



BITE by BITE

Conquering My Culinary Bucket List One Dish at a Time

By Emily Banks Wooten

“We’ll fling our green and gold afar to light the ways of time ...”

— From “That Good Old Baylor Line,” the Baylor University school song



A Taste of Oaxaca

A Mother’s Day weekend to remember

We

had a tremendous Mother’s Day weekend. We traveled to Waco to attend the opening night celebration gala at Art Center Waco for “Oaxacan Gold-Illuminating Mystical Mexico,” a multimedia, fully-immersive art and cultural experience curated by our friend, Greg Davis, an esteemed National Geographic contributing photographer and Livingston High School and Baylor University Alumnus. The exhibit featured 35 limited edition photographs of Greg’s, as well as five other different mediums of folk art by master Mexican artists.

It was a glorious evening and a feast for the senses. We were treated to cultural dances performed by the 20-member dance company, Ballet Folklorico de Austin. It was mesmerizing watching the timeless classic folk dances performed by the men and women and their colorful costumes were truly a feast for the eyes.

We were treated to “A Taste of Oaxaca,” which was Oaxacan food prepared by El Alebrije, an Oaxacan restaurant in Houston, and ChefATX, a private chef from Austin. The menu included:

- Picaditas - your choice of vegetarian refried beans, green salsa or red salsa garnished with Mexican crema, queso fresco, cilantro;
- Tostadas De Chapulines - guacamole, queso fresco, crickets on corn tortilla;
- Ceviche - shrimp, chile de arbol, red onion, cucumber radish, verdolagas, plantain chip;
- Yique - goat, maize, chile de guajillo, chile de arbol, chile de puya, avocado leaves;
- Tostadas De Mole - chicken, mole, sesame seeds, on corn tortilla; and
- Tamales De Mole - chicken, mole, masa, lard.

Yes, you read that correctly. We ate tostadas de chapulines which are tostadas topped with crickets. If you’ve read “Bite by Bite” for any length of time then you’ve surely figured out by now that I’m quite adventurous when it comes to food and drink. I’ll try just about anything once or twice. And fortunately, Hubby and Daughter are just as adventurous as I am when it comes to the palate. In all honesty, the crickets weren’t bad. We didn’t know what to expect going in, but I think it’s safe to say that presented



with the opportunity in the future, we’d probably try them again.

Another highlight of the evening was experiencing “The Spirit of Oaxaca,” which were mezcal tastings provided by Mezcal Vago and Wahaka Mezcal. I knew a little about mezcal, but not a lot. I’ve since learned quite a bit more. Basically, all tequilas are mezcals, but not all mezcals are tequilas. In other words, tequila is a type of mezcal, much like how scotch and bourbon are types of whiskey.

Mezcal is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from any type of maguey or agave. Agaves or magueys are endemic to Mexico and found globally. More than 70% of mezcal is made in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, but is nowadays produced and commercialized all around the country, growing in the

national and international market, according to Erich Lagasse. For certified mezcal, the agave name is referring to the scientific name for the plant. The local names that are often used in various mezcal communities are known as maguey. Trying several samples of the mezcal that evening, we discovered that just like anything else, there were some we liked and some we didn’t.

Greg’s photography exhibit of his time in Oaxaca, however, was the pièce de résistance of the evening. His work is beautiful and thought-provoking and he has the uncanny ability to tell stories through his camera lens. His work is amazing and if you’re not already familiar with it, then check it out at <https://gregdavisphotography.com/>.

We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and especially enjoyed

connecting with Greg, meeting his lovely girlfriend Amy, and visiting with his mother Sara, sister Diana and niece Taylor.

Funnily enough, we ran into them all the following morning when we arrived at Milo, an airy, rustic-chic eatery serving up seasonal Southern comfort food. I’d read about the place and knew it had won a number of awards, but had never been there and was looking forward to trying it. Being it was Mother’s Day, I had had the forethought to call several days ahead and make reservations. I’m so glad I did, as those who didn’t faced a wait time of an hour and 45 minutes. Anyway, we walked in and were seated and Sara, Greg’s mother, came over to greet us. Just a few tables over, their party had just finished their Mother’s Day brunch and were about to leave.

Hubby ordered Hot Chicken Tacos, which consisted of Nashville hot chicken tenders, special sauce, chow chow and queso cotija on flores tortillas and a side of breakfast potatoes. Daughter ordered the Buddy Holly which was two eggs any style, choice of meat, spicy potatoes, choice of toast or biscuit, butter and jam or bacon gravy. She selected her eggs over easy with bacon, biscuit and bacon gravy.

Having studied the brunch menu for days in advance, I knew exactly what I was going to order – Smoked Pork Chilaquiles, which consisted of chile rojo, tostadas, queso cotija, fried egg, refried beans and avocado crema and a side of pimento cheese grits.

We all enjoyed our brunch tremendously and can’t wait to go back. Milo is located at 1020 Franklin Ave. in Waco, Texas. Jonathan, our capable waiter, was a gem -- warm, engaging and knowledgeable.

Evidently we selected the hot, hip place for Mother’s Day brunch. Not only did we run into Greg and his party coming in, but we also ran into Dr. Linda Livingstone, the president of Baylor University, my alma mater, and her husband and daughter, as we were leaving. Hubby and Daughter headed to the parking lot but I insisted on going over and speaking to her briefly. She was just as lovely and gracious as when I previously met her at the 2018 Baylor Fling, a biennial ladies event. ■