

Naturally Healthy Mexican Cooking: Authentic Recipes for Dieters, Diabetics, and All Food Lovers

Jim Peyton

University of Texas Press (October 2014)

Hardcover \$24.95 (272pp)

978-0-292-74549-0

This clearly-laid-out cookbook is perfect for those who don't want to sacrifice taste for healthy choices—or vice versa.

Naturally Healthy Mexican Cooking: Authentic Recipes for Dieters, Diabetics, and All Food Lovers, by Jim Peyton, is a scrumptious book that proves that healthy living doesn't require a bare-bones diet.

After a brief but insightful introduction on health and the basic techniques and ingredients of Mexican cooking, the recipes take center stage. They're grouped by type—drinks, soups, poultry entrées, vegetarian entrées, desserts—making it easy to browse for ideas or to hunt down a meal in a hurry. Peyton gives readers insights alongside the recipes, from translations of Spanish recipe titles, to brief narrative descriptions of each recipe, to sidebars on key Mexican dishes like enchiladas. His tone is friendly and warm without being chatty or overly conversational; it has the feel of an expert food lover teaching a cooking class.

Each page keeps health in mind; it's trustworthy for people with diabetes or those just pursuing better health. Even the dessert section is health-focused—of the ten recipes, nine are under 200 calories, six are fat free, and three have twenty grams or fewer of sugar. Yet this book really is for food lovers, as the subtitle indicates. The dishes are decadent and varied, providing good options for all tastes and dietary needs—from classic recipes like corn tortillas and guacamole, to healthy meals like Tacos de Minilla de Pescado (tacos filled with minced fish) and grilled mangoes, to the staples of a life well enjoyed, such as Vuelta ala Vida (return to life), a traditional hangover remedy.

The recipes vary in difficulty and complexity, but all are accessible to the average home cook: specialized tools and methods are explained succinctly, and time investments are stated for busy dinner preparers. Some, like Grilled Prickly Pear Cactus, require ingredients that aren't available in all regions, but most, such as Olive Salsa and Carne Guisada (stewed beef), are easy to find everywhere. Each recipe includes the genre's staples (ingredient lists, thorough yet concise instructions, number of servings, etc.), but these health-conscious recipes also include detailed nutrition information, including not only calorie count but also amount of protein, carbohydrate, total and saturated fat, cholesterol, fiber, sugar, and sodium.

The cover design features an eye-catching cobalt blue pattern, which is beautiful but overshadows the small photographs of the food. There are seven pages of delicious, high-quality photos leading up to the introduction. The interior design is impeccable: the type size and style (boldface is used for lists of ingredients) as well as page layout (recipes are separated by horizontal lines) work together to make the information easy to reference while cooking.

This book will be valuable to anyone who loves cooking and eating south-of-the-border food—and doesn't want to sacrifice taste for healthy choices, or vice versa.

MELISSA WUSKE (Fall 2014)

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