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Gourmet FOOD TRUCK MEALS



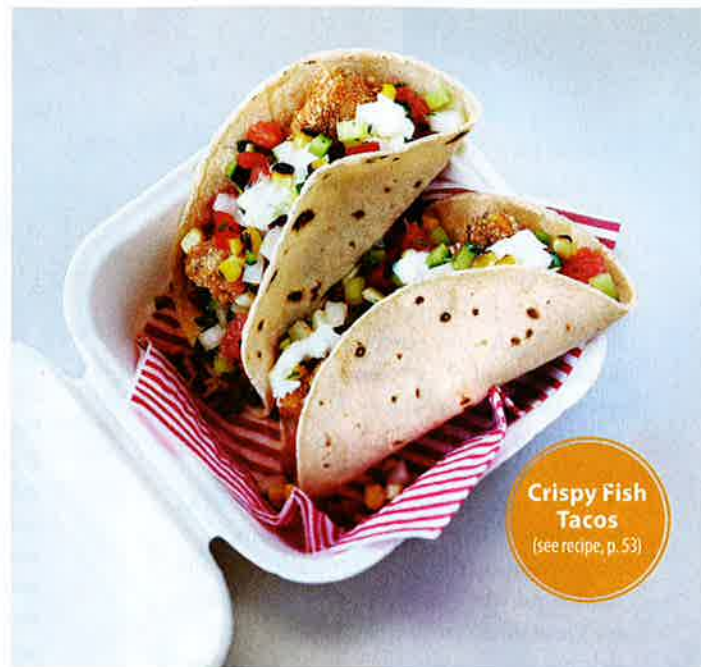
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A recent visit to Los Angeles is all it took to get me hooked on the gourmet food truck phenomenon. Once home, I hit the kitchen to try to recreate a few of my favorite “street food” finds... with a *Clean Eating* magazine twist, of course!



Joanne Lusted is *CE* magazine's Resident Chef and a Toronto-based culinary instructor and freelance writer. In addition to the pages of *Clean Eating*, Chef Jo can be spotted regularly on the syndicated series *Steven & Chris*.



Somewhere between my time at the university and chef school, I worked at an office in an industrial part of town. I was constantly baffled by the scramble that stirred when the PA crackled that the “lunch truck” had arrived.

What was the appeal? Was the food really that good, or was it the simple convenience of food arriving on cue? Little did I know that years later I would be darting around Los Angeles actually hunting for food trucks myself, armed with a smartphone glued to my Twitter feed.

We've all seen lunch trucks, chip trucks, hot dog carts and ubiquitous ice cream trucks, but the current food truck craze – trending toward the gourmet side of eats – is a new spin on these old-school meals on wheels. It all started when chef Roy Choi fired up the Kogi truck in Los Angeles. Taco stands are synonymous with LA, but Choi decided to put a Korean spin on Mexican fare, offering items such as his famed Kimchi Quesadillas, Short Rib Burritos and Spicy Pork Tacos. Choi's food was unique, but after a disappointingly slow start, he needed a plan. Patrons didn't know where to find the truck, he had zero advertising and most folks still deemed eating at the side of the road as a bit off. Enter the bloggers! After local food bloggers, in-the-know foodsters and epicures of social media came out for a taste and posted their reviews online, Choi's nomadic restaurant quickly rose to foodie fame.

Other trucks began popping up as aspiring restaurateurs saw opportunity, and a community was

recipes

born in the City of Angels. Due to their no-fixed-address lifestyle, gourmet truckers rely almost solely on Facebook, Twitter and the web to let patrons know where to find them. Parking lots, street corners, parks, farmers' markets: They're everywhere. Trucks are often spotted in remote, seemingly odd places thanks to one unwritten rule: Never park near a restaurant. The respect for eateries with roots is all part of the "Food Truck Code."

The appeal of modern-day food trucks is obvious: They're fun – from finding them to eating their food! It's all about the hunt. And what's not to love about nosing on Vietnamese fresh rolls bursting with delicate noodles while sitting on a curb in the sunshine? Or chasing down a cupcake truck to satisfy your afternoon Vegan Red Velvet craving?

Adding to the appeal, the trucks often have catchy names such as Like No Udder, a truck serving vegan ice cream and frozen treats, or Fishlips, a sushi bar on wheels. Fun factor aside, the cult status of the modern-day food truck is likely due to the fact that they serve up unique, crowd-pleasing, made-from-scratch fare with a spontaneity that can't be found in restaurants... and all for a bargain.

My first foray into truck-hunting landed me smack in the middle of Food Truck Mania, also known as the Monday lunch rush at the Miracle Mile area of Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. There were tons of trucks to choose from, but I only had eyes for the elusive Kogi truck, to see what all the kimchi fuss was about. So, I followed @kogibbq on Twitter, and the hunt was on!

Good news: You don't need a plane ticket to your closest metropolis or a GPS to enjoy some of the nation's trendiest – not to mention most mouthwatering – food truck fare. Here, I've offered up my own takes on a few Los Angeles favorites. I guarantee they're as good as the real thing, only with zero grease and hidden fats. Just flavorful, fun, roadside food... in your kitchen! From the rockin' Kreator burger to the sweet little gluten-free Ginger Cupcakes, there's something here to satisfy everyone's taste buds, plus you won't need an app to find them!



SPRINKLESMOBILE:

Founded in Beverly Hills in 2005, Sprinkles Cupcakes was the world's first cupcakes-only bakery. The teeny shop was featured on *Oprah* and has since expanded to an empire of 10 locations across the US, plus (lucky us!) one cupcake truck. The Sprinklesmobile sells a rotation of flavors, such as their Spiced Ginger Cake with Lemon Cream Cheese Frosting. I've swapped out the white sugar and flour for CE-approved ingredients to create our very own gluten-free version inspired by Sprinkles' sweet ride! sprinkles.com



Crispy Fish Tacos

WITH ROASTED CORN, GRAPEFRUIT & CUCUMBER SALSA

Serves 4. Hands-on time: 40 minutes. Total time: 40 minutes.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ears corn, husked
- 1 medium ruby red grapefruit
- ¼ medium English cucumber, diced
- ½ medium white onion, diced
- 2 plum tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 1 serrano pepper, seeded and minced
- Zest and juice 2 limes, divided
- 2 tsp olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ tsp ground cumin, divided
- ½ tsp sea salt, divided
- 8 small corn tortillas
- ¼ cup brown rice flour
- 4 egg whites
- 1 cup brown rice crisp cereal
- 8 oz boneless, skinless Pacific halibut, cut into 1-oz strips
- Olive oil cooking spray
- ½ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup crumbled low-fat feta or queso cotija cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

ONE: Prepare salsa: Arrange oven racks in center and top half of oven, and preheat oven to broil. Trim about 1 inch from tip of corn to form a flat end. Place corn on a baking sheet and transfer to top oven rack. Broil, turning once, until kernels are brown and blistered, about 18 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool to room temperature. Over a cutting board, stand corn upright on cut end and carefully slice kernels from cob in a downward motion. Transfer kernels to a medium bowl. Cut peel and white skin from grapefruit. Working over bowl of corn, use a paring knife to segment grapefruit, adding segments to bowl and allowing juice to drip over kernels. Add cucumber, onion, tomatoes, serrano pepper, zest and juice of 1 lime, oil, cilantro, ¼ tsp cumin and ¼ tsp salt to bowl. Mix well, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.

TWO: Preheat oven to 425°F. Stack tortillas on top of each other and wrap in aluminum foil. Place packet on 1 side of a parchment-lined baking sheet.

THREE: In a shallow bowl, add flour. In a separate

shallow bowl, whisk egg whites, remaining ¼ tsp cumin and ¼ tsp salt. In the bowl of a food processor, pulse rice crisp cereal into a fine powder; transfer to a third shallow bowl. Pat halibut dry with paper towel. Working 1 at a time, coat each strip in rice flour, then egg mixture and, finally, rice cereal. Arrange strips in a single layer on empty side of baking sheet. Mist strips with cooking spray and bake in center of oven for 6 minutes or until coating is golden.

FOUR: Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine yogurt, feta and remaining lime zest and juice. Set aside.

FIVE: To assemble, carefully open foil packet of tortillas and allow steam to escape. Lay tortillas in a single layer on cutting board and spoon salsa onto center of each, dividing evenly. Top each with 1 strip halibut and yogurt-feta mixture, dividing evenly. Fold closed and enjoy.

Nutrients per 2 tacos: Calories: 474, Total Fat: 14 g, Sat. Fat: 3 g, Monounsaturated Fat: 7 g, Polyunsaturated Fat: 2 g, Carbs: 65 g, Fiber: 7 g, Sugars: 12 g, Protein: 27 g, Sodium: 533 mg, Cholesterol: 29 mg

Gluten-Free!



BORDER GRILL: Tacos are the ultimate street food, especially in Los Angeles. Border Grill Truck is one of LA's favorites, serving up the bold, authentic Mexican flavors of Food Network's *Too Hot Tamales* chefs Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken. I caught this truck in the Santa Monica Farmer's market – no better setting for chefs who thrive on local, sustainable products, including fish for their famous Baja Fish Taco. Their combinations are unique, and they inspired this lighter version with no deep-fryer in sight. Brown rice cereal creates a crisp crust for the fish, and tangy feta and lime yogurt crema make a refreshing salsa topper.

bordergrill.com