

Taste of the Tropics

For food that's low-fat yet tasty, low-cal but still colorful, head south. Latin Americans have eaten this way forever.

By Elizabeth Fassberg

Too many Americans, when thinking about food from south of the border, immediately conjure up a cheese-laden take-out burrito. Or maybe an overstuffed taco with salsa on the side. In reality, the traditional Latin American diet is one of the most healthful in the world. Starring foods rich in plant and grain proteins, along with tubers, nuts, and lots of vitamin-packed fruits and vegetables, this cuisine relies on chilies and spices instead of oil and butter to enhance flavor. Instead of frying, Latin Americans often opt for roasting and braising—much healthier methods of cooking. And because most Latin American countries are surrounded by water, fish—not red meat—is a popular main course. Rice and beans provide complete proteins and round out nearly every meal. So, to add some spice to a summer fiesta, try these easy, nutritious Latin American dishes.

Quinoa

A native South American grain, quinoa is high in protein, calcium, and iron, and was once a staple food of the Incas. It can be found in specialty sections of supermarkets and in natural food stores.

1 cup quinoa
2 cups water

1. Rinse quinoa in a strainer. In small saucepan with cover, add quinoa and water. Bring to a boil and cover. Simmer on low 12 to 15 minutes, or until water is absorbed, grain appears translucent, and white germ ring is visible. Yield: 6 servings.

Per serving, 106 calories; 14% (4 g) protein, 14% (2 g) fat, 72% (20 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 6 mg sodium.

Black Bean Soup

2 cans (15½ oz. each) black beans
Vegetable spray
1 medium onion, diced
5 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. cumin
2 bay leaves
2 cups reduced-sodium nonfat chicken stock
Pepper, to taste
3 Tb. dry sherry (optional)
Optional garnishes: Fat-free sour cream, chopped red onion, chopped cilantro

1. Rinse beans and drain in colander. Set aside. Spray medium-size nonstick pot with vegetable spray. Add onions, garlic, and cumin; cook over medium heat until onions are translucent (about 3 minutes), being careful not to burn garlic. Add bay leaves and beans, and stir until combined.

2. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes. Turn heat to very low. Remove bay leaves. Put half of bean mixture into food processor. Pulse a few seconds until mixture is thickened to almost a paste.

3. Add mixture back to pot of reserved beans; stir. Add pepper and sherry and heat until very hot. For thinner soup, add up to 1 cup water or chicken stock.

4. Serve with fat-free sour cream, red onion, and/or cilantro. This can also be served over rice. Yield: 4 servings.

Per serving (without garnishes), 209 calories; 30% (15 g) protein, 8% (2 g) fat, 62% (34 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 847 mg sodium.

Ecuadoran Chopped Salad

3 cups lettuce (anything but iceberg), chopped
1 cup tomato, chopped
½ cup yellow pepper, chopped
1 scallion, finely chopped
½ cup fresh or frozen corn, cooked and chilled
2 cups cauliflower, chopped and blanched

Dressing:

¼ cup red wine vinegar
1 Tb. strawberry jelly
¼ tsp. Dijon mustard
¼ tsp. salt

½ cup canned beets, chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. In large bowl, add lettuce, tomato, yellow pepper, scallion, corn, and blanched (boiled 2 minutes, then shocked in cold water) cauliflower. Chill until ready to use.

2. In small bowl, whisk together red wine vinegar, jelly, mustard, and salt. Toss salad with dressing just before serving. Top with beets and add salt and pepper to taste. Yield: 4 servings.

Per serving, 77 calories; 15% (4 g) protein, 5% (1 g) fat, 80% (18 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 190 mg sodium.

really spice
up your
summer...

Rice With Garlic and Onions

1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 cup long grain rice
2 cups boiling water
¼ tsp. salt

1. In medium-size saucepan with lid, heat oil on medium heat. Add onion and garlic. Stir continuously until onion is translucent but not brown.

2. Add rice and stir. Add boiling water and salt. Cover and reduce heat to low. Cook until all water is absorbed and rice is cooked, about 20 minutes. Yield: 4 servings.

Per serving, 190 calories; 8% (4 g) protein, 7% (1 g) fat, 85% (40 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 3 mg sodium.

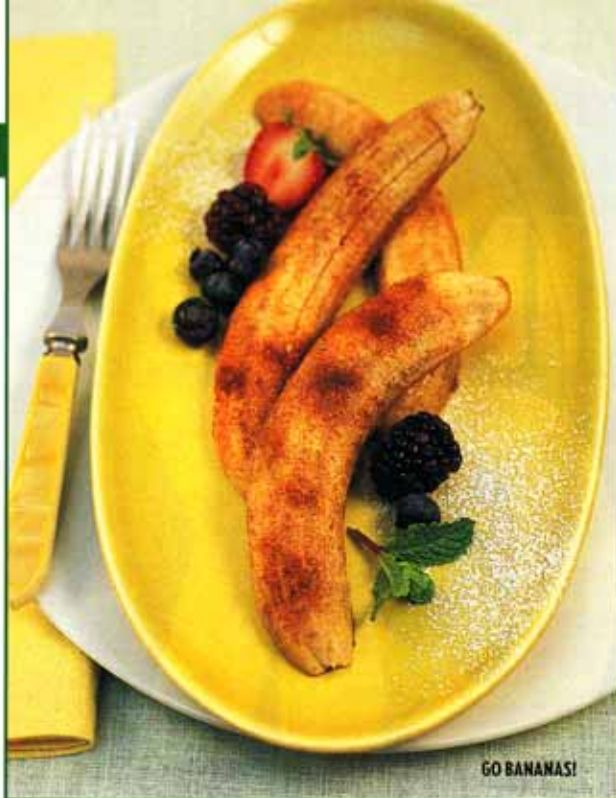
HEARTY, WHOLESOME
BLACK BEAN SOUP.



Baked Bananas

4 bananas
Vegetable spray
½ cup rum
1 Tb. fresh lime juice
1 Tb. sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Peel bananas; slice in half lengthwise. Spray medium-size oven-proof pan with vegetable spray. In small bowl, mix rum and lime juice; pour evenly over bananas. 2. Mix sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle evenly over bananas. Bake 10 minutes. Serve with raspberry sorbet, if desired. Yield: 4 servings. Per serving (without sorbet), 149 calories: 45% (.03 g) protein, 0% (.01 g) fat, 55% (20 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 0 mg sodium.



...with these
low-fat
latin dishes.

Quick Vegetarian Chili

Vegetable spray
1 cup (or 1 medium) onion, chopped
½ cup chopped carrots
1 cup chopped celery
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 Tb. chili powder
2 tsp. cumin
1 can (28 oz.) Italian plum tomatoes
1 cup vegetable stock
2 cans (19 oz. each) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
½ cup canned cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup frozen corn
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. pepper
Garnish: Fat-free sour cream, fat-free cheddar cheese, 3 Tb. scallions

1. Lightly coat medium-size nonstick pot with vegetable spray. Add onion, carrots, celery, garlic, chili powder, and cumin. Cook over medium heat about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onions are translucent. Be careful not to let burn. 2. Add tomatoes; crush against the side of the pot with large spoon. Add vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Cover, lower heat, and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. 3. Add beans, corn, and salt and pepper. Cover and simmer another 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve over quinoa or rice (see recipes) with cheese, sour cream, and/or scallions. This can be made ahead of time and reheated in microwave or on stovetop. When reheating, you may need to add water if too dry. Chili can be frozen up to 3 months. Yield: 6 servings. Per serving (without garnishes), 267 calories: 20% (15g) protein, 6% (2g) fat, 74% (52 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 1,133 mg sodium. ▶ 120

Mariscada

Mixed Seafood (Shrimp, Mussels, Clams)

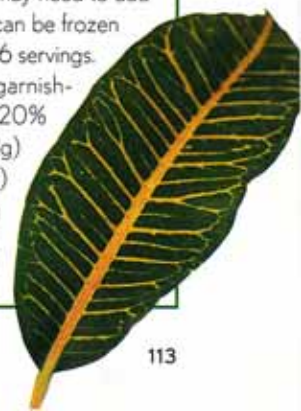
Vegetable spray
5 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup fresh-squeezed orange juice
½ tsp. cayenne, or to taste
1 can (28 oz.) peeled whole tomatoes
2 bay leaves
20 clams, cleaned well
20 mussels, bearded and cleaned well
20 medium shrimp, peeled to first knuckle and deveined
Garnish: ½ cup chopped tomato, ¼ cup chopped parsley

1. Lightly coat large pot with vegetable spray. Add garlic; sauté until lightly browned. Add orange juice, cayenne, and tomatoes. Crush mixture gently with back of wooden spoon. Add bay leaves. 2. Bring mixture to boil over medium heat. Lower heat; simmer until mixture has thickened, about 7 minutes. Add clams, mussels, and shrimp. Cover; let cook (stir about halfway through) until clams and mussels open and shrimp is pink, about 7 minutes. Discard any unopened mussels or clams. Remove bay leaves. 3. Divide seafood into 4 bowls. Pour sauce evenly over seafood. Garnish each bowl with tomato and parsley. Serve with crusty bread or crackers. This can also be served over linguine or rice. Yield: 4 servings. Per serving, 275 calories: 50% (33 g) protein, 15% (4 g) fat, 35% (23 g) carbohydrate. 116 mg cholesterol; 888 mg sodium.

Brazilian Chicken Soup (Canja)

3 skinless chicken breasts with bone (1¼ lb.)
½ cup chopped Italian parsley
1 scallion, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
2 stalks celery, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
2 leeks, cleaned, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
4 medium carrots, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
1 tomato, quartered
1 onion, finely chopped
1 sweet potato, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
1 yellow squash, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
1 zucchini, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
10 cups water
3 low-sodium chicken bouillon cubes
1 cup uncooked rice or soup noodles
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Add all ingredients except rice or soup noodles and salt and pepper to large stockpot. Bring to boil and simmer 1 hour, or until vegetables are soft, chicken is cooked, and soup has reduced by about a quarter. Remove chicken from pot. 2. Tear chicken into bite-size pieces and return to soup. Add 1 cup rice or noodles; cook until rice or noodles are done. Add salt and pepper. Serve hot with bread and salad. Soup can be frozen up to 3 months. Freeze in individual containers; defrost as needed. Yield: About 9 cups. Per serving, 319 calories: 34% (26 g) protein, 9% (3 g) fat, 57% (46 g) carbohydrate. 56 mg cholesterol; 650 mg sodium.





RELAX INTO SUMMER WITH A LITTLE LATIN FLAVOR: MIXED SEAFOOD MARISCADA OVER LINGUINE.

TASTE OF THE TROPICS

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Shrimp Seviche With Popcorn

- 1 lb. medium shrimp
- ½ cup tomato juice
- 5 Tb. lemon juice
- 3 Tb. minced red onion
- ½ tsp. minced jalapeño
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 4 cups shredded lettuce
- 2 tsp. minced cilantro
- 4 cups air-popped popcorn (optional)

1. In medium-size pot, boil water. Peel shrimp up to last knuckle, leaving tail attached. Devein and drop in boiling water. Cook until shrimp are pink, about 2 minutes. Drain, run under cold water, and refrigerate until ready to use.

2. In medium bowl, mix together tomato juice, lemon juice, red onion, jalapeño, and salt and pepper.

3. Add shrimp and let marinate in refrigerator at least 20 minutes. Place lettuce on 4 plates. Divide shrimp evenly and place on top of lettuce. Pour liquid over shrimp and sprinkle with cilantro. Eat with air-popped popcorn, and with light beer, if desired. Yield: 4 appetizer portions.

Per serving, 117 calories: 55% (16 g) protein, 9% (1 g) fat, 36% (11 g) carbohydrate. 135 mg cholesterol; 334 mg sodium.

Spicy Pan-Fried Fish

- ½ cup cornmeal
 - 1 tsp. salt
 - ½ tsp. pepper
 - 4 tsp. roasted jalapeño, minced*
 - 1 tsp. olive oil
 - 4 pieces (6 oz. each) cod, scrod, or flounder
- Garnish: lime wedges, mango slices

1. In medium-size bowl, mix together cornmeal, salt, and pepper. Set aside.

2. In small bowl, stir jalapeño into olive oil to make paste. Brush about 1 tsp. paste on both sides of each piece of fish.

3. Dip each piece of fish into cornmeal mixture and coat completely. Shake off excess. Spray large nonstick frying pan well with vegetable spray. Heat pan on medium-high heat. Once pan is hot, add fish and cook about 4 minutes on each side. (Fish should not be falling apart.) Remove from heat and serve hot with lime wedges and mango slices. (If you don't have a large enough frying pan, fry 2 pieces at a time and keep others warm in oven.) Yield: 4 servings.

*Note: To roast jalapeño, put whole pepper on open gas flame. Char outside, turning with tongs until pepper is black all over. Put pepper in plastic

bag and seal. Once pepper has sweat and is slightly cool (about 3 minutes), rub off skin. Cut pepper in half and remove seeds; mince.

Per serving, 211 calories: 63% (32 g) protein, 13% (3 g) fat, 24% (12 g) carbohydrate. 73 mg cholesterol; 631 mg sodium.

Chilean Fruit Salad

- 2 cups watermelon, seeded and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 cup green grapes, sliced in half
- 1½ cups fresh pineapple, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ½ cup sweetened pineapple juice (if using unsweetened juice, add 2 tsp. sugar unless fruit is very sweet)
- ½ cup inexpensive sweet white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc

2 Tb. coconut, toasted and shredded (optional)*

1. In medium-size bowl, add watermelon, grapes, and pineapple. Add pineapple juice and wine; let macerate at least 10 minutes before serving.

2. Serve in individual bowls with coconut on top. Yield: 4 servings.

*Note: To make toasted coconut, preheat oven to 375°. Shred fresh coconut or use prepared shredded coconut. Pour onto cookie sheet and toast in oven about 5 minutes, or until golden brown.

Per serving, 121 calories: 18% (1 g) protein, 6% (1 g) fat, 76% (25 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 5 mg sodium. □

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BEAUTY Q&A

Page 34: Cover Girl: (888) COVER-GIRL. Sally Hansen: Available at Kmart, Wal-Mart, Target, Walgreens, stores nationwide.

FASHION PASSION

Page 36: Liz Claiborne pedal pushers. For information: (800) 555-9838. Wendy Brigade necklace. Fragments, New York City.

FASHION MOMENT

Page 38: Laura Urbinati halter and skirt. Laura Urbinati, Los Angeles; Barneys, New York City; Noodle Stories, Los Angeles. AGATHA Paris bracelet. For information: (800) AGATHA-7. Katharine Hamnett sunglasses. For information: (800) 527-9265. Impo stretch sandal. For information: (800) FOR-IMPO. Kate Spade straw tote bag. Neiman Marcus, Barneys, and Saks Fifth Avenue, select stores nationwide. Stuart Weitzman open-toe slingbacks. Stuart Weitzman, New York City. Amy Chan handbag. Bond 07, New York City.

FASHION Q & A

Page 40: Ralph Lauren alligator slide, \$975. Polo Ralph Lauren, Bergdorf Goodman, select stores nationwide.

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