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APRIL/MAY 2008



Come. Sit. Play.

Calling all party animals! One L.A. couple put on the dog—literally—and unleash a Mexican bash that caters to canines.

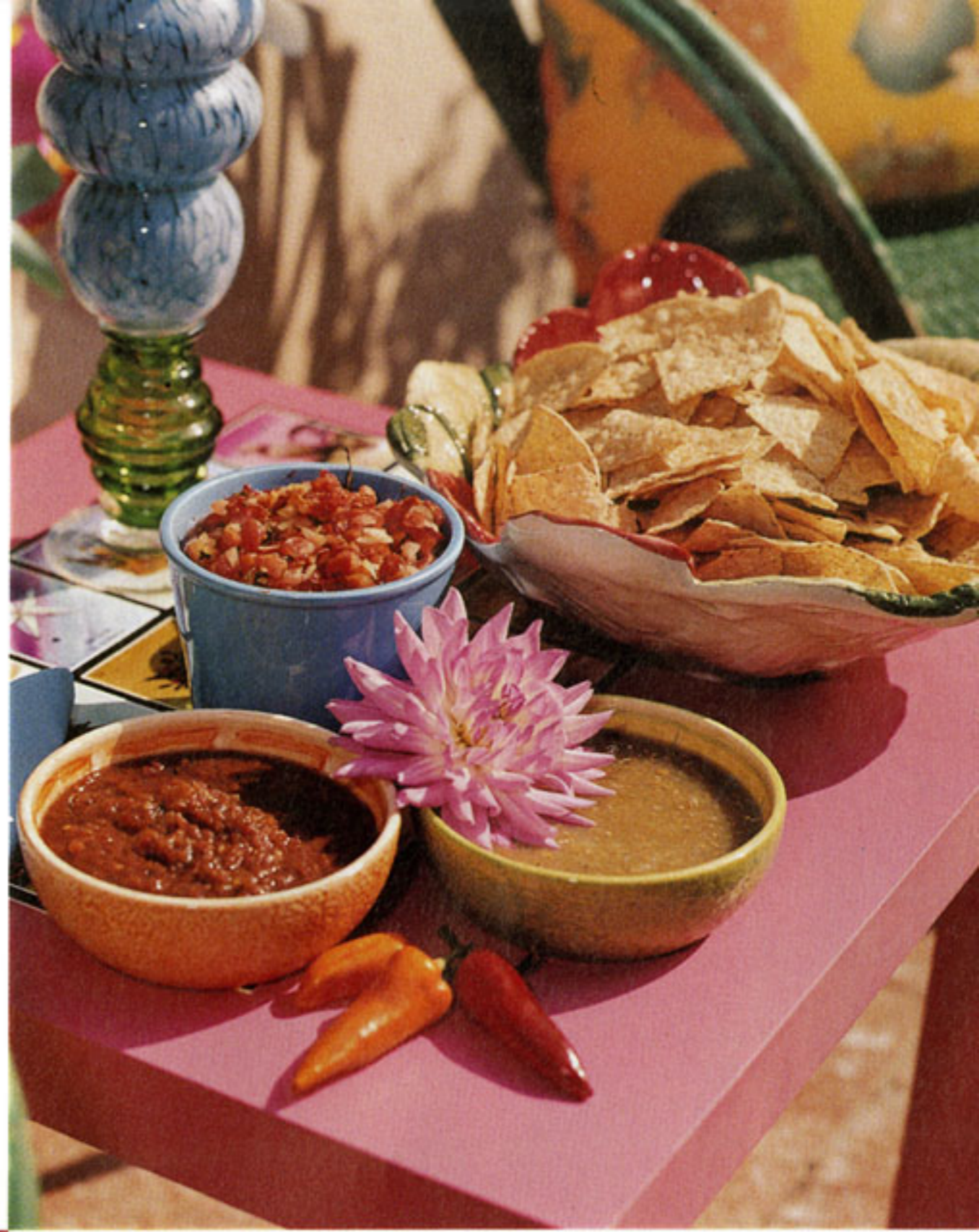
BY ROBERT MORITZ ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIANA KOENIGSBERG
PRODUCED BY SASHA EMERSON



*Happy
Birthday
Lulu*



Striped and floral Zarela Casa tablecloths, \$10 each at Wal-Mart, set the scene for a festive buffet, while sombreros make for cheap wall art (\$18 a dozen at orientaltrading.com). The blue glass vases are \$8 Big Lots finds. Opposite: When you're Lulu, the birthday Chihuahua, you can have your dulce de leche cake and eat it, too.







Mexican Flag Crudité Platter With Cilantro Dip (serves 16-20)

- 2 jicamas, peeled and sliced into bite-size sticks
- 1 lb. fresh snap peas, with strings removed
- 3 pt. cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1½ cups mayonnaise
- 1½ cups sour cream
- Juice of 3 limes (about ½ cup)
- 3 tbsp. minced white onion
- 5 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro
- Salt and pepper, to taste

BITCHIN' IDEAS

Chihuahuas aren't the only ones who know how to party. Surprise your canine companion with a bash that's all about pedigree. Here are a few ideas:

POODLE (OR FRENCH BULLDOG) Vive la France!

On the menu: crêpes (they're actually pretty easy to make), wine, and cheese. Maybe an Eiffel Tower backdrop for picture taking?

GERMAN SHEPHERD Oktoberfest can happen any month of the year, as long as there's plenty of sausage and beer. Extra points for dressing up the pups in lederhosen and braided wigs.

DALMATIAN Host a Black-and-White Party, an evening affair that calls for "formal" attire—think bow tie collars for dogs, thrift store tuxes for humans. Champagne and caviar if you can afford it, sparkling wine and smoked salmon if you can't.

DACHSHUND Call it the "Great Hot Dog Cookout." Grill an assortment of wieners (beef, turkey, and veggie dogs)—something for every appetite. Hand out Slinkys as party favors.

ENGLISH BULLDOG That's right—fish 'n' chips, laddie! Find a throne (a fancy chair will do) and photograph the dogs as king and queen or, if you're more punk than posh, Sid and Nancy.

Arrange jicama, snap peas, and tomatoes on a platter so they resemble Mexico's flag (see photo on page 101). For the dip: Blend mayo, sour cream, and lime juice in a bowl, fold in onion and cilantro; season with salt and pepper.

Pigs in Ponchos (makes 48)

- 2 medium poblano chiles
- 12 oz. spicy smoked sausages, fully cooked
- 2 8-count cans crescent rolls

Roast poblanos over the flame of a grill or gas stove until skin is completely blackened. Wrap in foil and steam for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, slice sausages lengthwise in quarters, then cut each quarter into 1½-inch-long pieces. Cut crescent roll triangles into thirds. Peel steamed poblanos, then rinse, core, and seed. Slice peppers into ¼-inch-wide strips that are the same length as the sausage pieces. Wrap a sausage slice and chile strip in each piece of dough, place on a cookie sheet, and bake at 375°F for 12 to 15 minutes.

Chicken Quesadillas (serves 16-20)

- ½ cup triple sec
- Juice of 10 limes (about 1½ cups)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 5 ears of corn
- Olive oil
- 3 15-oz. cans black beans
- 4 12-oz. packages queso fresco, crumbled
- 3 8-count packages 10-inch flour tortillas

Combine triple sec, lime juice, and garlic in a small bowl. Place a single layer of chicken breasts in a shallow dish and pour marinade over meat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours. Meanwhile, husk corn and remove silk. Brush with olive oil and grill over medium-low heat until tender, about 18 minutes. Slice kernels off corncob and set aside. Remove chicken from marinade and grill over medium-low heat (turning over once) until

A bash that mixes canines and cocktails gives new meaning to the phrase *hair of the dog*. Above, from left: Lulu's perch is actually a doll-size lawn seat picked up for \$16 at Ross Dress for Less and "reupholstered" with a few scraps of striped fabric and a staple gun; a Candied Margarita—with crushed Life Savers adorning its rim—makes for a refreshing sight atop Wal-Mart's Zarela Casa place mat (\$7 for four), which doubles as a game board for Loteria, a Mexican version of bingo; Apples is cowboy cool in a half-gallon hat and festive poncho, both from barkingbaby.com. Opposite: Even a French bulldog like Ruby can get into a south-of-the-border state of mind thanks to a \$7 wooden guitar from orientaltrading.com.

Talk about flying colors: Moritz and Brand snapped up these paper garlands, below, at a local party store for just \$3 a pop. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Leslie Landis and her miniature pinscher, Raincheck, look fetching in matching silk flowers from barkingbaby.com; relish the patriotism—colorful crudités take the shape of the Mexican flag; Lulu and her mom, Janel Holiday, mingle with Amber Mazzacano, proud parent of a long-haired Chihuahua named Ursula; a pumpkin piñata was easily transformed into a witty kitty with some tissue paper, construction paper, and craft wire.



completely cooked through, about 15 minutes. Let cool and chop into small chunks. Place a tortilla on the grill over low heat, and top with a portion of the chicken, beans, corn, and cheese. Add second tortilla on top and cook, lid closed, until quesadilla has grill marks, 8 to 12 minutes, turning over once halfway through cooking. Cut each quesadilla into eight wedges and serve.

Dulce de Leche Cactus Cake (serves 16–20)
Moritz and Brand had their cake custom-made at *Cake and Art* in West Hollywood, but you can follow this recipe to create your own homespun two-layer version.

For each 9-by-13-inch layer:

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups sugar
- 3½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup whole milk
- 4 egg whites

For the filling:

- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1¼ cups light brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ cup evaporated milk
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. baking soda

For the icing:

- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 5 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ cup half-and-half
- Green and yellow food coloring

To make one layer, line a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with parchment paper and set aside. Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. Using a mixer, incorporate butter, vanilla extract, and half the milk; beat for 2 minutes. Add remaining milk and egg whites, and beat 2 minutes more. Pour into cake pan. Bake for 26 to 28 minutes, checking for doneness after 25 minutes. Turn out cake and set on a cooling rack. Repeat process to make second layer. Meanwhile, cut out a cactus template from parchment paper, using the pan as a guide for size. Use template and a serrated knife to cut both layers into a cactus shape (see photo on page 94).

To make filling, melt butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Add sugar, cinnamon, and evaporated milk, and stir until smooth. Meanwhile, fill a large bowl with cold water. Cook mixture until it reads 240°F on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat and dip the base of pan in the water to stop cooking; let cool for 2 minutes. Add vanilla and baking soda, and beat well. Spread warm filling atop the first cake layer, then top with the second.

THE RECEIPT

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|
| 5 | 14-oz. bags tortilla chips | \$9.45 |
| 8 | 12-oz. jars assorted salsa | \$14.42 |
| 2 | jicamas | \$1.15 |
| 1 | lb. snap peas | \$3.99 |
| 3 | pt. grape tomatoes | \$11.97 |
| 1 | 16-oz. package sour cream | \$2.09 |
| 27 | limes | \$6.35 |
| 1 | white onion | \$0.89 |
| 1 | bunch cilantro | \$1.99 |
| 2 | poblano chiles | \$0.72 |
| 12 | oz. spicy smoked sausage | \$4.99 |
| 2 | 8-count cans crescent rolls | \$4.78 |
| 1 | 750-mL bottle triple sec | \$12.99 |
| 1 | bulb garlic | \$0.35 |
| 2.5 | lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts | \$5.84 |
| 5 | ears corn | \$2.50 |
| 3 | 15-oz. cans black beans | \$1.89 |
| 4 | 12-oz. packages queso fresco | \$17.96 |
| 3 | 8-count packages 10-inch flour tortillas | \$6.27 |
| 1 | 5-lb. bag all-purpose flour | \$2.09 |
| 1 | 5-lb. bag sugar | \$2.69 |
| 1 | 1-lb. box unsalted butter | \$4.95 |
| 1 | qt. whole milk | \$3.49 |
| 1 | doz. eggs | \$1.99 |
| 1 | 5-oz. can evaporated milk | \$0.69 |
| 1 | 2-lb. bag confectioners' sugar | \$1.49 |
| 1 | 8-oz. carton half-and-half | \$1.69 |
| 1 | 1-oz. four-pack food coloring (assorted colors) | \$3.19 |
| 1 | 750-mL bottle tequila | \$16.99 |
| 4 | rolls assorted Life Savers | \$2.00 |
| 1 | 24-pack Negra Modelo beer | \$23.60 |
| TOTAL | | \$175.45 |
| (tax not included) | | |

ALREADY IN YOUR PANTRY: mayonnaise, salt, pepper, olive oil, baking powder, cinnamon, vanilla extract, light brown sugar, baking soda

To make icing, combine all ingredients, except food coloring, in a large bowl and beat well. Put ½ cup icing into a separate bowl and add yellow food coloring. Add green food coloring to the large bowl. Spread green icing over entire cake. Put yellow icing into a plastic bag; snip off a small piece from the corner to make a ⅛-inch opening. Squeeze yellow flowers all over cactus.

Candied Margaritas (makes 16–20)

- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 750-mL bottle tequila
- 1½ cups triple sec
- Juice of 14 limes (about 2 cups)
- ½ cup red and green Life Savers, crushed

Dissolve sugar in ¾ cup boiling water; let mixture cool. In a pitcher, combine sugar water, tequila, triple sec, and 1½ cups lime juice. To serve, dip glass rims in remaining lime juice, then crushed candy. Fill glasses with ice. Measure ⅓ to ½ cup margarita mixture into a cocktail shaker, add ice, and shake; strain into prepared glass.

