

Gourmet Dining at Grand Velas Riviera Maya

White sand beaches, relaxing pool areas, balmy weather and high end service are a few reasons people choose to stay at Grand Velas Riviera Maya [luxury all-inclusive resort](#). Another reason? Top notch food and drinks available to visitors.

Located south of Cancun on the Caribbean Sea, Grand Velas Riviera Maya resort takes pride in its culinary variety. From traditional Mexican food to French cuisine and Asia fare there is a restaurant for every taste. With eight restaurants on site including four AAA Diamond rated restaurants, a resident mixologist and food available 24 hours a day, eating and drinking while at Grand Velas Riviera Maya is a gourmet's delight.

Creative and Tasty Beverages

Unlike many all-inclusive resorts in the area where you pay different levels based on how much is included in your plan, Grand Velas Riviera Maya is a true all-inclusive resort. Excluding their high end wines and several other options such as excursions and the spa, everything is included in your initial cost. Even though high end wines are not part of the all-inclusive package, that doesn't limit you to only two or three wine choices as you'd see elsewhere. We had a wide selection of wines from Mexico, the United States, Chile and other regions. All liquor is also included and their mixed drinks didn't taste watered down or weakened.

The only beverage that wasn't diverse at the resort was beer. As an beer lover, I wanted to taste some local beers from Mexico. Although there are quite a few craft beers in Mexico, the resort didn't carry any. Even our room mini bars (which was also included in the all-inclusive rate) only offered traditional basic beers.

While out at the pools, you'll have a poolside concierge who takes your order. The resort has its own mixologist on site who helps create special drinks for the pools and restaurants.

A new experience at Grand Velas Riviera Maya is the tequila/mezcal tasting. The mixologist, Brendon, provided a tasting that showcased the [difference between tequila and mezcal](#) while educating us on the history of Mexican liquor. Did you know there are 330 different types of agave and that the Mayans considered mezcal a present of the gods?

Fine Dining Food Options at the Grand Velas Riviera Maya

With eight restaurants, poolside food service and 24 hour room service, there is always plenty to

eat when staying to Grand Velas Riviera Maya. Each restaurant has its own chef and theme and menus are often switched up depending on the season.

There's even a guacologist on staff. You read that correctly - one of Grand Velas Riviera Maya's chiefs is a guacamole expert. After tasting his handmade guacamole with a choice of toppings (including papaya, cucumbers, pineapple and peppers), I'm a converted guacamole lover! The secret? Minimal lime juice, hand smashed avocados and a pinch of salt. That's it! Too much lime juice will alter the taste of the guacamole and traditional Mexican guac doesn't have any seasoning other than salt.

Another detail that each restaurant was very specific about was asking about allergies before taking orders. The waiters and staff will describe in detail every ingredient that is in a dish if you ask and if they're not sure they will clarify with the chef. This made the ones in our group who had food allergies feel much more secure. We had no incidents of contamination even though we had several food allergies, including one guest that couldn't eat anything with gluten.

Restaurants at Grand Velas Riviera Maya Resort

A strict elegant-casual dress code at night is enforced at the restaurants. This means a collared shirt and closed shoes for men and dressy slacks or skirts for women. No tank tops, flip flops or shorts are permitted during dinner hours. Some restaurants have the option of family seatings while others are strictly for guests 16 and over.

During my three night stay, I was lucky to have been able to try four of the eight restaurants that Grand Velas Riviera Maya has to offer.

Frida

Named after Mexican artist [Frida Kahlo](#), this 4 Diamond AAA Rated restaurant is delicately lit for a relaxing ambiance. Dedicated to serving a menu that honors local Mexican foods with a contemporary twist, the chef at Frida has wonderfully combined a variety of flavors.

After enjoying a cucumber margarita, I placed my dinner order for Torta Ahogada (duck carnitas), Black Bean Cappuccino with cotija cheese foam, Short Ribs in Marrow Sauce with cotija cheese salad and mashed potatoes with mushrooms and truffle oil. For dessert - white chocolate cream with dried fruit, nuts & amaranth and passion fruit gelee.

A day of traveling had made me extremely hungry but I wasn't prepared for how delicious and rich

the meal at Frida would be. I had been to all-inclusive resorts in the past and generally they tasted good but nothing spectacular. The chef at Frida took traditional Mexican flavors and mixed the into flavorful art. Who would think to take black bean soup, put it in a drinking glass and combine it with cheese foam?

I'm also not a huge dessert fan but the white chocolate cream with *gelee* was fantastic. It was a work of art when brought out to the table and paired wonderfully with a glass of red wine.

Azul Restaurant

I was so relaxed from my dinner at Frida the previous night, I slept well and woke up early, which is a rare thing for me to do. I decided to take the shuttle to the beach (my room was on the lagoon side) and enjoy the sunrise. Located right on the beach was the restaurant Azul, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

When I was finished with my beach stroll I went inside Azul to get some breakfast. The views from inside the restaurant were spectacular and so was the food. Breakfast at Azul is buffet style but it doesn't feel like a traditional buffet.

Waiters bring you your coffee, tea and juice and the extensive buffet had traditional options such as pancakes, scrambled eggs and toast. There were also options of smoked salmon, charcuterie meats, eggs benedict and even mini desserts all for your choosing. It was a great way to start my day.

Cocina de Autor

A unique dining experience, Cocina de Autor focuses on molecular gastronomy, or the art of seeking physical and chemical transformations while cooking. Truly small bites of food exploding in flavor, Cocina de Autor is AAA 5 Diamond rated and was the first restaurant in the Riviera Maya to receive this award.

The menu at Cocina de Autor changes on a regular basis and is created by the chef based on what is in season at the time. Guests are not given a menu to make selections from - the chef decides what to serve each night. However if you go twice in your stay, just let your waiter know and the chef can change your menu the second time. I was surprised on how small the servings were. However we eventually had 8 courses and the plates were flavorful and artfully arranged so I ended up not noticing too much, unless there was something I really enjoyed.

Our chef selected meal was:

- Foie Gras with poblano chile and corn
- Raw Tuna with a Apple & Avocado Gazpacho
- Quail
- Poblano chile, green tomato and coriander
- Beef prepared in a clay coffee pot

All the servings were so artfully arranged I didn't want to eat them. When I did, I was really surprised. I had never experienced molecular gastronomy, so just going off the size of the plates I honestly wasn't expecting much. However, the levels of flavor that were packed into each dish was amazing! I wasn't a huge fan of the *foie gras* (it was my first time tasting it and it was gamey to me) but all of the dishes were special.

For dessert we were presented with sotolone with sherry, curry and roasted coconut. Sotolone is a lactone that has different aromas based on how high a temperature it's heated at. The surprise came when you cracked the circular portion of the dish.

Our final dish and second dessert was ice cream made with olive oil and honey. Served in a thick wooden bowl, it was the perfect ending to a artistic, satisfying experience.

After our meal the chef, Nahúm Velasco, of Mexico City, was kind enough to come out and speak with us about his motivations and then took us in the kitchen area. It was pristine and bustling.

Cocina de Autor is a restaurant for people who enjoy being experimental, since your entire meal is based on someone else's choices. If you are adventurous though, Cocina de Autor will not disappoint. The arrangement of the food is beautiful and the way the food is combined to create so much flavor is a credit to the chef.

Chaka

There is a Mexican legend that tells of two brothers who were fighting over a lover. They ended up killing each other and when they went to the afterworld, the gods made them into two different trees: the chenchén which has a poisonous, burning sap and the chaká, which always grows next to the chenchén and whose sap offers an antidote to the poisonous brother tree.

The last restaurant I enjoyed at Grand Velas Riviera Maya is named after the healing tree, Chaka.

Chaka had a nice outdoor back patio where we enjoyed our drinks before heading inside for our meal. The lighting inside Chaka was a little low but it had a relaxing feeling and wasn't so dim that you couldn't see the menu or your meal.

Since this was our group's last meal together we decided to order a variety of items and share them. This worked out well because the selection on the menu had many things I wanted to try. Based on a Mayan theme, there were plenty of meats and seafood choices.

Among the delicious dishes we tried were:

- Pork Loin Empanadas with Oaxaca cheese and tomato sauce
- Shredded Beef Tacos with citrus infusion and chicharrón
- Traditional Lime Soup
- Grilled Shrimp with white sauce over rice
- Salmon in achiote juice
- Chicken Cooked Underground with rice, caramelized corn and pressed chicharrón
- Grilled Beef Tenderloin
- Yuca Doughnuts with Horchata Ice Cream

Everything at Chaka was flavorful with spices and textures. The chef used layers of spices and sauces to make every dish memorable. Nothing was spicy though. The term *chile* doesn't mean spicy as it can in the US. Chaka was the perfect ending to my culinary trip in the Riviera Maya.

Choices That Appeal to Everyone's Tastes

Overall my culinary experience at Grand Velas Riviera Maya was one of the best I've experienced in my life. There is a wide variety of choices to appeal to different taste buds, food and drinks are available whenever you desire and all the food choices are included in the all-inclusive package, which made the vacation even more relaxing and enjoyable. I can't wait to return!

For More:

- Grand Velas Riviera Maya, <https://rivieramaya.grandvelas.com/>
- Quintana Roo Tourism, <https://www.visitmexico.com/en/main-destinations/quintana-roo/>
- Visit Mexico, <https://www.visitmexico.com/en/>
- On our site: [San Jose del Cabo: A Perfect Winter Vacation](#)
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-All photos by Marcea Cazal.