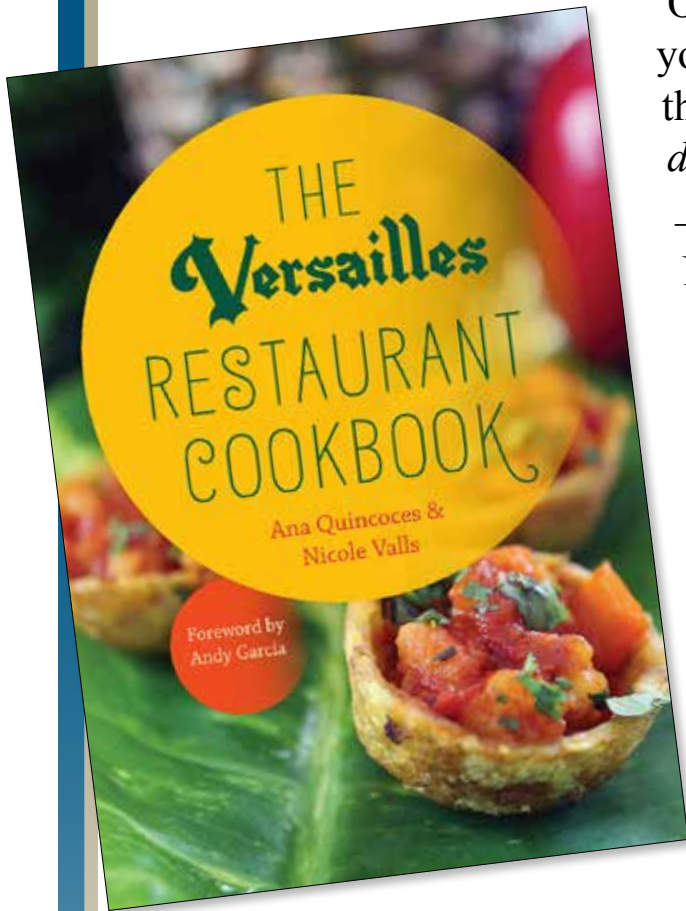


WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



“One sip of their Cuban coffee will keep you up for a week, which is perfect—that way you can have their *delicioso desayuno* every day.”

—**SUNNY ANDERSON**, Food Network

“Now—finally—this wonderful collection of insightful stories and priceless recipes . . . *Qué maravilla!*”

—**JOHN QUIÑONES**, ABC News

“If you haven’t tasted Versailles, you don’t know Miami.”

—**PAMELA SILVA CONDE**, Univision

“How brilliant to be able to take Versailles home!”

—**DAISY OLIVERA**, former *Miami Herald* columnist

“What is a trip to Miami without a Cuban sandwich from this Little Havana landmark?”

—**CHEF ART SMITH**



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THE VERSAILLES RESTAURANT COOKBOOK
ANA QUINCOSES AND NICOLE VALLS

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Hardcover \$30.00

192 pp. | 7 x 10 | 83 color photos
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Credit: Michael Katz

ANA QUINCOFES is a lawyer, author, and media personality born and raised in a Cuban household in Miami, Florida. Her mother’s cooking inspired her passion for Cuban cuisine. Ana writes for several publications and is a featured chef and competitor in the South Beach Wine and Food Festival. She is a foodie-driven character on a hit Bravo nonscripted series, has cohosted ABC’s *The View*, and has appeared on *The Chew* and *The Today Show*. Ana is a published author. Her books are *Cuban Chicks Can Cook* and *Sabor! A Passion for Cuban Cuisine*; her latest is in development and features slimmed-down Latin recipes. Ana recently launched her own specialty food line, *Skinny Latina®*; visit www.AnaQuincofes.com to learn more.

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, **NICOLE VALLS** is the firstborn of Lourdes and Felipe Valls Jr. As the eldest of six sisters, Nicole stands as a role model to her siblings and is the first of her generation to serve in the family business. Upon graduating from the University of Miami with a bachelor of arts in business management and organization, Nicole began working full-time in various Valls Group Inc. business ventures. She has been involved with the opening of seven of her father’s restaurants. She remains active in restaurant operations and is responsible for customer service, public relations, and the Valls Group charity organizations. Nicole is the vice chair of the Board of Directors of Amigos for Kids, a local nonprofit organization.

ANA QUINCOFES AND NICOLE VALLS
are available for interviews and appearances.



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Credit: Michael Katz



Q & A with

ANA QUINCOCES AND NICOLE VALLS

authors of

The Versailles Restaurant Cookbook

“Once our patrons knew that a cookbook was in the works, they gave us their two cents, recommending recipes to be included, stories to share, and even photographs.”

Versailles Restaurant has been a Miami institution for over 40 years. What inspired you to make this cookbook?

Our family felt that a restaurant that has been around as long as Versailles and that is as frequented by such patrons as Versailles merits a cookbook to memorialize our history and our recipes. We have always felt that Versailles not only belonged to us but to our loyal customers as well. This is a way for them to take a little piece of Versailles home with them, no matter where they live.

Celebrities and civilians alike have raved about their visit to this restaurant. Can you tell us about your most memorable personal experience at Versailles?

It is always an amazing treat to see how much celebrities love Versailles and how often they visit. We are always honored when a President or former president pays us a visit, but perhaps the event that left the most indelible impression in our minds was when a group of peaceful protesters marched down SW 8th Street towards Versailles after Elián was forcibly taken from his Miami family and was going to be returned to Cuba. The police were there armed with riot gear, and while they never had occasion to use them, it was still a very chilling scene that we will never forget.

What's your favorite meal to eat at Versailles?

Ana loves the *ropa vieja* which she usually accompanies with black beans, rice, and *maduros*. Nicole's is a toss up between the *pastel de plátano* and the *camarones enchilados*. But everything on the menu is delicious. Every time we eat there it's a struggle to decide on just one thing. We often order several things and share.

How did you become passionate about cooking?

We think growing up in a Cuban household instills the love of food and cooking. For Ana, it was getting married young and trying to emulate her mom's ability to nurture all those that came into her home. For Nicole, it was growing up in the restaurant business and seeing her family's passion for food. It's contagious.

How did you decide which recipes to feature in this cookbook?

It was difficult to limit the cookbook but we made sure to include all the traditional favorites, especially those that our patrons ordered again and again.

Versailles is a very popular restaurant with the Cuban community. Has the community had a role or influence in this cookbook?

Absolutely. Once our patrons knew that a cookbook was in the works, they gave us their two cents, recommending recipes to be included, stories to share, and even photographs.

For readers and chefs new to Cuban food, what recipe would you encourage them to try first?

We feel that *picadillo* is a great freshman Cuban recipe. It is easy to make, very traditional, and can be used in many other recipes like *empanadas* and *pastel de plátano*.

Do you have one sentence of advice for aspiring cookbook authors?

Tell your story, test your recipes, provide precise instructions and accurate pictures of what the finished product will look like.

What are you working on next?

We already have our delicious La Carreta Coffee on the market for retail sale. We are working on getting some of our other favorites on the market as well, like our famous *croquetas*.

THE
VERSAILLES
RESTAURANT
COOKBOOK

ANA QUINCOCES & NICOLE VALLS

Foreword by Andy Garcia

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA

Gainesville · Tallahassee · Tampa · Boca Raton · Pensacola · Orlando · Miami · Jacksonville · Ft. Myers · Sarasota

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FOREWORD

Versailles: A Place of Solace

The New Oxford Dictionary’s definition of solace is “comfort or consolation in a time of distress or sadness.” Solace is not only a state of mind but can also be a place—a place where one finds comfort, consolation, cheer, support, and relief.

All exile communities will find places of solace wherever they end up. Places that provide this most necessary emotional and spiritual space. Where one can gather with fellow exiles and share a profound love and nostalgia for the country they have left. For those of us in the Cuban exile community in Miami, Versailles is such a place.

Since its inception Versailles has been a gathering place not only to reminisce but also to socialize. Its famous “Ventanita” or small walk-up window serves you perhaps the most famous and strongest Cuban coffee in the world. Versailles continues to host dignitaries, celebrities, and a constant flow of politicians in need of support, as they mingle with the locals. But most important, it is a place where one can immerse oneself in its authentic Cuban culture and vibe.

Its food is exquisite and traditional. The waiters are the real thing, with a joy for life and never without a friendly smile. Its clientele is now of all cultures in need of this experience and great food. And at its heart is that Cuban thing—whether it is the obligatory early morning *café con leche y pan tostado* (coffee with milk and toasted Cuban bread and butter) or an afterhours late-night meal to replenish and reconstitute. For me it is white rice with two fried eggs in extra virgin olive oil, sunny side up with fried bananas and *picadillo*, which is a traditional peasant type of ground meat hash.

Memories have been created there by all of us looking for a little something to ease the pain. The hole in one’s heart that lives in all exiles, who carry with them a deep love for the country left behind. It is like an impossible love. You can love her, but you can’t be with her.

But you can find solace somewhere else, and for many, that place is Versailles.

Andy Garcia

Actor/Director/Producer

Basic Tomato-Based Sauce ♦ Sofrito

Sofrito is the foundation of many Cuban dishes. It is also a wonderful condiment, especially with store-bought roast chicken or sautéed mushrooms. This sofrito can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days in a tightly sealed container.

Makes about 2 cups

¼ cup olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
1 cup tomato sauce
1 bay leaf
¼ cup *vino seco* (dry white cooking wine)
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon dried oregano leaves
½ teaspoon ground cumin

♦ Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and bell pepper, and sauté until the onion is translucent, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the tomato sauce, bay leaf, and *vino seco*, and cook 5 minutes more. Reduce the heat to low, add the salt, pepper, oregano, and cumin, and stir. Cover the pan and let the vegetables simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf.

proof

Mojo Criollo

½ cup olive oil
10 to 12 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium yellow onion, grated
2 teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
¾ cup sour orange juice, or a mixture of equal parts lime juice and grapefruit juice

♦ To make the Mojo Criollo, heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the garlic, onion, salt, and pepper and sauté for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the sour orange juice or the lime/grapefruit juice combination. Set aside to cool to room temperature.

Note: The mojo will keep for up to a week, covered and refrigerated.

APPETIZERS

Our culture loves to *picar* (to graze). Appetizers or starters are rarely served individually at the dinner table but rather are passed around in large platters while family members grab handfuls of the treats, fearing that the plate won't come around a second time. Our appetizer section comprises the most popular “shareable” plates at Versailles. These are the dishes people not only share before their meal but also eat late at night in lieu of a meal. In essence they are Cuban “bar food,” for lack of a better term.

Everyone has a favorite appetizer or snack at Versailles. There is scarcely a time when the waiter arrives at the table to take drink orders (with a green basket of hot buttery bread in hand, mind you) without members of the group starting to call out their favorite starters to share, tapas style. Going to Versailles is often a group activity. Whether you go before or after a function, in your team uniform, or in black tie, Versailles is a must stop to fill the void in your belly that only good Cuban food can satisfy. So whether it's *mariquitas con mojo*—freshly and delicately fried plantain strips with garlic sauce (Cuban ketchup, as we like to call it)—or creamy delectable chicken or ham croquetas, or our popular *yuquitas fritas* with cilantro aioli, you are in for a real treat.

Sometimes patrons come in and order every appetizer on the menu, and then the feeding frenzy begins. Yes, it gets loud sometimes, but that is the wonderful thing about Versailles. Food is made to be shared and enjoyed while exchanging stories and telling the latest Pepito joke (the Cuban equivalent of “little Johnny”). Versailles brings families together, and appetizers are often the precursor to a fabulous meal, which is almost certainly followed by a few shared desserts and then languishing over your cortadito or cafecito.

The recipes here tease your palate but can also satisfy a big appetite. We are not talking about cheese and crackers. These appetizers are hot and flavorful, with a few exceptions that are served cold. There is something for everyone in this chapter. Salty, crunchy, spicy, creamy, tangy—you name it. So, let's get started! These appetizer recipes epitomize the joy of Cuban cuisine and are sure to become favorites.

Plantain Chips ♦ Mariquitas with Mojo Criollo

Who needs chips and salsa when you can feast on these crispy strips of heaven? Few things can compare to a fresh-from-the-fryer plantain chip dipped in garlic mojo. Eating just one is an absolute impossibility, so make plenty—they go fast!

Serves oo

2 or 3 green plantains
3 cups oil
sea salt



♦ Heat the oil to 375°F in a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat.

Once the oil is hot, peel a plantain and cut into paper-thin slices, no more than 1/16 of an inch thick. Immediately place the slices into the hot oil and fry the plantains for 3 to 4 minutes, turning them occasionally, until they are crisp but not brown. Transfer the fried plantains to drain on a paper towel-lined plate and sprinkle them generously with salt.

Let the oil return to 375°F before cutting more slices and frying each consecutive batch.

Mojo Criollo for Mariquitas

10 to 12 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
¼ cup grapefruit juice
¼ cup fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon white vinegar
1 bay leaf
3 tablespoons of water or more to reduce acidity

♦ To make the Mojo Criollo for Mariquitas, combine all the ingredients and mix well. Taste, adding more salt and water as necessary. Allow to sit for 30 minutes to an hour before serving alongside hot mariquitas (plantain chips).

Note: The mojo will keep for up to a week, covered and refrigerated.

Ham, Chicken, or Cod Croquettes ♦ Croquetas de Jamón, Pollo, o Bacalao

Croquetas are probably everyone's favorite Cuban snack food. They are certainly popular at Versailles. Croquetas are fried little bundles of goodness and everyone loves them. They are a little time-consuming to make but well worth the effort. These are great alone, in a sandwich, or with any meal. With so many fillings to choose from, you will never tire of eating them.

Although croquetas are perfectly acceptable at room temperature, they are best right out of the fryer—crispy on the outside, creamy and divine on the inside. These little treats are so flexible; they can be made in large quantities and frozen until ready to fry. So there's no reason why you should have to save these for parties or special occasions.

Serve them with our delightful Ensalada de Pollo.



Ham Croquettes ♦ Croquetas de Jamón

Makes 25 to 30

3 cups ground sweet deli ham (you can buy it sliced from the deli and pulse it in a food processor until finely ground)
2 cups whole milk
1 stick of salted butter
½ cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground white pepper
½ teaspoon salt or more to taste
2 cups ground cracker meal or bread crumbs
3 eggs beaten
oil for frying

♦ The base of this recipe is a thick béchamel sauce. In a heavy saucepan, bring the milk to a boil. In a separate large saucepan, melt the butter until it begins to bubble. Whisk in the flour, salt, nutmeg, and pepper. Reduce the heat to low and continue stirring until the flour mixture attains a light golden color. While continuing to whisk, add milk a cup at a time, incorporating each addition completely before adding the next. Once all the milk has been added, bring heat up to medium and bring to a boil. Continue stirring to avoid getting large lumps. Once the béchamel has thickened, add the ground ham and combine well. Set aside and allow the mixture to come to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

In two separate bowls, place the cracker meal and the beaten eggs. Take about

Chicken Croquettes

The only difference between the chicken and ham croquettes is that you will be using cooked ground chicken instead of ham. Use a combination of white and dark roasted skinless chicken meat, and pulse it in your food processor until finely ground. In addition, increase the salt by 1 or 1½ teaspoons, since the chicken is less salty than the ham. I also like to add about ½ a teaspoon of paprika to the chicken recipe, but this is optional.

an ounce or a heaping tablespoon of ham mixture at a time and form it into cylinders about 1 inch in diameter and 2 inches long. Dip each cylinder in egg and then roll in cracker meal. Do this twice with each cylinder. Allow the croquetas to rest refrigerated for about an hour before frying.

Heat about 3 inches of oil in a large frying pan to 375°F or medium-high heat. Fry the croquetas until golden brown on all sides. Do not fry too many at once, and allow the oil to regain the original temperature before adding the next batch. Drain on paper towels. Serve with saltine crackers and a squeeze of lime or in a “croqueta preparada.”

Note: Did you know our ham croquetes are one of Versailles’s most sought after recipes?

Galician White Bean Soup ♦ Caldo Gallego

This soup originated in Galicia, Spain, and is very popular in Cuban kitchens—including ours. It is a robust and nutritious dish perfect on a cold night with some crusty bread and a hearty Spanish wine.

Serves 8 to 10

1 pound dry white beans (such as navy, cannellini, or great northern), rinsed, soaked overnight, and drained

½ pound ham hock or shank bones

½ pound pork belly or pancetta, diced and sautéed until golden brown

3 ounces cured pork fatback or salt pork, rind removed

1 small turnip, diced

1 large onion, diced

3 garlic cloves, minced

3 medium potatoes, diced

salt and white pepper to taste

2 cups chopped fresh collard greens or turnip greens

3 tablespoons olive oil

♦ Combine 2 quarts water, beans, ham hock, pork fatback, pork belly, onion, and garlic in a large pot over medium-high heat. Bring the soup to a boil; boil for 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and cook the soup for 2 to 2½ hours.

Remove the soup from the heat and let it sit for 15 to 30 minutes, so that the soup can thicken and the flavors come together. Remove the ham hock and fatback from the pot, discarding the fatback. Remove the meat from the ham hock and return it to the soup. Discard the bones.

Add the potatoes, turnips, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover the pot and let the soup cook over low heat for another 30 to 45 minutes, until the potatoes are fork-tender. During the last 10 minutes of the cooking process, add the collard greens. Taste the soup and adjust the seasonings, if necessary.

*Nadie
escarmienta
por cabeza agena.*

Nobody learns
through someone
else's experience.