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Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta
Recipes from the World-Famous Spa
By Deborah Szekely and Deborah M. Schneider

Great cooking—unlocking the amazing farm-fresh flavors of seasonal, local ingredients without the traditional overuse of processed oils, animal fats, salt, and sugar—is at the heart of the experience offered by Rancho La Puerta, the world-famous fitness resort and spa located in Baja California.

In **Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta (Stewart, Tabori & Chang; ISBN: 978-1-58479-709-8; October 2008; \$35.00 U.S. / \$39.00 Canada)**, the Ranch’s founder, Deborah Szekely, and co-author Deborah M. Schneider demonstrate that you can bring this revitalizing experience to your own home kitchen. **Cooking with the Seasons** changes the way you think about food and cooking and inspires a healthier lifestyle that doesn’t let the enjoyment of delicious, satisfying meals take a backseat.

Though not a “diet cookbook,” **Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta** emphasizes the authors’ view that eating simply and healthfully—with homemade meals that reflect the cycles of nature—is one of life’s most profound pleasures. This beautiful book includes 120 delicious recipes featuring seasonal ingredients that are colorfully and creatively combined to entice the palate as well as promote health.

The inspiration for the book comes from Rancho La Puerta’s own farm, “Tres Estrellas” (Three Stars), which provides the spa with much of its fruits and vegetables. Here, in a cooking school literally built amidst the rows and orchards beneath Mt. Kuchumaa, Creative Chef Jesús González works his healthful magic in a way that enthralls over 6,500 guests each year. His and the resort’s favorite recipes, developed under the tutelage of his many years of work for spa founder Deborah Szekely, form the heart of this book.

Organized as a series of complete seasonal menus—including Poached Wild Salmon with Avocado-Taragon Aioli for summer, Carrot and Ginger Soup and Butternut Squash Flan for autumn, Mayan Hot Chocolate for winter, and Sorrel and Spinach Salad with Roasted Cumin-Orange Vinaigrette for spring—**Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta** illustrates how you can create dishes that are both luscious and nutritious all year round. Throughout, the authors also give valuable advice on how to make the most of natural ingredients, from choosing healthful grains to preserving summer’s goodness with dried herbs and homemade jams.

By showing readers how to integrate fresh, local, and organic ingredients into their dishes, and to be more environmentally conscious in the process, **Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta** offers an inspirational, perhaps even life-changing, approach to cooking.

About the Authors:

Deborah Szekely invented the destination fitness resort and spa when she opened Rancho La Puerta in 1940. She opened The Golden Door in 1958, and it has been consistently rated the top spa in the United States for many years. Szekely lives in San Diego.

Deborah M. Schneider is a chef and food writer with more than 25 years of culinary experience. She is the author of *¡Baja! Cooking on the Edge*. She lives in San Diego.

About the Book:**Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta*****Recipes from the World-Famous Spa***

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About Rancho La Puerta: The original fitness resort and spa, Rancho La Puerta welcomes some 140 guests each week to its 3,000 private acres of gardens, mountains and meadows. All facilities and land are for the exclusive use of its guests, who come for the week, ensuring the delights of a warm and welcoming shared community. The climate is near-perfect; warm and dry, with some showers, in winter, and warm with very low humidity in summer. Rancho La Puerta is located only about 25 miles from the Pacific Ocean at an elevation of 1,700 feet.

The cuisine is semi-vegetarian, featuring an abundance of organic fruits and vegetables. The freshest-of-the-fresh seafood from the port of Ensenada, Baja California, brought in by our own driver and buyer from a fishermen's market where the local boats come in daily, allows the Ranch chefs to prepare spectacular seafood dishes five times week. All meals offer both vegetarian and modified-vegetarian alternatives.

“We provide the true luxury of time and space,” says founder Deborah Szekely, “that which is most lacking in today's life. Space to breathe freely, to relax and enjoy what will be ‘the longer-living, younger life.’”

Week-long packages start at \$2,795 per person for a double occupancy room and are inclusive of complimentary transportation from San Diego airport and back, meals, snacks, accommodations and a wide array of fitness classes.

Butternut Squash Flan

Traditional flan is creamy, rich and heavy. This lightened version is based on naturally sweet butternut squash puree with a zing of orange in the syrup. Baked pureed yam may be substituted for the squash. Makes 6 flans.

Syrup

1 orange, washed

1/3 cup light brown sugar packed

Flan

3 cups milk

1/4 cup light brown sugar

4 extra-large eggs

3/4 cup cooked and pureed butternut squash

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla

Seasonal fruit

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Make the syrup: Grate the orange rind first, then juice the orange. Set rind aside.
3. Combine sugar with 3 tablespoons orange juice in a small saucepan. Cook over low heat until the sugar is melted, and bubbles form across the surface of the syrup.
4. Divide syrup evenly among six 6-ounce ramekins.
5. Make the flan: In a saucepan, combine the milk and sugar. Heat over low to medium.
6. Heat to dissolve the sugar, stirring constantly. Set aside to cool.
7. In a bowl, whisk the eggs until frothy. Add the pureed squash pulp, cinnamon, vanilla and orange zest. Stir in the cooled milk mixture. Strain the custard through a fine sieve to remove any fiber.
8. Pour into ramekins, filling to within 1/4 inch of the top. Set in a baking dish just large enough to hold them. Pour boiling water into the pan about halfway up the sides of the cups. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes, turning the pan once, or until set and a toothpick comes out clean. Uncover and let the custards cool in the water bath. Refrigerate for several hours.
9. To un-mold, press gently around the edge of each flan to break the seal. Invert onto a dessert plate. If you prefer, the flan may be served right in the baking dish.

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by Deborah Szekely and Deborah M. Schneider
with Chef Jesús González, Chef of La Cocina Que Canta*