

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Negrosal

**Negrosal** in Playa del Carmen, located in the **Riviera Maya, Mexico** is the stylish design restaurant of Chef/Owner Rafael Olivera Núñez, who deftly combines Mediterranean and Mayan fusion cuisine.

The restaurant is gorgeous with eye-catching details, beaded chandeliers resemble melting candles, dark wood tables dressed with ivory runners and napkins feature graceful ballerina legs poised in pointe slippers, seating is comfortable in high-backed ivory leather chairs with seductive corset laces, bas-relief artwork hangs on the specially designed dark walls, and the floor is made of stone and glass that provides a voyeuristic look into the international wine cellar below featuring hundreds of wine labels from 16 countries.



### Negrosal Restaurant

Edward F. Nesta and I had dinner at Negrosal in May 2008, where we were not only impressed with the restaurant, but also with the well stocked bar featuring an interesting cocktail menu. We began our evening with a lavender colored cocktail made with champagne, coconut vodka, violet liqueur, with red rose petals floating on top. The color was stunning and when the waiter brought our drinks to the table, heads turned at other tables inquiring about our cocktail. One sip assured us that the taste matched its beauty.



Cocktails in hand, we were eager to see what Chef Rafael would send us to begin our evening of tasting. The first item to arrive was richly flavorful Gazpacho made with tomatoes, cucumbers, and garlic (Gazpacho sopa frio - tomate, pepino, aji) layered on guacamole and elegantly served in a martini glass with an endive garnish. The flavors melded perfectly and the diced vegetables added textural interest. Accompanied by a delicious selection of homemade breads, we knew we were going to enjoy the evening.

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Next to arrive was a large square platter bearing four smaller square plates of Salmon, chaya (a green leafy Maya vegetable), mango, and papaya composition; Octopus enchilada; Chicken with saffron; and Pears with chèvre mousse.



This was a wow of both presentation and taste; salmon rolled into rosettes filled with julienne mango and papaya on a bed of chaya and reduced balsamic vinegar garnished with sliced fans of ripe strawberries and mint leaves; octopus marinated for 6 hours in three types of chilies, grilled and served with tortillas; golden chicken in a saffron sauce; and marinated pears with goat cheese mousse to eat last to refresh the palate.



We continued with an excellent course of Grouper with creamed spinach and epazote (a green leafy Maya herb), presented with the grouper cooked in a cornhusk on a pool of Hibiscus sauce with the mélange of spinach and epazote placed alongside. The brightly colorful hibiscus sauce really complemented the grouper.



Chef Rafael appeared at our table and told us that he likes to do things a little different, and instead of having a sorbet as a palate cleanser, presented us with an interesting palate cleanser of julienne fruits and vegetables namely strawberries, carrots, and cantaloupe garnished with mint presented in a footed glass that had a very refreshing taste.



Edward and I went our separate ways with the next course; he went the land route, while I took a sea excursion. He selected Lamb chops, which were two tender chops presented in an appetizing Chianti and shallots reduction sauce accompanied with fresh green beans.

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I had Shrimp in a mandarin chipotle sauce presented as three large shrimp arranged around a mound of mixed julienne vegetables in the center that was an enticing blend of sweet, smoky, and spicy that playfully teased my taste buds.

As for dessert, although we were tempted, we were more than satisfied with our savory selections, which leaves us something to look forward to on future trips to Negrosal.

Negrosal is open for dinner Monday - Sunday from 6:00 pm until 3:00 am.



**Negrosal**

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For information on **Riviera Maya, Mexico**, please visit the website: [www.RivieraMaya.com](http://www.RivieraMaya.com).

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