

Making Savory, Spicy, and Sweet TRAVEL MEMORIES

By Doreen Pendgracs



This Greek salad is made the authentic way, with fresh herbs and no lettuce.

If you're a foodie like me, you're always on the lookout for exciting, memorable meals and culinary adventures to take pictures of and make notes about in your travel journals. To me, food is life, and life is all about making memories.

Do you remember places and adventures based on what you ate and drank while there? I sure do. It was in Greece where I learned how to make an authentic Greek salad. Did you know that the Greeks don't put lettuce in their trademark salads? Only taste-tempting vegetables like fresh cucumber, tomatoes, white onion, peppers (they primarily use green, but any color will do), Kalamata (also known as Greek) olives, feta cheese, fresh herbs (such as oregano, thyme, basil, and rosemary), a dash of cracked pepper, and the best extra virgin olive oil you can get your hands on—as well as a little red wine vinegar. Do I have you

salivating yet? If not, I'm doing something wrong, as nothing is more pleasing to the taste buds than pure and fresh ingredients combined to perfection.

I'm sure many of us have had similar European culinary adventures where we learned how to make the best of anything. Those experiences stay with us forever, and so do those tantalizing flavors.

I have similar food memories from a recent trip to Mexico, where an innovative chef taught me how he creates savory dishes with cacao. We think of chocolate as being sweet, but when chefs use cocoa beans, nibs, or unsweetened cocoa powder, the result is generally deep, rich, savory, and somewhat earthy.

I learned how to make a Molognesa pasta dish by Chef Hugo Ahumada in Puerto Vallarta whose ingenious recipe combines the spiciness of a Mexican molé sauce with the savory flavor of an Italian favorite, the tomato and meat based Bolognesa. It was amazing! Just the right amount of heat from Mexican



Grilled agave worms called channassi were served according to a Oaxacan recipe featuring Resposado Tequila.

chili peppers and cacao married with traditional Italian herbs and seasonings are a match made in heaven that I will long remember. That's what's so exciting about international cuisine. There is very often a fusion of

unexpected flavors that create something truly unique.

Speaking of the unexpected, sometimes we have the opportunity to try something we never would dream of eating—unless it is put right in front of us! I had the opportunity to eat Channassi (grilled



This lemon dessert from Alexander's Patisserie in the Silicon Valley is just one of the sweet masterpieces you can enjoy.

agave worms) seasoned with oil, herbs, onion, and tequila and served with guacamole and a delicious salsa. Super savory!

Mexican cuisine is far more than just tacos and tortillas. Did you know that it has been given an honor in the form of the designation, "Cultural Patrimony of Humanity"? This honor put Mexican cuisine on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2015. I had not previously heard of a country's cuisine having been given such an honor by such a prestigious world organization.

We've experienced some amazing spicy and savory options in this article. Now it's time to get down to the sweeter side of the tasting palate. Creating desserts that are equally as beautiful as they are delectable is an extremely precise art form quite

different than that of standard food prep, cooking or grilling where there is more room for flexibility.

There are true artisans who excel in this type of offering. I was blown away by the desserts at Alexander's Patisserie in the community of Mountain View in the Silicon Valley region of California. But Alexander's doesn't stop there. This chic sweet shop also makes chocolate bonbons, bars, and barks on-site that you can take with you to enjoy at home or give as gifts. Major brownie points in my book! If you can take some of that tasting pleasure home with you to share or savor at a later date, what could be better?

What has been your most memorable culinary travel experience? Has it involved learning how to make a favorite dish that you've always wanted to perfect? Has it been a meal that was memorable because of impeccable service, flair, and flavor? Has it involved tasting something far beyond your normal boundaries or level of comfort? Did stepping out on that limb provide you with the pride and special memories to put that trip into your Top 10?

When we travel, we have the opportunity to turn an ordinary trip into an extraordinary one. Use your camera (or your phone's camera) to capture those special culinary moments. Sometimes, they provide you with the proof you may need to convince friends and family—and perhaps yourself—that you actually ate or drank something that provided you with that once-in-a-lifetime taste tempting (or traumatic!) experience that you will never forget.

And sometimes, those moments toss all differences aside, and open the door to a bond or friendship with people with whom we otherwise may not have connected. Breaking bread or sharing a drink are great ways to open the door to worldwide lasting friendships. So, look for unique opportunities to test and tempt your taste buds. You won't be sorry! ✨

Doreen Pendgracs is a frequent contributor to THOR Travel Advantage who has eaten and drank her way through close to 40 countries, and never regretted a moment of it. Follow her travels and culinary adventures at <https://chocolatour.net>.

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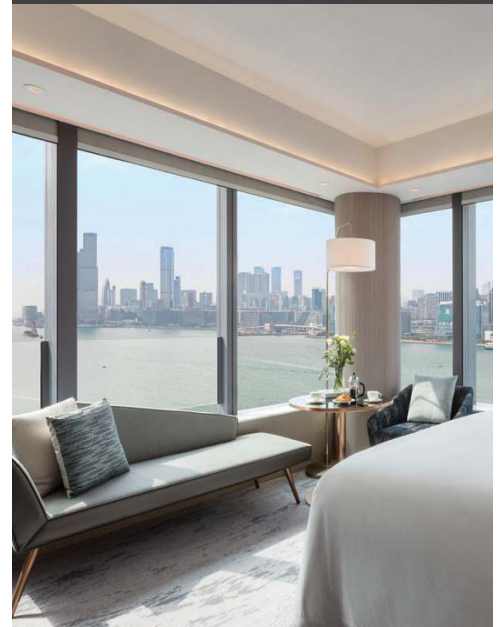
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