

GRAND TOUR

Traveling Gourmet

HOOKED ON CHILES IN NEW MEXICO

By Diana von Welanetz Wentworth

CHOCOLATE LOWER ALERT! Eating chiles will release endorphins just like chocolate does! Husband Ted and I unearthed this little known fact while spending almost a week in the environs of Santa Fe. You can test this for yourself by ordering unique chile-spiked chocolate paté from Handwrought chocolates (www.chocolate-smith.com). You'll find hearts and other shapes and flavors of chocolate ganache dipped in colorful wax to create an arty presentation and preserve freshness. We plan to order plenty for holiday gifts this year.

What else did we discover? Here are our highlights for planning your own itinerary for a fun and flavorful adventure:

Be sure to stay at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya. You will fly to Albuquerque and drive halfway to Santa Fe, less than an hour, and only a few miles off the highway you'll be amazed at the sight of this hideaway surprise—truly an oasis—on 500 acres of protected land on the banks of the Rio Grande. Its outstanding amenities rank highest among the most picturesque and peaceful resorts we've found. Besides Twin Warriors Golf Club, a top golf course, and a full-service spa, its offerings include horseback rides and chuck wagons, hot air ballooning, tastings from an outdoor Native American bread oven, and in the evening, story time and S'mores. With outstanding customer service, this is the place for the whole family (www.tamaya.hyatt.com).

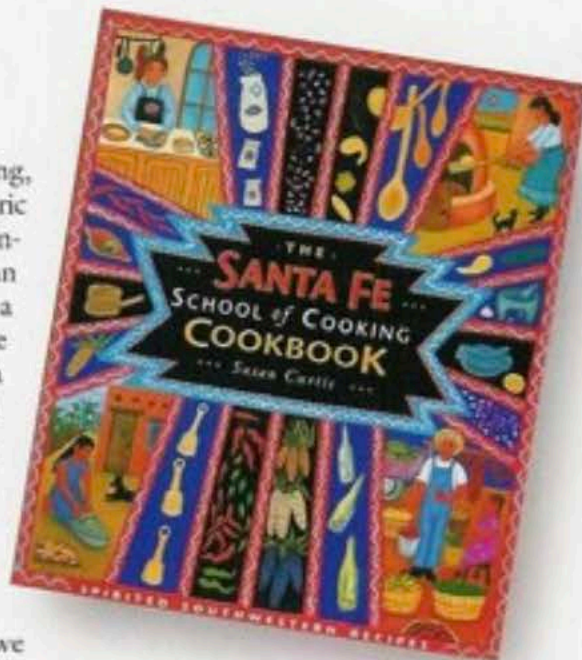
The Corn Maiden Restaurant alone is worth the trip to Tamaya. Begin dinner there with Southwestern Caesar Salad served in a Parmesan crust cup. Then dig into one of their rotisserie platters of skewered, spit-fired meats, fowl and fish accompanied by marinated grilled and roasted vegetables. Our favorite platter is the Land and Sea—Sweet and Sour Tuna, Soy and Orange Duck Breast (our favorite), Blackberry Rosemary Glazed Beef Rib Eye and Citrus Herb Shrimp. And, don't miss a look at the dessert tray—an array of the most imaginative you'll ever see.

Less than an hour north, Santa Fe beckons morning walkers to spend a few hours strolling along Canyon Road with its graceful cottonwood trees. (It was May we were there and lilacs and mimosa were in full bloom.) The earthy pink-toned adobe walls of the many galleries that line the street are festooned with ropes of chiles called ristras—they make the buildings as visually appealing as the art inside.

Before lunch, drive north another thirty minutes to visit El Santuario de Chimayo, a lovely little chapel known as the Lourdes of North America where many miracles have occurred. Enjoy lunch nearby at Rancho de Chimayo (505.351.4444), a restored, century-old adobe home serving traditional and contemporary native New Mexican cuisine. Ted raves over their Blue Corn Stacked Enchilada with both red and green chile sauces. All entrees are served with sopapillas—pillows of fried bread dough sprinkled with powdered sugar that you drizzle with honey. You can buy the Jaramillo family's historic cookbook, as well as a feast of Chimayo chile products through their Web site at www.chimayotogo.com.

In the early evening, stroll around the historic Santa Fe Plaza and window shop along San Francisco Street. Sip a Margarita on the rooftop of the La Fonda Hotel and you might have our luck of watching a sky turning deep navy blue and thunder storms gathering nearby. Soon in the midst of a hail storm, we watched a show of nature we'll never forget.

Try to fit in a cooking class in Santa Fe. Nancy Curtis, author of *The Santa Fe School of Cooking Cookbook*, and her daughter, Nicole Curtis Ammerman, run the school on San Francisco Street. Check out class schedules and their product catalogue at www.santafeschoolofcooking.com. In case you miss this treat, give those endorphins a lift with their perfect recipe for guacamole:



GUACAMOLE

From the *Santa Fe School of Cooking Cookbook* by Susan Curtis

For 3 cups:

- 3 ripe Hass avocados, about 6 ounces each
- 1/4 cup finely diced white onion
- 1/4 cup diced ripe plum tomatoes
- 2 to 3 tablespoons finely chopped Serrano chiles, to taste (jalapeno or roasted and peeled New Mexican chiles may be substituted)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 2 teaspoons coarse salt, to taste

Cut each avocado in half and remove the pit. Cut the halves in half and carefully peel off the black skin. Cut the quarters into chunks and place in a medium bowl. Mash the avocado with a fork and stir in the onion, tomatoes, chiles, and cilantro. Season the mixture with lime juice and salt. Keep covered with plastic wrap pressed against the surface of the guacamole until ready to serve. **GT**

*Diana von Welanetz Wentworth has enjoyed a career as an author of nine award-winning books and as a popular public speaker and television host. Her books include *Chicken Soup For The Soul Cookbook*, *The Pleasure Of Your Company* (winner of the French Tastemaker "Cookbook of the Year" award), *The Art of Buffet Entertaining*, *L.A. Cuisine*, and *Celebrations*. Diana@travelinggourmet.com.*

