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WHERE TO SIP SUMMER COCKTAILS // FAMILY FUN ON DAD'S DAY
// SCENIC ROAD TRIP ALONG HIGHWAY 1 // DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO



MAY/JUNE 2015

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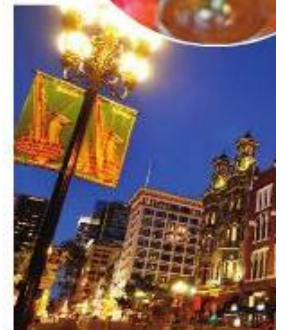
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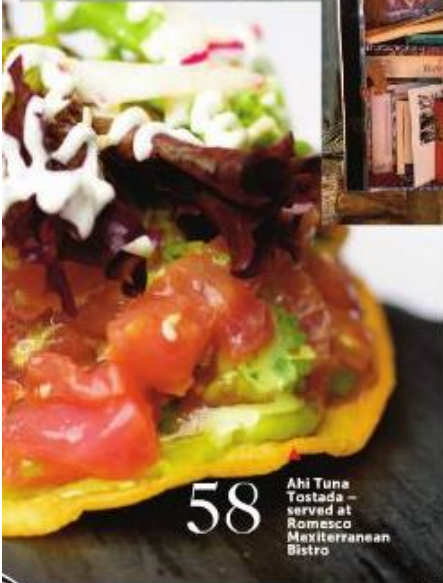
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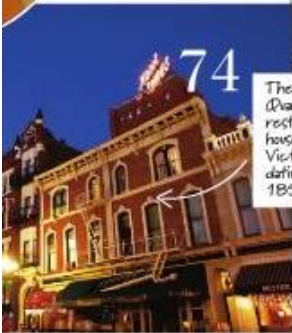
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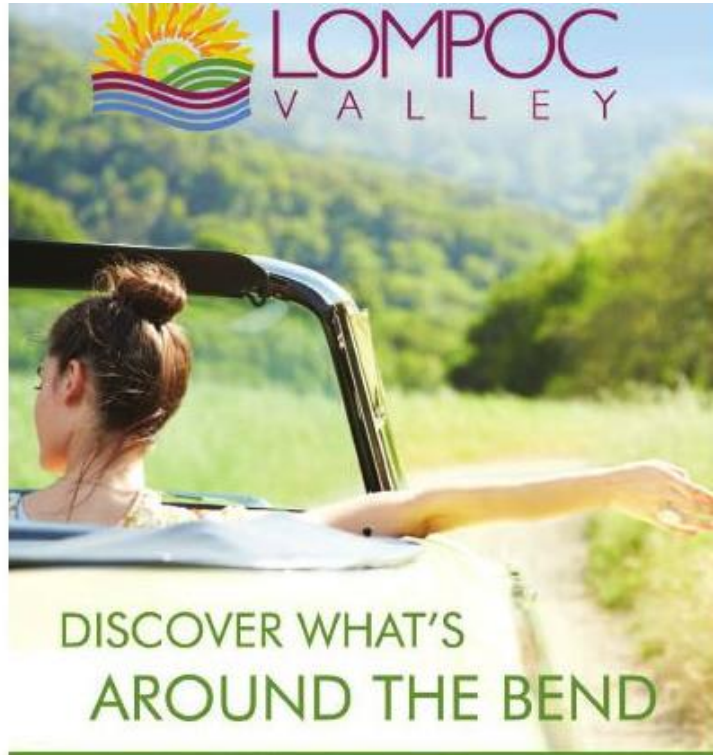


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The Guslamp Quarter's shops and restaurants are housed in restored Victorian buildings dating back to the 1850s.



ON THE COVER



DISCOVER WHAT'S AROUND THE BEND



EXPLORE Country Roads

Nestled in a flower-filled valley, surrounded by lush Sta. Rita hills and vineyards, Lompoc awaits!



TASTE Our Wines

Discover Lompoc's Old Town murals, fully restored mission, exceptional wines, and outdoor pursuits.



TOUR La Purisima Mission



CHEF JAVIER PLASCENCIA SERVES UP CUISINE THAT KNOWS NO BORDERS

BY LYNN MORGAN

Javier Plascencia effortlessly inhabits two different worlds, overseeing a growing restaurant empire on both sides of the US/Mexico border. For 10 years, he has run the acclaimed Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro in the San Diego suburb of Bonita, serving up a fusion of Mexican and Mediterranean flavors in a casual, yet elegant bistro atmosphere. On the other side of the border, the Plascencia family is renowned for their string of family-owned restaurants which have helped transform Tijuana and Ensenada into destinations for adventurous gastronomers.

As famous for the warmth of their hospitality as they are for their cuisine, Plascencia is proud to carry on and expand the family legacy with his new San Diego restaurant, Bracero: Cocina de Raiz, opening in the spring in Little Italy.

"San Diego is my second home," Plascencia explains. "I'm really looking forward to introducing these flavors to the city."

The flavors Plascencia has in mind take diners beyond

the typical tortillas, guacamole and spiced mystery meat that often passes as Mexican food. "A lot of people don't know Mexico or Mexican food," he says with a touch of sadness. "There are a lot of people who have never been there, never experienced it. I want them to be able to taste the authentic flavors of Mexico. Mexican food varies a lot from one region to another: the styles of cooking, the techniques are different, and of course, the ingredients are different in different regions. The cuisine of Baja is very fresh and innovative, and people love it, especially young people who are just beginning to learn about food and wine and want to experience new tastes."

Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro Exterior



Salt Crusted and Baked Bone Marrow with Charred Octopus - will be served at Bracero Cocina de Raiz



Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro Interior

Plascencia is dedicated to honoring and preserving the best traditions of Baja-style Mexican cuisine. He will serve fresh local fish and seafood at Bracero, along with produce from local farms, and all of his tortillas (corn, flour or blue corn) will be freshly hand-made. "There is no comparison between a fresh, hand-crafted tortilla and the commercial kind. My tortillas will taste totally different from the ones that come in a plastic package from the supermarket!" he insists with a laugh.

He finds there is good will towards Mexican food all over California, as well as the rest of the Southwest and beyond. He credits some famous American

chefs for spreading the message that there is much more to Mexican cuisine than breakfast burritos and *chalupas*. "Microwave burritos make me sick!" he states flatly. "Guys like Rick Bayless and Anthony Bourdain love Mexican food, and they have traveled to Baja, sampled the cuisine. They've really helped to introduce people to this cuisine, and their enthusiasm has encouraged people to taste it for themselves."

Plascencia is a powerful ambassador for the cuisine he loves. He is friendly and unpretentious, and passionate about food. He loves to talk about food, its role in culture and sociology almost as much as he loves to cook. He has appeared on the hit TV show "The Taste" alongside such food world mega-stars as Nigella Lawson, Ludo Lefebvre and Anthony Bourdain, as

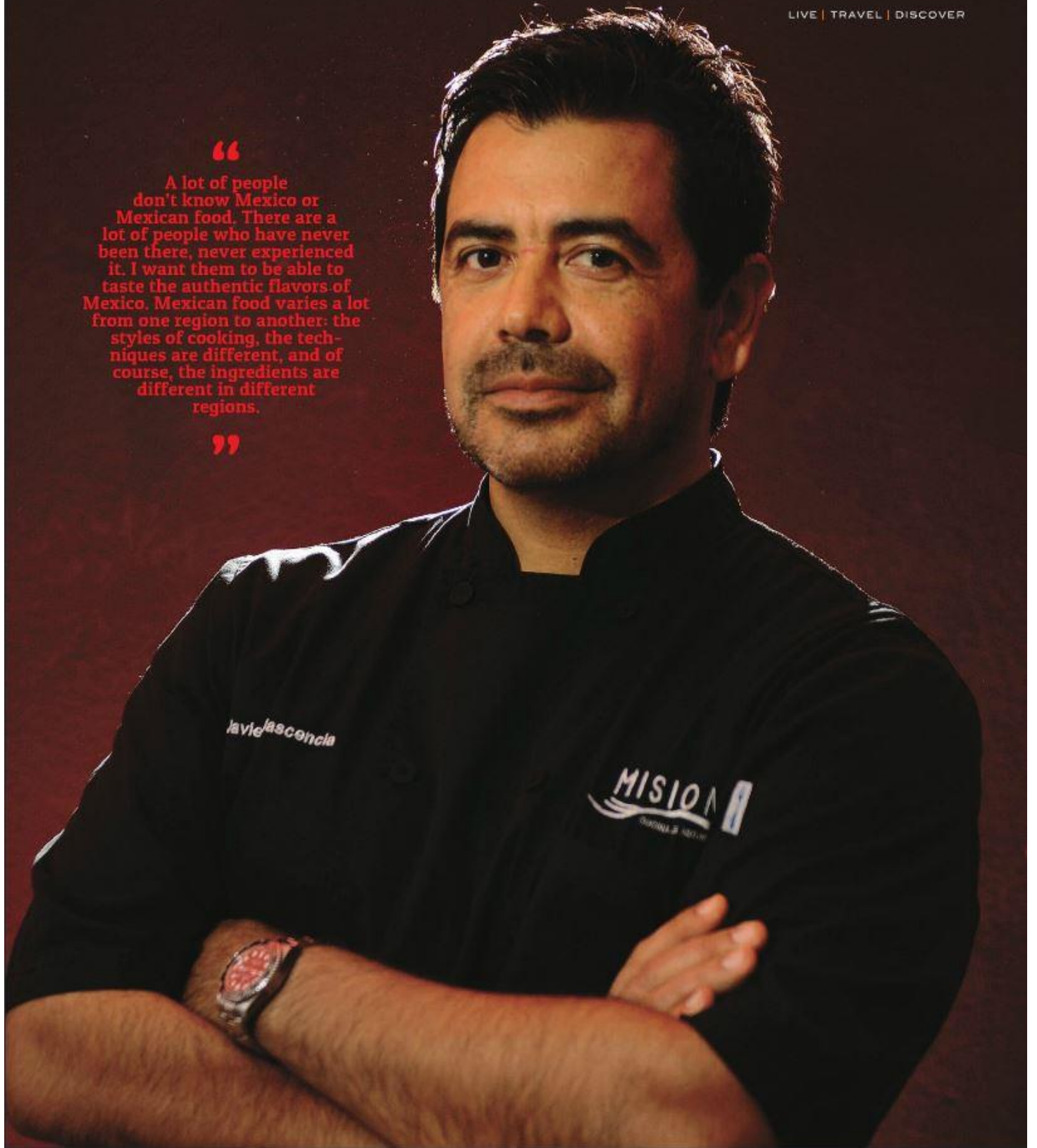
Seafood Paella - served at Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro



“

A lot of people don't know Mexico or Mexican food. There are a lot of people who have never been there, never experienced it. I want them to be able to taste the authentic flavors of Mexico. Mexican food varies a lot from one region to another: the styles of cooking, the techniques are different, and of course, the ingredients are different in different regions.

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JAVIER PLASCENCIA

a guest judge for the Latin cooking segment. But his most important role is as chef and host.

"Our father taught my brothers and me the restaurant business," Plascencia recalls. "We are the second generation of our family to work in restaurants. I hope our kids will be the third! The most important thing I learned from my father was how to make people feel welcome, to allow them to enjoy their food, and feel that they have had a wonderful experience and want to return."

Bracero represents a substantial gamble for Plascencia. The restaurant business is unpredictable, and he is doubling down with this new venture. It will be large, seating over 180 people at full capacity, and it will be unfamiliar. Some of the things he plans for the Bracero menu will be challenging for timid diners.

"I'm going crazy with my menus!" he laughs. "I have so many recipes I want to include, I don't want to stop. The menu will change with the seasons. It will even change daily, depending on what's available from the farmer's market. We will work very closely with the

local farmers. We're very lucky to have such easy access to so much wonderful, fresh produce."

First-time visitors to Bracero will be surprised, possibly shocked, and hopefully delighted by the exotic flavors in Plascencia's cuisine. He plans to serve kale tamales, fresh masa, octopus and bone marrow tacos. "We're going to serve a lot of offal meats; tripe, and beef cheek tacos," he says.

The spacious, two-story restaurant was designed by the architectural firm, Bells and Whistles. Plascencia took the designers on a Mexican tour to introduce them to the country and to help them understand the look and feel he wanted for Bracero: *Cocina de Raíz*. They purchased flooring for the project in Mexico, and bought chairs from local artisans, but Plascencia wasn't interested in a mall version of Mexico, some sort of *faux hacienda*. Instead, the architects created a contemporary space for him, a

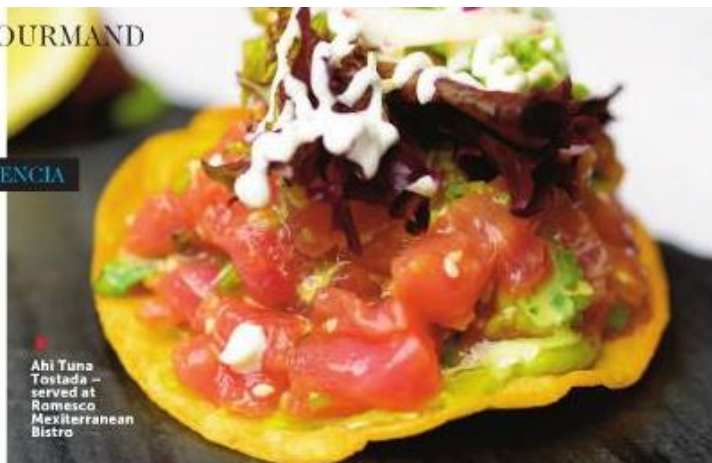
modern Mexican bistro.

Downstairs, the bar and oyster bar will be open for lunch, serving small plates, tapas and appetizers. "It will be very casual," Plascencia explains. "Places to have a drink, a light meal, relax with friends. The raw bar will serve oysters, clams, *ceviche*, and *tiritos* – a Peruvian version of sashimi."

Upstairs, the mood will be more formal. Plascencia will be in the kitchen, producing more elaborate, complicated dishes.

"We're telling a story with this restaurant," he reflects. "We're paying tribute to the *braceros* that came here to work in the fields; some of them eventually bought vineyards in Napa and became winemakers. They are an important part of California's history and we want to honor them."

"I want people to experience authentic flavors," he insists. "I want them to be fearless, willing to taste new things. That's my mission." ♦



Ahi Tuna Tostada – served at Romesco Mediterranean Bistro



Roadside Ahi Tuna Tostada

Recipe courtesy of Executive Chef Javier Plascencia

Serves 1

Ingredients:

- 1 tostada
- 1/4 cup of ahi tuna cut in squares
- 1 oz. lemon juice
- 1 cup of fine cut cilantro
- 2 oz. ponzu
- 1/4 cup of guacamole
- 1/4 cup spring mixed greens
- 1 oz. fresh cream
- 1 oz. habanero cream sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon of sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon of radish cut in strips

Ingredients for Habanero Cream Sauce:

- 2 cups cream cheese
- 1 1/2 cups of milk
- 1 3/4 cups of cilantro
- 1.5 oz habanero peppers
- 1 tablespoon of chicken stock
- 3/4 teaspoon of ground black pepper

Directions for Habanero Cream Sauce:

1. Fry habanero peppers until golden brown.
2. Blend all ingredients (cheese, milk, cilantro, chicken stock, habanero peppers and pepper) in a mixer.

Directions Ahi Tuna Tostada:

1. Mix and prepare ahi tuna, lemon juice, cilantro and ponzu in a small bowl.
2. Cover one side of the tostada in guacamole.
3. Cover tostada with prepared ahi tuna mix.
4. Add spring mix greens and strips of radish on top.
5. Add cream and habanero sauce on top and sprinkle with a pinch of sesame seeds.



Renderings of Bracero Cocina de Raíz