

FALL/WINTER 2008

Points South

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Vallarta's Good Tastes

Street Fare to Gourmet Cooking Classes

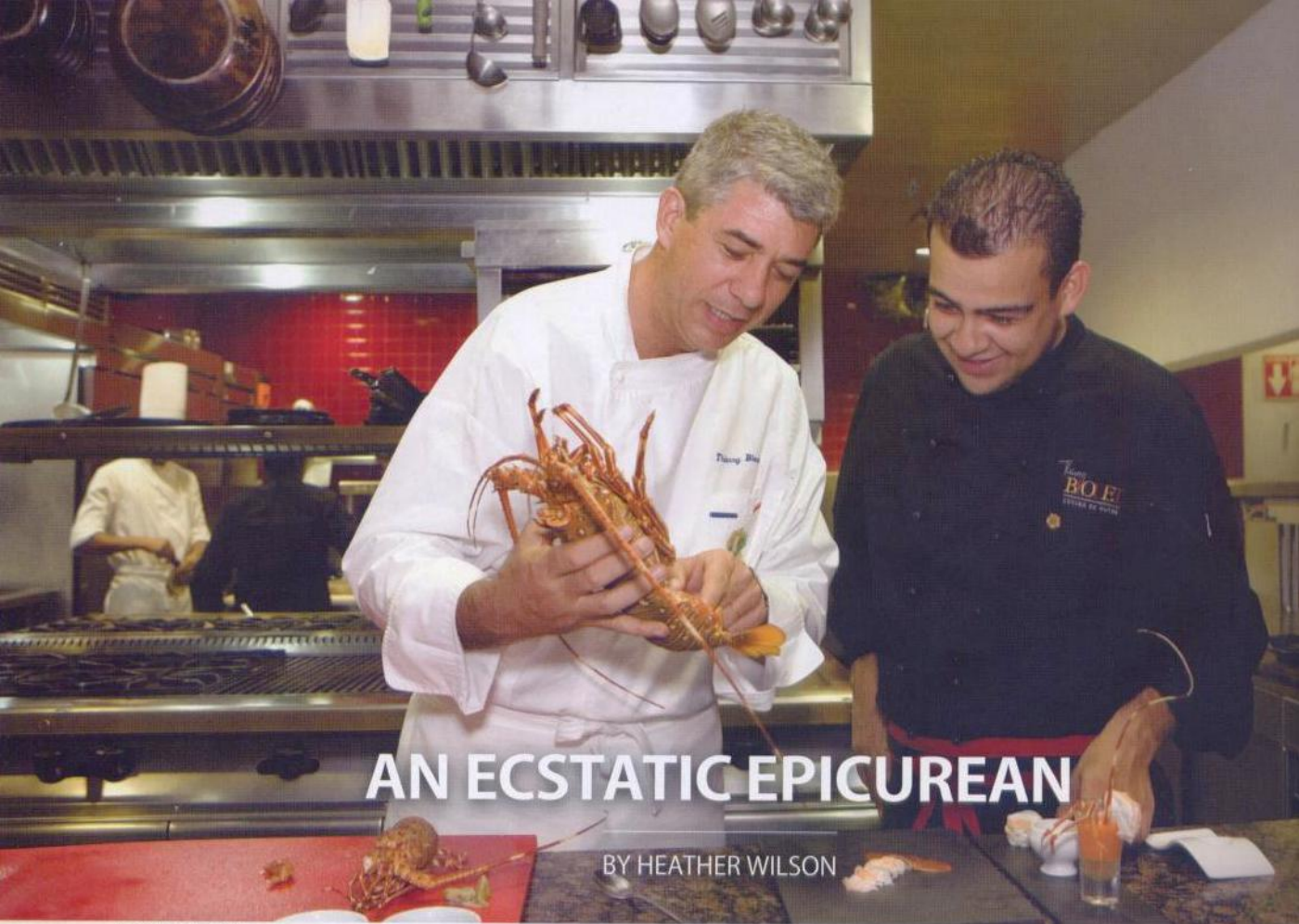
San Miguel Remembered

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AN ECSTATIC EPICUREAN

BY HEATHER WILSON

www.josefkandollw.com

Hailing from Toronto, which boasts many a noteworthy eatery, and fine dining a passion of mine, I have to admit that one of the major reasons I call Puerto Vallarta home is the food!

Ironically, while some assume my life now revolves around tortillas and frijoles, I'm happily enjoying world-class cuisines prepared by top-notch chefs who, like me, have been drawn to

this most beautiful part of the planet.

Vallarta's dining scene is the hottest in Mexico. There are at least a couple dozen restaurants that will absolutely knock your socks off, every detail about the food, wine, service and ambiance exceptional. One could spend months here and never set foot in the same venue twice, while being consistently delighted with the food. I say this without hesitation, being a res-

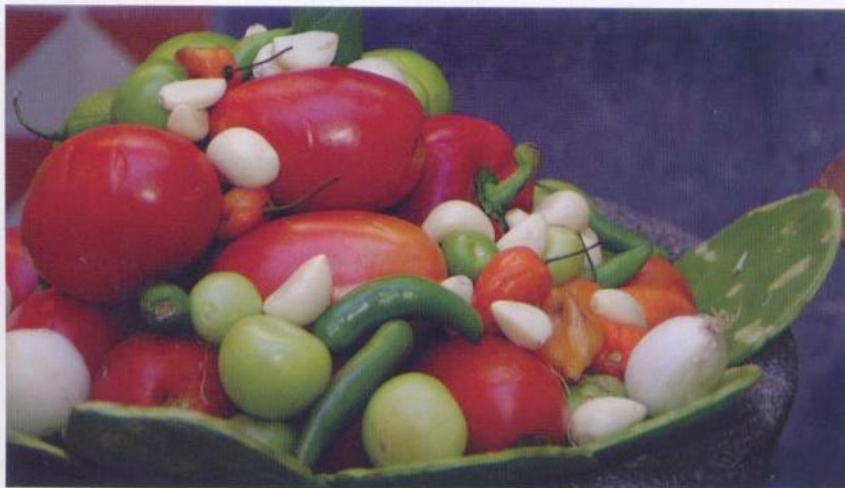
taurant reviewer here for the better part of the past 18 years.

Oceanfront, cliff-top, in the jungle or a former hacienda, on a cobblestone street, or under a giant palapa, you name it. Choices run the gamut. Not only will you find familiar dishes, but exciting new fusion plates that leave you wanting more.

Many a spot boasts live music, piano perhaps, or guitar, wandering trios and mariachis popping by tables to imbue sultry tropical evenings with yet more romance.

Much of the credit for how strikingly sophisticated the dining scene is in this former sleepy fishing village has to go to Thierry Blouet of Café des Artistes fame, whose vision and professionalism set the gold standard for many a restaurateur. And I must say, both locals and visitors sure enjoy reaping the benefits as they continually strive to outshine one another, by winning world-class chef competitions, for example.

There's almost always a food-related festival running, whether it be wine or tequila, soufflés or desserts, every day here is made special. And then there are the two major gastronomic



events we look forward to year after year—the Festival Gourmet International each November and Restaurant Week in May.

Spanning November 13–23 this year, Puerto Vallarta and the Riviera Nayarit really come to life with the excitement revolving around the gourmet festival. Organized by chefs Blouet, Heinz Reize, owner of Coco Tropical, and Roland Menetrey, diverse events range from cocktail parties, tasting menus, cooking demos, a

spectacular Sunday brunch, gala closing dinner and more. If you are a “foodie” who likes to have a good time, you will want to be part of it!

Each of the participating restaurants, 25 in 2008, brings in a renowned chef from abroad to join forces with their own executive chef, their mutual expertise resulting in a surprising synergy and new flavor experiences—fantasy dishes and familiar favourites with unorthodox new twists. To learn more, check out www.festivalgourmet.com.

www.festivalgourmet.com.

Presented by Vallarta Lifestyles, an avid promoter of the town's finest restaurants for some two decades, the 2009 Restaurant Week runs May 15–31. Offering three-course menus at surprisingly reasonable set prices, this is an ideal opportunity to visit your favorite spots and discover new ones. Last year there were 34 to choose from. See www.virtualvallarta.com/restaurantweek. **ES**

HAND TO HAND

JOSEF KANDOLL W.

Puerto Vallarta offers a truly expansive range of dining options from gourmet to home-cooking to on-the-street delights. What gives it an additional level of attraction for the aficionado of menus is the opportunity to learn how to prepare those special dishes. Classes range from daily to weekly to monthly with price ranges that cross the gamut as well.

Thierry Blouet, *Café des Artistes*

Learning to appreciate all your Senses
Thierry Blouet Cocina de Autor
www.cafedesartistes.com
(322) 226-7200 ext. 120
marketing@cafedesartistes.com
Rebeca Magaña

In the restaurant's special teaching kitchen, with theater-style seating, there are two styles of classes:

Demo: features cooking demonstration by Thierry or one of his chefs. Max 50, min 25, \$150 USD, recipe book included.

Participatory: features four-course meal demonstrated by Thierry or one of his chefs, then preparation of meal in small groups, to be enjoyed later with a wine pairing by sommelier. Max 20, min 15, \$250 USD, recipe book, apron incl.

Maitre Cuisinier de France

Member of La Académie Culinaire de France since 1997

Member of the Chaîne des Rotisseurs since 1996

Café des Artistes is a regular winner of Vallarta Lifestyles Readers' Choice Award

Carmen Porras, *El Arrayán*

Authentic Flavors from the Past
El Arrayán
www.elarrayan.com.mx
(322) 222-7195
info@elarrayan.com.mx

Carmen Porras

In the restaurant's professional stainless-steel kitchen, classes offer a focus on home recipes with fresh ingredients picked up at local markets after breakfast in town.

Lunch is served after the preparation, paired with wine. Max 15, cost from \$75 to \$95 USD, depending on menu; recipe book, apron included.

Classes once a month during May, June, July and August.

El Arrayán voted best Mexican restaurant four years in a row by local poll.

Chef Mariano Valdés offers experience in regional Mexican cuisine, since 2008.

Carmen Porras provides hotel experience, fluent in English.

Gilles le Fort,

The Passion of Preparation

www.lefort.com.mx
(329) 298-1532
mlefort@pvnet.com.mx
Gilles and Margarita LeFort

In their peaceful seaside home kitchen in Bucerías, Gilles prepares the three-course dinner while guests sit at the counter enjoying paté and champagne.

Max 18, min 6, \$55 USD, 8 pm daily

Reservations a must and arriving on time as well. First caller for any one night chooses the menu. If there are reservations when you call, you will be told the menu for the evening.

When cooking demonstration is complete, guests move to outdoor covered terrace where tables are elegantly set for dinner with wine.

Gilles studied the science of freezing meats in his home country of France.

Dolores Brittingham Entertaining at Home

Essence of Cuisine
Dolores Brittingham
(322) 222-7017

y_brittingham@hotmail.com

In a comfortable Mexican-style condo with kitchen counter spanning cooking area, students sit at counter on high-rise chairs for demo-style classes in gourmet cooking

Four-course lunch is served at formal sit-down meal including wine

Max 12, min eight, \$60 USD, includes recipes

Classes held four to five times a month from November through June except during holidays

With over 28 years experience teaching cooking, Dolores offers not only diverse Mexican cuisine but international as well

Entertaining at home is her passion next to Mexican cuisine

Offers private catering for events

Emalee Chapman

Learning from the Masters

Emalee Sala-Chapman
(322) 223-0906
emiliasc33@hotmail.com

It was her reality as a single mother of four young children that opened the door to her career as a chef and teacher

Offers private classes for small groups with focus on fresh ingredients and healthy meals

Cost ranges from \$75 to \$100 USD, includes recipes

Writer of many cookbooks, best known being "Fifteen Minute Meals," published in 1981, then followed by "Fast Italian Cooking" in 1983 and "Fresh 15-Minute Meals" in 1986; employed for years by Williams & Sonoma in their experimental kitchen, she wrote "Chicken" and "Vegetables" for them in 1993

Her passions are classic northern Italian and classic French cuisine, primarily home recipes, and is currently working on another book for healthy eating for singles