

Mexico

The Land

Long and narrow, Mexico forms what looks like a curved horn between the United States to the north and Guatemala and Belize to the south. To the west is the Pacific Ocean. The Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea lie to the east. Two huge mountain ranges, the Sierra Madre Occidental to the west, and the Sierra Madre Oriental to the east, run the length of the country, forming a giant V. Between these mountain ranges lie a series of plateaus. The plateau in the north is largely desert land, while the long central plateau farther south is more fertile. Near the tip of the horn, the Yucatan Peninsula juts into the Atlantic Ocean. A long, narrow peninsula called Baja dangles from California's southern border. The southern coasts are home to tropical rain forests and jungles.

With most of its eastern and western borders being on the coast, some Mexican cuisine is based on seafood. There are good grazing areas in the north, with some fertile agricultural land to the south; however, between arid conditions and challenging terrain, only 12 percent of the country gets enough rain for crops.

History

Mexico is a country of great contrasts. Within its borders, there are scorching deserts, snow-capped volcanoes, and lush tropical rain forests. Mexico is also one of the twenty richest

nations in the world but, as in nearby Central American countries, there are big differences between standards of living of the rich and the poor. Long before the first European explorers arrived in 1519, Mexico was the home of some of the world's greatest civilizations.

A thousand years ago, Mexico was inhabited by groups of Mayan Indians, who had developed a very advanced civilization. They built large cities out of stone, developed systems of writing and arithmetic, and created beautiful works of art. Mayan settlements were situated close to *cenotes*, natural water holes that allowed for survival in an inhospitable tropical climate. The basis of the culture was farming, which included the cultivation of corn, beans, squash, and chile peppers. Chiles, both fresh and dried, are used more for flavor than heat and popular varieties include jalapeño, poblano, serrano, guajillo, chipotle, pasilla, habanero, ancho, mulatto, and cascabel. Squash, including pumpkins, and zucchini are used as vegetables; their blossoms are stuffed or incorporated in soups and sauces; and squash seeds are dried, ground, and used in sauces. Tomatoes were cultivated and became an essential ingredient along with tomatillos, small green tomatoes encased in papery husks.

It was the conquest of Mexico by Spain in 1521 that had the most influence on Mexican cuisine. Not only did the conquistadors introduce new types of livestock to the area, such as pigs, cows, and sheep, but they also introduced dairy products such as cheese and the fat from the cattle. The Spanish, themselves heavily influenced by the Arabic Moors of western Africa, introduced the most distinctive features of their cuisine to Mexico. Perhaps most characteristic is the combination in one dish of various finely chopped ingredients. Highly seasoned and spiced meat casseroles, hot pots of meats and vegetables, fruit syrups, and pasta and rice pilaf are Arab in origin. The Spanish brought many herbs as well as an abundance of Far Eastern spices like cinnamon and cloves. Wheat, an essential staple of the Spanish diet, was introduced to the region. Citrus fruits, peaches, melons, figs, and cherries as well as garlic, carrots, turnips, and eggplants became regular items in the diet.

Sugarcane was cultivated and became an important trade item, and with this widely available sweet Mexicans developed many deserts and sweets. Many Spanish-style "convent" desserts were developed by the nuns and priests who came to cook for the viceroys (royal officials that governed the provinces). For many years convents all over Mexico have supported themselves by making marzipan-like candies, with almonds and *pepitas* (pumpkin seeds). This period also saw the assimilation of many other cultures, cuisines, and ingredients, including French, Portuguese, Caribbean (particularly in the Veracruz area in the southeast), West African, and South American.

Today, almost 80 percent of contemporary Mexicans are descendants of both native and Spanish cultures and are called *mestizo*. There are more than fifty native groups, including the Nahua, Zapotec, Mixtec, Maya, Purepecha, Trahumara, Huastec, Mayo, Yaqui, and Otomi Indians, who account for fewer than 10 percent of the population. The remaining 10 percent comprises others of European descent. The Roman Catholic Church plays an important part in the everyday life of most Mexicans and religious festivals and celebrations take place in towns and cities across the country throughout the year.

The Food

Although it is very diverse among the various Mexican regions, Mexican food is rich in color and flavor. Areas along the ocean are famous for their abundant *mariscos* (seafood dishes). Inland and highland mountain areas are famous for stews, intricate sauces, and corn-based recipes. Desert areas have cultivated delicacies of different sorts. In some desert regions, for example, there are numerous dishes containing varieties of cactus plants. While Mexico is made up of thirty-one states and one federal district, the country can be divided into six regions: northern Mexico, central Mexico, southern Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula, the Pacific Coast, and the Baja Peninsula.

NORTHERN MEXICO

The north is mostly desert—a vast, high, windswept plateau flanked by the Occidental and Oriental chains of the Sierra Madre Mountains. The states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo Leon, Sonora, Tamaulipas, and Zacatecas are part of this region. The cooking of northern Mexico gets its strongest influence from the ranching culture, predominately cattle, goats, pigs, and sheep. Ranch-style food is prepared with indigenous ingredients and cooked over an open fire. Cabrito is roast kid goat, a specialty of the city of Monterrey and its state of Nuevo Leon. Flour tortillas were created when the Spanish brought wheat to the New World; however, they are considered a bread staple in the northern states only. In the valleys of the eastern states farmers raise peaches, melons, nuts, and more than thirty varieties of apples. Queso Chihuahua or Chihuahua cheese is a soft white cow's milk cheese available in braids, balls or rounds. The cheese is named after its place of origin and is also called *queso menonita* after the Mennonite communities that first produced it. In the 1920s the Mexican government wanted to settle the barren northern areas of the country with industrious farmers. At the invitation of the then-president, 20,000 Mennonites left Canada and settled in the state of Chihuahua where the community still flourishes.

CENTRAL MEXICO

The Distrito Federal, or Mexico City as it is called in English, is the Mexican capital in every sense of the word. With over 20 million people, it is not only many times larger than any other city in Mexico, but is also the second most populous city in the world, just behind Tokyo. There has been a capital here since before the arrival of the Spanish, although then it was the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Unfortunately, almost all this old city was destroyed by the Spanish in their zeal to convert the Indians to Christianity. One impressive remain, however, still survives. El Templo Mayor is what's left of the Great Temple of the Aztecs. The ruin

sits off the northeast corner of the Zocalo, the city's massive main square. In Mexico City, there is a full range of national cuisine. Because it is the capital, cooking from every region is available here.

The state of Michoacán derives its name from the Náhuatl terms *michin* (fish), *hua* (those who have), and *can* (place), which roughly translates into "place of the fisherman." Today there are national fishing tournaments and annual international sport fishing competitions focusing upon catching sailfish, marlin, and mahi-mahi. This state, along with the states of Morelas, Puebla, Queretaro, and Tlaxcala, are known as "the Central Breadbasket," and are one of Mexico's most important agricultural regions. Sugarcane fields, rice fields, coffee plantations, and macadamia trees are cultivated. Michoaca is the largest producer of avocados in the country. The area also produces large quantities of corn, beans, chickpeas, and potatoes. Fruit crops such as mangoes, strawberries, papaya, bananas, lemons, and limes are grown as well.

The food in this region is based heavily on corn. The early Indian tribes served it as a kind of porridge, called *atoll*. Corn kernels were also softened in water and lime and then ground into a fine meal known as *masa*. The *masa* is then shaped into flat, round cakes called tortillas, which are cooked on a *comal*, or griddle. Specialties include *corundas*, a triangular puffy tamale made with white corn and unfilled. *Huitacoche*, a small, dark fungus that grows on a cornstalk, is considered a particular delicacy. One of the other important crops is agave (also known as maguey), used to produce syrup, vinegar, and *pulque*, an alcoholic beverage. *Pulque* was the historical predecessor of mescal and tequila, which wielded a heavy sociological influence during both pre-Hispanic and Colonial periods of Mexican history. There are more than 400 species of agave native to North America and Mexico. It was one of the most sacred and important plants in ancient Mexico and had a privileged place in mythology, religious rituals, and the economy. *Pulque* is still made and drunk in limited quantities in parts of Mexico today. However, because it cannot easily be stored or preserved, it is not well known outside the country. Mezcal (or mescal) is the name given to a double-distilled spirit that comes from the maguey plant. Tequila is made exclusively from the agave azul that grows in semiarid soils and takes from eight to twelve years to mature.

The state of Puebla has been considered the gastronomic capital of Mexico. Its location between the coastal city of Veracruz and Mexico City gives it ample access to fresh seafood. The state produces fresh fruits and vegetables year-round, and raises some of the best beef and pork in the world. It cultivates cinnamon and nuts, as well as different types of hot peppers. *Mole* (the word means stew, or "concoctions") is a dish regarded with national pride and a culinary touchstone of Mexican cooking. It is a rich dark sauce with chocolate, chiles, spices, herbs, groundnuts, seeds, and a variety of other ingredients. Every Mexican household has its version of a *mole*, most of which are named for the color given by the variety of chiles used. Without a doubt the most famous type of *mole* is *mole poblano* (made from any fresh or dried chiles from the poblano pepper family). Other commonly prepared *moles* include *mole verde* (uses green chiles), *mole rojo* (uses red chiles) and *mole pipian* (uses pumpkin seeds).

The cities in this region all have their own enchiladas, from the Enchiladas Potosinas of San Luis Potosí (cheese and onion, with red chile ground into the masa tortillas) to the Enchiladas Mineras (miners' enchiladas) of Guanajuato (cheese or chicken filling topped with potatoes and carrots in a *guajillo* salsa). The *zacahuil*, a three-foot-long tamale that may weigh as much as 150 pounds, is perhaps the most famous food of the region. Stuffed with pork and a variety of ingredients including potatoes, hard-boiled eggs, and vegetables, the *zacahuil* requires nearly all the leaves of a banana tree to wrap it.

SOUTHERN MEXICO AND THE GULF OF MEXICO

This region lies between two major bodies of water—the Gulf and Mexico and the Pacific Ocean—and includes the states of Veracruz, Chiapas, and Tabasco. Veracruz is located on the eastern shore of Mexico known as the Gulf Lowlands as it stretches along the Gulf Coast. Veracruz is the busiest port in Mexico and home to one of the most fertile fishing banks in the world. This is where the European conquest started and where the Spanish first settled, so there are significant Mediterranean influences. *Red Snapper Veracruz* is considered representative of the area. Traditionally, the whole fish is covered in a sauce of tomatoes, onions, capers, Spanish olives, olive oil, and pickled jalapeños. Veracruz is one of the few places in Mexico where people cook with olive oil, and ingredients like green olives and capers and raisins have been incorporated into the cuisine. In the city of Pampantla, vanilla pods are harvested from an orchid-type plant called *tlixochitl*.

During the first years after the Spanish arrived, diseases brought by the Europeans and unknown to the indigenous people decimated the population. Sugarcane production made heavy demands on labor, and African slaves were brought to work in the plantations. These slaves were some of the many thousands to bring their culinary influence with them. The peanut, an important ingredient in West African cooking, was added to meat, fish, and vegetable dishes and ground with spices as part of a paste-like condiment. Plantains, yucca, and sweet potatoes, all important elements of West African cooking, also became part of this region's cuisine.

More than half of Mexico's coffee beans are grown in Chiapas, and this state is one of the largest producers of cacao, used to make chocolate. The ancient Maya were the first to cultivate the cacao tree, native to the Central American rainforest. They found that by first fermenting the pulpy seeds, then drying, roasting, and crushing them, they could make a potent and delicious drink that they called *xocoatl* or *chocoatl*. When the Aztecs conquered the Maya in Central America, they demanded cacao seeds as tribute, and in their empire the seeds became a kind of currency. The Aztecs, like the Maya before them, used the *chocoatl* in religious ceremonies and considered the seeds a gift from the gods.

Here the tamales are made of fresh corn and pork wrapped in the large leaf of the *hoja santa* herb. When heated, the leaves produce a sweet, musky anise steam that flavors the tamale.

THE YUCATAN PENINSULA

This region comprises the states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo. The Yucatan was once an isolated region of Mexico due to the mountainous terrain surrounding it. The Mayan civilization originated in the Yucatan near 2500 B.C. The Toltec culture arrived in A.D. 987, followed by the Spanish in the 1500s. Game meats such as venison and wild turkey, and vegetables like squash, cucumbers, chiles, and tomatoes are from the Mayans. Black beans, rather than pinto beans or kidney beans, are used in this area. Cooking methods like the *pib*, a hand-dug pit lined with stones and coals in which meats wrapped in banana leaves are cooked, are typical of Mayan cooking. The Spanish introduced pork, beef, and chicken. The Mayans had never fried foods before, but with the pig came lard, and with lard came frying. This produced one of the most significant changes in Mexican cooking.

Seville oranges came from Spain and are a key ingredient in this region's cuisine along with herbs and spices such as garlic, oregano, cinnamon, and cumin. Northern Europeans have a legacy in this region as well, especially the Dutch. Holland was an active trading partner in the nineteenth century and Edam cheese continues to be a regional staple. Ground spice pastes used for marinades are called *recado*. The red version (*rojo*) contains annatto, Mexican oregano, cumin, clove, cinnamon, black pepper, allspice, garlic, and salt. The annatto seeds dye the mixture red, which gives the meat or vegetables cooked with it a distinctive red hue. There are hundreds of variations and each *recado* is for a different dish.

THE PACIFIC COAST

Many of the traditions considered characteristically "Mexican" were created in Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco. It is the country's second-largest city and has large mountain ranges, volcanoes, valleys, and plateaus. Guadalajara is the origin for traditions such as mariachi music, the Mexican hat dance, broad-brimmed sombrero hats, the Mexican rodeo, and tequila. The most important crops in this region include peanuts, sugarcane, and agave (for the production of tequila). In the mountainous regions ranch cooking dominates. *Pozole*, Mexico's pork and hominy stew, originated here, as did *birria*, mutton or goat prepared in an adobo sauce and served in a rich tomato and meat broth.

The state of Oaxaca is one of the most mountainous states in Mexico. Most of the people today are farmers and the most common crops are mangoes and coffee. A festival every December celebrates the radish, which was introduced to Mexico by the Spanish in the late 1500s. Specially grown radishes, some reaching over seven pounds, are carved into works of art. Sometimes called the "land of seven moles," Oaxaca is best known for its seven major varieties of mole. From the most elaborate to the simplest, the seven types are *mole negro* (black mole, the one that uses cocoa), *mole amarillo* (yellow), *mole coloradito* (little red), *mole almendrado* (with almonds), *mole chichilo* (a local name without translation), *mole verde* (green), and *mole colorado* (red). In the way of wine tasting, *mole* tasting is also practiced in several regions of Mexico.

Chocolate con leche, or more commonly *chocolate con agua* (hot chocolate prepared with milk or with water) is one of the most famous products of Oaxaca. The drink is prepared with fresh paste or tablets of cocoa, which in some stores are custom made with a mix of fresh cocoa, sugar, and cinnamon. The paste or tablets are dissolved in either water or milk. The hot liquid is mixed with a special wooden shaker (*molinillo*), which has loose rings that help produce foam. In many places it is served inside a large bowl accompanied with traditional bread made with egg and anise (*pan de huevo*).

The states of Colima, Nayarit, and Sinaloa border the Pacific Ocean. Sinaloa is one of Mexico's largest agricultural states, and also has one of the largest fishing fleets. The coast provides deep-sea fish such as marlin, swordfish, tuna, and sea bass as well as shallow-water fish and shellfish. All three states are important for their coconut, coffee, and banana plantations and orchards of avocado, limes, mango, mamey, and tamarind. Nayarit is famous for its chile sauce, called *Salsa Huichol*. This sauce is made from a variety of chiles, spices, vinegar, and salt and is used like American Tabasco.

THE BAJA CALIFORNIA PENINSULA

This territory is divided into two states, Baja California and Baja California Sur. In Baja California, Tijuana is one of the most visited border cities in the world. The fertile valleys of Guadalupe, San Antonio, Santo Tomas, and San Vicente make up part of Mexico's famous wine-producing region. The state also hosts many food festivals throughout the year, including the Paella and Wine Fair, the Seafood and Fish Festival, the Tequila Festival, and the Caesar Salad Festival (the caesar salad was created in this state). The food in this region tends to be influenced by the north with the use of flour tortillas, burritos, tacos, red meat, and *machaca* (the Mexican equivalent of beef jerky). Baja California Sur only became a state in 1974, when tourist resorts such as Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo were developed. In the coastal waters off Baja California and Baja California Sur the seafood harvested includes sole, tuna, sardines, mackerel, clams, shrimp, and lobster.

Glossary

Achiote Small, hard red seeds of the annatto tree, known as achiote, which are used to give color and flavor. Achiote seeds are widely available in Caribbean and Latin groceries. The seeds should have a healthy, earthy-red color; avoid seeds that have a dull brown color. The seeds alone have a slightly musky flavor, but they are most often combined with other herbs and seasoning to make achiote paste, which is popular in the Yucatan for marinades and

sauces. In Mexico, the whole seeds are ground and used. Achiote should always be cooked in fat to remove any chalkiness.

Avocado The avocado tree, a member of the laurel family, is native of the tropical Americas. The pear-shaped fruit is sometimes known as the alligator pear. The word “avocado” is derived from the Nahuatl word *ahuacatl*, meaning “testicle.” The medicinal properties of the avocado have been lauded since the Spanish conquest.

Avocado Leaves Fresh or dried; used for their flavor in Mexican cooking, particularly in the states of Morelos, Puebla, and Oaxaca. Avocado leaves should be stored dried in an airtight container away from light.

Banana Leaves Available year-round, fresh or frozen, in most Latin American markets. Banana leaves are popular in the southern and Gulf coast Mexican states for wrapping fish, tamales, pork, and chicken. Items wrapped with banana leaves stay moist during the cooking process, plus they pick up a fruity flavor.

Beans Two beans are typically associated with Mexican cooking: black beans and larger mottled pink pintos. Small black beans, eaten extensively in Latin regions of the world including Mexico, are small and quite hard, requiring a longer cooking time than other dried beans such as the pinto. Beans and rice are normally served at every meal and are a complete protein.

Cactus Paddles (Nopales) The prickly pear cactus is the most common type of cactus eaten in Mexico. *Nopal* means cactus in Spanish and *nopales* is the term for “cactus stem.” *Nopalitos* refers to the pads once they are cut up and prepared for eating. Nopales are usually sold already cleaned (needles removed); look for bright green and firm pads. They are typically eaten grilled or boiled.

Chayote The chayote, or vegetable pear, is a native of Mexico, and its name is derived from the Nahuatl word *chayutli*. Chayote was one of the principal foods of the Aztec and Mayan people. This pear-shaped squash has the mild taste of zucchini. The flesh is quite crisp, something like a water chestnut. Chayotes come in both smooth and prickly varieties (covered in spines).

Cheeses

Fresh Cheeses

Queso Blanco A creamy white cheese made from skimmed cow’s milk. It is described as being a cross between salty cottage cheese and mozzarella. It is traditionally coagulated with lemon juice, giving it a fresh, distinctive lemon flavor, although today it is often commercially made with rennet.

Queso Fresco A pale cream-colored, moist, crumbly, soft cheese made in round cakes of different sizes. It has a slight acidity but with a creamy flavor. It is sometimes called *queso*

de metate because the curds are pressed out on the *metate* (grinding stone) until compact enough to be packed into the small wooden hoops that give them shape. It is usually made with a combination of cow's milk and goat's milk.

Panela The most popular fresh cheese in Mexico, also called *queso de canasta* because it carries the imprint of the basket in which it is molded. It is a white, spongy, salty, semi-soft cheese mild in flavor. It absorbs other flavors easily.

Requesón A loose, ricotta-like cheese used to fill *enchiladas* and to make cheese spreads. It is typically sold in the markets wrapped in fresh corn husks. *Requesón* has a very mild and semisweet flavor. Its color is white and its texture is soft, moist, and grainy.

Soft Cheeses

Oaxaca Also referred to as Asadero or Queso Oaxaca cheese. It is a semi-soft, white, string-type cheese. It is stretched, kneaded, then formed into a ball shape, which is plunged in brine for several minutes. The flavor ranges from mild to sweet and buttery.

Semi-Soft Cheeses

Asadero The literal translation of this cheese's name is "broiler" or "roaster"; the cheese itself is made by the same method as the braided Oaxaca cheese. The cheese melts easily when heated and strings appropriately.

Chihuahua Also called *queso menonita*, after the Mennonite communities of northern Mexico that first produced it. This is a mild, spongy, pale-yellow cheese. Unlike most Mexican cheeses, it is pale yellow rather than white, and can vary in taste from mild to a nearly cheddar-like sharpness.

Queso Jalapeño A smooth, soft white cow's milk cheese with bits of jalapeño chile in it.

Queso Quesadilla This cheese is smooth, soft, mild, and white. It melts easily to make dishes rich and creamy.

Semi-Firm Cheeses

Queso Criollo This pale yellow cheese is a specialty of the region around Taxco, Guerrero, and is similar to Munster.

Edam Although not considered a Mexican cheese, edam has become an intrinsic part of Yucatan regional cooking.

Manchego This cheese has a black, gray, or buff-colored rind with a crosshatch pattern. The interior ranges from stark white to yellowish, depending on age. It has a number of holes and a mild, slightly briny, nutty flavor.

Firm Cheeses

Añejo An aged cheese, white and crumbly, often very dry and salty, rather resembling a dry feta. This cheese is not as strongly flavored as cotija, but can be easily shredded or grated.

Cotija This is a sharp, crumbly goat cheese. This cheese is strongly flavored, firm and perfect for grating. It was originally made with goat's milk but today cow's milk is preferred.

Chicharrón Crispy fried pig skin used in salads, fillings, and as a snack.

Chiles, Canned Many Mexican recipes call for chiles serranos or jalapeños *en escabeche*, which means that they are canned in a souse, or pickled. Traditionally this includes vinegar, oil, herbs, garlic, onion, and slices of carrot. Canned *chiles chipotles en vinagre* or *adobo* are also widely used.

Chiles The most prominent feature of Mexican cooking is the emphasis it places on chiles, with more than seventy varieties.

Dried Chiles

Each chile has its own characteristics, flavor, and quality; you should not interchange chiles within a recipe unless it is indicated in the recipe.

Ancho Chile A ripened and dried *chile poblano*, one of the most commonly used throughout Mexico. Chile Ancho has a deep, reddish-brown color—brick red when soaked in water—and a wrinkled, fairly shiny skin. It is triangular in shape, and measures about 3 inches at its widest point and 5 inches in length. The ancho has a pleasant, sweet flavor, similar to a bell pepper. It may be stuffed; however, it is mostly soaked and ground for cooked sauces. It rates between 1,000 and 2,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Árbol Chile The name means “tree chile.” It is long and skinny, $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ inches on average, and has a brilliant red, thin, smooth, shiny skin. This chile has a vicious bite, and should be treated with caution. It has a tannic, smoky, and grassy flavor, and a searing, acidic heat on the tip of the tongue. It rates between 15,000 and 30,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Cascabel Chile Small and round, it is so named because it sounds like a rattle when it is shaken (cascabel means “jingle bells” in Spanish). It has a smooth, brownish-red skin, and usually measures 1 inch in diameter. Cascabel adds a deep smoky, nutty flavor to dishes. It is typically toasted and ground for sauce. The cascabel rates between 1,500 and 2,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Chipotle Chile This is chile jalapeño, ripened, dried, and then smoked. Its light brown, wrinkled skin smells distinctly of smoke and its name means “smoked chile.” It measures

Where's the Chile's Heat?

Chiles get their “heat”—or “pungency”—from a group of chemical compounds called capsaicinoids, the best known of which is capsaicin. According to the Chile Pepper Institute, a research and education center housed at New Mexico State University, capsaicin is produced in the whitish pith (also called membranes or ribs), not by the seeds.

HEAT SCALE

The pungency of chile peppers is measured in multiples of 100 units. It ranges from the sweet bell peppers at zero Scoville units to the habanero at 300,000-plus Scoville units! One part of chile “heat” per 1,000,000 drops of water is rated at only 1.5 Scoville Units. The substance that makes a chile so hot is called capsaicin. Pure capsaicin rates between 15,000,000 and 16,000,000 Scoville units! Today a more scientific and accurate method called liquid chromatography is used to determine capsaicin levels.

GENERAL NOTES

- Smaller peppers are usually hotter than larger peppers.
- Peppers often become hotter as they ripen, and hotter still when they're dried. Dried peppers tend to have a richer, more concentrated flavor.
- The majority of the chile's heat is concentrated in the seeds and ribs. To tone down the heat of a pepper, remove some or all of the seeds and the white ribs.
- When working with peppers, wear rubber gloves or coat your hands with vegetable oil. Wash your hands carefully afterward.
- Chiles don't freeze well.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH FRESH CHILES

- It is advisable to wear gloves when handling fresh or dried chiles.
- Never bring your hands near your eyes during or after working with fresh chiles.
- Keep some vinegar or bleach on hand to neutralize the capsaicin, if it comes in contact with your skin.
- Be very careful of the hotter chiles like the habanero. It has been known to create first-degree burns.
- Gently wash your hands and arms after working with the chiles. The chile oils will need soap to break them up. Scrub fingertips, especially under the nails, and then soak them for a few minutes in strongly salted water, if necessary.

approximately 2 to 4 inches in length and about an inch wide. As much as one-fifth of the Mexican jalapeño crop is processed into chipotles. It rates between 5,000 and 8,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Guajillo Chile A long, slender, pointed chile whose brownish-red skin is smooth, shiny, and tough, the *guajillo* averages $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in width. Sweet and mild, this chile is a base for rich chile con carne and classic Tex-Mex cuisine. The *guajillo* is used in table and cooked sauces. The skin is extra tough, so it needs longer time for cooking. It rates between 2,000 and 4,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Mora Chile This is a smoked and dried large red jalapeño pepper. Blackish red in color, it has a wrinkled, tough skin, with a round tip. A typical size is 2 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide. Like the *chipotle*, it has a smoky flavor and is very *picante* (hot and spicy). It rates between 5,000 and 8,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Morita Chile A small, mulberry-red chile, triangular in shape and about 1 inch long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide, with a slightly smoky flavor. This smoked and dried small red jalapeño pepper is very hot and spicy. It rates between 5,500 and 8,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Mulato Chile This very popular chile looks like the ancho, only slightly larger with tougher and smoother skin and a brownish black hue. It's fairly mild and has an earthy flavor; when soaked in water it has a sweetish, almost chocolatey flavor. This chile is normally used soaked and ground in cooked sauces, the classic example being *mole poblano*. It rates between 900 and 1,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Pasilla Chile This is a long, slender chile with a rounded tip. The skin is wrinkled with a blackish tone. It is a standard ingredient in mole sauces. The average size is 6 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch wide. The seeds and veins clustered at the top by the stem are very hot; however, the flesh is generally mild and has a slight "tobaccoish" flavor. It is toasted and ground for table sauces and soaked and ground for cooked sauces. It rates between 1,000 and 1,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Chile de la Tierra, Colorado Chile This is the *chile verde*, or Anaheim, ripened and dried. When dried it has a tough, dark, reddish brown matte skin. It is very mild and does not have much flavor. It rates between 700 and 1,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Fresh Chiles

Güero Chile A pale yellow chile that varies in size, averaging 4 to 5 inches long and 1 inch wide. It is pointed at the end, with a smooth, small-ridged, undulated surface. This chile can be very hot and has a delicious and distinctive flavor. It rates between 2,000 and 6,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Habanero Chile This chile is shaped like a small lantern, about 1 inch across as its widest part and a bit over 2 inches long. This extremely hot chile has a distinctive fruity flavor. It is a light green color and as it ripens it turns to one of various colors including red, orange, salmon, white, and chocolate, depending on the variety. It rates 200,000 to 300,000 Scoville units.

Jalapeños Chile The most well known of Mexico's chiles. It is a mid- to dark-green chile with a smooth surface and more often rounded at the tip than pointed. It averages $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch at its widest part. It has a unique rich fresh flavor and is hot. *Jalapeños*, like *serranos*, are used in various ways: fresh in a relish, cut and cooked, boiled and blended. It rates between 2,500 and 8,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Poblano Chile The poblano can vary in shape, color, size, and flavor, depending on where it was grown, the time of year, and so forth. Typically, they are mild, large, heart-shaped peppers with very thick walls, 5 inches long and about 3 inches wide at the top, tapering to the apex. They are great for stuffing. They can be fairly mild to hot. With minor exceptions they are always charred and peeled. It rates between 1,200 and 2,500 Scoville units on the heat index.

Serrano Chile A small, smooth, mid-green chile, mostly rounded but sometimes pointed at the end. It averages $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. The flesh has a strong, fresh flavor, and the seeds and veins are very hot and spicy. It has thin walls, so it doesn't need to be charred, steamed, and peeled before using. It rates between 8,000 and 22,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Chile Verde, Anaheim Chile A light green chile with a rounded tip, averaging 1 inch wide and 6 inches long. Anaheim chiles range from mild to hot. They have a tough skin that is typically charred and peeled before being used. When mature and red, an Anaheim is called a *chile colorado*. It rates between 1,000 and 2,000 Scoville units on the heat index.

Chorizos Brought to Mexico by Spanish explorers, this pork sausage is made all over Mexico, and each region has its own balance of spices, chiles, and herbs. Many cooks believe that lean pork is *the* important factor when making chorizos. The pork for Mexican *chorizos* is chopped (not ground), seasoned, and stuffed into casings made from pigs' small intestine.

Cilantro The fresh green leaves and tender stems of coriander, or Chinese parsley. The dried seed is occasionally used, but the two are not interchangeable. There is no substitute for its crisp and pungent flavor. Thick stems should be discarded and only thin stems and leaves used.

Cinnamon The light brown cinnamon bark originally from Ceylon is used extensively in Mexican cooking. Mexican cinnamon has a softer and more delicate flavor, and flavors both savories and sweets.

Corn Husks The dried outer sheath that surrounds each ear of corn. They are the traditional wrappers for tamales, but they can be used to wrap other foods for steaming or grilling. In addition to protecting foods as they cook, they also impart a mild corn essence. Cornhusks are used fresh as well as dried.

Cumin The flavor of cumin plays a major role in Mexican cuisine. Cumin is the dried seed of the herb *Cuminum cyminum*, a member of the parsley family. The cumin plant grows to about 1 to 2 feet tall and is harvested by hand. Cumin is a key component in both chile powder and curry powder. Always develop the flavor by cooking it first in fat.

Epazote A weed that grows all over North America. It is a strong-tasting herb; the flavor is dominant and should be used alone, not in combination with other herbs. It is quite pungent and some say it smells like gasoline or kerosene. It is most commonly used in black bean recipes to ward off some of the “negative” side effects of eating beans.

Huitlacoche An exotic fungus that grows naturally on ears of corn. The kernels are swollen and deformed, black and juicy inside and covered with a crisp, silvery-gray skin. The texture and inky flavor is unique. The earthy and somewhat smoky fungus is used to flavor quesadillas, tamales, soups, and other specialty dishes.

Jicama Like potatoes, jicama grows underground as a tuber. It is a round brown-skinned vegetable that yields crisp white flesh that looks like an apple or raw potato. Raw jicama is sweet and juicy. Always remove the fibrous brown skin. Cooked lightly it becomes milder but retains its crispness, like a water chestnut. Jicama is primarily a texture food since its flavor is rather bland.

Lime Mexican cooks use the yellow-skinned key lime, because it tastes sweeter than other limes. If key limes are unavailable, use half lemon juice and half lime juice. Mexican cuisine uses limes for marinating fish and chicken, in salsas, soups, and best of all balancing margaritas.

Masa, Masa Harina Masa means “dough” in Spanish, but in Mexico it is generally understood as “corn dough.” It is made by boiling corn kernels in powdered lime (calcium oxide), washing them, and then grinding; water is mixed in to make dough. Smoother, soft masa is required for tortillas, and coarser, stiff masa is used for tamales. Masa harina is factory-made powdered masa. It can be used to make anything that calls for masa. Ordinary yellow cornmeal for making cornbread is not a substitute.

Oregano Mexican oregano has a more assertive flavor than the Mediterranean oregano. Thirteen varieties of oregano grow throughout Mexico. However, Mexican cooks normally use dried oregano.

Pepitas or Pumpkin Seeds These seeds have been used in Mexican cuisine since pre-Columbian times. Toasted in their hulls or hulled but unroasted and unsalted, they are used in moles, sauces, salads, and snack foods.

Plantains Plantains are popular in Latin American, Asian, and African cuisines, and are prepared and eaten in a number of ways. Unlike their common sweet banana cousin, plantains have to be cooked. They are starchy, only slightly sweet, and are no more appealing to eat raw than a potato. They can be pink, green, red, blackish-brown, and yellow with black spots. In Mexican cooking they must be very ripe, almost juicy, and sweet.

Sesame Seeds Widely used as a topping for breads and pastries or as a thickener for sauces.

Seville or Sour Oranges Small, brilliantly orange, thin-skinned oranges. There is no real substitute for the sharp, fragrant juice.

Tamarind Seeds and Paste Widely grown in Mexico since the sixteenth century, this is a 3- to 8-inch-long, brown, irregularly curved pod, which produces a juicy brown to reddish brown acidulous pulp. When fully ripe, the shells are brittle and easily broken. The pulp dehydrates to a sticky paste enclosed by a few coarse strands of fiber. The pods may contain from one to twelve large, flat, glossy brown seeds embedded in the brown, edible pulp. The pulp has a pleasing sweet-sour flavor and is high in both acid and sugar.

Tomatillos (Tomates Verdes, Mexican Green Tomatoes) The *tomatillo* is of Mexican origin; however, it now grows everywhere in the Western Hemisphere. It is a pale green fruit enclosed in a green, papery husk that ripens to yellow. It is not an ordinary unripe tomato. In central Mexico it is called *tomate verde*, and in the northeast *fresadilla*; elsewhere it is *tomatillo*, *tomate de cascara*, or *tomate de bolsa*. Generally used when they are green rather than yellow, *tomatillos*, vary in acidity and have a very tart flavor. When working with *tomatillos* always remove the husks and wash the fruit.

Tomatoes Tomatoes are indigenous to Mexico and South America, and are grown year round. The Italian plum tomato, called *jitomato guaje* (“gourd” tomato) or *guajillo*, like the chile, is also grown extensively. However, the skin of the plum tomato is much tougher than an ordinary tomato.

Tortillas Indispensable in Mexican cuisine, made with either corn or wheat flour. Available both fresh and frozen.

KITCHEN TOOLS

Cazuela An earthenware casserole used to make moles. Its great advantage is that it heats evenly, eliminating that nemesis of all cooks, the dreaded “hot spot.”

Coffee/Spice Grinder A necessity for many Mexican dishes that call for ground *achiote*, pumpkin or sesame seeds, or spices.

Comal A round plate, usually made of unglazed earthenware, cast iron, or tin, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. It is a Mexican griddle used for cooking tortillas, toasting chiles, garlic, and the like.

Molcajete y Tejolote This mortar and pestle combination, made of basalt, is used for grinding. The tejolote is a heavy, oval shaped rock used to grind spices, onions, peppers, and tomatoes into thick purees in a molcajete.

Molinillo Found in every Mexican kitchen, this wooden implement will, when twirled between the palms of both hands, give hot chocolate a spectacular collar of froth.

Tortilla Press An absolute must if you plan to make your own tortillas, the wooden variety of tortilla presses have largely been replaced by the cast-iron variety. There is also an aluminum model that is decidedly less popular.

COOKING METHODS

Charring, Peeling, and Cleaning Fresh Chiles and Bell Peppers In Mexican peasant cooking this is done by charring peppers right on the charcoal or wood fire, which also serves to enhance the flavor. They can also be put directly over a gas flame, grill, or on a tray under the broiler. Char the pepper, turning it frequently, until the skin is blackened. The entire chile will not be completely black, but it should be charred about 60 percent. They will char evenly and in all the little irregular surfaces if they are first lightly coated with oil. After charring, place the pepper immediately into a plastic bag to “sweat” for about 15 minutes. Remove from the bag and when cool enough to work with, remove the blackened skin. You can use your hands, continually dipping them in water to remove the blackened bits, or use a paper towel. Use a knife to remove any skin that sticks. Do not peel roasted peppers under running water because this will wash away juices and flavor.

Guisar (Braising or Stewing) This is the most common way of cooking meat and poultry (with the possible exception of northern Mexico, where much of it is grilled). The meat, poultry, and in some cases vegetables are prepared separately from the sauce in the making of *mole*, *pipian*, and other complex dishes. A heavy-bottomed Dutch oven is a good substitute for a *cazuela* when doing this long, slow type of cooking.

Moler (Grinding) This is traditionally done in a *molcajete* but today a blender is more frequently used. The *molcajete* allows more control over the final texture of a *salsa*; however, if the sauce is a smooth one, a blender does quite well. The process of grinding chiles, herbs, spices, and tomatoes in a *molcajete* is labor-intensive, and an alternative is to grind dry ingredients in a spice or coffee mill before combining them with other ingredients. Whether using a *molcajete*, blender, or food processor, garlic and salt should be ground together before adding the remaining ingredients.

Poner a Sudar (Sweating) This refers to the method used for removing the skins from fresh chiles, especially poblanos, which are usually cooked without skins, either for stuffing or for making *rajas*, strips of chiles that are used in a great number of dishes.

Sofreir (Soft-Frying/Sautéing) Not much deep-frying is done in Mexican cooking, with the exception of some street snacks. A far more common technique is “soft-frying” or sautéing, which is done to soften ingredients and intensify their flavor. Dried chiles, for example, are sometimes soft-fried in combination with dry-roasting. Tortillas usually need to be soft-fried before being covered with sauce, as with *enchiladas*.

Tostar/Asar Toasting or dry-roasting. This is commonly done on the *comal*, but any well-seasoned griddle or dry skillet will work. It is a quick process, done over high heat and involving no liquid or oil. Toasting ingredients adds a distinctive flavor to the dish in which they are cooked.



Menus and Recipes from Mexico

M E N U O N E

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Arroz Blanco con Verduras: White Rice with Vegetables

Mole Verde con Hierbas: Pork Herbed Green Mole

Corn Tortillas

Flan de Naranja: Orange Flan

M E N U T W O

Sopa de Ajo: Garlic Soup

Nopales en Chipotle Adobado: Nopales in Chipotle Sauce

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Mole Negro Oaxaqueño: Oaxacan Black Mole

Pozole Blanco: White Pozole

Arroz à la Mexicana: Mexican Rice

Pescado à la Veracruzana: Fish Veracruz Style

Jicama Salad

Sopa de Lima con Pollo y Elote

Chicken, Corn, and Lime Soup SERVES 4-6

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 ml	Vegetable oil
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
2		Garlic cloves, minced
3 cups	18 ounces, 504 ml	Chicken stock
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups	9 ounces, 252 g	Roma tomatoes, peeled, seeded, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups	8 ounces, 224 g	Corn kernels
2		Jalapeño chiles, seeded, minced
1 teaspoon		Cumin, ground
1 cup	6 ounces, 168 g	Chicken thigh meat, fat trimmed, thinly sliced
3 tablespoons	8 g	Cilantro, chopped
$1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce, 21 ml	Fresh lime juice
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Heat oil over medium heat, add onion and garlic, cook 8–10 minutes or until very soft.
- 2 Add chicken stock, tomatoes, corn, chiles, and cumin, bring to boil, reduce to simmer, and cook 5–8 minutes to blend flavors.
- 3 Add chicken and simmer about 3 minutes to cook meat.
- 4 Stir in cilantro and lime juice.
- 5 Correct seasoning.

Arroz Blanco con Verduras

White Rice with Vegetables

SERVES 4

Chef Tip For all Mexican rice dishes, the grains are soaked, drained, and sautéed before steaming, then cooked with onion and garlic, as one would make a pilaf. This method produces fluffy, separate grains and a nutty, full flavor.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 cup	7 ounces, 198 g	Long-grain, unconverted white rice
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 g	Corn oil
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Green onions and tops, finely chopped
2		Garlic cloves, minced
1 cup	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 70 g	White mushrooms, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) slices
1		Serrano chile, seeds and veins removed, minced
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	12 ounces, 353 ml	Chicken stock
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Corn kernels
1 cup	4 ounces, 113 g	Queso fresco, grated
2 tablespoons	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, 7 g	Cilantro, chopped
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Cover the rice with hot water and let stand for 20 minutes. Drain and rinse well under cold water. Let drain for 10 minutes.
- 2 Heat the oil until it smokes and add the rice; stir until all the grains are well coated.
- 3 Cook until the rice just begins to take on a color.
- 4 Add the onions, garlic, mushrooms, and chile; cook over high heat for 10 minutes, until white onion and garlic are translucent, stirring constantly.
- 5 Add chicken stock and corn; cook uncovered over medium heat—do not stir again—until the liquid has been absorbed and small air holes appear in the rice.
- 6 Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 10 to 15 minutes.
- 7 Add the cheese and cilantro, and stir into the rice with a fork.

Mole Verde con Hierbas

Pork Herbed Green Mole SERVES 4

Green mole is most commonly found in the states of Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Oaxaca, where it is one of *los siete moles*—the seven famous moles, each with a distinctive color, flavor, and aroma. Unlike the other moles, which nearly always contain nuts and seeds, this recipe gets its characteristic flavor and bright green color from fresh herbs. If you prefer chicken, it may be substituted for pork in this recipe

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 ½ pounds	24 ounces, 672 g	Pork stew meat, 1 ½ inch (3.8 cm) cube
½ teaspoon	1 g	Black peppercorns, bruised
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, cut 1 ½ inch (3.8 cm) cube
10		Garlic cloves, peeled and split lengthwise
8		Cloves, whole, or ¼ teaspoon ground
1 teaspoon	2 g	Cumin seeds
2		Jalapeño chiles, seeds removed
1 pound	16 ounces, 448 g	Tomatillos, husks removed
2		Thyme sprigs, fresh
2		Marjoram sprigs, fresh
1 cup	8 ounces, 224 g	Masa, either fresh or reconstituted by mixing 6 tablespoons masa harina to a smooth paste with 1 cup water
½ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Italian parsley, chopped
½ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Cilantro leaves, chopped
¼ cup	½ ounce, 14 g	Epazote, fresh or ⅛ cup dried, crumbled
¼ cup	½ ounce, 14 g	Hoja santa leaves, fresh, or 3 dried leaves (Also called hierba santa or root beer plant, it has a distinctive anise flavor that's hard to duplicate.)
2 cups	14 ounces, 392 g	White beans, cooked
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Combine pork stew meat, peppercorns, ½ cup white onions, and 5 garlic cloves, cover by 1 inch with cold water. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce to simmer. Cook until just tender, 30–45 minutes. Remove meat and strain stock, reserve.
- 2 Grind the cloves and cumin seeds with a spice grinder or a mortar and pestle.
- 3 In a blender combine ground spices, jalapeño, tomatillos, thyme, marjoram, remaining garlic cloves and onions and ½ cup stock from the cooked pork. Blend until smooth.

- 4 Combine reserved pork stock and tomatillo mixture; simmer, uncovered, 3 minutes.
- 5 Whisk masa into pork and tomatillo liquid; whisking constantly, return to simmer.
- 6 Cook, uncovered, over low heat 10 minutes, whisking occasionally. If lumps form, pass through a medium-mesh sieve and return to heat. Mixture should thicken to the consistency of whipping cream; if necessary, reduce to correct consistency or thin with more stock.
- 7 Combine parsley, cilantro, *epazote*, and *hoja santa* in a blender or food processor. If necessary, add a few tablespoons of liquid; process to a smooth puree.
- 8 Add beans, cooked pork, and pureed herbs to the *masa*-thickened sauce and let return to a simmer. Correct seasoning and serve.



Corn Tortillas

YIELD: 1 POUND

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
2 cups	10 ounces, 280 grams	Prepared masa harina
1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups	21 ounces, 588 ml	Warm water, approximately
1 teaspoon		Salt

PROCEDURE

- 1 Dissolve the salt in the warm water. To the masa harina, add the water all at once (this keeps lumps from forming) and mix quickly, just until the ingredients are combined.
- 2 Let rest 5 minutes. Masa will dry out quickly, so keep covered with plastic wrap or a damp cloth.
- 3 Pinch off golf-ball-sized pieces and roll into balls.
- 4 Flatten the balls and roll out to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (.3 cm) thick or use a tortilla press. If using a tortilla press, line both sides with plastic.
- 5 Gently place the tortilla on a hot skillet or griddle. It should make a soft sizzling sound. Cook for 30–40 seconds or until the tortilla starts to bubble on top. Turn tortilla over and cook an additional 20–30 seconds.
- 6 Remove the tortilla from pan and keep warm.
- 7 To reheat, bake covered in a 350°F (176°C) oven for 10–12 minutes.



Flan de Naranja

Orange Flan

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 98 g	Sugar, granulated
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 15 ml	Water
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon		Lemon juice
Pinch		Cayenne pepper
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Blanched almonds
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$1\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, 50 g	Sugar
		Finely grated zest of 1 orange
4		Eggs
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 60 ml	Heavy cream
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	6 ounces, 180 ml	Orange juice

PROCEDURE

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F (176°C).
- 2 Make caramel by melting $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar ($3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 98 g), water, lemon juice (lemon juice keeps the mixture from hardening or crystallizing), and cayenne over low heat and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, without stirring. Gently tilt the pan off the heat to distribute color evenly as sugar caramelizes. When sugar reaches a uniform golden brown (light amber) color, immediately remove from heat.
- 3 Pour caramel into 4 individual custard cups; tip the molds side to side until there is an even coating of caramel over the bottom and halfway up the sides. Set aside.
- 4 Grind the almonds in a food processor.
- 5 Add the remaining sugar, orange zest, and the eggs, process until smooth.
- 6 Add cream and orange juice, process to mix.
- 7 Let the froth subside before pouring into custard cup.
- 8 Bake in a water bath, covered, until the flan is set. Test by inserting the blade of a knife into the center of the custard. If the blade comes out clean, cooking is done.
- 9 Set aside to cool before unmolding.

Sopa de Ajo

Garlic Soup

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 ml	Vegetable oil
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	Leeks, white and light green parts, cleaned, thinly sliced
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Garlic cloves, peeled, thinly sliced
1		Chile morita or arbol, seeded and soaked in hot water until soft
1 cup	6 ounces, 168 g	Roma tomatoes, roasted and peeled, rough chopped
3 cups	24 ounces, 672 ml	Chicken stock
3		Eggs, lightly beaten with 1 tablespoon oil
2 tablespoons	6 g	Parsley, chopped
To taste		Salt
4		2-inch round croutons
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 56 g	Panela or queso fresco cheese, crumbled

PROCEDURE

- 1 Heat oil over medium high heat; add leeks and garlic and sauté until soft but not brown.
- 2 Puree the chile and tomatoes and add to the leek mixture.
- 3 Cook over medium high heat until mixture is thick.
- 4 Add chicken stock and bring to boil; return to simmer and cook 10–12 minutes.
- 5 Add beaten eggs, stirring constantly in a circular motion. Add parsley and simmer until eggs are set.
- 6 Correct seasoning.
- 7 Serve with a crouton in each bowl and sprinkle with cheese.

Nopales en Chipotle Adobado

Nopales in Chipotle Sauce SERVES 4

The mild flavor of nopales makes them ideal for combining with strong-flavored ingredients.

Chef Tip Nopal means cactus in Spanish and nopales is the term for “cactus stem.” The term nopalitos refers to the pads once they are cut and prepared for eating. Nopales can be eaten grilled or boiled. Overcooking may give them a slightly slimy texture.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
2 cups	12 ounces, 336 g	Nopales paddles, cleaned and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.27 cm) dice
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds	672 g	Tomatillos, husked and roasted on a dry griddle or comal until soft
2		Garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
2		Chipotles in adobo sauce
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 ml	Vegetable oil
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, sliced very thin
To taste		Salt
2 cups		Arroz blanco

PROCEDURE

- 1 To prepare the nopales remove the thorns and the “eyes” with a vegetable peeler or small paring knife. Wash the pads well with cool water and peel or trim off any blemished or discolored areas.
- 2 Combine nopales with enough salted water to cover. Bring to a boil and cook 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- 3 Combine tomatillos, garlic, and chipotles in a blender and blend until smooth.
- 4 Heat oil and sauté onions over low heat until transparent.
- 5 Add puree and nopales, stir and cook over low heat 10–15 minutes. Season to taste.
- 6 Serve hot with rice and warm tortillas

Pavo con Salsa de Achiote a la Yucataneca

Yucatán-Style Steamed Turkey in Achiote Sauce

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	4 ounces, 112 g	Achiote paste (recipe follows)
3 cups	18 ounces, 504 ml	Seville or sour orange juice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 46 ml	Honey
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, 6 grams	Cumin seeds, toasted and ground
1 teaspoon	1 g	Oregano, dried
1	47 ounces, 1.33 kg	Turkey breast, bone in, skin on
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 46 g	Butter, softened, or lard
3		Banana leaves or enough fresh corn husks to line the roasting pan and cover the turkey
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 ml	Vegetable oil
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups	12 ounces, 336 ml	Beer
1 cup	8 ounces, 113 g	Pickled red onion, thinly sliced (recipe follows)
1	8 ounces, 224 g	Avocado, sliced
8		Corn tortillas, 8 inches (20 cm), warmed
		Pico de Gallo (see p. 34)
		Salsa de Jitomate Cocida (see p. 32)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Combine achiote paste, juice, honey, cumin, and oregano.
- 2 Lift the turkey skin and rub softened butter over meat.
- 3 Spread the achiote mixture evenly over turkey; let marinate at room temperature for 45 minutes or under refrigeration 3–4 hours.
- 4 Line a pan with half the banana leaves or corn husks. Place the turkey on a rack on top of the banana leaves and cover with excess marinade.
- 5 Add beer to pan, cover turkey with remaining banana leaves or cornhusks.
- 6 Wrap pan with foil or use an airtight lid.

- 7 Steam until turkey reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C). Steaming may be done in a preheated 350°F (176°C) oven. Check liquid level and add more beer or water if necessary. (Some Mexican cooks place a coin at the bottom of the steamer; when the coin begins to rattle, they add more water.)
- 8 When cooked, remove from pan and let cool. Shred as for tacos, combining meat with any sauce left in steamer. Turkey can also be placed on a platter, whole or in pieces, with any remaining sauce poured over it.
- 9 Serve turkey with pickled onion, avocado, tortillas, salsa (Pico de Gallo) and Salsa de Jitomate Cocida (p. 32; cooked tomato sauce).

Achiote Paste

MAKES $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
4 tablespoons		Achiote seeds
15		Peppercorns
1 tablespoon		Oregano
1 tablespoon		Cumin seeds
2		Whole cloves
1 tablespoon		Coriander seeds
6		Garlic cloves
4 tablespoons		White wine vinegar

PROCEDURE

- 1 Grind all but the garlic and vinegar in a coffee grinder. Crush the garlic in a mortar; gradually add the vinegar. Add the ground spices to the crushed garlic and mix well.

Pickled Red Onions

SERVES

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 pound	16 ounces, 448 g	Red onions, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices
1 tablespoon	18 g	Kosher salt
1 tablespoon	2 g	Oregano
1 teaspoon	1 g	Cumin seeds
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup	10 ounces, 280 ml	Vinegar
5–6 tablespoons	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, 49 g	Granulated sugar
1 teaspoon	2 g	Black pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Separate the onion rings, toss with the salt until coated, and let stand 30 minutes.
- 2 Rinse the onions under cold water, drain very well, and pat dry with paper towels.
- 3 Combine well the oregano, cumin seeds, vinegar, sugar, and black pepper; pour over the rings in the bowl; toss to coat well. Chill for at least 2 hours before serving.

Frijoles Refritos

Well-Fried Beans

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
3 tablespoons	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 42 g	Pork lard or vegetable oil
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
2 cups	9 ounces, 252 g	Black, pink, or pinto beans, cooked, with cooking liquid
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 In a heavy pan, heat the lard or oil over medium-high heat.
- 2 Sauté the onions until brown, 3–4 minutes.
- 3 Increase heat to high and add half the beans and all the cooking liquid; mash well.
- 4 Gradually add the remaining beans and mash to a coarse puree.
- 5 Cook additional 10–12 minutes or until the beans begin to dry out and sizzle at the edges.

Arroz Blanco

White Rice

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
		Hot water to cover
1 cup	6½ ounces, 184 g	Long-grain rice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 ml	Vegetable oil
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Carrots, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Onions, thinly sliced
1		Garlic clove, minced
2 cups	16 ounces, 470 ml	Chicken stock
2 tablespoons	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 g	Green peas, cooked

PROCEDURE

- 1 Soak rice in hot water for 20 minutes.
- 2 Drain and rinse well in cold water, let drain 10 minutes.
- 3 Heat oil to smoke point, add rice and stir to cover well with oil.
- 4 Cook, stirring, until rice is just turning color.
- 5 Add carrots, onions, and garlic; cook until onions are translucent, stirring constantly. Allow about 10 minutes over high heat to color rice and cook vegetables.
- 6 Add chicken stock and cook uncovered over medium heat—do not stir—until the liquid has been absorbed and small air holes appear.
- 7 Cover rice with a tight lid or aluminum foil, to prevent steam from escaping. Let set for 25 minutes.
- 8 Remove cover; stir in peas.

Salsa de Jitomate Cocida

Cooked Tomato Sauce YIELD: 1 ½ CUPS

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1		Poblano chile, charred, peeled, seeded, and ¼ inch (.6 cm) dice (see step 1)
8 ounces	224 g	Tomatoes, charred, seeded, and chopped (see step 1)
1 tablespoon	½ ounce, 14 ml	Vegetable oil
½ cup	3 ounces, 84 g	Red onion, ¼ inch (.6 cm) dice
2		Garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon	3 g	Oregano, fresh, or ½ teaspoon dried
1 teaspoon	3 g	Basil, fresh, or ½ teaspoon dried
½ cup	4 ounces, 112 g	Tomato sauce
1 teaspoon	5 g	Fresh lime juice
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Char poblano and tomatoes, turning frequently, until lightly charred on all sides, 3 to 5 minutes for chiles, 6 to 8 minutes for tomatoes (flesh should be soft).
- 2 Heat oil over medium heat and sauté onion and garlic until translucent, about 5 minutes.
- 3 Puree charred tomato and poblano.
- 4 Combine all ingredients except lime juice and salt and pepper, and cook over medium heat until slightly thickened and flavors are blended, about 5 minutes.
- 5 Add lime juice and correct seasoning.

Churros

SERVES 4

Churros are fried strips of dough typically served hot and sprinkled with powdered sugar or cinnamon and sugar, or dipped in chocolate. While the churro is actually an import from Spain, the dessert became very popular in Mexico. It is customary to serve churros with Mexican hot chocolate (see p. 34) or *Cafe de Olla*.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	6 ounces, 168 g	All-purpose flour
1 teaspoon	2 g	Baking powder
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	10 ounces, 280 ml	Water
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	1 g	Salt
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons	21 g	Brown sugar
1		Egg yolk
		Oil for deep frying
1		Lime, cut into wedges
		Powdered sugar for dusting

PROCEDURE

- 1 Sift the flour and baking powder together; set aside.
- 2 Bring water to a boil, add salt and brown sugar, stirring constantly, until both have dissolved.
- 3 Remove from heat, add the flour and baking powder mixture, and beat continuously until smooth.
- 4 Beat in the egg yolk until the mixture is smooth and glossy. Set the batter aside to cool. Have ready a churro maker or a piping bag fitted with a large star nozzle, which will give the churros their traditional shape.
- 5 Heat the oil to 375°F (190°C) or until a cube of dried bread floats and turns golden after 1 minute.
- 6 Spoon the batter into a churros maker or a piping bag. Pipe five or six 4-inch lengths of the mixture into the hot oil, using a knife to slice off each length as it emerges from the nozzle.
- 7 Fry for 3–4 minutes or until golden brown.
- 8 Drain the churros on paper towels while cooking successive batches. Arrange on a plate with lime wedges, dust with powdered sugar, and serve warm.

Mexican Hot Chocolate

SERVES 4

Mexican chocolate is a grainy chocolate disk flavored with sugar, cinnamon, almonds, and vanilla. It is used to prepare hot chocolate and mole sauces. For 1 ounce Mexican chocolate, substitute 1 ounce semisweet chocolate, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon, and 1 drop almond extract.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 quart	32 ounces, 896 ml	Milk
1 pound	16 ounces, 448 g	Mexican chocolate or dark bitter chocolate
2		Vanilla beans, split lengthwise

PROCEDURE

- 1 Warm milk and chocolate.
- 2 Scrape seeds from the vanilla bean and add the seeds and beans to milk.
- 3 Stir with a *molinillo* or whisk until the chocolate is melted and the mixture begins to boil. Remove the vanilla beans. Remove from the heat and froth the chocolate with the *molinillo* or the whisk. Serve immediately in ample mugs.

Pico de Gallo

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 0.015 l	Olive oil
1 cup	4 ounces, 113 g	Yellow onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
1		Serrano pepper, minced
1		Garlic clove, minced
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons		Cilantro, minced
1 cup	6 ounces, 170 g	Tomatoes, peeled, seeded, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 0.015 l	Fresh lime juice
To taste		Salt and black pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Heat oil over medium heat. Add onions, serrano pepper, garlic, and cilantro. Toss and remove from heat. Let cool.
- 2 Combine onion mixture with tomatoes and lime juice and correct seasoning.
- 3 Serve warm or at room temperature.

Guacamole

Avocado Dip

The word *guacamole* comes from the Nahuatl words for avocado (*ahuacatl*) and “mixture” or “concoction” (*molli*). It should be made in the *molcajete*, never in a blender or food processor. Guacamole can contain a seemingly infinite variety of ingredients; however, it is best when kept simple: avocados, chiles, onions, cilantro, and seasoning. Even tomatoes may cause problems if they are too watery.

Guacamole is usually eaten in Mexico at the beginning of a meal with a pile of hot, freshly made tortillas, crisp pork skins (*chicharron*), or little pieces of crispy pork (*carnitas*).

YIELD: 2 CUPS

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (.3 cm) dice
2		Jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded, and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (.3 cm.) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Cilantro, chopped fine
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 ml	Fresh lime juice
To taste		Salt
3		Hass avocados, ripe
Optional		
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	5 ounces, 140 g	Tomatoes, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
Garnish		
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (.3 cm) dice
1 tablespoon	2 g	Cilantro, chopped fine
As needed		Tortilla chips

PROCEDURE

- 1 In a *molcajete* or with a regular mortar and pestle, grind together the onion, chiles, cilantro, lime juice, and salt until smooth.
- 2 Cut the avocados in half. Remove the pits, scoop out the flesh, and mash roughly into the chile mixture in the *molcajete*. Mix well to incorporate flavors.
- 3 Stir in tomatoes, if desired.
- 4 Adjust the salt.
- 5 Sprinkle with garnish and serve immediately with warm tortilla chips.

Sopa de Fideos Aguada

Noodles in Tomato Broth

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 g	Chicken fat or vegetable oil
	3 ounces, 84 g	Mexican fideos, angelhair pasta, or vermicelli
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	9 ounces, 252 g	Roma tomatoes, roasted and peeled
1		Garlic clove, chopped
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	White onion, roughly chopped
5 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	42 ounces, 1.24 liter	Chicken stock, heated
1 tablespoon	3 g	Italian parsley, roughly chopped
To taste		Salt

PROCEDURE

- 1 Heat fat or oil until it begins to smoke; add the whole bundles of noodles without breaking them up.
- 2 Sauté, stirring constantly to prevent scorching, until they are just golden brown.
- 3 Drain off excess fat; reserve 2 tablespoon in pan.
- 4 In a blender, combine tomatoes, garlic, and onions; blend until smooth.
- 5 Add mixture to the browned noodles; stir to coat noodles.
- 6 Add hot chicken stock and parsley; bring to a boil.
- 7 Reduce heat and simmer until pasta is cooked (soft).
- 8 Adjust seasoning.

Sopa de Fideos Aguada – Noodles in Tomato Broth



Chiles en Nogada

Chiles in Walnut Sauce

SERVES 4

This is one of the famous dishes of Mexico: large, dark green chiles poblanos stuffed with a pork meat picadillo and covered with a walnut sauce. It is decorated with red pomegranate seeds and large-leafed Italian parsley. The recipe is said to have been concocted by the grateful people of Puebla, for a banquet in honor of Don Agustin de Iturbide's saint's day, August 28, in 1821. He and his followers had led the final revolt against Spanish domination; as self-proclaimed emperor he had just signed the Treaty of Cordoba. All the dishes at the banquet were made with ingredients the colors of the Mexican flag: in this dish green chiles, white sauce, and red pomegranate seeds.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
4		Chiles poblano, large and smooth
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 ml	Vegetable oil
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	12 ounces, 336 g	Pork, chopped fine
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (.6 cm) dice
1		Garlic clove, minced
1 cup	6 ounces, 170 g	Tomato, peeled, seeded, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (.6) dice
1		Apple, sweet or tart, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Peaches, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Plantain, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Raisins
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Almond slivers
2 teaspoons	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 g	Pine nuts
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{3}$ ounce, 10 g	Lemon zest
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 ml	Chicken stock
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	1 g	Coriander seeds
To taste		Salt and black pepper
3		Eggs, separated
As needed		Flour
As needed		Oil
2 cups	16 ounces, 448 ml	Walnut sauce (recipe follows)
Garnish		Seeds of two pomegranates

Chiles en Nogada – Chiles in Walnut Sauce



PROCEDURE

- 1 Roast (char) the chiles, steam, and peel off outer skin without removing the stem.
- 2 Make a lengthwise slit in each chile and remove the veins. Optional: Soak in a salt water and vinegar solution for up to 2 hours to reduce the heat of the pepper.
- 3 Heat oil and brown the pork. Remove and drain meat; leave fat in pan.
- 4 Cook onion and garlic until translucent. Add tomatoes and cook 2 minutes.
- 5 Combine pork, apples, peaches, plantain, raisins, almonds, pine nuts, lemon zest, and chicken stock with onion mixture. Add coriander and season with salt and pepper.
- 6 Cook over slow heat until almost dry. Allow to cool.
- 7 Stuff chiles with pork mixture. Reshape and secure openings with a toothpicks; chill for 30 minutes.
- 8 Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Lightly beat the egg yolk and mix into whites.
- 9 Heat oil to 350°F (175°C) in a deep fryer or pan fry using enough oil so it comes up half the thickness of the chiles.
- 10 Dip the stuffed chiles in flour and then in the egg batter, and fry until golden brown on each side. Drain on paper towels and remove toothpicks.
- 11 Just before serving, coat with warm walnut sauce and garnish with pomegranate seeds.

Walnut Sauce

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	Walnut halves
1 cup	8 ounces, 240 ml	Milk
1 ounce	28 grams	Sliced bread, torn in pieces
1 cup	8 ounces, 224 g	Queso fresco or whole-milk ricotta cheese
1 cup	8 ounces, 240 g	Heavy cream
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	2 g	Sugar

PROCEDURE

- 1 Soak walnuts in half the milk for 1 hour. Strain and reserve the milk. Rub walnuts in a clean towel to remove the skin.
- 2 Soak the bread in remaining milk for at least 30 minutes.
- 3 Combine all ingredients in a blender and process until smooth.

Frijoles de Olla “Pot” Beans SERVES 4

This is traditionally served in a small earthenware bowl.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
2 cups	15 ounces, 420 g	Dried beans, black, pink, or pinto
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6) dice
2 tablespoon	1 ounce, 28 g	Pork lard or vegetable oil
1 tablespoon	15 g	Salt
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Rinse beans in cold water and check for and remove small stones.
- 2 Cover beans with hot water, add onion and lard, and bring to boil.
- 3 Reduce to simmer; cover and cook until they are just soft and the skins are breaking open, $1\frac{1}{2}$ –2 hours.
- 4 Add salt and continue to cook until the beans are soft and the liquid is somewhat thick.
- 5 Correct seasoning.

Arroz con Leche Mexican Rice Pudding

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
2 cups	16 ounces, 480 ml	Milk
1		Cinnamon stick
1 cup	$6\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 184 g	Long-grain rice
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 98 g	Granulated sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	4 ounces, 112 ml	Sweetened condensed milk
$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons	8 ml	Vanilla extract

PROCEDURE

- 1 Combine milk and cinnamon; bring to boil.
- 2 Add rice, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook 15 minutes.
- 3 Combine sugar, condensed milk, and vanilla; stir to dissolve. Stir into rice and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat and serve warm.

Mole Negro Oaxaqueño

Oaxacan Black Mole SERVES 4-6

The most famous of *Oaxaca*'s many moles, traditionally served with pork, chicken, or particularly turkey, this is the choice for festive occasions. In Mexico, the ingredients for large batches of mole are usually taken to a *molino*-mill to eliminate the laborious process of grinding with the *metate* (stone mortar and pestle).

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
	5 ounces, 140 g	Mulato chiles
	4 ounces, 112 g	Ancho chiles
	2 ounces, 56 g	Pasilla chiles
	4 ounces, 114 g	Chile negro
2 cups	16 ounces, 448 ml	Chicken stock
1		Dried avocado leaves
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounces, 56 g	Sesame seeds
1	2 ounces, 56 g	Corn tortilla, finely chopped
	2 ounces, 56 g	Bolillo or French roll, crumbled
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 ml	Lard or vegetable oil
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Almonds, sliced
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Peanuts, shelled and skinned
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Raisins
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Prunes, pitted and chopped
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	3 ounces, 84 g	Plantain, peeled and chopped
1 teaspoon	2 g	Black pepper
2		Allspice, whole
$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon		Marjoram
$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon		Thyme
$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon		Oregano
1		Cinnamon stick, 2 inches

(Continued)

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
Pinch		Anise
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	3 g	Cumin, ground
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Garlic clove, minced
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, chopped
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Tomatillos, husked
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Tomato
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	4 ounces, 112 ml	Vegetable oil
	2 ounce, 56 g	Mexican chocolate
To taste		Sugar and salt

PROCEDURE

- 1 Roast chiles and remove the veins and seeds; soak in chicken stock for 20 minutes. Puree chiles in a blender or food processor with stock. Reserve.
- 2 Dry-toast the avocado leaves, sesame seeds, tortillas, and *bolillo* until browned, set aside.
- 3 Heat the lard and fry the almonds, peanuts, raisins, prunes, plantain, herbs, spices, garlic, and onions until the onion begin to soften. Add more oil if needed.
- 4 Roast the *tomatillos* and tomatoes on the *comal* or on a sheet pan under the broiler.
- 5 Blend all ingredients in a food processor, blender, or mortar except chile puree, vegetable oil, and chocolate; puree until smooth, adding enough water or stock to allow the blades to move. May be done in batches.
- 6 Heat the vegetable oil over medium heat.
- 7 Add blended ingredients and cook over low heat for 35 minutes.
- 8 Add chile puree and continue to cook 30 minutes or until thickened.
- 9 Add chocolate; stir until melted.
- 10 Adjust seasoning with sugar and salt.

Pozole Blanco

White Pozole

SERVES 4-6

Pozole, a Mexican soup, is made with a special type of corn that has been slaked (soaked) in a solution of lime. The traditional corn used is *maiz blanco* or *cacahuazintle* [kaw-kaw-WAH-SEEN-til]. This is a very large-kerneled white corn grown in Mexico.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
		Water to cover
2 cups	13 ounces, 364 g	Hominy
1 pound	16 ounces, 448 g	Pork stew meat, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.2 cm) cubes
1 pound	16 ounces, 448 g	Pork neck bones
1		Pork trotters (optional), cut in 4 pieces
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.2 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Garlic cloves, minced
To taste		Salt and pepper
Garnish		
2		Limes, quartered
2 cups	4 ounces, 112 g	Lettuce or cabbage, shredded
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Radishes, washed, sliced thin
1 tablespoon		Dried oregano
1 tablespoon		Crumbled chiles piquin or other small, dried hot red chiles
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6) dice
8		Corn tortillas, 4 inch, fried crisp

PROCEDURE

- 1 Add water to hominy to cover by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.2 cm).
- 2 Bring to boil and cook until corn kernels start to blossom or “flower” (they will open out at one end).
- 3 Add all pork items, first quantity of onion, and garlic; cook until pork is tender, adjusting water as needed.
- 4 Correct seasoning.
- 5 Arrange lime wedges, shredded lettuce or cabbage, radishes, oregano, chiles, and onions in bowls.
- 6 Ladle soup over garnish.
- 7 Serve with fried tortillas.

Arroz à la Mexicana

Mexican Rice

SERVES 4-6

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
		Hot water to cover
1 cup	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, 184 g	Long-grain rice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 ml	Vegetable oil
1 cup	6 ounces, 168 g	Tomato, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Onions, thinly sliced
1		Garlic clove, minced
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce, 28 g	Carrots, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
2 cups	16 ounces 470 ml	Chicken stock
2 tablespoons	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 g	Green peas, cooked

PROCEDURE

- 1 Add hot water to cover rice and soak for 20 minutes.
- 2 Drain and rinse well in cold water; let drain 10 minutes.
- 3 Heat oil until smoke point; add rice and stir to cover well with oil.
- 4 Cook, stirring, until rice is light golden, stirring and turning so the rice cooks evenly. This process should take about 8 minutes and should be done over high heat or the rice will become mushy in its final cooking stage.
- 5 Blend the tomato, onion, and garlic until smooth; add to the fried rice.
- 6 Cook until the mixture is dry.
- 7 Add carrots and chicken stock; cook uncovered over medium heat—do not stir—until the liquid has been absorbed and small air holes appear.
- 8 Cover rice with a tight lid or aluminum foil to prevent steam from escaping. Let set for 25 minutes.
- 9 Remove cover; stir in peas.

Pescado à la Veracruzana

Fish Veracruz Style SERVES 4

Pescado à la Veracruzana is one of the most famous dishes of Veracruz, which lies on the Caribbean coast of eastern Mexico. This dish shows a strong influence of Spanish cuisine.

Chef Tip Be careful with how much salt you add to this dish. The olives and capers will add their own salt to the sauce.

Red snapper is the fish most commonly associated with this dish, but any firm white fish fillet may be used.

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
4	4–6 ounces, 113–1170 g	Fish fillets, boneless white firm flesh
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 ml	Fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon	8 g	Salt
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 ml	Vegetable oil
1 cup	4 ounces, 112 g	White onion, sliced thin
2		Garlic cloves, minced
3 cups	18 ounces, 508 ml	Tomatoes, peeled, seeded, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) dice
1 cup	8 ounces, 224 ml	Fish stock or water
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Green olives, pitted, sliced thin
2 tablespoon	6 g	Parsley, minced
1 teaspoon	1 g	Oregano, dried
1		Bay leaf
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, 14 g	Capers, rinsed, drained
2		Jalapeños, seeds and veins removed, sliced thin
1		Cinnamon stick
2		Whole cloves
To taste		Salt and pepper
		Rice, for serving

PROCEDURE

- 1 Marinate the fish in the lime juice and salt, 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- 2 Heat oil over medium heat; add onion and cook until translucent.
- 3 Add garlic and cook 1 minute.
- 4 Add remaining ingredients, bring to simmer, and cook 15 minutes until almost sauce consistency.
- 5 Add fish to tomato sauce, cover with sauce; cover and simmer until fish is cooked.
- 6 Serve with rice.

Pescado à la Veracruzana – Fish Veracruz-style



Jicama Salad

SERVES 4

AMOUNT	MEASURE	INGREDIENT
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Red bell pepper, julienned
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Green bell pepper, julienned
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Yellow bell pepper, julienned
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces, 56 g	Carrot, julienned
2 cups	8 ounces, 224 g	Jicama, peeled, julienned
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	3 ounces, 84 g	Cucumber, peeled, seeded, julienned
1 tablespoon	3 g	Fresh cilantro, minced
1 teaspoon		Fresh parsley, minced
1 teaspoon		Fresh chives, minced
2		Shallot, minced
1		Garlic clove, minced
2 tablespoons	1 ounce, 28 ml	Vinegar or sherry wine vinegar
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2 ounce, 56 ml	Olive oil
To taste		Salt and pepper

PROCEDURE

- 1 Combine the first six ingredients.
- 2 Combine the remaining ingredients and whisk mixture until well incorporated.
- 3 Toss vegetables with dressing; refrigerate until ready to serve.