: Sasha Tomaszycski

Directions

Lightly combine the avocados with red wine vinegar in a bowl. Stir in black beans, corn, tomatoes, green onion and red onion.

Squeeze lime juice into bowl. Pour in enough olive oil to coat. Add cayenne pepper, salt, pepper, and jalapeño.

Toss lightly. Refrigerate.
Serve chilled with tortilla chips.



When the last shadow warrior falls, so will all humanity.

With each demon he vanquishes in service to the Aztec sun god, Tomás fulfills his duty to defend humankind—and surrenders another piece of his humanity to his wolf spirit. All hope seems lost until a mission leads him to the door of the one thing he thought he'd never find...his spirit mate --The only woman who can save him from oblivion.

Buy: http://www.amazon.com/Out-of-the-Shadows-ebook/dp/B005GXOQB0/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpt_2

Out of the Shadows © Samhain Publishing, LLC 2011
By Gabriella Hewitt

A wolf's howl pierced the desert silence, causing the animals to stir restlessly in their stalls. Wolves had been reintroduced into Arizona, but she had yet to see or hear one so close to her ranch. Was it an omen?

Carolina paused in her chores to stare out the open barn door into the gathering darkness. For a moment, she let herself get caught up in the long, solitary note. It felt like a kindred spirit. She knew loneliness intimately. Only her loneliness did not come from the vast miles of the sun-parched Sonoran desert that surrounded her, but out of the necessity to protect her goddess, her land's secret. As one of the few amongst her people to become a guardian, her choices were limited.

The one occasion she'd invested herself in another, he'd betrayed her. She'd foolishly placed her hope and trust in Billy and she'd paid a horrendous price. Her desire to find someone to share the workload, her joy and sadness, and the burden of her secret—just as her parents had done—had blinded her to the trap she'd walked into. By the time she understood what was happening, it was too late. Her parents were dead.

Her heart weighed heavy in her chest as if it had happened recently and not five years ago. The memory of her parents lingered too close to the surface today. This had been their land, their dream, and now it was hers to fight for. She'd vowed never to fail

them again. Above her own needs came the higher purpose of protecting her goddess at all costs.

Her mare, Mariposa, snorted and reared up, pulling Carolina from her thoughts. The animals had been growing edgier with each passing minute. They sensed the evil that blew in with the warm desert breeze. She berated herself for not paying more attention to them.

Goose bumps prickled her skin. Her tattoo, a gift from the goddess, began a slow burn on her shoulder, a sure sign that evil was approaching. She felt the heat radiating through the fabric of her denim shirt. The last time she'd experienced the odd sensation, her world had fallen apart.

Cautiously, she turned her head, seeking the source.

Her breath came out in a gasp.

Less than ten feet away sat a magnificent gray wolf, watching her. Waiting.

Aida Magallón Reader Contribution

Mexican food is usually eaten with the hands and we try to cook with ingredients with similar colors to our flag (Green, White and Red).

AIDA'S GUACAMOLE

Ingredients

2 avocados large
1 onion, finely chopped
1 tomato, finely chopped
1 small fresh red chili, deseeded, finely chopped
1 fresh lime
Salt
Coriander or cilantro



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Directions

Place the avocado flesh in a medium bowl and using a ladle or fork mash it until almost smooth.

Add the onion, and chili. Squeeze in lime juice. Use a spoon to mix well.

Then add the tomato and coriander and mix it up gently. Taste and season with salt.

Main Dishes

Josh Lanyon

<http://www.joshlanyon.com/>

I grew up in Southern California where Mexican and Spanish food are as common as burgers and fries in other parts of the country. One of my favorite foods growing up was tacos -- in fact, I think tacos may have been the second thing I learned to cook (right after scrambled eggs). I've graduated to slightly more complex dishes nowadays, such as the dishes that I have featured in *Mexican Heat*.

JOSH'S TWICE-BAKED POTATO WITH CHORIZO (from Country Living Magazine)

Serves 6

Ingredients

6 large russet potatoes, scrubbed and dried
Olive oil, for rubbing potatoes
3/4 lbs. fresh chorizo sausage, removed from casings
1/4 cup pimientos, drained
1/4 cup whole milk
2 Tbs. whole milk, combined with above
2 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted
4 oz. goat cheese
Salt
Freshly ground pepper



*Photo Credit: Juan Tiaguas,
WikiMedia Commons*

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prick top of each potato a few times with a fork and rub with olive oil. Place potatoes directly on oven rack and bake until easily pierced with a paring knife, about 1 hour. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet over medium heat, cook chorizo until browned and crumbly and fat is rendered into pan, about 10 minutes. Stir in pimientos and cook for 2 more minutes. Set aside.

Using a serrated knife, halve potatoes lengthwise. Using a spoon, scoop out flesh from all 12 halves into a medium bowl, leaving about 1/4-inch border of flesh inside potato skins. Place 6 potato-skin shells in a medium baking dish and set aside. (Discard 6 remaining scooped-out skins.)

Mash scooped-out potato flesh with a fork. Stir in milk and butter until mixture is smooth. Crumble goat cheese into potatoes and stir until just combined. Fold in sausage mixture and season with salt and pepper. Divide potato filling among 6 remaining potato-skin shells and bake until heated through and tops begin to brown, about 20 minutes.



Tough, street-smart SFPD Detective Gabriel Sandalini is willing to do whatever it takes to bring down West Coast crime boss Ricco Botelli -- including a dangerous, deep undercover gig as one of Botelli's hired guns. But Gabriel's best laid plans may come crashing down around him when he falls hard for Antonio Lorenzo, the sexy, suave lieutenant of a rival Mexican drug lord. Turns out Antonio may have a few secrets of his own: secrets that could destroy both men and the fragile bond between them.

Buy: <http://store.samhainpublishing.com/mexican-heat-p-3079.html>

Mexican Heat © Samhain Publishing, LLC 2009

By Laura Baumbach and Josh Lanyon

Any answer Ortega might have made was forestalled as down the street a black SUV turned the corner and glided silently toward them—followed by two more vehicles.

“Just when it looked like I might finally get to turn in early with a good book,” Gabriel drawled.

Ortega said quietly, “Let me handle this. *¿Comprender?*”

“Don’t I always?”

Ortega did not respond as the lead car stopped a few feet from him. Doors flew open and several armed men jumped down from the vehicles, but no one made a threatening move.

Lieutenant Ferreño squeezed himself out of the backseat. His face mirrored their own lack of pleasure. Not that Gabriel or Ortega wasted much time studying him, as a small, trim man with skin as dusky as walnut, black sunglasses, and an old-fashioned handlebar mustache that reminded Gabriel vaguely of cartoons he’d seen as a kid, climbed out of the front passenger seat of the SUV. Even in his casual dress uniform with its open neck and short sleeves, the man looked crisp and formal, the image of control and discipline—an impression reinforced by the fact that he wore glossy black boots and carried one of those silver-tipped equestrian whips.

Definitely eccentric, although something about him reminded Gabriel a bit of Don Jesus. It was hard to pinpoint what it was exactly. A certain energy? Restrained tension? Or just good old-fashioned psycho vibe?

Ortega’s demeanor subtly changed, became...deferential. “Chief Piñero, it is an honor to meet at last. I am Miguel Ortega, the lieutenant of Don Jesus Sanchez.”

Piñero studied him. It should have been comical—the black sunglasses were a ridiculous affectation in the failing light—but instead there was something ominous in the still, sightless gaze. The shades turned to Gabriel.

Ortega said, “My associate, Giovanni Contadino. He represents Ricco Botelli’s interests.”

“Who is this Botelli?” Ferreño asked insolently. Clearly they were not forgiven for the afternoon’s confrontation.

“Botelli controls our West Coast distribution network,” Ortega said matter-of-factly, and then he smiled. “And he is the brother of Don Jesus’ lovely fiancée.”

“Ah,” Piñero said. “*La Familia.*”

Ortega, still oozing charm and affability, said, “*Si*. Your reputation demanded that both houses honor you with their presence, Captain.”

Piñero smiled, his teeth small and white and perfect beneath the perfectly trimmed mustache. “So?” Slowly, he removed his glasses and held out his hand.

Ortega shook hands, still smiling, still relaxed, confident, and yet respectful. Even Gabriel had to admit it was well done. He began to see how Ortega had climbed so swiftly through the ranks: competence, ruthlessness, and charm. It was an unbeatable combination.

Piñero’s eyes were small and black: shoe-button eyes or the eyes on a stuffed toy. They studied Ortega with keen attention and then moved on to Gabriel. Piñero nodded once, and let one corner of his mouth twist into something Gabriel thought might be a condescending smile.

Whatever. Gabriel resisted the urge to roll his eyes. This macho shit was bad enough at home. Here in the old country every action and phrase seemed weighted. Personally, he thought he’d go nuts if he had to spend his professional life in macho posturing—never mind all the class war bullshit.

“That was quite a welcome party you threw for us, Captain Piñero,” he remarked. “Fireworks and lead party favors all around.”

Ortega shot him a warning look, eyes narrowed, mouth straight-lipped. Gabriel raised one shoulder. Okay, he could keep his trap shut, but it seemed nuts not to call this runt’s bluff.

But Piñero laughed. “First impressions, *si*? They can be most misleading. This is what I tell Tito.”

Ferreño glowered at them. Piñero laughed again. “*Señors!* Let us conduct our business indoors like gentlemen.” He beckoned with his little whip toward the cantina, and his uniformed men darted past, securing the premises.

Ortega and Gabriel followed Piñero back across the dusty road, Ferreño at their heels wheezing like a fat, asthmatic dog.

They went inside the cantina and found the patio abruptly, conspicuously, empty. Piñero’s men arranged themselves along the raw wood posts. Piñero took a chair at a small table; Ferreño positioned himself behind his captain’s chair. Gabriel wondered if he was supposed to stand at attention behind Ortega. If so, there was about to be a breach of protocol.

Ortega pulled a chair out, wood scraping the stone floor as Piñero lit a cigarette and blew out a stream of blue smoke. Gabriel sat and followed suit, reaching into his pocket and fishing a pack of cigarettes out. He selected one, and cupped his hands around it as he lit up. He glanced at Ortega who was looking at him disapprovingly, and he nearly laughed. Ortega certainly had some weird hang-ups for a crook.

The woman who had served them earlier appeared on the patio with a tray of local hors d’oeuvres and a bottle of wine. Her hands were not quite steady as she set down a platter laden with white fish ceviche with habañero chilies, potatoes with chorizo, and achiote-marinated pork wrapped in banana leaves.

She poured the wine, which Piñero sampled. Languidly, he waved her off, and she went gladly, avoiding meeting the bold gazes of the uniformed men ranged around her patio.

Piñero handed the wine glasses around, smiling affably.

Louisa Bacio

<http://www.louisabacio.com/>

Culture often gets passed down with cooking, from mother to daughter, among the family. So how does one capture that flair for Latin cuisine when the lineage starts with them? You see, my mother was born in Mexico and adopted by my grandparents at the age of 12. As the oldest of seven children, she should have possessed a plethora of cooking knowledge, but she never shared. In America, she never made tortillas by hand or created tamales to distribute at Christmas – activities my other friends experienced. And then she passed away when I was 14; her knowledge forever lost.

While I learned authentic Italian recipes from my father's side of the family, my foray into Latin food is more filled with cookbooks and experimentation. The passion to cook infuses my psyche. Being in the kitchen relaxes me.

Following is a recipe for Spanish rice. Most of the time I cook by adding ingredients into the pan. I don't follow recipes exactly. So, adjust according to your ingredients on hand, and how spicy you like your food. In our house, we prefer it pretty mild, so only a sprinkle of chili powder. You like it hot? Dash in some cayenne or fresh-cut jalapeños.

LOUISA'S SPANISH RICE

Serves 6

Ingredients

About 2 Tbsp. olive oil
Small sweet yellow onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, chopped
2 cups of white rice
3 ½ cups chicken broth
Small can (8 oz.) of tomato sauce
2 green onions, sliced
Cilantro
Salt/pepper/chili powder to taste



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Directions

Step 1: Sauté the chopped onion and garlic in olive oil, browning. Watch garlic since it burns easily.

Step 2: Add in rice, chicken broth and tomato sauce. Depending upon the rice directions, you may have to adjust amount of liquid. Usually it's two cups of liquid for every cup of rice. Deduct one-half cup of the liquid to account for the tomato sauce. Add in about ½ tsp. salt, chili powder and pepper to taste.

Step 3: Bring ingredients to a boil, reduce temperature to low, cover and simmer for about 20 minutes. Watch the liquid level. Some stovetops cook higher (hotter, and the liquid may evaporate more quickly). When done, rice should be tender, not crunchy.

Step 4: Top with fresh cilantro and green onions.



Haunted by paranormal abilities that she can't control, and plagued by nightmares about a demon that seeks her soul, Lily Anima travels to New Orleans in search of salvation. In the French Quarter, Lily dives into the paranormal world and enlists the help of an unlikely couple: a vampire, Lawrence Justice, and a werewolf, Trevor Pack.

As the trio encounters ghosts, voodoo and unspeakable evil, will Trevor and Lawrence be able to help Lily turn her powers into a gift rather than a curse? And when Lily discovers that she needs to lose her virginity in order to embrace her powers and get the demon off her back, will the twosome be able to survive as a threesome? Buy:

<http://www.amazon.com/Vampire-Witch-Werewolf-Threesome-ebook/dp/B004VN398C>

The Vampire, The Witch and The Werewolf © Ravenous Romance, 2011
By Louisa Bacio

“You seem to be awfully deep in thought for a party-guest,” a hushed voice said in her ear. So close, it felt like his lips would nip her earlobe. “Especially when you’re the guest of honor.”

Senses afire, Lily took in a deep breath.

“I’m just taking everything in. You did just a fantastic job decorating the store, Trev.”

His body vibrated against her as he laughed. He loosened his hold on her waist and she turned to face him. A dark gray wolf mask covered the top of his face, while his pouty, full lips lay exposed. He wore a tight black leather vest that showed off the lines of muscles in his arms, and escaping curly hair on his chest. Lily held back from running her fingers through those curls, but she couldn’t help but imagine what it would feel like to have them rub against her bare breasts. She shook her head to break the fantasy and looked up into his eyes, which had taken on the same tone of gray as his mask.

Mentally, she flashed to their moment together in bed, with Trevor’s cock pumping in her hand. A shine of humor and mischief danced in the way his eyes creased up on the side, and he smiled. The young man possessed a light-hearted sense of humor, and an inner strength that matched his outer physical beauty. She thought that he, too, was thinking about the same encounter.

“What fun are you?” he asked. “You knew who I was right away.”

Now it was her turn to laugh. “Never could understand how someone wouldn’t recognize Batman or Superman. What type of disguise is a pair of glasses or a mask? At least Spiderman had a full mask, but I’d like to hope I would be able to know someone by his kiss ...” Lily gushed.

Internally she groaned, and her cheeks turned red. Times like this, when she felt nervous and unsure, she tended to blab too much. It was one of those habits that she hoped to break quickly. Imagine being in bed with someone, at that moment of being romantic, and having one’s partner start blabbing on about superheroes? Someone, please help her now.

“Did you say something about a kiss?” Trev asked, leaning in closer.

She could feel his breath across her lips. If she stood up on her tiptoes just slightly, their lips would touch.

“Am I interrupting something?” Another body pressed up behind her, propelling her forward and up against Trev. Their lips brushed, and she pulled back, only to meet the unrelenting body behind her.

Mirta Ramirez-Espinola

Reader contribution

I am a Latina who was born and raised in Texas. My family goes some three to five generations back and more. They are indigenous to Texas or what once was Mexico. We have roots in Spain and I am sure other countries, but it is my husband's family that has passed this recipe down to us making its way from Bolivia. Their food is exquisite. This recipe I am sure has been modified and changed through the generations, but basically it is easy to make and is delicious. Make more modifications if you'd like, but definitely ENJOY!

MIRTA'S PICANTE DE POLLO - BOLIVIAN STYLE

Ingredients

5 chicken thighs and legs
1 white onion
½ green pepper
1 potato
3 Tbs. traditional tomato sauce
Pinch of paprika
Pinch of Adobo seasoning
1 Tbs. parsley
1 Tbs. cilantro
Oregano
Pepper (optional)



Photo Credit: Sasha Tomaszycski

Directions:

Cook the chicken without the skin, use just enough water to submerge the chicken and add salt as needed. For the salsa: chop up all the ingredients (onions with the green peppers in small pieces). Fry the ingredients in a pan then add the garlic, the tomato sauce, then the paprika, Adobo, and 3 spoons of chicken broth into the tomato sauce. Let it cook and simmer for about 30 minutes on low heat. After it is all cooked add a little parsley and oregano. Use half of the water used to cook the chicken and add it in with the cooked chicken and the simmered sauce. Dispose of the other half of the water. Stir it all together for 5 minutes to allow the sauce to seep into the chicken. Garnish with paprika and oregano. Serve hot.

M. Jules Aedin
<http://mjules.net/>

My mother went vegan out of concern for her cholesterol, and when I saw how many unexpected side health benefits she was experiencing from her diet change, I joined her. But I'm (USA) Southern and an epicurean hedonist, so no way was going vegan going to mean giving up amazingly flavorful foods and all the comfort that goes along with them. Latin food is one of the easiest kinds of food to make vegan. These beefless tacos are so good even my omnivore friends request them. So if you're cooking for a vegetarian or a vegan, or if you just want an easy, healthy meal every now and then without compromising flavor, try these out.

JULES BEEFLESS VEGETARIAN or VEGAN TACOS (adapted from Kathy Freston)

Ingredients

Beefless Soft Tacos

1 bag of Gardein™ beefless tips (freezer section or health food store)
6 small tortillas, wheat or corn
1 cup cooked corn (this is especially good roasted)
1 head shredded romaine lettuce

Marinade

1/3 cup prepared green salsa (Tomatillo salsa recommended)
2 tsp. fresh lime juice
1 tsp. fresh chopped cilantro
1tsp. minced garlic
pinch black pepper and sea salt

Avocado Salsa (see Guacamole recipe in Appetizers)



*Photo Credit: MikeCPeck
WikiMedia Commons*

Directions

Marinate beefless tips for 20 minutes.

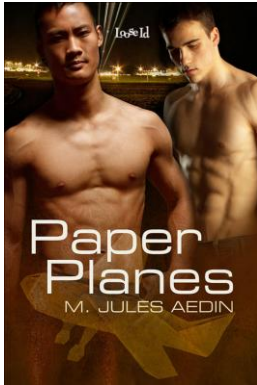
Heat stainless steel sauté pan, add oil and sear beefless tips for 3 min on each side.

Meanwhile combine avocado salsa ingredients in medium bowl. Set aside.

Warm tortillas.

Put tips in middle of tortilla with avocado salsa, romaine lettuce and corn and fold.

Garnish with other favorite toppings, such as rice, black beans, or fresh chopped tomatoes and onions.



Photographer Stuart Grange was happy with his suburbanite life until his partner was killed in a plane hijacking. Now he's suddenly the face of gay rights in America and trying to deal with his new responsibility while coping with his overwhelming grief. He's got his hands full without the complications of a new love, but his heart's not waiting for him to catch up.

Commercial pilot Dustin McDonough knows what it's like to deal with loss. He has his own set of scars, physical and emotional. He's trying to give Stuart the time and space he needs to be ready to move on, but he's in love for the first time in years, and he's determined not to lose again.

Buy: <http://www.loose-id.com/Paper-Planes.aspx>

Paper Planes © Loose Id 2011
By M. Jules Aedin

I'm not afraid of flying. It's odd; I think everyone expected me to be, including myself. But I travel a lot for my job -- I'm a photographer -- and aside from a subtle tightening of my stomach during every takeoff and landing, when I'm thinking of just how easy it would be to come back down again and how it must have felt for Brendan to lose altitude way too quickly, I'm just fine.

For the first few months, my therapist and my mother kept waiting for the other shoe to drop, for me to finally flip out and have a full-blown panic attack on a plane. Anytime she knew I was going to be flying, which was not nearly as often as I actually did, my mother watched the TV, waiting for the *Breaking News* bulletin.

This just in: There is a plane stopped on the runway at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport as one of the passengers on board is being removed after experiencing an emotional breakdown. Stuart Grange, thirty-four, is the surviving partner of Brendan Miller, who, along with three others, was awarded a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom for his role in stopping a plane hijacking in 2008.

My partner, the national hero. On a commuter flight from Charlotte to Boston, Brendan and some other brave souls had reenacted the infamous Flight 93, leaving behind parents, children, spouses -- and me. No one claimed the attack at first, and then every small-time nutjob in the country spoke up, saying they'd done it. The FBI dismissed them all. In the end, no one was really sure if the hijacking Brendan died preventing was linked to known existing terrorist groups, whether domestic or foreign, but since the government was willing and eager to have justification to continue the war, it was generally tossed around as "speculated to be connected with the terrorist attacks of 9/11." It was enough to strike the nerve of public sentiment, and the media cashed in on it.

I was interviewed everywhere from *The Advocate* to the local *Channel 9 News* and was held up as a poster child for gay rights, which was kind of funny since, aside from attending the occasional Pride celebration and donating to legal organizations, Brendan and I had never really been big on activism. It wasn't like our situation

highlighted any huge discrimination either. Brendan wasn't killed in a hate crime, I wasn't denied hospital visitation, and his parents didn't bar me from his funeral. Property taxes on our house took a chunk out of my savings account, and I got slapped with inheritance taxes that no widow would have had to pay on her deceased husband's earthly goods, but as tragedies go, being gay didn't really make ours any worse.

However, that's not to say that it made it any less. I still woke up in a cold sweat several times a week, thinking I could hear my phone ringing.

I wasn't afraid of flying, but I was terrified of my phone.

I had been on a pre-Christmas photo shoot when my phone suddenly went off, and everyone stared at me. I'd forgotten to turn it to silent before we started. I could have just silenced it and let it go to voice mail, but it was Brendan's custom ringtone, and he usually didn't call me when he knew I was at work. I stepped out of the room and took the call.

"Hey, babe, it's not really a good time --"

"Stuart, I love you."

There had been something in his voice that made the pit of my stomach go cold and uncomfortable. "I love you too, but --"

"This will probably be the last time I get to tell you, so..." His voice broke then, and I could feel my own eyes burning. "I love you, baby. I love you. Tell my parents I love them too."

"Bren, what --"

The line went dead, and my throat slammed shut as I remembered that Brendan was flying out to meet with a client in Boston. He should have been in the air. He *was* in the air.

And at that moment, I knew he wouldn't be in the air for much longer, and I sat down and cried.

Linda Gonzalez
<http://www.lindagonzalez.net/>

My *Mami* would have been eighty-seven on August 18, 2011. She was born in Colombia and ventured alone to Los Angeles in her twenties, married my father, a Mexicano, and raised three children. My first memory of making Colombian tamales was in my teens. She went to a neighbor's yard to cut their banana tree leaves, giant as elephant ears. "*Esos le dan el sabor.*" ("These give it the flavor.")

I was in my thirties when I began to listen, watch and learn the many faceted steps, jotting down notes that I pulled out year after year as we cooked pounds of chicken in a broth that flavored the pre-cooked, enriched *masa*. This was the heart of the recipe. The broth, a thick dark essence by now, was absorbed by the finely milled *masa* like a hungry ghost wanting to walk the earth again.

My mom usually took on blending the *masa* into a smooth, warm *cobija* that held the chicken, rice, garbanzo beans, capers, carrots, Spanish olive and dollop of salsa. I began cutting in to be the *masa's* partner when the Alzheimer's weakened her grip on the dance steps in her early seventies. I make them every year, my mom's spirit in my hands as I blend the *masa*, knowing one day my twins will listen, watch and learn from me so this tradition will survive X-boxes and fast food. The tamales are a labor of memory with intentional ingredients of love and tradition.

LINDA'S TAMALES COLOMBIANAS

Serves 45- 50 people

Ingredients

35 boneless chicken thighs
2 cups long grain rice
8 medium carrots
4 lbs. La Venezolana pre-cooked cornmeal
2 lbs. banana leaves
3 lbs. mild or medium salsa (ready-made)
4 tomatoes
1/2 bunch cilantro
4 oz. capers
green onions
10 oz. Spanish stuffed olives
Garlic
cumin (optional)
1 can garbanzo beans
6 cubes bouillon
White cotton twine (precut into 1.5 feet long strips)



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Day before: Take leaves out of freezer to thaw. You can cook chicken and rice, but make sure you have enough room to store all the broth.

Directions

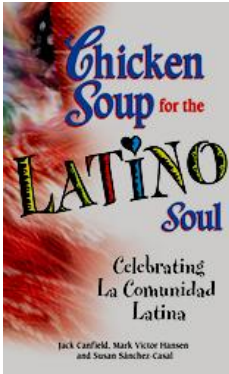
Bring broth to a boil, then simmer chicken (cut fat off) with onion, garlic, salt, herbs, bouillon and plenty of water for broth. Separate chicken from liquid and let broth cool.

Open banana leaves up to dry (you can heat leaves over gas flame to soften but be careful). In a rice cooker or pot, cook rice in chicken broth. Steam carrots lightly. Chop tomatoes and cilantro and add to ready-made salsa to make it tasty. Put in a separate bowl.

Mix *masa* (cornmeal) with lots of chicken broth, salt and cumin until moist, tasty and smooth, add more flavoring if necessary, finish with large dollop of salsa.

To make the tamales: Lay out all the ingredients on table and have bowls to shape the tamales

Lay twine, put leaf on top, smooth thin layer of *masa* (don't use too much *masa*- it will expand three times), chicken, a few carrots, capers and garbanzos, 1 olive; the last two ingredients are rice and salsa on top; another thin layer of *masa*, fold leaf over like a present. Tie with cotton twine like a present in a bow, use two strips of leaf if pieces are small. Steam for about 45 minutes; let cool 10 minutes so *masa* will firm up. Then serve with salsa and enjoy!



Inspiring, heartwarming and humorous, this special story collection celebrates Latino life and community across the country. Whether your roots are in Mexico, Central or South America, the Caribbean or the Iberian Peninsula, the stories in this volume will remind you of the pride, hope and joy of being part of the Latino community in America. *Chicken Soup for the Latino Soul* showcases the storytelling traditions of Latino culture.

Buy: http://www.amazon.com/Chicken-Soup-Latino-Soul-ebook/dp/B004FN1SUY/ref=kinw_dp_ke?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2

Chicken Soup for the Latino Soul © HCI 2005

Excerpt from “Isabel’s Final Chapter” by Linda M. Gonzalez

My mother, Isabel, came to live with me during the final 6 months of her life, dying as she was from metastatic breast cancer and Alzheimer’s. There was never a thought to having anyone but family care for her, which helped me to focus on preparing for such a physically and emotionally challenging process. Ironically, because of the Alzheimer’s, she did not remember she was dying and in many ways was more tranquil and cheerful than she had been since my father’s death seven years before.

We wove our distinct lives together, with her complaining every day that her *café* was too cold or too strong before heading off for the Alzheimer’s Day Care Center that we called “The Senior.” She thought she was volunteering, and it was one of the multiple re-designs of reality I shaped and re-shaped each day to help us both cope with our daily losses. She was becoming more childlike than my eight-year-old twins; I was becoming my mother’s mother. I was a caregiver, juggling my job, my kids, my mamita and my own sanity and self care.

It was Memorial Day, 2003. Monday dawned with my mom’s sharp cries of pain. “¡Ay, ay, ay, caray! Me duele mi cadera”, she exclaimed. That very same hip had alerted us almost two years ago that her journey on earth was beginning its final chapter. As I had been taught by my mom, I went into task mode and began giving her more pain pills and checking in with the hospice nurse. The tender feelings I had unearthed over the months for my mom were making me both present to the moment and scared for what it foretold.

Previous to this episode, each pain medication adjustment had quickly relieved her aches and we would continue with our delicate balance. This was distinctly different

and I slowly comprehended that as three days passed and the pain did not abate despite doubling and then tripling her medication doses.

Mom relaxed on Thursday, staying in bed, reading the paper over and over again, oblivious to the efforts made on her behalf. By night some liquid morphine had been delivered. I was instructed to give her a dose every hour until she was no longer in pain. After 4 doses she began to become delusional.

“Where is the letter from Colombia?” she began asking repeatedly, looking at me with suspicion. This distrust was so different from the harmonious connections we had developed and it brought up great wells of anguish that I futilely attempted to keep at bay. Instead of going with her version of reality, something I had become quite adept at, I fought it, as if she was not leaving our sweet and crazy co-existence. Despite all the anxiety and work, I had come to appreciate giving her the comfort of being in my home.

After a few minutes I found mom in the bathroom squeezing the crinkly paper around a Kalonchoe plant, saying she wanted some candy, her hands pecking away at the sound her mind identified as belonging to a candy wrapper. I tried to wrest it from her strong grasp.

“It’s not candy, mom”, I said in a disapproving tone, “it’s a plant.”

She held on determinedly and finally threw it in the trash and walked haltingly back to her bed. I rescued the plantita and hid it in my room, like a child hides the bottle of her alcoholic parent.

Desserts

Liz Fichera

<http://www.lizfichera.com/>

I first tasted *sopapillas* at a Mexican restaurant when I moved to Phoenix, Arizona, after college and, as I recall, I absolutely swooned when I took my first bite. Some people call them “little pillows” and use them during the meal like bread; others make them as a dessert. Either way, flour, honey, powdered sugar—what’s not to like? After tasting them, I knew that I had to get the recipe and I knew that I had to try making them at home. My first try was terrible. My second and third tries were better. That said, the best part about making *sopapillas* is not necessarily the end product but the fun you should have while cooking them and the lovely smells that will fill your kitchen. I recommend making them with friends and tripling the batch so that everyone can take some home.

ELENA’S SOPAPILLAS

Serves 24. Share half with your best friend.

Ingredients

4 cups flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
4 Tbs. shortening
1 ½ cups warm water
2 quarts oil for frying
Honey (optional)
Powdered sugar (optional)



Photo Credit: Sahsa Tomaszycski

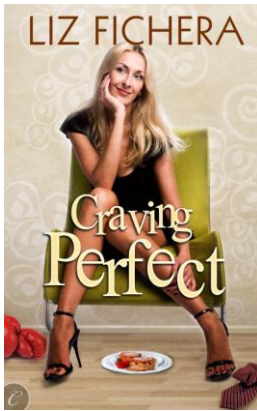
Directions

In a large bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, salt and shortening. Stir in water and mix until the dough is smooth. Cover and let stand for 20 minutes. Roll out on floured board until 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick. Cut into 3 inch squares.

Heat oil in deep-fryer to 375 degrees. Fry until golden brown on both sides.

Drain on paper towels and serve hot. Drizzle generously with honey and/or powdered sugar. Preferably both.

Give half to your best friend. Enjoy!



Grace Mills craves being perfect almost as much as she craves raspberry scones. In fact, her life would be perfect if only she could lose ten more pounds, if only the pastry café she co-owns with her sister would turn a profit, if only the hottest guy at the gym would look her way...And then "if only" comes true. Grace is suddenly straddling two lives: an alternate reality where she's a size two, weathergirl celebrity and being chased by the hot guy. Only Mr. Gorgeous isn't very nice.

In her other life, she's starting to realize her sister is less than happy running the family café, and hunky Carlos, the gym's janitor, seems to have a secret crush on her. Maybe there's more to him than meets the eye...Grace is living two lives and it's beginning to cost her. Is there a way to pick one...that's perfect? Buy:

http://www.amazon.com/Craving-Perfect-book/dp/B005078ONS/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1314446948&sr=1-1

Craving Perfect © Carina Press 2011
By Liz Fichera

"Grace, can you hear me?"

They say your life is supposed to flash before your eyes right before you die.

But what about when you're spread-eagle at the bottom of a stair-climber at your local gym, wearing an oversized T-shirt and spandex shorts that were designed for women lucky enough to wear single-digit dress sizes? What then? What should flash before your eyes when you're dying of embarrassment?

Four faces knelt over me.

Somehow death seemed less painful.

"Grace, please! Say something!"

Just my luck, only two of the faces showed genuine concern: Kathryn, my older sister, and Kathryn's boyfriend, Eddie Cahill. Kathryn kept stroking my cheek and urging me to speak while Eddie adjusted a towel behind my sweaty head. The third face, the one that belonged to the bleach-blonde, overly Botoxed, ridiculously thin Alexandra Summers, was only concerned that my round torso blocked her ability to use the stair-climber. In Alexandra's defense, there were only three of these sadistic contraptions in Goldie's Gym, and they were popular at six o'clock in the morning.

But only the stunned expression on the fourth face mattered. It was my reason for living. It was the reason I dragged my tired body to the gym each morning before work, and the reason why I'd sworn off onion rings and lattes with whipped cream and starved myself to lose ten whole pounds.

The fourth face belonged to Max Kramer.

His face melted me. Even the hint of his smile made my knees wobble.

Max was also the reason why I had tumbled off the damn machine.

I'd been fantasizing about him as I did every morning whenever I watched him bench-press 250 pounds. Each glorious purple vein and arm muscle bulged magnificently with every lift, and I wondered what it would be like to squeeze his biceps or brush my fingertips across his sculpted chest. His sleeveless, black T-shirts were always the perfect combination of too snug and dreamy. And don't get me started on what I believed existed beneath his shorts. I drank him in each morning, top to glorious bottom. Max Kramer was the best-looking thirty-something I'd ever seen. Unfortunately, I was a twenty-something with absolutely no nerve and another ten pounds to lose.

Well, better make that fifteen, to be safe.

I even adored Max's faint Philadelphia accent, not that he'd used it much on me, although one morning he did say "excuse me" over my head when he accidentally elbowed my ear as we both reached for a clean towel at the front desk. That single moment lifted me for a whole week. I couldn't stop thinking about it, analyzing it, replaying it in my mind and remembering how the sunlight from the front glass doors had spilled across his golden head like caramel sauce. For one, glorious moment, he'd been all mine. It didn't matter that he'd snatched the last towel and I had to wait ten minutes at the front counter for the next clean batch.

I played this little game with myself each morning, a game I knew I'd win most of the time. If I spotted Max at the gym, I'd reward myself with one of the raspberry scones I made at the Desert Java, a small café in Tempe near the university I owned with Kathryn. And if Max didn't show for his morning workout, I'd force myself to run an extra fifteen minutes on the treadmill. Truth be told, I would much rather enjoy Max and a raspberry scone, in that order. Stat.

Now that I'd fallen off the stair-climber, Max looked at me like someone studying a beached whale. That was why I'd have given anything to curl up and die and pretend my fall didn't just happen in front of his size twelve Nikes.

Miranda Baker

<http://www.mirandabaker.com>

My best friend and I celebrated our college graduation by going to Panama, Central America to visit American friends who worked on the Panama Canal. I hadn't yet decided to become a chef, but that trip made some lasting food memories. I ate my first mango standing over a kitchen sink with the juice dripping down to my elbow. We enjoyed fresh-caught lobster in the San Blas Islands. All the food was amazing, but the taste I remember most vividly is the incredible *churros*. I was still pretty much a kid, so naturally it was the doughnuts that impressed me – steaming hot, crunchy and filled with *dulce de leche* caramel.

Churros originated in Spain, but their deliciousness rapidly migrated through South America and other Hispanic countries. I'll never be twenty-two again or have the chance to drive another tugboat in the Canal, but this recipe takes me right back to Panama – to the mango trees, the orchids, the once-in-a-lifetime adventure and yes, the amazing doughnuts.

Disclaimer: I think this recipe is easy, but I bake for a living. You do need a mixer, a deep-fry thermometer, a half-inch star-tip, scissors and a pastry bag. Or else you need a strong arm, a good eye, a plastic bag, oiled fingers and a sense of adventure. Fear not, I'll give good directions!

MIRANDA'S CHURROS (Makes about two dozen three-inch doughnuts)

Ingredients

1 can sweetened condensed milk
Oil for deep frying
2/3 cup water
1 1/2 Tbs. granulated sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
2 oz. (half a stick) butter, cut into pieces
1 cup minus 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
2 extra-large eggs
1 Tbs. dark rum
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 cup of granulated sugar
1 1/2 tsp. of cinnamon



Photo credit: Miranda Baker

Directions

Place 2 inches of oil in a small saucepan. Slowly bring the oil to 370 degrees while you prepare the batter. If you don't have a thermometer, 370 degrees cooks the doughnut in about four minutes. The idea is to cook the middle without the outside getting too brown. You can find the sweet spot on your stove by trial and error. Just below medium works for mine. Place water, sugar, salt and butter in a small saucepan. Bring to a rolling boil. Add the flour all at once and stir with enthusiasm until the mixture is smooth and it pulls away from the sides of the pan. (If you've made cream puff dough, the method is the same.) Transfer the batter to a mixer. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until incorporated. Add the rum and the cinnamon. Beat on high until smooth.

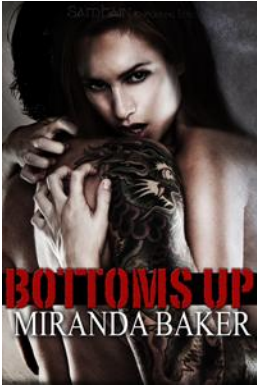


Transfer mixture to a pastry bag. A note about pastry bags: fold down around your hand. Never fill the bag more than halfway. An over-filled bag is hard to control. Twist the end of the bag. When the oil is the right temperature, squeeze a 3-inch length dough into the oil and snip it off with the scissors or pinch off with fingers.

Put as many into the pot as it will comfortably hold in a single layer. Let them have some elbow-room so they cook evenly. Fry them until they are golden brown on the bottom. Flip them over with a fork and continue frying until they are golden brown all over and done in the middle. Remove the *churros* from the oil with a slotted spoon, and let them rest on a paper towel while you start the next batch. Refill the pastry bag as necessary. Toss the cooked *churros* with cinnamon sugar and devour them! If you want to make extra-special *churros*, fill them with store bought *dulce de leche*. You can also make your own, but you'll have to do it the day before. Jam another pastry bag filled with *dulce de leche* (it will be trickier with a plastic bag. Perhaps you should dip or drizzle instead) into the end of a doughnut and squeeze! Yum!

Dulce de Leche Caramel

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Pour the sweetened condensed milk into one oven-proof dish (or several ramekins). Cover with foil. Place the dish in a roasting pan and put it in the oven. Pour an inch or so of hot water into the roasting pan. Bake until the condensed milk becomes caramel-colored. In one big pan, it will take about 1 1/2 hours. In smaller cups, it will take less time. Sweet heaven!



Destiny Blake senses that her boredom with blond pretty boys is about to come to a flesh-tingling end. Since her first love left her for a more experienced Domme, she's honed her topping skills to a fine edge. Yet the idea of bottoming for the hard-bodied owner of her favorite BDSM club is an erotic challenge she can't resist.

Destiny isn't Johnny Delcorral's type. Tangling with her, even for one night, is a dangerous proposition for a man with good reason for needing his women submissive. But he suspects she's hiding a submissive streak under her dreadlocks and leather, and he hungers to make her obey—and curb her reckless spirit.

Buy http://www.amazon.com/Bottoms-Up-Come-Again-ebook/dp/B004C44LEG/ref=pd_sim_kinc_1?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2

Bottoms up -- Come Again, Book 1 © Samhain Publishing 2011
By Miranda Baker

“Do you want to play with me? Because I think you do.”

His arrogance should have been irritating, but she couldn't take offense at the truth. She did want him—just not the way he thought.

Maybe.

Thinking about that, Destiny knocked back the shot and licked her lips. “I don't know anything about you.”

“Don't let that stop you.” He set the glass and the towel on the bar and faced her squarely. “You didn't answer my question. Do you like to be watched?”

Curiosity overtook caution and she found herself answering him. “Yes, I'm an exhibitionist. But I've never bottomed, and I don't think I'd want an audience the first time.”

“Agreed. Hard limits?” He moved swiftly to negotiation. Her limits, his desires, their needs—a verbal contract between two interested parties that would bind their play in the rules of the BDSM world.

Destiny sipped the beer chaser Johnny provided. He didn't rush her, which was good, because frankly, she'd never seriously considered putting herself on the other side of the power dynamic. Bottoms held the power, truly, but it wasn't supposed to feel like it. Part of the play was feeling powerless, and her Dominant nature utterly rejected that concept. She wasn't sure how much submission she could handle. Where should she draw the lines? What boundaries would permit her to let him take control?

She watched him run the bar towel over each glass as he waited for her to answer. The thought of putting herself under those rough hands made her tingle. Her nipples peaked. Sexual energy thrilled through her tight muscles. For one night, she could handle just about anything, she decided.

Destiny looked up from his strong hands to see that he was watching her, not the glass, as he worked.

“No blood,” she finally answered. “No blindfolds. Always wear a condom. No other women. And not tonight.”

“That’s it?”

Destiny nodded.

“Do you have any questions for me? Anything you need?”

She nodded again swiftly. There was one thing she wanted to know, but it didn’t have anything to do with her needs. She watched him closely. “Why do you like to Dominate?”

Johnny frowned. He dropped the towel again and placed his hands flat on the bar. His shoulders formed a tight bridge as he loomed over her. “You’ll agree to submit to me with ridiculously few limitations so long as I tell you why I’m going to enjoy the experience?” His voice was incredulous.

Uncertainty crept up on her. It wouldn’t be the first time her impulsiveness had gotten her into trouble. Johnny was a big man in more ways than height and breadth, she was sure. She thought of those hands, blunt-fingered and ringed, positioning her, his tattooed arms encircling her body as he pushed into her from behind. Blood rushed south, north, engorging her vulva and breasts, sending a flush up her chest. She ignored her arousal and focused on him. “I’m not afraid of you. Do you want me to be?”

“A very proper question from my new submissive.”

Destiny rolled her eyes, making Johnny grin. Humor flashed merrily in his dark gaze. She hoped he wasn’t the kind of Dom who wanted her to look down all the time. She enjoyed seeing his eyes glow like that.

His smile faded. “As for an answer, no, I’m not into fear. Pain, yes; fear, no. I won’t expect you to cringe, but you will show me respect.” His voice was quiet, calm and diamond-hard.

“Earn it.” Destiny clenched every muscle she could control to keep her shiver from showing.

“Ah, Destiny, there is absolutely no doubt of that.”

He reached across the bar to stroke his index finger over her lower lip. His touch made her breath stop in her throat. Her mouth fell open and her tongue darted to taste the pad of his finger. Lime from the gin and tonic he had just mixed made her mouth water. The urge to lower herself was shocking.

“Good girl. Good, good girl,” he whispered. “You are going to please me very much.”

Sweet Jesus, she wanted to. Fear spiked in her center.

Where was the woman who loved power, the leader, the one creating the scene? Panic made her pull her head back from him and close her lips, but he caught her by the jaw, fingers gently clamped around her chin, his little finger feathering the pulse in her throat.

“Uh-uh, no way, little lamb. There is no strength in denial. Choose this. Don’t let your brain talk you out of what you need.”

Her thoughts pinwheeled. She cleared her throat and swallowed, a difficult feat with his hand on her throat. “Not lamb—ram. The symbol for Aries is the ram.”

“Since you asked so nicely, I’d be happy to.” His slight, mocking smile returned and his hand dropped away from her face, chilling her.

Destiny was torn. Half of her still wanted to flip this situation, make him bow and scrape, put him on his knees in any way she could. The other half, the rising half, actually wanted what he could give her—a strong hand, a will to match her own. She sure as hell hadn’t come across another man who brought out a submissive side of her.

Again, the wicked gleam. “Choose it. It’s only fun if you want to. Mostly.”

“Fun? You do this for fun?”

“Absolutely. Does that answer your question?”

She nodded slowly and Johnny’s shoulders relaxed. He took her hand. “Isn’t that why you do it too?” he asked.

She had to think about that. Her eyes rested on the blond boy in the corner. He was waiting for her. She knew he was waiting for her. So like Damian, her first love and the man who had introduced her to the BDSM lifestyle, with his long, blond curls and sweet disposition. Also like him in his need to serve. She shook her head. “No, that’s not why I do it.”

“Then welcome to my world, Destiny. Good times, guaranteed. Give me a night, one night, to show you how much pure pleasure can be found in submission.”

Roseli Goh

Reader contribution

In Brazil you'll find this treat at every child's birthday party. I used to help my *mãe* (mom) making the balls, sprinkle different toppings and put them in very colorful paper cups. I couldn't wait until the party to eat them, so *mãe* would allow me to make tiny ones and taste it "just to see if they were really tasting good."

ROSELI'S BRIGADEIRO

Ingredients

3 Tbs. of Nesquick
1 Tbs. of butter
1 can of sweetened condensed milk
Shredded coconut flakes
Coconut powder
Chopped nuts (optional)
Confection sugar



Photo Credit: Mayra ChiaChia, Flickr

Directions

- Step 1: Combine the Nesquick, butter and sweetened condensed milk in a medium saucepan over low/medium heat.
- Step 2: Cook the mixture for about 10 minutes until it thickens enough to show the pan bottom during stirring.
- Step 3: Pour the mixture in a lightly greased dish and let it cool to room temperature.
- Step 4: Grease your hands with margarine and create small balls by rolling it in your hands.
- Step 5: Roll each ball in sprinkles, coconut, coconut powder, chopped nuts or powdered sugar.

Caridad Piñeiro

www.caridad.com



I learned to make flan from my grandmother and my sister learned from my mom. We both use different methods for making the caramel that is essential to a sweet flan. My mom and sis start with just sugar and melt the sugar sans water which has a tendency to produce a darker and slightly bitter tasting caramel. My grandma would dissolve the sugar in water first and then boil it down, kind of like making candy. The caramel this way is sweeter and lighter in color — actually clearless if you don't want to push the cooking.

CARIDAD'S FLAN

Ingredients

*1 cup plain white sugar
6 whole eggs
6 egg yolks
1 cup whole milk
1 can sweetened condensed milk
2 tsp. vanilla extract*



Photo Credit: Renato Higa Moreas

Directions

For the baking process: Large baking pan. 1 1/2 to 2 quart ovenproof baking dish (I use the same pan to make the caramel and then put the custard. Why wash two dishes? Corningware is da bomb for this.) Hot water to fill large baking pan halfway up the sides.

Step 1: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place a large baking pan in the oven with hot, but not boiling water about half way up the side of the pan. This will make what is called a Bain Marie. The Bain Marie will help keep the flan from drying out and will allow it to cook evenly.

Step 2: Make the Caramel:

Mami's Caramel!

Start with 1 cup of sugar. Set it over medium heat in a heavy medium/small saucepan or preferably, an ovenproof 1 1/2 to 2 quart dish. Use a wooden spoon to stir until the sugar is melted and begins to turn golden. Keep on going until it is a dark dark brown. (Be very careful!! Cooked sugar is very hot and can burn the skin if it spatters.)



Abuelita's Caramel (and guess who that is with grandma in the picture!) Start with 1/2 cup of sugar and dissolve it in 1/2 cup to 1 cup water. Make sure the sugar is fully dissolved before you begin to heat it (if you have any sugar left, it will form crystals and be gritty). Once the sugar is dissolved, set the pan with the sugar over medium heat in a heavy medium/small

saucepan or preferably, an ovenproof dish. Use a wooden spoon to stir until the sugar water is reduced (it should get thicker as it cooks). Grandma liked it light, but you can let it get golden and keep on going until it is a dark brown. (Again, be very careful!! Cooked sugar is very hot and can burn the skin if it spatters.)

NEXT STEP regardless of how you made the caramel:

If you did not use an ovenproof pan/dish, quickly pour the hot caramel syrup into a baking dish (DO NOT GREASE THE PAN).

If you did use the ovenproof pan/dish — MAKE SURE TO PUT ON OVEN MITTS before proceeding!

Swirl the pan until the sugar coats the bottom and sides of the pan/dish. The caramel will start to harden at this point. When you cook the flan in the oven, the caramel will melt and make a delicious syrup that the flan will swim in. AGAIN be very careful. A sugar burn is quite painful!

Gently mix together the eggs and egg yolks. Do not create too much froth or bubbles as these will linger and ruin the texture of the flan. Add the condensed milk and gently mix a little more. Then finally add the rest of the regular whole milk (for ease and to get all the condensed milk, put the whole milk into the can and use it to wash out all of what lingers in the can from the thick condensed milk). Again, gently mix until the mixture is smooth.

Add the vanilla.

Pour this egg/milk custard mixture into the baking dish (make sure the caramel has set against the sides and bottom of the pan).

Set this baking dish into the larger baking pan with the hot water. Bake until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, 35 to 45 minutes or so. If it's a little soft (but not runny), that's okay as it will continue to cook for a bit. Be careful with the hot water in the bain marie (baking pan with water), but then let the flan cool in the water. After half an hour or so, remove the flan from the bain marie and refrigerate for at least an hour or more.

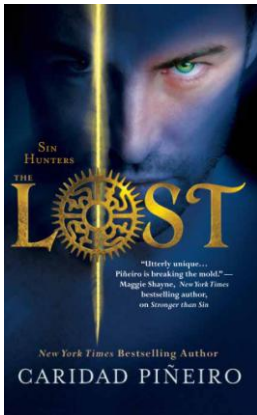
It's actually preferable to make the flan and let it sit overnight so the caramel soaks into the outermost layer. Yum!

Before serving, run a sharp knife around the edge of the flan to release it from the baking dish. Place a larger serving plate (preferably with a small lip to keep the caramel liquid from spilling) over the baking dish and, invert the flan onto the serving platter.

Keep refrigerated until it's time to serve.

For simple variations, you can add a little amaretto or grand marnier to both the caramel and the custard mix. For more complex variations, try a chocolate flan (which I've never made in my life!)

One thing that is delicious is to increase the number of egg yolks and eliminate the egg whites entirely. This will make a very thick rich egg custard called *Toscinillo del Cielo*.



Adam Bruno is no ordinary millionaire. The heir to an ancient race possessing a dark, powerful magic, he can shapeshift and create energy. His gifts make him a living weapon and have forced him to live in seclusion. But now an inhuman force hunts down Adam-just when he finds someone who makes him feel more human than he ever imagined possible . . .

Home from combat in Iraq, Bobbie Carrera wants only peace, yet soon joins Adam in a terrifying battle against paranormal enemies who hide in plain sight. She's drawn to his strength of mind and body; he's attracted to her courage and intoxicating energy. Their scorching passion can either transport them to the heights of ecstasy or-if Adam's powers rage out of control-destroy them. But when an invisible brotherhood tightens its nets and someone Adam trusts betrays him, only a heartrending decision can save them. Buy <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0446584614/caridadpineirosc/104-5740055-1397549>

The Lost © Forever Romance July 2011
By Caridad Pineiro

Her caress awakened him, but not in a healing kind of way. As she paused and her fingers trembled against his skin, he realized she was experiencing the passion as well.

He wanted to touch her. Wanted to savor the softness of her skin beneath his fingers, but he feared that contact. And not just because he might hurt her. He feared becoming any closer to this woman who was somehow making him want things that weren't possible for him.

"This isn't a good idea, Bobbie."

She stroked her hand up and down his arm and his gut twisted into a painful knot.

"You feel it, don't you? The connection?" she asked, her gaze filled with yearning and confusion. She, too, wanted as much as she feared.

"Whatever this is can only cause problems for both of us." But even as he said it, he pressed closer to her, pulled toward her by so many things. The strength of heart he sensed. By the femininity encased in her warrior's body. And by the temptation of the power swirling all around her, creating a bond he had never encountered before with anyone else.

"I'm not the kind to run from a problem," she said as she reached up and ran her fingers through his hair, smoothing the short strands into place. The innocent action stoked alive more need and a sensation like static electricity against his scalp. As she quickly pulled away, it was a sign that she had sensed the noise from the power as well.

“I kind of gathered that when you helped me in the parking lot,” he said with a chuckle, trying to downplay the way even minimal contact created a charge between them.

“You handled yourself pretty well. You probably didn’t need my help.”

He hesitated, contemplating just how much to tell her. Too much and he risked the secrets he and his father had kept for so long. Not enough and he maybe left her indefensible if the two men decided to come after her as well.

He opted for disclosure, wanting to safeguard her as much as possible. “Actually, those men were like the two of us. Different.”

She shook her head. “I’m not different. I’m—“

She stopped as he ran the tip of his index finger along her lips and made it impossible to deny the sparks that flew from that contact and the way it roused an ache along her sex. The color of her eyes darkened to amber and she licked her lips nervously. “Why am I feeling this way?”

“You have an aura. It’s stronger than any I’ve ever seen, except for possibly the two men from this afternoon,” he explained and because he couldn’t stop touching her, he laid his hands on her bare arms, rubbed them up and down. It generated yet more electricity and heat between them. Everywhere he touched, her blue aura danced with silvery light.

Bobbie sucked in a shaky breath, battling the way her body was responding to his caress. Her nipples were rock hard and between her legs an insistent throb had her damp and achy. There was no denying his actions were the reason for it, but she needed to maintain a level head.

“Are you saying I’m like them?” she asked and laid her hands against his chest. As she did so, another wave of power had her biting her lip against the sensations rocketing through her which were mirrored in the rainforest green of his eyes.

Renato Higa Moreas

Reader contribution

I think if there is a cake that every Brazilian child knows and loves, this one is it: the Carrot Cake. And I must say grown-ups enjoy this cake just as much as kids do! I learned this recipe from my mother and have always thought it couldn't get any better than that. But by the third time I baked it, I discovered an amazing baking revelation: most of the cakes can still get better by adding a cupful of chocolate chips!

RENATO'S CARROT CAKE

Ingredients

2 large carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
3 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/4 tsp. cinnamon powder
2 cups sugar
3 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup oil (could be soy, sunflower or any other of your choice)
1 tsp. salt
1 1/2 Tbs. baking powder
1 cup chocolate chips



Photo Credit: Renato Higa Moreas

Directions

Preheat oven at 350°F.

In a blender, blend well the carrots, eggs, milk, oil and cinnamon, until you can't see any more bits of carrots.

In a large bowl, mix and sieve the sugar, flour, salt and baking powder.
Using a large spatula fold the flour and sugar mixture into the liquid.

Mix in the chocolate chips and pour the dough in a large oiled Bundt pan, approximately 9 or 10 inches wide.

Bake it for 30 to 40 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the cake comes out clean.

Serve it at room temperature, just as is, or with your favorite chocolate frosting!

Cocktails

Gabriella Hewitt

<http://www.gabriellahewitt.com/>

I love the islands. When I was a child my parents used to take me to Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Bahamas, Jamaica, Curacao, and all the islands of the Caribbean. The best moments I could remember were getting to drink coconut milkshakes straight out of the coconut. I always wanted to take the coconut back home with me but Customs always took it away.

Now that I am older, I still drink fruity drinks that remind me of the islands, only now I'm old enough to indulge in the sweeter more tempting stuff.

GABRIELLA'S MANGO PUNCH

Ingredients

¾ cup (6 oz.) dark rum

1Tbs. lime juice

4 tsp. sugar (sweetener substitute okay)

1 tsp. grenadine

Crushed ice

½ cup (4oz.) frozen mango pulp or Tampico Mango Punch Drink (substitute)

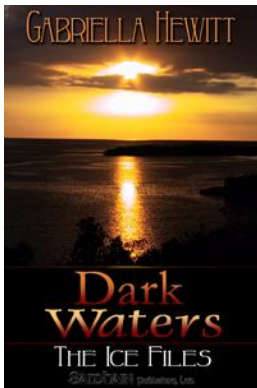
Pineapple slice & maraschino cherries to garnish (optional)



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Directions

Combine rum, lime juice, sugar, mango, grenadine and crushed ice in blender. Blend at high speed for 5 seconds. Pour into wine glasses, garnish and serve chilled. Add a little umbrella if you're feeling tropical.



On a tropical isle, Frankie Montalvo discovers roots to a past she never knew. Tales of witchcraft, missing girls and *el chupacabra* surround her, but it will take more than superstitions to scare her away. Determined to create her own home, she enlists the help of an enigmatic beach bum.

She doesn't want to fall for a drifter who will probably break her heart and move on, but when both she and her home are attacked, it's in Rico's arms that she finds safety and protection. All she's ever wanted was to settle down and live life on her own terms, but someone has other plans and Frankie must decide—is Rico her lover or her enemy?

Buy -- http://www.amazon.com/Dark-Waters-Files-Gabriella-Hewitt/dp/1599988178/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1304605989&sr=1-1

Dark Waters © Samhain Publishing, LLC 2007
By Gabriella Hewitt

God save him from stubborn females.

He pulled a lock pick out of his pocket and went back to the kitchen door. In a matter of minutes he was inside. His eyes swept the kitchen, noting the clean counters and dishes lying in the draining board. The scent of onions and garlic lingered in the air. Well, she'd obviously eaten.

He retraced his steps from the afternoon until he was at the bottom of the staircase. He could see where Frankie covered over the hole he'd made with a patch of plywood. As much as he wanted to run up the stairs, he didn't dare. Carefully, he tested each tread before taking a step.

While moonlight filtered into the rooms downstairs, up here, with all the doors to the hallway closed, he could barely see his hand in front of his face. Quietly, Rico made his way down the hall until he came to Frankie's door.

He rapped lightly. Still no answer.

Moving to the side of the door, he reached over, turned the handle and gave it a small push inward. He glanced in and then slowly stepped over the threshold, grateful for the moonlight that enabled him to see.

Fresh sheets covered the bed. The room looked neat and tidy.

No Frankie.

What the hell had happened to her? God help him if she'd been snatched... He didn't pause to wonder why his fear she'd had an accident had morphed into something worse. He didn't have to.

This house had him on edge, while his mother's request had him balled up so tight he could bounce.

A sound caught his ears. Exiting the room, he moved silently down the corridor. The noise grew louder, like a herd of sick cows. When he reached the room where the sound came the loudest, he threw open the door and went in low and fast, ready to deal with the threat.

Frankie rose before him, moonlight casting its soft glow on the water droplets sliding down her torso and into the claw foot tub she stood in. Her mouth opened and closed and, in that second, Rico catalogued every gorgeous inch of her, from her perfect, dusky-tipped breasts to her shapely thighs.

“What do you want?” Her voice came out reed thin, her eyes wide.

He'd terrified her. Rico held his hands out, palms open. “I brought your truck back, Frankie. When you didn't answer the door, I got worried and let myself in. I'm not here to hurt you.” He spoke low and soft, willing her to listen to his words. He almost missed the change in her eyes from fear to majorly ticked off, but he wasn't left in doubt long.

Frankie exploded into action. She grabbed a bar of soap and hurled it at him, hitting him smack in the chest.

Instinctively, he caught the soap before it fell to the tiled floor. “Want me to get your back?” Relief coursed through him. Not only was she okay, she was in kick-butt NY mode. He could live with that.

“Get out!” she screamed. “Out! Out! Out!”

The gentleman in him grabbed up a towel and held it out to her. The other side of him wanted to wipe every drop of water off her sexy body, but he highly doubted she would let him.

Frankie seized the towel and wrapped it around her. “Get out!”

“I'm going. But, why are you taking a bath in the dark?”

“Because the damn fuse blew and I wasn't about to go traipsing around the house wet and naked. Satisfied?”

Hell, no! But, feeling a definite tightening in his groin at the image, he decided not to answer. Safer that way. At least with this woman.

“Now are you leaving or do I have to get mean?”

“You got a weapon on you? All I saw—”

“Shut up, Lopez. I swear you’re dead meat.” Her hands tightened into fists at her sides.

“Need a hand getting out of the tub?” he asked hopefully.

“That’s it. You have five seconds to get out of this room or you and that toilet brush are going to become personally acquainted.”

“Okay, you win,” he said, holding his hands up in the air in mock surrender.

“Anything but the toilet brush.” He winked at her and left the room, shutting the door with an audible snap. Leaning against it, he closed his eyes. He could hear her stepping out of the tub. Could imagine her rubbing that lithe body down and wished he were the towel. The image of Frankie rising up from the water like some goddess out of a Greek myth would stay burned onto the back of his eyelids for a long time. And if he told her, she’d probably try to have them surgically removed.

He grinned so hard the sides of his mouth hurt.

The bathroom echoed with her creative curses in both Spanish and English. The woman sure had a mouth on her.

Feeling incredibly lighter, Rico spoke through the closed door. “Frankie?”

“What?”

“Would it make you feel better if I got naked too?”

Gracias

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER:

Gabriella Hewitt is the pen name of creative writing talents Sasha Tomaszycski and Patrizia M.J. Hayashi. Together they weave tales of romantic suspense and dangerously sensual paranormals, delivering on their promise of **Excitement, Suspense and Passion**. Check out the website www.GabriellaHewitt.com to find out about upcoming book releases, events on their blogs and free recipe booklets.