

WADING IN: THE SPREAD

FLORIDA-FRESH BITES & BEVS

By Christina Cush • Photography by Alex Celis

Everybody LOVES TACOS

A WEST PALM BEACH CHEF SHARES HIS FAVORITE HOME-COOKED SMALL PLATES, PERFECT FOR PARTIES

Clay Carnes, 32, says he's never met a person who hates tacos. That's because his signature organic-corn hand-helds are making quite a name for his new Latin street food restaurant, Cholo Soy Cocina, which opened last September in West Palm Beach. Carnes draws inspiration from his family's Ecuadorian heritage in creating Andean-American dishes like snapper tacos and grilled street corn—a fan favorite, even if it does get stuck in people's teeth. The Floridian has been cooking since the age of five and now shares his love of food with his two young sons and nephews. In fact, the boys often gather around Carnes's newly renovated home kitchen island to nosh on

a gorgeous taco buffet. "So I can work and talk at the same time," he says. The Sunshine State's succulent produce and plentiful fish, including red snapper, star in many of Carnes's recipes. "I love the seafood here. Always have," he says. His secret to winning over discerning South Florida palates at work and at home? "People would be surprised by how bent on using the highest quality products we are...but again, that's why they come back," Carnes says. "Because we don't settle."



Above:
Clay Carnes'
friends-approved
fish tacos

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Street Corn with Passion Fruit Mayo

SERVES 4

SWEET CORN

- 4 ears corn, shucked
- olive oil
- queso fresco
- passion fruit mayo (recipe below)
- blackening spice
- sea salt
- 4 tablespoons organic scallions, sliced
- 1 lime, cut into wedges

PREPARATION: Coat corn with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and grill on medium-high until golden brown on all sides. Remove from grill, sprinkle with queso fresco and bake in oven on 350 degrees (or on grill top) until cheese is melted. Transfer to serving dish. Sprinkle blackening spice and sea salt to taste. Top with scallions. Drizzle with passion fruit mayo. Serve with lime wedge on side.

PASSION FRUIT MAYO

- 1/2 cup mayo
- 1/8 cup passion fruit juice
- favorite hot sauce (to taste)
- pinch of salt

PREPARATION: Whisk ingredients together and set aside.

Above: Add pizzazz to grilled street corn with passion fruit mayo. *Below:* Chef Clay Carnes



Tempura Batter Fish Tacos

SERVES 4

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chilled soda water
- 1 ounce soy sauce
- 2 fresh snapper filets
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 3 cups vegetable oil
- shredded organic purple cabbage
- lime juice from one fresh lime
- cilantro
- pinch of salt
- 4 soft tortillas
- diced pineapple or mango

PREPARATION: For tempura batter, lightly mix flour, water and soy sauce until mixture reaches the consistency of runny pancake batter. Whisk continuously, but be careful not to over mix. Slice snapper filets into strips and lightly coat with cornstarch. Heat oil to 350 degrees in a deep fryer or sauté pan. Dip filets into tempura batter and fry for five minutes. Toss purple cabbage with juice from one fresh lime, cilantro and salt. Lightly toast tortilla in a dry

skillet. Place fried fish on tortilla. Top with cabbage mix. Sprinkle with diced pineapple or mango. Drizzle with passion fruit mayo.

CHOLO SOY COCINA

— LOCATION —
3715 S. DIXIE HWY
WEST PALM BEACH

— HOURS —
TUES-SUN: 11:30 A.M.–2 P.M.,
5–9 P.M.

CLOSED SUN & MON

cholosoycocina.com

WADING IN: THE SPREAD

Sangria Social

SAY "HOLA" TO A BUBBLY CITRUS-INFUSED
THIRST-QUENCHER FOR (MACHO) SPRING FLINGS

Like the great Jerry Jeff Walker, who sings "I love that Sangria wine, when I'm drinking with old friends of mine," Clay Carnes of West Palm Beach's Cholo Soy Cocina prefers the fruity beverage to a frosty beer or a salt-rimmed margarita when entertaining at home.

"There is nothing manly about sangria. But neither is being thirsty or needing to be refreshed. I love sangria just because it seems girly. So, if it's there, I'm having some!"

Carnes grabs whatever he has around the house to transform straight vino into a more festive concoction but stays away from using too much chunky fruit. "No one eats it," he says. "Slivers of citrus are much more inviting. And always top it with soda or something bubbly."

Carnes suggests serving drinks from a pitcher or large container—it automatically ups the fun-factor. "It's great making sangria socially," he says. "You can pick and choose your wine—red, white or rosé, whatever works. Sangria bars should be a thing at parties!"

Citrus Splash Sangria

SERVES 4

- 12 ounces Sauvignon Blanc
- freshly squeezed juice from two organic oranges
- 2 organic oranges, sliced into rounds
- 2 cans blood orange or prickly pear San Pellegrino soda

PREPARATION: Mix ingredients in a large pitcher with ice and orange slices, then pour into your favorite casual glassware. Drink with friends and enjoy a beautiful spring day or evening.