

DESERT HOT SPRINGS may only be a short 15-minute drive from Mid Century Modern design mecca Palm Springs and two hours from Los Angeles, but it's effectively its own island of serenity. While the town is humble and down to earth, it is also the only place in Southern California where a spa enthusiast will find some of the purest and most crystal clear hot mineral spring water.

As you would expect, Azure Palm Resort & Day Spa Oasis — opened during the pandemic — taps into the city's namesake natural resource for its pools, therapeutic spa treatments and ambiance. While its quick growth and early success with area locals and visitors is miraculous in its own right in a challenging time for resorts (spas in particular), it's also a place where health miracles great and small happen. The mineral water powering the Azure Palms experience (which also made Desert Hot Springs the most decorated city in the world for its municipal tap water) soars from the ground at 174°F and packed with beneficial, restorative minerals including calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium and lithium.

The almost viscous, silky textured water is rich with silica which softens and moisturizes the skin and enhances treatments running the gamut from classic massages to custom facials, scrubs, lymphatic dry brushing and other indulgences on the spa menu. While numerous main and trace minerals are absorbed through the skin during a dip into the hotel's jacuzzi and pool, relaxing muscles and mind, it also doesn't hurt that the spa is surrounded by the Coachella Valley's fabled desert landscape as well as beautiful on-property landscaping.

"I wanted the resort to be supremely comfortable and chic in one breath," affirms owner Maria Lease, managing partner and visionary, who takes pride in the fact that guests will not find a television or anything too gadgety in sight during their stay. "The guest should be surrounded by the beauty of the desert while enjoying the mineral water deep beneath it. Having restful music playing when the guest enters their room, supplying incense and candles at the spa tub are all part of trying to help the guest be in the moment, relax and start their rejuvenation. While our miracle spring water maintains a high sulfur content it is completely odorless, soft and silky," she adds.

To create a look that distinguishes Azure Palm from the other high-end spas in the area, Lease teamed up with decorator Dominique Cady to create an ambiance that riffs on the area's Mid Century Modern aesthetic.

"We wanted to bring in rich, naturally dyed fabric, and the hand-dyed indigo fabric and mud cloths of Africa were a perfect»



THIS PHOTO The resort's stunning 100-foot pool.

AZURE PALM RESORT

AZURE PALM HOT SPRINGS



Desert Hot Springs

WHERE ON EARTH

& DAY SPA OASIS *by* ELYSE GLICKMAN

Cook

USA



SERVES 1

Azure Green Goddess Salad

SWAPPING OUT prepared, processed and nutritionally deficient fast and frozen food for freshly prepared dishes from organic, whole ingredients is one of the best ways to bring the Azure Palm Café's simple style into your kitchen.

Baby Spinach 2 cups	Cucumber peeled and seeded, ½ cup	Fine Sea Salt a pinch
Green Beans blanched, shocked, chopped, ¼ cup	Daikon Sprouts a small handful	Black Peppercorns a pinch
Edamame ¼ cup, blanched and shocked	Avocado ½, sliced	Azure Green Goddess Dressing ¼ cup
Toasted Pumpkin Seeds 2 Tbs	Lemon Wedge 1	

- 1 LAYER** the greens on the bottom of the bowl and compose the toppings attractively, finishing with avocado and sprouts.
- 2 SQUEEZE** the lemon wedge on the avocado, drizzle with the Green Goddess Dressing and season the whole salad with salt and pepper.



THIS PHOTO
Spa suites include a personal Mineral Water Tub.

«addition, imparting vibrant, yet soothing, natural colours,” continues Lease. “Dominique had been sourcing these fabrics directly from Mali in West Africa, so this was a perfect addition. While it was very challenging to source the right furniture for our look during the pandemic, a market did open up in Las Vegas in August of 2020 and we were able to make a number of great connections there, and the final look is gradually coming together.”

Another thing that sets Azure Palm apart from other wellness retreats is its food — not because it is high-concept, stylishly austere or created by a celebrity chef, but because it is simple, accessible and, ultimately, inspirational.

“One of the café’s goals has been to provide a variety of healthier options to both guests of Azure Palm Hot Springs as well as members of the community,” explains Alysa Valdez, the retreat’s café manager. “A part of our mission is making affordable, delicious and nutritious meals accessible to anyone interested in taking control of their diet and health. We took great care to avoid the stripped down ‘health food’ diets often encountered at wellness properties that are difficult to sustain when you leave, and instead focused on familiar and delicious dishes made from simple, fresh ingredients.”

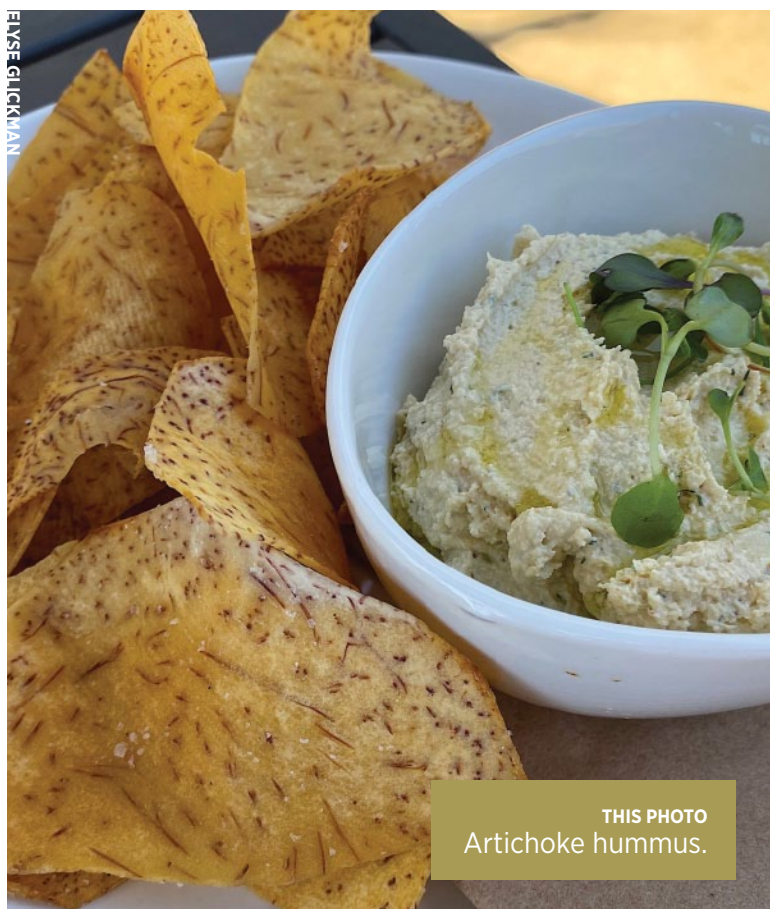
To get the menu exactly right, the Azure Palm management teamed up with restaurant consulting



AZURE PALM HOT SPRING



USA



Elyse Glickman

THIS PHOTO
Artichoke hummus.

MAKES 3 CUPS

Green Goddess Dressing

Chives washed and chopped, ½ cup

Parsley washed and chopped, ½ cup

Tarragon washed and chopped, ¼ cup

Low Fat Greek Yogurt ½ cup

Low Fat Buttermilk 1 cup
Mayonnaise ¾ cup

Lemon Juice 2 Tbs

Olive Oil ½ cup

Himalayan Pink Sea Salt ¾ tsp

Freshly Ground Black Pepper ½ tsp

- 1 **PURÉE** all ingredients in a blender until smooth.
- 2 **USE** within seven days.

firm Uncommon Fruit LLC, which has shaped everything from a Michelin-star restaurant in Los Angeles to small cafes and humble donut shops. For this project, the team drew inspiration from native California ingredients like dates, almonds and citrus. Additionally, recognizing that the Coachella Valley is the ancestral home of the Aguas Calientes band of Cahuilla Indians (and to honor their stewardship of the land), they included traditional and historic foodstuffs of the tribe such as mesquite pods, cactus and agave in the cafe's menu development. By »

Cook
to



SERVES 10

Azure Flourless Chocolate Cake

Azure Palm's outlook is that a healthy diet doesn't have to be boring, bland or flavourless. And this moist, deeply chocolatey cake is anything but!

Black Beans
canned or
cooked and
drained, 300 g

Beets chopped
and boiled till
soft, 100 g

Coconut Oil
50 g

Honey 150 g

Espresso 30 ml

Eggs 5 large

Fine Sea Salt
¼ tsp

Vanilla Extract
1 Tbs

**Dark Chocolate
Chips** 100 g

Baking Soda
½ tsp

Cocoa Powder
65 g

Baking Powder
½ tsp

- 1 PREHEAT** oven to 350°F. Grease a 9" springform pan and line with parchment, grease again.
- 2 PURÉE** the cooked beans, beets, honey, coconut oil, and espresso in a food processor (or blender) until smooth. Add in the eggs one at a time and blend until just combined, then add vanilla and salt. Strain the bean/beet mixture through a sieve into a large bowl to remove lumps.
- 3 IN** the top of a double boiler (or in the microwave at 50% power) gently melt the chocolate.
- 4 FOLD** the melted chocolate into the beet mixture until just combined.
- 5 IN** a small bowl, sift together the cocoa powder, baking soda and baking powder to remove lumps and combine. Add dry ingredients to wet and stir until just combined.
- 6 TRANSFER** the batter to the greased pan, bake on centre rack for 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean.
- 7 LET** cool completely.
- 8 SERVE** with raspberry chia jam and powdered sugar. Add whipped cream and chocolate sauce if you so desire.

«offering a range of plant-forward recipes like a black bean walnut burger or green goddess salad in addition to sustainably sourced proteins, the goal is to deliver to guests — including residents dropping by for a healthy meal and some inspiration for their own home cooking — something that satisfies their tastes and health goals.

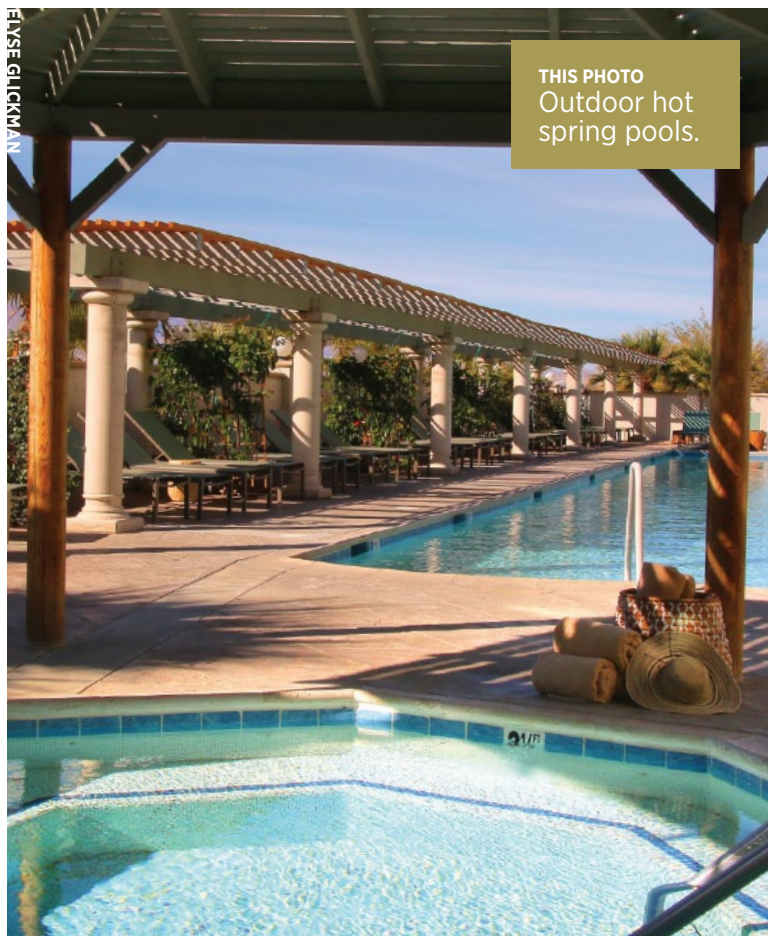
“Many of our guests don’t have the time, equipment or know-how to cook and eat healthy for themselves all the time,” says Alysa. “This is why instead of spotlighting specific recipes, we like to inform people about techniques, planning and logistics when they come here for a meal. For example, by buying whole grains and legumes in bulk and learning how to cook them yourself instead of using canned or buying prepared sides, you can drastically reduce sodium intake and grocery bills. Vegetables bought in bulk at the farmers’ market or sourced from a friend with more harvest in their home garden than they can handle can be processed into salsas or side dishes and quick-frozen to retain their nutrients for months. A few short hours of organized meal prep a week can help you stock your fridge with restaurant-quality and nutritionally complete food.”

Plans are in the works for an on-site herb and edibles garden as well as cooking classes as circumstances and local government regulators allow. The menu as it stands now is described as, “curated, not limited, by Mother Nature, and will continue to change and evolve to highlight Southern California’s incredible seasonal bounty.”

Guests who come for a longer, more transformative visit, meanwhile, will get their nourishment from Yesenia’s Vida Cleanse, a comprehensive, yoga and juice fasting program bolstered with the healing benefits of the natural, mineral springs. Management refers to it as “holistic approach,” including hiking, yoga, colonics, daily educational classes and meditation, concluding with a sound bath session, a gentle but powerful vibration experience that helps shift the brain into a more relaxed and healing state.

Although juices on the regular menu at the cafe do have some natural and residual sugars from the fruit, juices served during the fast are designed not only to be healthy but delicious even without added sugar. The green juice used for the fast includes a hint of ginger and lemon for taste and wellness, while the watermelon blend and rejuvenating mineral broth are packed with potassium and vitamins.

“While nothing we’re doing is revolutionary or groundbreaking, what sets us apart is an attention to detail, from the way we season different dishes to the way we adjust the recipes during the seasons to



THIS PHOTO
Outdoor hot
spring pools.

Visit
&

Azure Palm Hot Springs Resort & Day Spa Oasis
www.azurepalmhotsprings.com

WHILE IN DESERT HOT SPRINGS (and before your fast or healthy escape), here are a few community favourites noted for their use of fresh ingredients and healthy portions. At the time of writing all were observing Covid-19 safe practices.

Thai Palms

Authentic Thai cuisine founded on simple ingredients of excellent quality and freshness.

www.thaipalmsdhs.com

Its Taste of India

Flavourful Indian dishes made to order from the freshest ingredients, with plenty of vegetarian options.

www.itstasteofindia.com

Zapopan Mexican Food

Quality, fresh and authentic Mexican food.

www.zapopanmexicanfood.com

Eat
&

ELYSE GLICKMAN is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.



Cook
&

USA

MAKES 2 CUPS

Raspberry-Chia Jam

Raspberries
2 cups

**Lemon Juice
and Zest**
30 ml

**Sugar or
Sugar
Alternative**
46 g

**Filtered
Water** ½ cup

Chia Seeds
38 g

- 1** IN a medium saucepan, combine the raspberries, lemon juice and zest, sugar or sugar alternative and water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes or until soft.
- 2** REMOVE from the heat and chill rapidly. When cool, whisk in the chia seeds and refrigerate overnight to allow the chia seeds to gel and jam to set.
- 3** USE within 7 days.

storing things properly, labeling and dating the containers to ensure everything is as fresh as possible," adds the enthusiastic-yet-modest chef on duty, who is also a principal at the Uncommon Fruit consulting team. "We have two simple rules. One is building our flavours with a balance of salt, sweet and acid such as vinegar and lemons before bringing in locally sourced herbs and spices. The other is showing guests it is possible to create an overall lifestyle change when you rely less on processed foods and take a little extra effort to use what's fresh."