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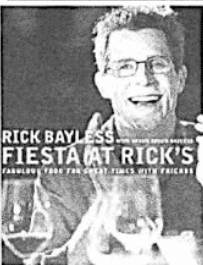
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RICK BAYLESS IS A MASTER OF MEXICAN CUISINE



Chef Rick Bayless in his Chicago restaurant, Frontera Grill.
ASSOCIATED PRESS ARCHIVE
PHOTO © 2007



By NATALIE HAUGHTON, *Los Angeles Daily News*

It's been a whirlwind year for Rick Bayless, who's been in the food business for more than three decades turning out and sharing amazing Mexican fare. The chef/owner of Chicago's Frontera Grill, Topolobampo and XOCO not only cooked at a White House State Dinner for the president of Mexico in May but consulted and designed the menus for the recently opened RED O Restaurant in Los Angeles. You might also recognize Bayless as the winner of Bravo's first Top Chef Masters television competition where he captured the \$110,000 top prize last August.

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CHAMPAGNE MARGARITA

Finely grated zest (colored rind only) from 1 lime

1 cup fresh lime juice

1 cup Cointreau (orange flavored liqueur)

1 cup silver tequila (El Tesoro and **Partida** preferred)

Superfine sugar, if needed sweetness

Coarse (kosher) salt, for serving

1 lime, cut in half, for serving

1 bottle (750 milliliters) Champagne OR other sparkling wine

In a pitcher, combine lime zest, lime juice, Cointreau, tequila and sugar (if using). Cover and refrigerate until cold, at least 1 hour.

Just before serving, strain mixture to remove zest and pour enough salt into a saucer to cover the bottom.

Rub a lime half over the rim of each champagne glass and upend into salt to crust lightly. Pour about 3 ounces of tequila mixture into each glass, fill the rest of the way with Champagne or sparkling wine and hand to one of your lucky guests. Makes 8 (6-ounce) drinks.



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