

ENSALADA XEK

JICAMA AND MANDARIN ORANGE SALAD

In Mérida's central market you will frequently see piles of mandarin oranges stacked neatly next to piles of *jicama* – the crispy root vegetable. Look closely and you will also see tiny bags of powdered red *chile* and salt nearby. These items are displayed together because they are the ingredients for *xek* – a refreshing snack or salad. Xek in Maya means something like "hodge-podge" and indeed this salad is a wonderful medley of crisp and sweet. Toss in some melon balls and green grapes and you will see the possibilities are endless. Xek is typically sold in little plastic bags with the slivers of *jicama* sticking out the top, the mandarin wedges visible below; in the home it is prepared more like a salad. It is especially popular during *Handl Pixán*, when the market is seemingly overtaken by piles of the ingredients to be used as offerings on family altars.

8-10 SERVINGS

🍴 PREPARE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS 🍴

- **1.5 lbs. (680 g) *jicama*, peeled and cut into julienne strips**
- **1 lime**
- **1/4 cup (60ml) *naranja agria* juice**
(Substitute: 2 parts lime juice, 1 part each grapefruit and sweet orange juice)
- **1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and coarsely diced**
- **5 mandarin oranges, peeled and sectioned. seeds removed**
- **3 small dried *chiles*, finely chopped**
- **3 Tbs. (45ml) *cilantro*, chopped**
- **Salt to taste**

STEP 1 PEEL JICAMA. The skin of this root vegetable will peel right off after you insert a knife between the skin and the flesh. Remove any traces of brown or remaining skin with a vegetable peeler. To keep the vegetable from discoloring as you work, rub liberally with lime juice. Cut *jicama* into julienne strips. Toss in a large bowl with the orange juice.

STEP 2 PEEL CUCUMBER, seed and dice. Meanwhile, peel oranges and separate into sections, removing any seeds. Toss oranges and cucumber with *jicama*.

STEP 3 ADD CHILE AND CILANTRO. Toss and check for seasonings. Refrigerate until ready to serve.