

Cooking classes are a surefire recipe

Experience a great way to learn about local atmosphere, meet others and tru

BY CRAIG AINSCOUGH

For most people, an ideal vacation includes a break from the kitchen. But have you ever considered attending cooking classes in your host country?

It's a great way to experience some local atmosphere, meet others and enjoy a truly local meal. We recently signed up for a five-course dinner lesson at "My Mexican Kitchen" in Bucerias, Mexico. (www.mymexican-kitchen.com) Edgar Cordova and Travis Dietz greeted us and explained the routine.

No Gordon Ramsay-type yelling chefs here, they soon had us washing, chopping and stirring.

We spent the rest of the evening preparing and eating our creations course by course.

First on the menu was Agua Fresca (fresh fruit water) using Tuna.

It was obvious the chefs enjoying our reaction to the thought of drinking



Tuna. Tuna is also the name of the fruit of the Prickly Pear Cactus.

We were shown how to skin the prickle-covered fruit without drawing blood. It was then cubed and put in a blender.

I'd eaten cactus before but was pleasantly surprised at how refreshing it was. On another evening we used Hibiscus flowers.

At "My Mexican Kitchen" the menu changes each day, which makes it possible to choose classes for: soups, appetizers, side dishes or five course dinners.

Travis told us they use only fresh ingredients and shop the local market as much as possible. Sometimes the market comes to them, as I discovered the next day.

Two small pickup trucks with loudspeakers drove street by street through town. One was loaded with oranges while the other had crates of just-picked strawberries.

Back to our dinner, we made: green salsa, chalupas poblanos with our own homemade tortillas, poblana chile cream soup (my favourite of the evening) Mexican rice and chicken in roasted chipotle sauce.

For dessert we had sweet fried plantains served with Mexican coffee.

Bonus #1: Who better to ask for the source of ingredients or favourite dining spot than a chef?

Bonus #2: "My Mexican Kitchen" is located above "Broken Art" and "The Winged Iguana" two art galleries – a nice way to spend some time before returning to the hotel.

The take home recipe booklet allows you to relive the great food once you're at home. Next time you book a trip, ask if there's a cooking school nearby. I promise it will spice up your travels. B.Y.O.B.

Prices vary \$60 to \$85 per person depending on the menu for that day.

Ps: An indication of how much fun it was; when we heard there were still openings for Friday night, we booked another class.



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