



# The Habana Café Cookbook

*Josefa Gonzalez-Hastings*

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## **The Habana Café Cookbook** Josefa Gonzalez-Hastings

Culinary wizard and cafe owner Josefa Gonzalez-Hastings offers this extravagance of Cuban cooking as a celebration of her heritage. Many of the recipes were passed down to her from her mother and aunts; others are "nuevo Latino cuisine"--a fusion of traditional Cuban foods with modern dishes. Cuban food and preparation always has been varied, she says, flavored by the ancestry of the island, with contributions from Spanish conquistadors, African slaves, Asian laborers, and Indian natives.

Of course, she also includes Habana Cafe's standard sides of rice, black beans, and glazed golden-brown plantains. Customer favorites are all represented here in easy-to-follow recipes and colorful photographs--from appetizers and soups, seafood and vegetarian entrees, to classics (Cuban sandwiches and flan) and beverages (mojitos, sangria, cafe con leche, Cuba libre). Gonzalez-Hastings also provides a glossary explaining typical ethnic Cuban ingredients such as bijol, a condiment used to give rice a yellow color; naranja agria, the tart Seville orange often used to marinate meat and make mojo sauce; and malanga, a mild, nutty root that flavors soups and other sauces.

"In my Cuban family," she writes, "two things were always certain-- food and good times." Gonzalez-Hastings shares family stories and photographs of life in pre-Castro Cuba, re-creating the days when Havana was a dining mecca, Ernest Hemingway frequented La Floridita restaurant, and the island gave birth to the daiquiri.

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