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FIVE FABULOUS FIESTA IDEAS FOR CINCO DE MAYO!

Carolina Buia and Isabel González, co-authors of *Latin Chic: Entertaining with Style and Sass*, have been throwing parties with their signature Latin style for years. The dynamic duo have *everything* you need to celebrate Cinco De Mayo - their playful and practical advice covers party details ranging from a must-have menu to festive décor.

Since 2008 is *the* year for Latin American cuisine,¹ there's simply no better time to turn your home into a hot fiesta ... with help from Buia and González, of course!

FIVE TIPS TO SPICE UP YOUR PLATE

Preparing food for a group can be a challenge, but it doesn't have to be. Remember these simple tips when planning the menu for your next fiesta.

Uno: Choose Food to Fit the Theme

Create your menu around typical Latin fare. One suggestion for the main course is pork, a very traditional ingredient in Hispanic food. Pork's mild flavor offers versatility for the dynamic flavors of Hispanic recipes – you will impress your guests and let the unique flavors of Latin cuisine shine through.

Dos: Simple Substitutions

Look for ways to swap certain ingredients to make your menu more unique. For example, include cabbage in your tacos instead of lettuce. Or, exchange your typical green peppers for yellow or red peppers for a whole new taste. Pork can replace chicken in traditional dishes such as enchiladas, tacos or burritos.

Tres: Artsy Dipping

For festive guacamole and salsa bowls, make your own with dried corn husks! Soak the husks in warm water until pliable, bend into the shape of a bowl, tie off corners with strips of another husk, place small bowl in middle and let dry. When dry, remove bowl and the husk will maintain its shape.

Quatro: Margarita Makeover

No Latin celebration is complete without margaritas. Instead of regular table salt rimmers, add a twist to your drink presentation by rimming glasses with colorful

¹ National Restaurant Association. "What Hot, What's Not" chef survey, Dec. 2007 (survey addressed hot cuisine for 2008)

salts, which are popular and easy-to-find. Try Hawaiian red salt, Peruvian pink salt or Black Lava sea salt.

Note: Specialty salts can be coarser than regular salt, so before rimming, grind them for a minute with mortar and pestle.

Cinco: Cater to Kiddies

To make the evening special for the little ones, put out a “mocktail table” where they can concoct their own juice drinks with colorful straws and garnishes. Set up another table to serve as a pork taco bar with all the necessary trimmings like salsa, sour cream and cheese. The kids will eat it up!

FIVE TIPS FOR ENTERTAINING WITH STYLE

Creating a remarkable evening with imaginative accents and special touches is easier than you think. Pull off the party of the *year* with these tips for entertaining with ease.

Uno: Presentation is Everything

A beautiful and lively celebration can truly set the mood for the evening. Decorate the patio with strings of brightly colored lights or brighten up the table with candles.

Dos: Tune In

No celebration is complete without music. Consider hiring an authentic mariachi band or download some regional music so your guests can show off their dance moves.

Tres: Stylish Party Favors

Festive party favors are always a nice touch. Popular throughout Mexico, petite Mexican Aztec dolls are inexpensive and made by Mexican Indians whose populations and traditions are disappearing. Find them online! Your purchase and gift will bring joy to guests and help this community.

Quatro: Take it To-Go

There is usually plenty of food left over after a gathering and finding space in the fridge is always a challenge. Purchase small, inexpensive containers and wrap up your delicious pork dishes to send home with guests. Place the containers in colorful handle-bags and add a hand-written note, thanking them for coming.

Cinco: Clean-up Tricks

Cleaning up after a party needn't be dreaded - this trick is sure to put a smile on your face at the end of the night. When possible, serve food on colorful rattan or reed baskets lined with wax paper. This will save *hours* on washing dishes.

For more recipe ideas, visit TheOtherWhiteMeat.com.