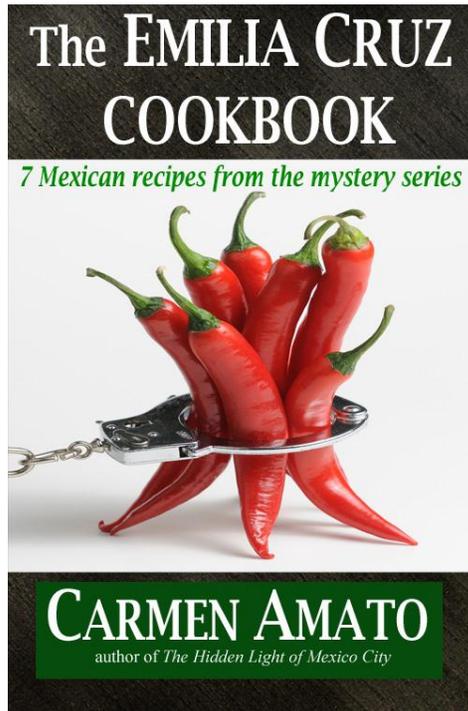


**“Special attention to authentic Mexican food . . .
[adds] an enjoyable layer to the fast moving plot.”**
Kirkus Reviews on CLIFF DIVER



Mexico’s rich gastronomic heritage is one of the joys of writing a mystery series set in the country.

The following 7 recipes have all made guest appearances in the Emilia Cruz novels.

It is my pleasure to share them with you.

All the best, *Carmen*

the Emilia Cruz series

CLIFF DIVER: An Emilia Cruz Novel

HAT DANCE: An Emilia Cruz Novel

DIABLO NIGHTS: An Emilia Cruz Novel

MADE IN ACAPULCO: The Emilia Cruz Stories

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Arroz Rojo

Emilia plunged the blistered tomato into a bowl of cold water, rubbed away the scorched skin, then began the process again with a second tomato. “Did she say why she wanted to talk to me?”

“Something about insurance.” Sophia began chopping a white onion.

“Did you give her my cell phone number?”

“Was I supposed to?” Sophia asked. “You didn’t tell me to.”

“I didn’t know she was coming.”

Sophia made a disapproving face as she minced the onion. “Then she should have told you.”

Emilia counted to ten in her head. “Yes, that would have been good. I guess I’ll have to call and see what she wanted.”

Sophia stirred rice and onions into the hot oil while Emilia chopped the peeled tomatoes. When the rice changed from opaque to transparent, Emilia added the tomatoes, cilantro, and chicken broth. While the *arroz rojo* cooked, Sophia took out three small *robelo* sea bass. Emilia was reminded of Pedro Montealegre’s office.

The stink of sardines and sadness. A sense of things struggling to remain hidden.

DIABLO NIGHTS

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup long grain white rice

1/3 cup finely chopped white onion

1 clove garlic, minced

2 1/2 cups chicken broth

2 roasted, peeled, and finely chopped plum tomatoes (squeeze out seeds and juice)

Salt and pepper to taste

1 finely diced jalapeno pepper

1 tablespoon Herdez salsa

1 sprig minced fresh cilantro

1. Brown the rice

Brown the garlic, onion, and rice in hot oil, stirring constantly. As soon as rice is transparent, add remaining ingredients.

2. Combine and cook

Cover and simmer on low heat, stirring occasionally, until broth is absorbed and rice is fluffy, about 20-25 minutes.

Ceviche with avocado and tomato

It had been six months since Emilia had seen the Pinkerton agent, but Alan Denton seemed much the same. He was a trim, swarthy man with sun-darkened skin and hooded eyes that gave him an Arab look.

He was already on the northeast corner of the park, paying a vendor for a cardboard cup of ceviche when Emilia strolled up. He didn't acknowledge her, just finished paying. She waited behind him as he got a napkin and a plastic fork. When he moved off Emilia bought a portion of the pickled fish and shrimp salad for herself.

She caught up with Denton as he sat on a bench. She sat down and opened her container and inhaled the fresh lime and cilantro of the marinade.

"So, Detective," Denton said without looking at her. He kept his attention on the container of ceviche in his hand. "A grand Friday night in Acapulco. Do we have unpleasant things to discuss?"

DIABLO NIGHTS

1/2 cup fresh lime juice

1 pound cooked shrimp (not canned)

1/2 medium white onion, finely chopped

1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus several sprigs for garnish

About 2 tablespoons olive oil, preferably extra-virgin (optional, but recommended to smooth out sharpness)

1 cup diced peeled cucumber

1 small ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and cubed

1 chopped plum tomato

Salt and pepper to taste

Lime slices for garnish

Tostadas or tortilla chips, store-bought or homemade or saltine crackers for serving

1. Marinate

Toss the shrimp with the lime juice, cover and refrigerate for about an hour.

2. Flavorings

In a small strainer, rinse the onion under cold water, then shake off

the excess liquid. Mix all ingredients with chilled shrimp. Cover and refrigerate if not serving immediately.

3. Serving suggestion

Spoon the ceviche into sundae glasses, martini glasses, or small bowls: garnish with sprigs of cilantro and slices of lime. Serve with tostadas, tortilla chips or saltines to enjoy alongside.

The ceviche is best made the day it is served. The flavorings can be added to the shrimp a few hours in advance.

Adapted from epicurious.com

Carnitas

The scent of the pork and tortillas was rich and reassuring. Emilia felt hunger and fatigue rush in to claim her as she took off her jacket and unbuckled her shoulder holster. The late encounter with the new detective had been a momentary diversion but now she realized how upsetting it had been to handle the rigid cadaver amid the swaying carcasses aboard the cruise ship. Hopefully, given that they had two suspects, the case could wrap up quickly. But she never liked to predict.

As a detective, she'd learned long ago that some weeks were an exercise in sleep deprivation. A week would start slow, like this one, with only one new case—if she didn't count Padre Pro—but speed up until the days stretched to 12, then 14, or 16 hours. And still the case would be retired to the files as unresolved and out of time.

Sophia put a plate on the table in front of her and Emilia gave a start, realizing that she'd all but fallen asleep as she sat there. The plate of *carnitas* looked enticing; soft, warm corn tortillas wrapped around pork that had been slow cooked and then fried until hot and crisp.

DIABLO NIGHTS

- 3 pounds boneless pork shoulder
- 2 tablespoons lard or vegetable oil
- 1 small chopped white onion
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 2 cups water
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 2 teaspoons Adobe seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

1. Prepping the meat

Cut meat into chunks. Heat lard or oil in a Dutch oven and brown the cubes evenly. Remove meat from pan. Add onion and garlic and brown. Return meat to pan.

2. Mix and heat

Add all ingredients except olive oil and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until meat is soft, about 2 hours. Remove lid and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until liquid is all absorbed.

3. Second cooking step

Remove meat from pan and shred, using two forks (spread out on cookie sheet or large cutting board.) Heat olive oil in large frying pan. When sizzling, drop in shredded pork to make a thin layer. Fry for 5 minutes or until pork is crisp.

4. Serving suggestion

Serve in warm tortillas with lime wedges, salsa fresca, sliced avocado and/or salsa verde.

Salsa Fresca

The salsa was already on the table. Emilia ladled a spoonful onto the beans and proceeded to inhale the food.

Sophia sat down across from her. For several minutes neither spoke as Emilia ate. Then Sophia folded her hands and said, “I think I should speak to this boy’s parents, Emilia.”

Emilia nearly choked on a bite. “Mama, we’ve been over this before,” she said after getting the food down. “Kurt is not a boy from school. He’s grown. I’m grown. We like to spend time together on the weekends when we’re not working. If you ever need me, I’m only a phone call away.”

DIABLO NIGHTS

2-3 medium sized fresh tomatoes (from 1 lb to 1 1/2 lb), stems removed, finely diced

1/2 white onion, finely diced

1 jalapeño chili pepper (stems, ribs, seeds removed), finely diced, or 1 can chopped jalapenos

1 serrano chili pepper (stems, ribs, seeds removed), finely diced (optional)

Juice of one lime

1/2 cup chopped cilantro

1/2 teaspoon Adobo seasoning

Salt and pepper to taste

1. Chop and combine

Combine all of the ingredients in a medium sized bowl. Let sit for an hour for the flavors to combine.

Sophia's Albondigas de Camarones *Shrimp Meatballs*

The chopped tomatoes and onions sizzling in an iron frying pan would become the base of the *caldillo* broth for the meatballs. The smell was rich, and as Emilia stirred the mixture she felt a sense of normalcy that had been missing since the night at the El Tigre.

Sophia kissed her daughter's cheek as she tied an apron behind Emilia's back. "You never cook with me, Emilia," Sophia said. "This is nice."

Emilia poked at the mixture in the pan with a wooden spoon as Sophia poured hot water from a saucepan into a bowl of dried *ancho* chilies. Fragrant steam rose as the chilies absorbed the moisture. "Mama," Emilia said. "What if I had a boyfriend?"

HAT DANCE

Sauce:

1 lb tomatoes
2-3 chile serrano
1 clove garlic, peeled
salt and pepper to taste

Albondigas:

1 lb uncooked shrimp, shelled and deveined
1 egg
1/2 cup bread crumbs
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
salt and pepper to taste
corn oil for frying

1. Make the sauce

Lightly coat with oil and heat. Add the whole tomatoes and chiles, and roast them until they have blackened in a few places. Remove from the heat, peel and core the tomatoes, cut in half and remove the seeds. Remove the tops of the chiles.

Place the tomatoes and chiles in a food processor, and add the clove of garlic. Process until the sauce is smooth. Pour the sauce in to a small skillet, and bring to a simmer, reducing the liquid (about 10 minutes.) Set the sauce aside while you prepare the albondigas.

2. Shrimp mixture

Place the uncooked shrimp in a food processor, and pulse until the shrimp become a chunky paste. Alternatively, chop finely with very sharp knife. Using a rubber spatula, transfer the shrimp paste to a mixing bowl. Add the egg, bread crumbs, cilantro, salt and pepper. Stir to combine well. The mixture will thicken slightly once the bread crumbs have absorbed some moisture.

3. Fry the meatballs

Add approximately 1” of corn oil to a 10” skillet, and heat on the stove. Once it is hot, form walnut sized balls with the shrimp mixture, and carefully place in the hot oil. The albondigas are a bit delicate, so turn them very carefully when cooking. Fry one side until the shrimp turns pink, about 3 minutes, and then flip to the other side for another 3 minutes.

4. Serving suggestion

Remove the cooked albondiga from the hot oil, and drain on paper toweling. Serve hot with the sauce, alongside arroz rojo.

From melissaguerra.com

Pescado Empapelado ***Corvina cooked in foil***

“I don’t know.” Emilia shoved her sunglasses into her hair as the proprietor slung down two plates laden with food. “The timing is wrong. *El teniente* died on a Tuesday and the girls said they only saw him on Sundays. I don’t think they were lying.”

They were at a tiny *loncheria* near the fishing docks on Avenida Azueta, sitting at one of three tiny outdoor tables. Both had plates of rice, salsa, and *pescado empapelado*; marinated fish wrapped in foil and grilled by the sweaty proprietor. Emilia pulled apart the foil packet, taking care to keep her fingertips away from the billow of lemony steam. The whole fish lay nestled inside the packet, fragrant with citrus and tomato, the fish’s mouth open wide as if in surprise.

CLIFF DIVER

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 (6-ounce) corvine fillets (also called sea bass or striped bass)
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 lemons, cut into thin circles
- 2 garlic cloves, very thinly sliced
- 3 chopped plum tomatoes
- 1 1/2 tablespoons drained bottled capers

1. Prepare fillets

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 400°F. Line a large baking sheet with foil, then drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil.

Pat fish dry and sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper. Arrange fillets in single layer in center of foil on baking sheet and slide 2 lemon slices under each fillet.

2. Prepare topping

Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a 10-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté garlic, stirring occasionally, until pale golden, about 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and a pinch of salt and sauté, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes are softened, about 1 minute. Stir in capers.

Spoon hot tomato mixture over fish, add more slices of lemon, then cover with another sheet of foil, tenting it slightly over fish. Crimp edges to seal.

3. Bake

Bake fish 15 -20 minutes (depending on thickness of fish); check by removing from oven and carefully lifting up a corner of top sheet of foil, pulling up sides of bottom sheet to keep liquid from running out. If fish is not cooked through, reseal foil and continue to bake, checking every 3 minutes.

4. Serving suggestion

Transfer fillets with lemon slices to plates using a spatula (be careful not to tear foil underneath) and spoon tomatoes and juices over top. Serve immediately.

Adapted from epicurious.com

The Pasodoble Mojito

“Did he confess?” Kurt asked.

“He hasn’t said anything,” Emilia said. She jiggled her straw down around the ice cubes and crushed mint leaves in the bottom of her *mojito*. “No confession, no alibi. Won’t say where he was last Saturday night. Macario Urbina’s office sent a lawyer, but he hasn’t said anything either.”

“I don’t usually jump to conclusions, but that looks bad to me.” Kurt finished his own *mojito* and took a nut from the bowl on the table.

“If it wasn’t him, where’s his alibi?” Emilia raised her hands in pretended exasperation. “Maybe they need to put Silvio in with him for a couple of hours.”

Kurt laughed. “That bad, eh?”

Emilia had to smile. “Well, only sometimes.”

To her surprise, Silvio had not said anything to Lt. Rufino about her panic Thursday at the demonstration. Nor had he lectured her again. Silvio had actually been quiet on Friday after the morning meeting, as if he’d known he had pushed *el teniente* as far as the new lieutenant could go.

“The only bad part of this is that Carlota is going to start talking about her damned Olympics again,” Kurt said.

Emilia laughed. The *mojito* was cold and sweet, but not cloying, the lime and mint adding just the right double shots of zest. It was as if the Palacio Réal’s bartenders knew exactly what she’d needed.

HAT DANCE

1 1/2 oz white rum
1 1/2 cups club soda
12 mint leaves
juice from 1/2 lime
1 tbsp sugar

1. Place mint leaves, lime juice, and sugar in bottom of a tall glass. “Muddle” the mixture together, crushing the mint leaves, with a long spoon or wooden spatula.
2. Add ice, rum, and top with club soda. Stir well and garnish with a lime wedge and sprig of mint.

Adapted from Bacardi’s rumtherapy.com