



PRESS RELEASE

Banyan Tree Mayakoba Introduces HAAB', a Captivating Outdoor Dining Concept Based on Ancient Maya Traditions and Cuisine

The Mayan Calendar and Elements of Earth, Wind, Fire and Water inspire a Culturally-immersive and Interactive Culinary Experience



Riviera Maya, Mexico – February 2016 : Banyan Tree Mayakoba, an award-winning resort on the shores of the Riviera Maya, has introduced HAAB', an immersive outdoor dining experience that brings to life the ancient culture, customs and cuisine of the Mayan people. Hidden in the jungle, yet steps from the resort, HAAB' is the first dining experience of its kind, commemorating how the ancient Mayans cultivated their food in agricultural fields and forest gardens, allowing guests to actively participate in the narrative.

HAAB' takes its name from the Mayan Zodiac, an integral part of the Mayan calendar and culture, inspired by the four basic elements of earth, wind, fire and water. These elements envelop guests throughout the dining experience; guests sit on the earthy forest floor, surrounded by water features and fresh Caribbean Sea air, while playing an interactive role in the preparation and cooking of the indigenous cuisine over an open fire pit.

The HAAB' experience begins at sundown with a Mayan ritual that pays tribute to the sun for another beautiful day and signifies the start of night. Adorned in traditional garments with colorful ornamentation, feathered headdresses and face paint, Mayan warriors arrive at the resort by canoe through Mayakoba's mangrove-lined waterways, or stride into the lobby to escort awaiting guests to HAAB's intimate forest garden, led by the light of burning torches and the sound of beating drums. The warriors ignite HAAB's four fire pits, signifying the cardinal points of north, south, east and west, and pray for the next day. Throughout dinner, they regale



stories of Mayan history and culture, explaining the origins of their calendar, its meaning and characters, as well as traditional customs, crafts and age-old knowledge on astronomy.

HAAB's cuisine ignites the experience further by paying homage to the ancient traditions and influence of the vibrant Mayan culture. Guests are greeted with warm *sopes* – an authentic Mexican appetizer made of fried corn dough with freshly harvested vegetables and slow cooked meat – served family-style; paired with a traditional drink flavored with *xtabentum*, a flower that grows wild on the Yucatan peninsula with origins tracing back to ancient Mayan time. This customary beverage is presented in a *jicara*, a small, artfully decorated wooden jar made from the fruit of the calabash tree. Refreshing, flavoured waters incorporating locally-sourced, seasonal ingredients such as lime, orange, hibiscus flower and lemongrass are also available, alongside signature cocktails infused with local Mayan liqueurs such as *huana* (rum with guanabana fruit), *XTA* (rum with aniseed) and *kalani* (coconut liqueur).

As dinner unfolds, guests indulge in traditional dishes inspired by the bounty of ingredients native to the region, such as *aguachile ceviche* made with fresh, local fish and shrimp, dressed in a creamy avocado sauce. Other specialty dishes include lime soup with tender, pulled chicken; spiced *pibil* suckling pig; locally-caught fish wrapped in banana leaves; and tortillas filled with *chayote*, a special Latin squash, and other native minced vegetables. To complete the exciting dining experience, simple yet decadent traditional desserts include a choice of savoury sweet potato tart and banana flan, as well as skewered marshmallows for roasting over the open flame, served with chocolate and cookies.

“HAAB’ takes guests back in time, providing a truly authentic Maya dining experience” says Banyan Tree Area Director of Business Development for the Americas, Sergio Serra. *“The natural surroundings beneath the tree tops and under the stars provide a sense of place unlike any other. Everything from the guest involvement with preparing the food and interaction with the warriors, to the storytelling and learning throughout dinner, HAAB’ is a one-of-a-kind experience that creates a cultural connection to our land that our guests will remember for years to come.”*

The launch of HAAB’ supports Banyan Tree’s ethos to embrace local culture and traditions whilst supporting local communities and the environment. The Banyan Tree Gallery, found in all of the resorts, offers additional indigenous, locally-sourced handicraft on exhibit and for sale.



With a capacity of up to 16 guests, HAAB is open daily for dinner, starting at 6:30pm.

Accommodation at Banyan Tree Mayakoba starts from USD\$574 per villa, per night. For further information, call +52 984 877 3688 or email mayakoba@banyantree.com. For more information about Banyan Hotels & Resorts visit at www.banyantree.com.

To download HAAB' images, please visit <http://bit.ly/1XCdxKK>. For a video of the HAAB' experience, please visit: <http://on.fb.me/1Kvq94s>.

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About Banyan Tree Mayakoba

The first Banyan Tree resort in the Americas, Banyan Tree Mayakoba sets the benchmark for a luxury holiday in the Riviera Maya. Located in the heart of a 1,600-acre resort enclave, the resort is built between lagoons and the Caribbean Sea, 40 minutes south of Cancun and 10 minutes north of the lively Playa del Carmen. This sanctuary offers 116 elegantly-designed private pool villas, several distinct dining options and an award-winning spa. Committed to creating a positive impact for the environment, the resort is EarthCheck Silver Certified, PROFEPA Tourism Environmental Quality Certified and a Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Standard-Setter Award winner.

About Banyan Tree

Banyan Tree offers a Sanctuary to rejuvenate the mind, body and soul in awe-inspiring locations around the globe. Rediscover the romance of travel as you journey to iconic destinations and gateway cities. An all-villa concept often with private pools, Banyan Tree provides a genuine, authentic service and distinctive, premium retreat experience. www.banyantree.com

More About HAAB' and the Sun Down Ritual

The HAAB' is a 365-day Mayan solar calendar that is divided into 18 months of 20 days each and one month which is only five-days long. The Mayan civilisation was a Mesoamerican civilization developed by the Mayan peoples and noted for the Mayan hieroglyphic script, the only known fully developed writing system of the pre-Columbian Americas, as well as for its art, architecture and mathematical and astronomical systems.

The sun had great significance in the lives of the ancient Mayan and was thought to have three phases during the day: sunrise, indicating the rebirth of the world with each new dawn after being in Xibalba, the world of darkness; midday, when the sun is at its peak, symbolizing the highest level of universal energy; and sunset, a time for all negativity accumulated during the day to be given to the sun to take away and return on the following day, charged with renewed positive energy.

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