

# K's Kitchen: Cinco de Mayo salad



By Kathryn Reed

Even though California cuisine has a definitive flavor, the broader definition in my mind incorporates the various ethnicities that make up this state. Not necessarily at the same time, though.

Asian, Italian and Mexican food – they are California cuisine in my mind.

With Cinco de Mayo more of a U.S. celebration than one in Mexico, I thought a recipe for today would be appropriate.

It's the authentic stuff I'm talking about – not something you get at Taco Bell.

A couple years ago I took the Mexican food class taught by Steve Fernald at Lake Tahoe Community College. Some of the items are rather time consuming – like mole, the national sauce of Mexico. I have no intention of ever making it again, but that's the fun thing about taking any class – learning and doing things outside your ordinary life.

The variety of ingredients and complexity of some dishes was great to learn.

As with all the food classes I've taken at LTCC, I left full and had lunch for the next day.

The following is a salad one group in the class made. It was

one of my favorite dishes during the four-week class.

The nopaoles can be found at local Mexican markets. Cooked green beans (chayote) can be substituted for the nopaoles.

### **Ensalada de Nopalitos (Salad of Cactus Pieces)**

3 C cooked nopaoles, cut into squares

3 T finely chopped white onion

$\frac{1}{2}$  C loosely packed, finely chopped cilantro

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried oregano, Mexican if possible

2 T fresh lime juice or vinegar

#### **The topping**

3 small tomatoes, unskinned, sliced

$\frac{1}{3}$  C finely chopped cilantro

$\frac{1}{3}$  C crumbled queso fresco or anejo

$\frac{1}{3}$  C purple onion rings

3 canned chiles jalapenos en escabeche, cut into quarters lengthwise

1 avocado, peeled and sliced (optional)

inner leaves of romaine lettuce for the sides of the service platter

Mix the nopalitos with the next four ingredients and set aside to season for 30 minutes. Stir well and adjust seasoning. Spread the nopalitos over platter about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep. Decorate with the tomato slices and top with cilantro, cheese, onion rings, chile strips, and slices of avocado. Overlap the romaine leave around the edge of the platter and serve at room temperature.