

A MUCH NEEDED

MEXICAN MARINATED

# VACATION

So right after Christmas I completely disregarded the government's advisory not to travel and hopped on a plane to Mexico. Definitely felt a little guilty, but as divided as people are on nearly everything to do with the pandemic, the one thing I think we can all agree on is that we're all tired of this whole episode and could use a little time out of our snowed-in province to reacquaint ourselves with a sense of normalcy. I didn't want to just post up on a beach at an all-inclusive, I wanted to go to the heart of Mexico and eat (and yes, also drink) as many delicious new flavours as I possibly could over a few weeks. We went to Mexico City and then Oaxaca de Juarez, and then along the Pacific Coast. It was a fantastic trip and I'm still basking in the glow of it, but I'm also glad to be home because a) I missed all the customers and coworkers here at the VG and b) I wanted to share some of the flavours of Mexico with you to enjoy without having to wash them down with some Pepto.

## CHORIZO SAUSAGES

Obviously February isn't what we typically think of as grilling season, so we scale back on our sausage offerings, which is why our Chorizo hasn't been in our meat counter as often recently. But as it's a Mexican theme, it's the obvious pick here. The Chorizo definitely packs a powerful chili punch with a lingering smokiness. Makes amazing tacos which are all over the place wherever you go in Mexico. We also have homemade tortilla chips and all the fixings to make a tray of bad ass nachos on sale this weekend, and it just so happens that the best thing you can put on tacos is our chorizo, just cut it out of the casing, fry it up and layer it into your nachos. Reg. \$6.99/lb

25% OFF

# CHICKEN BREASTS

## VILLAGE CREAMERY'S ICE CREAM OF THE WEEK!

Most people were shocked I didn't return with a tan, or my signature lobster-toned sunburn. The temperature for most of my trip was about the same as what we'd have in April and early May, as Mexico City and most of the country is high in the mountains, (over 2000m above sea level). The cooler temperatures didn't stop me from taking any and every excuse to eat ice cream and popsicles (palletas) multiple times a day. Particularly in Oaxaca, I would go to this stall in the famous Mercado Benito Juarez that just had the most amazing flavours that they'd make up daily. I plan on going back to try them all. I loved all the tropical fruit flavours like passionfruit, mango with chili, mandarin, coconut, but the one I particularly went crazy for was, believe it or not, a Mezcal flavoured ice cream. It was creamy and smoky and so different. We wanted to do something a little less controversial though, so we are recreating another one of my favourites, an Oaxacan specialty, Mexican Spiced Chili Chocolate Ice Cream. I really have to hand it to Ed with this one, it's beautifully seasoned, a rich dark chocolate base that he's doctored up with cinnamon and the perfect touch of cayenne that will linger every so slightly in the aftertaste. Exquisito!

Mexican Spiced Chili Chocolate Ice Cream Reg. \$12.99/L

\$2.00 OFF

Like many of you, I have made a conscientious effort to support some of the gems in my neighbourhood by ordering takeout. Sadly, I was usually overwhelmed, as so much of the pleasure of a dining experience is rooted in service and ambience, and also, some foods are ill-suited to take-out. Pizza is undefeated in that regard. So naturally I was happy to see restaurants reopen earlier this week, with one exception. There's this ultra-chic Mexican restaurant, Quetzal, in my area that reinvented itself as a "delivery and takeout only spot" specializing in Sinaloa-style rotisserie chicken. Juicy, smokey and perfectly seasoned, can easily say it's the best chicken I've ever had in my life, and it's not even close. Now that they're open again, it means no more delivery and no more of that delicious, delicious chicken. So we've done some research and whipped up our own Sinaloa-Style Chicken Breasts for you to cook up at home. Consisting of orange juice, lime juice, onion, garlic, Guajillo peppers, cinnamon, thyme, Mexican oregano and mild chilis, there's a lot going on in every bite. We will also have our chicken breasts "au naturel" if that is more your thing. Reg. \$12.99/lb

25% OFF

## BRISKET TACOS

An overwhelming number of Mexican dishes are some permutation of dried corn (tortillas, pozole, tamal, atole, menudo, etc.), but none are more popular than the taco. Every state across the country has a regional variation that they are famous for. For example, Mexico City is the birthplace of Tacos al Pastor, a creation of Lebanese immigrants to the city who would roast pork marinated in adobada on a vertical spit and shave it off, the same way they would cook and serve a lamb shawarma at home. Tacos al Pastor were everywhere we went and they'd be crazy cheap (~\$1/taco). We decided to mix it up one day and went to an unassuming taco stand that was engulfed by people, so we assumed it was a solid choice. When we got to the front of the line, we were greeted by the cook, standing in front of a giant pot with about a dozen different cuts of meat, none of which I could identify, didn't help that I didn't recognize any of the Spanish words on the menu either. We ended up choosing Longaniza (sausage), Cachete (beef cheek, YUM!) and suadero (brisket, double YUM!) I took a photo of the menu after and was happy I avoided the Ojo (eyes), Sesos (brains) and trompa (pig snout), although I'm sure they would have been delicious, I was satisfied with my picks.

We'll be recreating the Suadero Tacos this week as our Friday lunch special. We are slowcooking brisket and tossing it in a vibrant sauce of smoky chipotle and lime and serving it on the most amazing tortillas with a charred pineapple salsa and cilantro. Available at the café Friday February 4th only, from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm. Featured at:

\$20.00 COMBO

# RASPBERRIES & BLACKBERRIES

MIX & MATCH

So, as I mention elsewhere in this ad, I had some of the most amazing fruit on my travels, especially the tropical fruit. The papayas and passionfruit just had an intensity that I'd never tasted before. Even an unripe pineapple down there is hands-down better than what comes to our market. I also came back addicted to Tajin, which is this spice mix of salt, mild chilis and dehydrated lime that they sprinkle on their fruit, specifically mango, pineapple and oranges (the traditional pairing with a shot of Mezcal). Salting fruit might sound weird, but once you try it, you can't knock it. Sadly, I wasn't wowed by any tropical fruit at market, so in place of that I got my hands on some KILLER Blackberries and Raspberries. Really fresh raspberries, firm as can be with a well balanced sweetness and tanginess. The blackberries are the real star of the show. They are the Limited Edition ones that we only see a few weeks of the year. They are plump and juicy with the jammy sweetness that you get from picking them off a bush in the summertime. Seriously, blackberries don't get any better than this!

\$9.99 /4 CONT.

Mix & Match. 4 containers for ...

# RED SNAPPER FILLETS

So I have been called out by a few customers because I have described a variety of different fish as "the best for fish tacos." In my defence, all white fish are good in fish tacos, but if I were to go on record, I think this Red Snapper is my definitive answer. I would also grill or do these in the pan as it's healthier, and deepfrying at home is a pain in the you know where! There are three important components to making great fish tacos: white fish, shredded cabbage, and crema (a white sauce, I use mayo, sour cream, lime juice, garlic powder and a touch of cumin). I would whisk together oil, lime juice, garlic, chili powder, cumin, paprika, cayenne and marinate the fillets for half an hour and then cook for 3-4 minutes a side before gently flaking it up and putting on your tacos. Featured at:

\$29.99 /LB

## WHAT'S BAKING?

Since we are celebrating the Mexican culture we wanted to bake with some "tropical" flavours, the first being a staple in our counter and a certified Evan MacDonald favourite, Key Lime Pie. We start with a hand-pressed graham cracker crust, filling is made with fresh lime zest and fresh squeezed lime juice, garnished with fresh whipped cream and lime slices. Reg. \$19.99 each

Brian, our bakery manager, is also treating us with a new creation this week- a Mojito Mousse Cup. This is a light and refreshing mousse flavoured with fresh lime and mint (as in a traditional Mojito, minus the rum), then decoratively piped into chocolate cups. Reg. \$6.99 each

ALL 25% OFF

Also, just a heads up that our Valentine's Day Bakery Menu is now up on our website for you to browse. Some of our favourites include our Heart Shaped Cakes which are only available once a year, our Strawberry Shortcake is a no brainer, as well as our Red Velvet Cake and wide selection of velvety Cheesecakes. Best to place your order in advance to avoid disappointment.♥

## WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Time to refresh and renew! Karen and Linda, our Queen Bees in the Village, want you to take advantage of our sale on some very stylish white dishware. Nothing complements food presentation more than setting it upon a white canvas. They have a wide selection of bowls in various sizes and shapes for serving up pasta, salads, soup, chips and dips. These are perfect for your Valentine's Day Dinner presentation if you are staying in, or your touchdown Superbowl spread.

Karen and Linda also have the Maxwell and Williams 16 piece dinner sets, available while supplies last.

## AISLE FOUR

Los Chips - I struggled a lot with my limited grasp on the Spanish language, but I'm pretty sure that translates to 'the chips'. We have been looking for a new go-to tortilla now that we can no longer get our hands on the Mamma Rositta's and so far, this is the one that has impressed me most. In fact, it's a wayyyy more authentic tortilla chip. Made by one of our longtime customers, Chef Paula Zavala, these are made from corn, fried in corn oil and then seasoned simply with a touch of salt and lime. Featured at:

\$5.99 BAG

Macha Chili Oil Sauce - Also from our good friend, Chef Paula, we have one of my favourite condiments, Salsa Macha. This is less of what we gringos would think of as salsa, a lot more similar to a chili oil with a crunch, with bits of fried tortilla, sesame seeds, sundried chilies, tamarind and garlic. Put it on pizza, pastas, soups, meats, sandwiches and more. It is a fantastic enhancer for all types of food or as a marinade for steaks, chicken, shrimp or fish. Featured at:

\$11.99 JAR

Chococol Coffee - From the people behind the amazing Oaxacan chocolate that we bring in, we'll have one of my favourite coffees. It's shade-grown coffee sourced from the Indigenous communities in Oaxaca and roasted fresh weekly. Seriously, the coffee I had was world-class down there, so happy I can get the same quality of cup at the store. Featured at:

\$15.99 BAG

Natalie's Margarita Mix - I had about a million margaritas when I was away. Actually, most were mezcal-based but either way, they were a fixture at every meal. For those of you who don't want to hand squeeze 40 limes to make one drink, we're featuring this excellent margarita mix we bring in from Florida. Featured at:

\$4.99 EACH

Que Pasa & Mrs Renfro's Salsas - You didn't think we'd feature tortilla chips without featuring some amazing salsas to have with them. We have two lines on feature this week. In particular I am a fan of the Tequila Salsa as well as the Pineapple Salsa. Both have a nice, lingering medium heat and make a great appy. Worth picking up with Superbowl right around the corner. Featured at:

\$5.99 EACH

## WHAT'S AT THE DELI?

Mexican Corn Chowder - Our soup of the week is a delicious corn chowder. Creamy, slightly sweet, perfect for this brutal weather. Reg. \$9.99/900ml

Spicy Bean Salad - This is one of my go-to's when it makes the odd appearance in the salad counter. We take equal parts rice and barley and then toss them with a medley of beans and corn in a zesty, ever so slightly spicy dressing. Reg. \$1.99/100g

Mac & Cheese à la Nigel - Even more than the substantial discount I get on my groceries, the biggest perk of working at The Grocer for me is managing our part-time employees. They're a highly eclectic bunch, varied in culture, life experience, extracurricular interests and maturity, but unified by the usual hallmarks of teenage awkwardness and the fact that this is their first real job. Watching them figure out what needs to be done and how to conduct themselves is sometimes hilarious, often frustrating, but always rewarding. You'll watch a kid who was so extremely shy flourish into an ongoing chatterbox (Evan Fletcher, that's you!) I try not to pick favourites, but Nigel, the creatine-fuelled lad who you'll find stocking the milk in his trademark gloves if you come shopping on Saturdays would definitely be considered one. Nigel's one weakness is his love of a good mac and cheese, so we sent him on a reconnaissance mission to the competitor a couple weeks ago and he informed us that their mac and cheese was watery, not near up to par with ours. I made up a Jalapeno and Bacon Mac and Cheese for Nigel after that, so he would never have to set foot in another grocery store and that's how this delicious smoky and slightly spicy creation was born. Reg. \$14.99/500g

ALL 25% OFF

## A NOTE ON PRODUCE & FOOD IN GENERAL...

I was so excited about featuring some killer produce for the ad when we decided on the Mexican theme because some of the fruit I ate was so jaw-droppingly good. Sadly, my plans of putting a cornucopia of tropical fruit on this week proved difficult as what I wanted to feature is a tad on the expensive side, and more importantly, not of the quality you'd expect from us. It's all over the news, plenty of headlines warning of impending shortages and ominous photos of empty grocery shelves. I thought I'd take the opportunity to comment on this to the best of my ability without getting political or referring to the suddenly hot button issue of truckers.

I never thought I'd find myself quoting a certain former president, but simply put, it's fake news! Every supplier I've talked to has assured me of this. Produce is always expensive this time of year as we have to rely on growing regions further away. In fact, the quality of what's coming to market has been markedly superior to a lot of the limp and maligned produce that we sometimes have to suffer through during January and February. The only difficulty is that the cost of transport has skyrocketed. Mandating vaccines for truck drivers crossing the border made it a headline, but the costs of getting a truck from Mexico or the southern States hit an all time high about a year ago and has hovered around there ever since. Deliveries are more erratic, a lot of stuff comes a day or so late, but that's about the extent of this 'crisis'.

Thinking ahead to Valentine's Day? Chef Kulam has curated a spectacular Valentine's Day Dinner for 2 which will be sure to impress that special someone in your life. The menu is now available on our website, check it out and give Chef Kulam a call to reserve yours. ♥

SPECIALS IN EFFECT FROM THURSDAY TO CLOSE, SUNDAY FEBRUARY 6

Store Hours: Monday - Friday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm | Sat. & Sun 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

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