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Explore Innovative and Authentic Mayan Cuisine at These Resorts

February 1, 2019 By Diana Spechler, Contributor

These chefs are using flavors and cooking styles from the ancient Mayan Empire



The Mayan civilization, which dominated Mesoamerica for about 2,700 years, disappeared somewhat mysteriously around A.D. 900, leaving behind not just artifacts — jade treasures, calendars, pottery — but also a long cultural tradition that includes delicious gastronomy. Thanks to a growing interest in authenticity, simple ingredients, and local sourcing, [Mayan flavors](#) (built from staples such as [chocolate](#), corn, squash, and beans) are having a moment.

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“The new generation wants to learn the old techniques,” chef Eduardo Gonzalez of Casa Palopo in Guatemala tells The Daily Meal. “Probably thanks to Netflix. ‘Chef’s Table.’ Social media, too. It’s a good thing. To know where you’re going, you have to know where you came from.”



To be sure, the quest for authenticity is rooted in a reverence for the past. Through that lens, Mayan cooking, as a trend, makes a lot of sense. “What makes Mayan food so unique and authentic,” Mely Martinez of [Mexico In My Kitchen](#) shares with us, “is that it has kept its original flavors and cooking styles since the ancient times of the Mayan Empire. The Mayans’ descendants flourished in deep tropical jungle that remained unknown to the Spanish conquistadors. Then France invaded Mexico in the mid-19th century, but their influence didn’t reach the [Mayan Peninsula](#) in the same way it reached other regions of Mexico, either. As a result, Mayan cuisine is almost the same today as it was back then.”

Many high-end hotel chefs working in old Mayan stomping grounds are honoring the rich histories of their surroundings. At the hotels on this list, chefs are doing creative and interesting things with Mayan dishes — elevating and presenting them in their simplest, freshest form.

Chablé Resort (Yucatan, Mexico)



Chablé Resort

Nowhere is Mayan culture more alive than on the Yucatán Peninsula of [Mexico](#) where the Spanish language is peppered with Mayan words, where if you hang out with locals, you'll eventually wind up eating Mayan food in their homes. And no trip to the region is complete without a stay at idyllic [Chablé Resort](#), a luxury hacienda hidden away in the forest. Hop on the resort's bikes to check out the chef's sprawling herb garden, then head over to the Mayan food demonstration given by a local mother-daughter team, Eneidal Quital López (the mom) and Brenda Gonzalez Quintal (the daughter), who will teach you how to make *conchinita pibil* by cooking it underground, bound in leaves.