



A VERY

GOOD

NIGHT

The fun-loving crew at Miami's Tinta y Café celebrate Noche Buena with a lush Cuban American feast

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**SPEND
 ENOUGH TIME
 IN MIAMI
 AND THE CITY
 CAN START
 TO FEEL
 LIKE AN
 EXTENSION
 OF CUBA.**
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Malu Statz, Elizabeth Jaime, and friend Mikayla Kim celebrate Noche Buena in Miami.

That's certainly how it felt for me. Even though I was born in the States, my first words were in Spanish (although I'll admit my language skills are pretty terrible these days) and the only way I could convince my Cuban mom to throw me a sweet 16 party was if I agreed to let her take traditional quinceañera photos. When it came to the end-of-year holidays, sure, we had Thanksgiving and Christmas, but the most important one was Noche Buena.

Literally translating to "good night," Noche Buena is a celebratory feast that happens annually on Christmas Eve. The parties can vary based on which culture you call your own, but all have the same underlying themes: eating, drinking, and spending quality time with family. When I was growing up, dishes like lechón (roasted pork) and congrí (black beans and rice) were holiday staples, though there was always someone brave enough to bring an off-the-cuff dish—like that time I decided to make a kale Caesar no one over the age of 25 touched. When I lived in New York City, I'd spend the days leading up to the 24th on the phone, asking my grandmother a million questions about her lechón recipe while figuring out how to squeeze a 10-person table into my tiny apartment and still leave space for post-dinner dancing.

Upon moving back to Miami in 2019, I was excited to find a new crop of Cuban cafes. These places reminded me of the food my family makes but also felt new and different in all the right ways. One of them in particular, Tinta y Café, caught my eye for its updated riffs on Cuban classics—and just how much fun the staff seemed to be having. Started by sister and brother Neli and Rafael Santamarina, Tinta has since grown to include Neli's daughters, Sachi and Malu; Rafael's son, Carlos, who took over operations with Malu after Rafael passed away; and culinary director Victor Santos. The tight-knit group of people has created the kind of place where you want to sit for hours, chatting over iced café con leche and croquetas. So of course I needed to find out how they celebrated Noche Buena.

Turns out it's pretty similar to the way I celebrate. Dinnertime is always set, yet no one really arrives until an hour later. The lechón, marinated in a mojo of spices, garlic, and sour orange juice, is crisp on the outside and juicy within. Music is always playing in the background—a mix of current Latin hits, American pop songs, and traditional salsa—and eventually someone will get tipsy enough to start dancing alone until everyone follows. Tinta y Café's holiday



menu features playful spins on classic recipes passed down through the generations, from black beans cooked with bacon and sausage for maximum richness to vanilla bean flan made both tangy and lush with the unexpected addition of cream cheese.

Just like my family, the Tinta team holds fast to old traditions while simultaneously creating new ones. And then, they party.



**CITRUSY ARUGULA
 SALAD WITH FENNEL
 AND PARMESAN**
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AROMATIC WHITE RICE

TINTA'S DOUBLE-PORK BLACK BEANS

CITRUSY ARUGULA SALAD WITH FENNEL AND PARMESAN
6-8 SERVINGS

Showcase best-in-season citrus with this elegant salad featuring licorice-y fennel and peppery arugula tossed in a bright, tangy mustard dressing. Using a variety of oranges really makes the salad pop visually.

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp. finely grated Parmesan, plus shaved for serving
- 2 tsp. honey
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- 6 mixed oranges (such as Cara Cara, blood, and navel)
- 1 medium fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 5 oz. arugula

Whisk oil, lemon juice, mustard, grated Parmesan, and honey in a medium bowl until emulsified. Season dressing with salt and pepper.

Using a small knife, remove peel and white pith from oranges; cut crosswise into ¼"-thick rounds. Combine oranges, fennel, red onion, and arugula in a large bowl. Pour dressing over and toss to coat. Taste and season with more salt if needed.

Arrange salad on a platter. Top with shaved Parmesan; season with pepper.

TINTA'S DOUBLE-PORK BLACK BEANS
6-8 SERVINGS

Tinta's twist on Cuban black beans dials up the flavor by doubling down on the cured pork. Smoky bacon and spicy Spanish chorizo, along with lots of aromatics, make for a pot of beans worthy of any special occasion.

- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 oz. cured Spanish chorizo, preferably chorizo Cantimpalo, chopped
- 4 oz. bacon (about 4 slices), chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, ribs and seeds removed, finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 Tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp. ground coriander
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 quart low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 15-oz. cans black beans
- 1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high. Cook chorizo and bacon, stirring often, just until some fat has cooked out, about 5 minutes. Add bell pepper, onion, garlic, bay leaf, oregano, coriander, and cumin. Cook, stirring often, until onion is beginning to soften, about 4 minutes.

Add broth and black beans and their liquid. Bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits stuck to bottom of pot with a wooden spoon. Reduce heat and simmer until liquid is slightly thickened and flavors have melded, 25-30 minutes. Stir in vinegar. Taste and season with salt and pepper if needed. Transfer to a large bowl.

AROMATIC WHITE RICE
6-8 SERVINGS

Cooked with onion, garlic, and chicken broth, this rice is ideal for pairing with black beans and roast pork and packs plenty of flavor on its own.

- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. Diamond Crystal or ½ tsp. Morton kosher salt
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 cups long-grain white rice, rinsed
- 4½ cups low-sodium chicken broth

Heat oil in a heavy medium saucepan over medium. Add onion, garlic, and salt. Cook, stirring often, until onion is softened, 5-7 minutes. Add bay leaf and rice; cook, stirring, until grains are coated in oil, about 30 seconds.

Pour in broth and stir once. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed, 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat, uncover, and let sit to allow excess moisture to evaporate, 5-10 minutes.

Fluff rice with a fork; pluck out and discard bay leaf. Transfer to a shallow bowl to serve.



MOJO ROAST PORK AND GRAVY

6-8 SERVINGS

Traditionally made from bitter oranges, olive oil, and garlic, mojo is a classic Cuban sauce that is both bright and savory. Here mojo stars as a marinade, a cooking liquid, and a gravy base for slow-cooked pork shoulder. If you can't find bitter oranges, equal parts orange juice and lime juice will do the trick.

PORK

- 1 7-8-lb. skinless bone-in pork shoulder (Boston butt or picnic)
- 4 Tbsp. Diamond Crystal or 2 Tbsp. plus 2 tsp. Morton kosher salt
- 2 Tbsp. dried oregano
- 2 Tbsp. freshly ground pepper
- 2 Tbsp. garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp. ground cumin

MARINADE

- 1 large bunch cilantro, leaves and stems coarsely chopped
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup fresh bitter orange juice (from 5-7) or ½ cup fresh orange juice plus ½ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. Diamond Crystal or 1 Tbsp. plus ½ tsp. Morton kosher salt

GRAVY AND ASSEMBLY

- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
- 8 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 Tbsp. whole grain or Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp. ground coriander
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- ½ cup fresh bitter orange juice (from 2-3) or ¼ cup fresh orange juice plus ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper

PORK Pat pork dry with paper towels and place fat side up in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot. Mix salt, oregano, pepper, garlic powder, and cumin in a small bowl to combine. Rub pork all over with spice mixture.

MARINADE Purée cilantro, oil, bitter orange juice, lime juice, and salt in a blender until smooth. Pour marinade over pork. Cover and let sit at room temperature at least 1½ hours or, preferably, chill up to 12 hours. If chilling, let sit at room temperature 30 minutes before cooking.

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 250°. Cover pot with lid or foil (crimped tightly). Transfer to oven and bake pork until fork-tender, 5-7 hours. Uncover pot and increase oven temperature to 350°. Roast until pork is well browned and flesh shreds easily with a fork, 30-45 minutes. Transfer to a platter and let rest at least 30 minutes.

GRAVY AND ASSEMBLY While the pork is resting, stir drippings in pot and measure out 1 cup. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a small bowl; set aside.

Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high. Cook shallots and garlic, stirring often, until beginning to soften,

about 2 minutes. Stir in bay leaf, mustard, coriander, and cumin. Pour in bitter orange juice and bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits stuck to bottom of pan with a wooden spoon. Cook, stirring often, until liquid is reduced by half, about 2 minutes. Add broth and reserved drippings and bring to a boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, 7-10 minutes.

Stir cream into gravy and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until gravy is thick enough to coat a spoon, 10-15 minutes. Stir in butter. Taste and season with salt and pepper if needed.

Serve pork with gravy alongside.



MOJO ROAST PORK AND GRAVY





THE CREAMIEST
VANILLA BEAN FLAN



**THE CREAMIEST
VANILLA BEAN FLAN**
6-8 SERVINGS

Tangy cream cheese heightens the creaminess of this decadent flan while adding just enough structure to make unmolding a breeze. Cook the caramel a shade darker than usual; the extra touch of bitterness nicely balances the sweet custard.

- CARAMEL**
1 cup (200 g) sugar
1 Tbsp. light corn syrup

- CUSTARD AND ASSEMBLY**
8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
½ cup (100 g) sugar
4 large egg yolks

- 3 large eggs
2 vanilla beans, split lengthwise
1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
1 cup whole milk

CARAMEL Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 350°. Set a 9x5" loaf pan inside a 13x9" baking dish. Bring sugar, corn syrup, and 3 Tbsp. water to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat, swirling pan occasionally (do not stir). Cook until caramel is dark amber, about 4 minutes. Carefully pour into loaf pan and let sit until set, about 10 minutes.

CUSTARD AND ASSEMBLY Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat cream cheese and sugar in a medium bowl until

combined. Beat in egg yolks and eggs; scrape down sides of bowl. Scrape in vanilla seeds; reserve pods for another use. Reduce mixer speed to low, add condensed milk, evaporated milk, and whole milk, and beat until custard is smooth, about 1 minute.

Pour custard into loaf pan. Pour water into baking dish to come ¾" up sides of loaf pan. Bake flan until pale golden on top and just set in the center but still a little wobbly when jiggled, about 1 ½ hours. Remove loaf pan from baking dish and transfer to a wire rack. Let flan cool in pan 15 minutes, then chill at least 3 hours and, preferably, up to 12 hours.

Just before serving, run a small knife around edges of flan. Set a platter on top of loaf pan and carefully invert flan onto platter.

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