



Pueblo Mágico Manual
La Villa Bonita Mexican Culinary Vacation
Chef Ana García

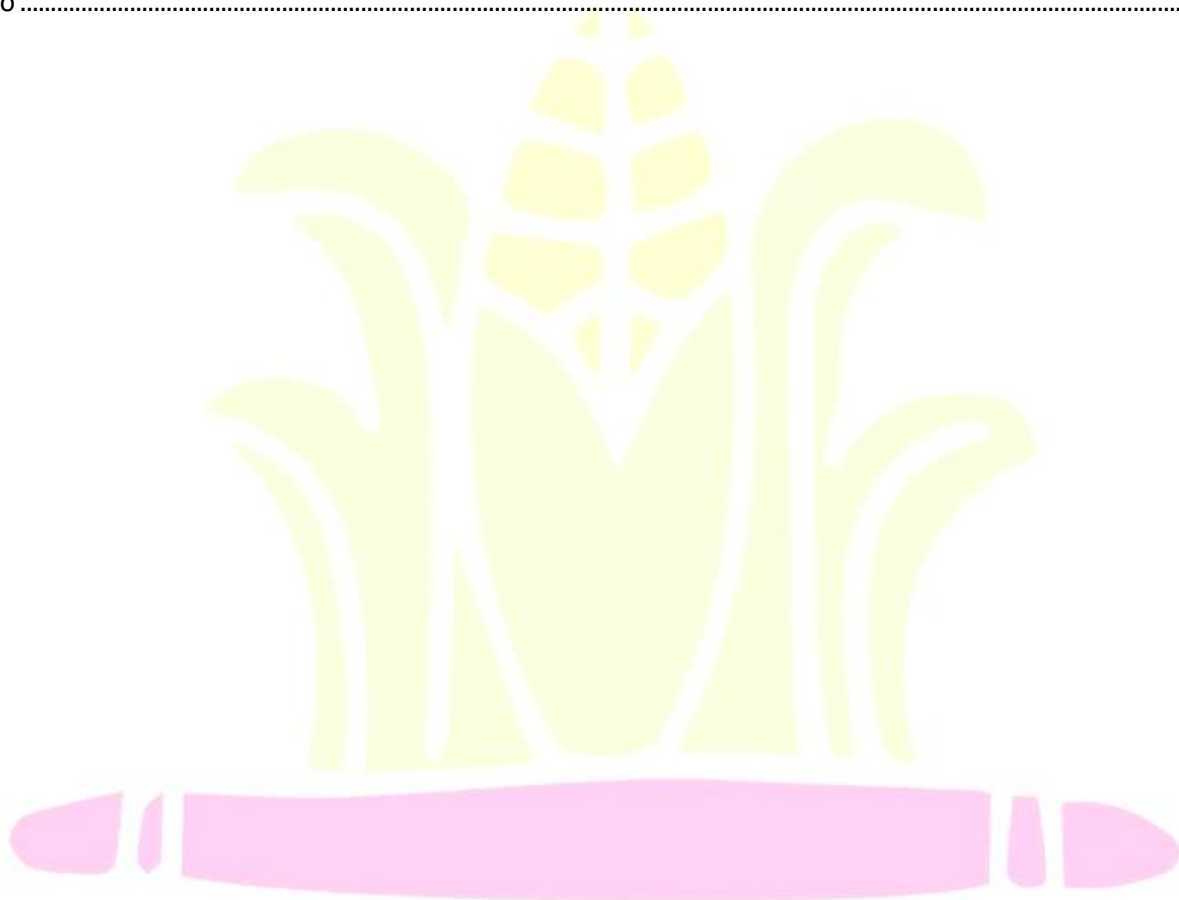
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Dear Participant:

Welcome to Tepoztlán and La Villa Bonita Culinary Vacation! We hope that your stay with us will be culturally interesting, informative, and fun. Chef García and the LVB staff are here to make sure that your stay meets your expectations as well as to assure that you have an enjoyable stay with us. Please feel free to ask any member of the staff if you have any questions or need assistance during the week.

We use the cellular phone app Signal and a group will be created during your stay. Please use that group to communicate with us at any time or send a message directly to us if you need anything during your stay. We will use the group to send any last-minute updates, share pictures, and stay in touch during the week. The WIFI for the house is network "La Villa Bonita Guests" and password "tortillas00".

Your manual includes the background and history of the dishes and ingredients as well as and space at the bottom of each recipe for notes and comments on the recipes. The recipes in the manual are the starting point that may be modified by Chef Garcia. Since Mexican cuisine is very technique-oriented, recipes are flexible allowing for creativity and experimentation. Please use the notation space for any observations or modifications as you go along.

Since our packages are limited in size, our guests can enjoy a very flexible package. If there is something that you want to learn, see or discuss, please feel free to let Chef Garcia know so that we can include such interests in the program.

Once again, thank you for choosing La Villa Bonita.

Sincerely,



Robb M. Anderson

PUEBLO MAGICO 7-NIGHT SCHEDULE

(All Events at La Villa Bonita marked "LVB")

Sunday

- 1:00- Airport Pickup in Mexico City and transport to La Villa Bonita (LVB).
- 2:30-3:00 Get accommodated and relax!
- 6:00-7:00 Ana's 4-Course Chef's Table Dinner of local ingredients.

Monday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast (LVB)
- 9:30-11:00 Walking excursion to Tepoztlán Market for general selection of ingredients (wear comfortable walking shoes)
- 11:30-2:30 Preparation of Dishes (TBA) in LVB kitchen. Welcome to Mexico Taco Fiesta (Tinga stew, cortadillo de res, frijoles de la olla, nopal mushroom and corn salad, roasted green salsa, Ancho Reyes Gavilan Cocktail. Nixtamal and tortillas 101)
- 2:30-3:30 Lunch of dishes prepared with drink service (LVB)

Tuesday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast (LVB)
- 8:50-11:00 Optional Yoga Class (\$15 USD per person)
- 11:00 Visit to the Masa Mill
- 12:00-3:30 Preparation of Dishes (TBA) in LVB kitchen. Traditional Tepozteco meal (Huanzontles in pasilla sauce, cecina with green raw salsa, refried beans, rajas, Guayaba in syrup, pineapple and mint agua fresca, cocktail jalapeño margarita. Other options seasonal Huasmole, Xompatle with fresh field beans in guajillo sauce, Green mole with frijol chino tamales.
- 3:30-4:00 Lunch of dishes prepared with drink service (LVB)

Wednesday

- 8:30-9:30 Coffee, Juice, Fruit, and Tea (LVB) (you will be eating in the market)
- 10:00-12:00 Trip to Tlayacapan to visit the pottery-makers.
- 12:00-2:30 Walking/Eating Tour of the Farmer's Market and Downtown

Thursday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast (LVB)
- 8:50-11:00 Optional Yoga Class (\$15 USD per person)
- 12:00-3:30 Preparation of Dishes (TBA) in LVB kitchen. Sopa de lentejas, Chiles rellenos with cheese in a tomato sauce, Chayotes in cream sauce, Arroz blanco, Orange flan, Jamaica Martini and watermelon agua fresca.
- 3:30-4:00 Lunch of dishes prepared with drink service (LVB)

Friday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast at LVB
9:30-1:00 Preparation of Dishes (TBA) in LVB kitchen. Mole Colorado, stuffed calabacitas, red rice with fried plantains, Natilla, Tamarind margaritas and Lime cucumber agua fresca.
2:00-3:00 Lunch of Dishes Prepared with wine and beer service.

Saturday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast at LVB,
10:00-6:00 Today is your day to do what your heart desires. You can have an afternoon on your own, shopping, relaxing.

Sunday

- 8:30-9:00 Breakfast LVB
10:00- Transportation and Departure to Airport provided by LVB

TIPS FOR BEING IN TEPOZTLÁN

1. **Be Safe.** Tepoztlán is a very safe place but there are some simple ways to reduce the risk of an unfortunate occurrence. Locals are very happy to help you and are used to a certain amount of tourism in their town. If you are going out, please keep in mind an important point of reference. We are in the area called “Tierra Blanca.” That will get you to our little park and you simply continue up from there. Taxis may not know where La Villa Bonita is but Tierra Blanca is our section of town. Do not hesitate to contact us at any hour on the Signal Messenger group. Feel free to walk around Tepoztlán at any hour but simply follow the same rules you would anywhere in the world. As a rule, it is not a good idea to carry around a lot of cash or count a lot of cash in the open. Anywhere between 1800-3600 pesos (100-200 USD equivalent) in cash is good amount to have on hand at any time when you are out-and-about. ATMs accept US cards. In Tepoztlan, there are three ATMs, one in the Bancomer on the corner of Villamar and Zaragoza in the downtown circuit as well as an HSBC ATM next to the central ruta bus station on the intersection between Avenida del Tepozteco and Zaragoza and a Banorte in a little shopping area towards the Tepozteco on the Avenida del Tepozteco. Established restaurants and shops usually accept credit cards, but stall owners or more rustic shops may not. We are here to make your stay enjoyable. Feel free to contact any of the LVB staff for anything you may need.
2. **Whatsapp Messenger.** Please download and install Whatsapp on your cell phone if you have not done so already. We will use this app to stay in communication before and during your stay. Please download and install. This entails receiving an SMS text message to confirm your phone number. You will need to enter a code in the app. Once you have done so, please send us your cell phone number.
3. **Telephones, Cellphones, Wifi, and Roaming.** If you would like to make a call to the US or Canada, you can do so on our line free of charge. Just let us know and we can establish the connection. Our telephone number to give out to others who may need to contact you is 011-52-739-395-1515 (office line, may be answered in Spanish) or our reservation line US 323-285-3588 (Robb answers this line and he may be out of the house at any time, but it is good for messages). If you are out-and-about and have a roaming package or bought additional data, it is very handy to stay in touch and use the WhatsApp app for communication. We have wi-fi in the house and in the kitchen. It is “La Villa Bonita Guests” and the code is “tortillas00.”
4. **Tipping.** **The practice of tipping is very common and accepted practice in Mexico,** from the person who bags your groceries to the guy who pumps your gas to the maid who cleans your rooms to the

guy who assists you parking your car. Many people live on tips and appreciate your generosity. If you would like to leave a tip for our staff, please pass it along to Ana or Robb as LVB employees are not allowed to accept money left in your room. We suggest 10-15 USD per day per room, but tipping is up to you. We will then distribute it to all the employees who attended to you both visible and invisible during your stay. For waiters in most restaurants, a 15% tip is a good one. If the service was exceptional you could go higher than 15%. For normal service in a cafeteria-type of restaurant a 10% tip is customary. **You do not, however, tip a taxi driver** unless they help you with your luggage or there is some other reason why the taxi driver has gone out of their way to help you. It is not expected under normal circumstances that you would tip a taxi driver.

5. **Valuables.** Although we have never had an issue, if you have valuables that you would like to for us to store, please let us know.
6. **Protect Yourself from the Sun.** The sun here is very strong and sometimes deceptively so since Tepoztlán climate is very temperate. When going out in the daytime it is generally good to use sunscreen, sunglasses, and perhaps a hat that gives you some shade. When going on the excursions a hat and/or sunscreen are essential.
7. **Water and Food.** Tepoztlán water is some of the best, most pure water in Mexico as it emanates from springs in the mountains. Nonetheless, for your safety, we have provided double filtered taps in your rooms which are the thin chrome faucets located next to the main faucet. Please use it to brush your teeth and drink. In general, you should not worry about the water or the ice cubes as no one would serve you either in an unpurified form. Street food offers some of the most interesting dining experiences. Don't shy away from eating the local delicacies. Most locals know which street vendors are good and which ones are questionable. A good rule of thumb is if it is popular, it is probably safe. If you have a craving for something you saw on the street, feel free to ask Chef Garcia or Robb and they can steer you to a good source.
8. **Taxi Prices.** To almost anywhere in Tepoztlán the taxis cost about 45-50 pesos. A taxi ride to Cuernavaca will cost about \$220 pesos. Do not be fooled. Taxistas will overcharge if they feel you don't know how much the real price should be. There are no taximeters in Cuernavaca or Tepoztlán. Before getting into the taxi, tell them where you want to go and ask "¿Cuanto cuesta? (Qwanto qwesta). Taxi fares are not an exact science – feel free to negotiate if you feel the price is exaggerated. You will almost always receive a better price if you negotiate before getting in the cab. If you want to go to Cuernavaca, ask Robb or Ana to arrange for a taxi for you. We will give them the destination and negotiate the price. When in Cuernavaca or Mexico City, Uber is great and works well. If you would like a taxi, ask for one through the restaurant or establishment in which you are

located whenever possible. They call established companies which are safer than flagging down a taxi in the street. In Tepoztlán around the main square or zocalo, there are “sitios” or taxi stands where many taxis are parked. If you don’t want to walk back to LVB at any point, obtain a taxi at a sitio around the square.

9. Getting Around in General and the Door. There are many options to move around in Tepoztlán. The first we have already discussed are taxis but you can walk anywhere and we encourage you to do so. If you get lost, you can ask anyone for “Tierra Blanca”, and they will point you in our general direction. That is what our section of town is called, and it starts with the little park. Stay to the right in the park and continue up until you see our adobe facade. You can also take any of the little ruta buses that say “Tierra Blanca” for 9 pesos, and they will bring you up to the house. The ruta runs back and forth to the downtown about every 20-30 minutes. The door has a small call box on it. Please ring the call box and we will let you in at any time.
10. Medical Attention. If you would like to see a doctor at any point during your stay, please inform Chef Garcia or Robb and they will make an appointment for you.
11. Time Difference. Apart from about 3 weeks out of the year, we are in the Central time zone. Around the change of hour in spring and fall there will be a period of about 2 weeks where our time zone will be in the Mountain time zone temporarily. Remember that we are in the Mexico City/Guadalajara time zone.
12. Bugs. We are a mountain climate and do not have very little standing water, lakes or ponds. As a result, we do not have an overabundance of mosquitos but there can be a few depending on the time of year. If you are susceptible to bug bites, we suggest the use of insect repellent which we have on hand and we suggest not leaving the door to your room open, especially in the early evening. There are scorpions in this area of Mexico. There should not be any in your room, but we do live in a rural environment. As a precaution, you should shake out your shoes before you put them on in the morning.



BASIC SALSAS

SALSA VERDE CRUDA

Raw Green Salsa
(makes 1.5 to 2 cups)

3 to 5 tomatillos (4 oz.), remove husks and wash
4 Serrano chiles, roasted and peeled
½ garlic clove, unpeeled
5 sprigs of cilantro
¼ cup water
1 teaspoon sea salt

In a blender place all the ingredients. If you are sensitive to spice, I would only put one chile and then add more if you feel you like a spicier salsa. Blend until smooth. Taste and check for salt.

ROASTED GREEN SALSA

(makes 1.5 to 2 cups)

4 tomatillos (7 to 8 oz.), remove husks and wash

4 Serrano chiles, roasted and peeled

1 garlic clove, unpeeled

7 sprigs of cilantro, chopped

2 tablespoons white onion minced

¼ to ½ cup water, as needed

1 teaspoon sea salt

Place the roasted tomatillos, serrano chiles, garlic in a blender. If you are sensitive to spice, add only one chile and then add more as needed to make the salsa spicier. Don't add all the water at once. Add as needed. Blend until smooth. Taste and check for salt. Place in a salsa bowl and mix in cilantro and onion.

TACO STUFFINGS (GUISADOS)

CORTADILLO DE RES

Beef cortadillo
Serves 4 people

I love this recipe because it is super simple, and it reminds me of vacations spent in Monterrey with my maternal grandparents and my cousins.

- 1 lb. 8 oz beef chuck in ½ inch pieces
- 2 lbs. roma tomato cut in quarters
- 5 green Serrano chiles or 2 Jalapeño chile. Cut in half long wise. For a less spicy stew, take out the placenta and the seeds or add less chiles.
- 1 lb white onion cut in slices
- 5 garlic cloves peeled
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon Mexican oregano
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon of lard or olive oil

In a cazuela or earthenware pot, heat one tablespoon of oil, add the cubed meat seasoned with salt and black pepper, and cover with a lid. Place on medium heat and allow for the meat to sweat. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile in a skillet, place the remaining oil over medium high heat. Add the onion, garlic, tomatoes, and chiles. Cover for 5 minutes so they can sweat. Once onions are soft, uncover and cook for another 5 minutes. There is no need to stir much as we would like to char the ingredients a bit.

Place the onion, tomatoes, garlic, and Serrano chiles in a food processor and pulse until the sauce is chunky. At La Villa Bonita, we like to do this in a Molcajete.

Now that the sauce is ready, add the flour to the meat and cook for another minute. Then add chunky tomato sauce along with the cumin and oregano. Add some water if needed. Cook the sauce for a couple of minutes more and it is ready to serve with corn or flour tortillas.



RAJAS

Creamy Chile Poblano strip
(Serves 4 to 6)

6 Poblano chiles
2 medium white onion, cut into thin slices
2 medium red onion, cut into thin slices
1 tablespoon oil of olive oil
2 cups Mexican crema or whipping cream
2 cups of chicken broth or milk
1 teaspoon of sea salt

Broil the chiles over the open flame until blistered and a little blackened (not ashy). Put them in a bowl and cover. After they sweat for about 20 minutes, remove the charred skin. This should be done without rinsing the chiles because you will lose the smokiness of the blistering.

Open the chiles from the top and take out the bulb and seeds. Split them open and cut into strips about 1/6 of an inch thick.

In large sauté pan, heat the oil on a medium-high flame and add the onion cover. Allow to sweat for 10 minutes. Uncover onions and continue cooking for 10 to 12 minutes or until they have started to caramelize. Add the chiles and cook for another 5 minutes.

Add Mexican cream and chicken broth. Allow coming to a boil and check seasoning. Add salt if needed. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes or until the cream thickens and has melded with the flavors.

Serve as a side dish with steak, chicken, or fish or use as a vegetarian option for tacos.



BEANS

FRIJOLES DE LA OLLA

Cooked Beans
(Make 3 quarts to 1 gallon)

2 lbs. dry black beans
1 medium white onion
1 head of garlic
4 large sprigs of epazote (only if available)
1 1/2 teaspoon salt

Clean the beans thoroughly. You are looking for bean-shaped stones or bad looking beans. Rinse well.

Place the beans in a large bowl and cover with water soak overnight or for 2 hours super important you have at least 2 inches of water over the beans, they soak a lot of water. Drain the beans and place in a 8-quart pot or an earthenware olla. Add 6 quarts of water, the epazote, onion, and garlic. The onion and garlic do not need to be peeled or chopped since the point of adding them whole is to easily remove them after they cook. Cover and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer covered for 2-3 hours or until the beans are tender. Stir the beans occasionally. Add hot water to keep the water level to about 5 inches above the level of the beans.

After the beans are completely cooked and tender, season with salt and simmer another 10 to 15 minutes to absorb the salt. Beans should never be salted before they are cooked completely, or they become tough. Remove the garlic, onion, and epazote. Remove from the heat. The beans are ready to serve in a bowl with the broth.

Although the beans are delicious freshly made, beans are generally best served reheated or refried (see the refried bean recipe). To add flare garnish with a fresh or roasted and chopped jalapeno, poblano, or serrano or add a dried chile such as chipotle, chopped onion and cilantro. Left over beans can be kept in the freezer for up to 6 months

REFRIED BEANS

(Serves 4 to 6)

This recipe is by far the most utilized in popular Mexican cooking. A true Mexican would not eat a meal without small amount of refried beans. It is truly the glue that holds the Mexican kitchen together. Once again there are many different versions of refried beans. This recipe is a basic recipe upon which you can add your own flavorful additions.

4 cups cooked and seasoned beans in their own broth (see frijoles de la olla recipe)
1 tablespoons lard or olive oil
¼ medium white onion, minced
¼ cup lard, bacon drippings or olive oil.

In a large skillet, heat the lard or olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the onion and cook until transparent.

Remove half of the bean broth. Add the beans with the remaining broth to the skillet. With a potato masher, mash the beans into a puree. Add the salt to taste if needed. Simmer the beans while stirring until they take on a mashed potato consistency.

Add the lard to the mashed beans and stir in, keep mashing until the beans are thick and they have absorbed all the lard. The beans are ready when they come off easily from the pan and have the texture of a meat loaf. At that point, the beans are ready to be served.

Refried beans can be kept for several days in refrigeration. If the beans become too dry, add water or bean broth and reheat.

SIDES

ARROZ BLANCO O ROJO

Red or White Rice
(Makes about 4 to 6 servings)

Like most rice dishes in Mexico, it is always fried first so that the grains will separate during cooking.

2 cups chicken broth or water
1 Roma or salad tomato, boiled in water
½ small white onion
1 garlic clove
1 tablespoon sea salt or to taste
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 cup D.O. del Estado de Morelos rice or long grain rice
1/4 cup chopped carrots, peas, or a whole serrano chile
Sprig of epazote or parsley

Using a blender, mix the chicken broth (you may use water if chicken broth is not available), tomato, onion, and garlic. Strain, making sure to squeeze as much of the liquid out of the onion, garlic, and tomatoes as you can and set aside.

In a small pot (2 quart) preferably with a wide opening, add the oil and heat over a medium flame. Add the rice. Stir regularly for 5 minutes or until the rice is matte white. Try not to break the rice when you are stirring it. Add the tomato liquid to the rice. Add salt (remember it has to be a little over-salted since the rice will soak up the salt).

Add the vegetables and let the broth come to a boil. Cover and cook over a low flame for 15 minutes or until the liquid is evaporated. Do not uncover the rice for at least 10 minutes or it will not cook correctly.

To make white rice, don't add the tomato to the chicken broth.

ENSALADA DE NOPALES CON CHAMPIÑONES Y ELOTE

Warm cactus paddle salad with mushrooms and corn

INGREDIENTS

Cooking the Nopales —

- 1 lbs. of fresh nopales, cut into 1/4-inch squares
- ¼ white onions whole
- 1 pinch of baking soda
- 1 teaspoon of salt

Salad Preparation —

- 1 white onion cut into half rings
- 2 lbs. of mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cups corn kernels
- 1 tablespoon Mexican oregano
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt to taste

PREPARATION

In a saucepan, place the nopales, onion, baking soda, and salt. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Cook for 10 minutes after the water starts boiling or until the nopales turn a dull green color. Drain and set aside. Let cool.

In a large skillet, heat the half of olive oil. When the oil is hot, cook the mushrooms in 3 batches until they are lightly brown, and place in a bowl. Heat the rest of the olive oil in the skillet. Add the onion and cook until transparent. Cook the corn for 5 minutes with the onions and add back the mushrooms along with the nopales. Salt and pepper and mix in the apple cider vinegar with the oregano. Serve warm or room temperature.

CHAYOTES A LA CREMA

Chayotes on cream sauce

Serves 4 to 6

INGREDIENTS:

4 chayotes, peeled and cut into strips
1 tablespoon butter
¼ cup crema or creme fraiche

1 teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon nutmeg

PREPARATION

In large sauté pan with a lid, place the chayote slices and onion. Sprinkle salt and add the butter. Cover the pan and place on a low heat. Cook for 8 minutes. Chayotes have a lot of moisture so it will steam in its own liquid.

Lift the lid and check if the chayotes are cooked, but still firm. If not, cover and allow to cook for another 3 to 5 minutes. Once they are cooked to your liking, add crema, pepper, and nutmeg. Heat the crema and check seasoning. They are ready to serve.

CALABACITAS RELLENAS

Stuffed zucchini

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS:

4 green zucchinis or 8 small round Mexican squash
8 oz. huitlacoche
2 tablespoons white onion chopped
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
½ cup tomatoes, peeled, deseeded, and chopped

¾ cup requeson or ricotta cheese (optional)
¼ cup breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons butter
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon sea salt

PREPARATION

Cut zucchinis in half and take the inside out using a melon baller, making sure they don't break. Chop what you have taken out and set aside to be used later as stuffing.

In a sauté pan on medium heat, place the onion and cook until translucent. Add the garlic for a minute or until aromatic. Then add the tomato, the huitlacoche, and the zucchini stuffing. Add salt and pepper. Cook for 5 minutes.

Before stuffing the zucchini boats, add ½ a cup of ricotta to the stuffing. Fill the half zucchinis with the huitlacoche stuffing. In a separate bowl, mix the breadcrumbs, cheese, and butter. Place this mixture on top of the zucchini stuffing. Place in an oven at 350F for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

SOUPS

CREMA DE CHILE POBLANO

Cream of Chile Poblano

6 poblano chilies, roasted, cleaned, and deveined
2 large potatoes peeled and cut into quarters
2 tablespoons butter
10 cups of chicken broth
½ medium white onion
1 garlic clove peeled
Sour cream for garnish (optional)
6 ounces of Panela cheese (optional)

In a saucepan (6-quart), heat the butter on medium-high flame and add the onion. Cook until transparent. Add the garlic clove and cook for 1 minute.

Add the potatoes to the onion and garlic and cook for 5 to 10 minutes without letting the onions and garlic burn. During this point, you may salt and pepper.

Add the already roasted, cleaned, and de-veined Chile Poblanos along with the chicken broth. Bring to a boil. Simmer until the potatoes are soft. Let the mixture cool.

Blend the chiles, the potato, the onion, and garlic with the broth until smooth. Place the soup in a 6-quart saucepan.

Leave the mixture under medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes until it begins to thicken. Add more chicken broth if needed, salt to taste.

Add to each bowl a spoon of cream upon serving as well as a generous serving of cubed Panela cheese.

SOPA DE LENTEJAS

Lentil soup
(Serves 4)

8 oz dry lentils	2 garlic cloves, chopped
1/4 white onion (not chopped)	7 sprigs of cilantro
1 garlic clove (not chopped)	1 tablespoon of olive oil
8 cups water	Sea salt to taste
2 tomatoes, chopped	1 plantain, cut in slices and fried
1 white onion, chopped	

To cook the lentils, place them in a saucepan, cover with water over 2 inches. Add 1/4 white onion and 1 garlic clove for flavor. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes or until the lentils soften. Discard the onion and garlic.

For the soup, over medium heat, place a saucepan add the olive oil and cook the chopped onions and garlic until translucent and aromatic. Add the chopped tomatoes with the onions and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes. Add half of the cilantro and the lentils with the cooking juices. If needed, add more water.

Bring to a boil and cook for another 10 to 15 minutes. Serve with fried plantains and a sprinkle of cilantro.

CREMA FLOR DE CALABAZA

Cream of Squash Flower
(Serves 6 to 8 people)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1 pound of squash flowers | 1 tablespoon butter |
| ½ cup of onion, quartered | 10 cups chicken stock |
| 2 garlic cloves | 1 tablespoon epazote, chopped (optional) |
| 2 poblano chiles, roasted, peeled and cut into thin strips | 1 cup whole milk or cream |
| 1 cup of zucchini or summer squash | Salt to taste |

Clean the squash flowers by taking off the stems and the pistils. Half of the squash should be cut into ¼ inch squares and set aside and the other half will be used for the soup.

In a stock pot, melt the butter and add the onion. Cook until the onion is transparent. Add the zucchini, epazote, and squash flowers and cook for 5 minutes.

Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil for 10 minutes. Take off the flame and let it return to room temperature.

In a blender, mix the zucchini and squash mixture until smooth and then add the milk or cream.

In a stock pot, add 3 tablespoons of butter. Cook the squash that was set aside until it becomes soft. Add the poblano chile strips and cook for 2 more minutes. Then add the squash flower soup and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve with croutons or a sprinkle of parmesan cheese.

MAIN DISHES



TINGA DE POLLO

Chicken “Tinga”

Like many of the widely diffused Mexican dishes, tinga isn't encompassed by just one recipe. This recipe is one of the classics among many variations depending on what region is offering the dish. This is the Tepoztlán version of “a messy stew.” The following recipe is for 6 to 8 people, takes 30 minutes to prepare and 1¼ hours to cook.

3 lbs. chicken cooked in water and shredded
(can be shredded rotisserie chicken if you
are in a hurry)
2 tablespoons lard or olive oil (Manteca)
3 lbs. tomatoes, cut in slices
1 lb. white onions, cut in thin slices
4 large garlic cloves chopped

2 cups of chicken broth
3 whole chipotle chilies in adobo (there are
lots of brands, Herdez, Goya, San Marcos,
etc.)
2 Bay leaves
4 cups chicken broth
1 tablespoon of sea salt or to taste

Heat the lard in a saucepan or earthenware cazuela. Add the onion and bay leaves, cook for 10 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add the chopped garlic and cook for another 1 minutes or aromatic.

Add the tomatoes. Simmer for 15 minutes or until tomatoes have broken down and become sauce-like.

Add the shredded chicken, and chipotle chiles with a tablespoon of the adobo sauce. Using whole instead of chopped chiles, the tinga will not become overly spicy. If you wish take the seeds of the chiles and chop them up for added flavor.

Add the 4 cups of chicken broth and simmer for another 20 minutes or until the tinga mixture becomes thick.

Chicken Tinga can be served as tacos with corn tortillas or on tostadas (crisp toasted corn tortillas) with a layer of refried beans as shown above. Both may be garnished with avocado slices.

HUANZONTLES

Huanzontles or as they are spelled in the Estado de México “Guausoncles” have been referred to as the “reward for Aztec champions” because they were served to the Aztec winning participants after the deadly competitions. One of the best descriptions of huanzontles is that they taste like “a field after the rain.” The scientific name for the plant is *Chenopodium Nutalliaes* and has large branches that turn into smaller branches that end in small little balls which are the seeds.

This recipe is for 6 people and has 20 minutes of preparation time and 20 minutes of cooking time.

1 lb. of huanzontles or brocoli rod	2 teaspoons of tequesquite (if available)
6 eggs whites	Salt to taste
6 egg yokes	3 cups of Lard or olive oil for frying
2 cup all-purpose flour	
12 oz of fresh cheese, panela or mozzarella	

Take the huanzontles and break them down into smaller bundles but still on their various branches. If available, place the tequesquite in a cup of water and allow to dissolve. Boil water and add the water were the tequesquite was dissolved making sure to leave the sediment behind. If tequesquite is not available use salt in the water and be generous. Add the huanzontles and cook for 30 minutes or until they are soft. Take out and drain well.

Cut your cheese into ½ inch x 3-inch pieces. Take a piece of cheese and place it in the huanzontles, forming a bundle of huanzontles around it squeeze it with your hands. Flour the huanzontles and put aside. Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks. Then fold in the egg yolks. Take the egg batter and dip the huanzontles until they are well covered. Fry the huanzontles in a small amount of lard or olive oil until slightly golden.

Prepare a caldillo (light tomato sauce in the chile relleno recipe) and serve the huanzontles bathed in that sauce. The sauce should be a little watery, not thick. Huanzontles can also be served with moles such as the recipe for adobo de pasilla chile.

Huanzontles are eaten by taking off a small branch and placing it in your mouth, holding on the end of the stem. Close your teeth slightly and pull the stem, taking off the little seed balls in your mouth. Eating with your hands is necessary.

CHILLES RELLENOS

CHILES RELLENOS DE CARNE

Meat-filled Poblano Chiles

STUFFING AND CHILE INGREDIENTS:

8 Poblano chiles, roasted and peeled	2 carrots chopped into ¼ inch pieces
1 lb. ground beef	3 tablespoons of raisins (optional)
1 lb. 8 oz tomato, chopped	2 tablespoons of olives, pitted and chopped (optional)
1 white onion, chopped	2 tablespoons of almonds, chopped (optional)
2 garlic cloves, minced	2 tablespoon lard or olive oil
2 bay leaves	Salt and pepper to taste
1 sprig of thyme	

STUFFING AND CHILE PREPARATION:

Broil the chiles over an open flame until they are evenly blistered all over. There should no green skin to be seen. They may be a little blackened but not ashy. Put them in a bowl and cover for at least 20 minutes to facilitate the process of taking off their skins. Remove the charred skin rubbing it off with your fingers. This should be done without rinsing the chiles because you will lose the smokiness of the blistering.

Using a paring knife make a slit from the base of the stem to the tip of the chile, leaving ½ inch unopened both at the top and the bottom of the chile. Open them, remove the bulb by cutting it off and take out the seeds and veins. Set aside to be used later.

In a saucepan (6-quart), heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sauté the onion and garlic 2 or 3 minutes until aromatic. Add ground meat, seasoning with salt, pepper, thyme and bay leave cook on medium-high flame. Once the juices of the ground meat have come out, add the chopped tomatoes, cover and allow to get juicer for about 5 minutes after mixture has come to a simmer. Add the carrots and cook for 5 more minutes. Taste and rectify for salt and pepper

The sauce should reduce, and the carrots should be completely cooked. After the carrots are cooked. Add the raisins, olives, and almonds and integrate for 1 minute. Let it cool.

Stuff the chiles, making sure to pack the meat from the stem to the tip of the chile. Leave enough seam in the opening to place the toothpicks to keep it closed. Set the chiles aside.

SAUCE INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. of tomatoes	1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 garlic clove, peeled	2 quarts of chicken broth or water
1 white onion, thinly sliced	Salt

SAUCE (CALDILLO) PREPARATION:

Place the tomatoes and garlic in a saucepan. Add chicken broth or water. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes or until the skin splits after they start boiling. Let them cool (important or you will have a horrible burning accident!). After they are cool put in a blender and purée - skins and everything. This is a rustic sauce or “caldillo.” “Caldillo” refers to the fact that this is more a flavored broth than a sauce.

In a saucepan, heat the olive oil and add the onion. Cook until transparent. Add the pureed tomato and cook for another 10 minutes. Add salt to taste. The sauce should be a runny like a broth with flavor and a little body to it. If it is too thick, add more chicken stock or water.

EGG BATTER INGREDIENTS:

1 cup of all-purpose flour	2 quarts of lard or peanut, avocado or unflavored coconut oil. You need a high heat oil.
1 teaspoon of salt	
6 egg whites	8 Toothpicks
6 egg yolks	

EGG BATTER PREPARATION:

On a plate, mix the flour and the salt. Then roll the stuffed chiles in this mixture, making sure you don't let the flour enter the chiles.

In a deep sauté pan (at least 3 inches deep) add the lard or oil and let it get hot for frying. The oil is sufficiently hot when bubbles appear on the submerged stem of a wooden spoon.

In an electric mixer, whip the egg whites and pinch of salt to stiff peaks, but not too dry. Add the egg yolks and fold in.

Dip the chiles in the fluffy egg batter one-by-one. Fry them by placing slowly into the hot oil seam facing up. Once the bottom is golden, turn around. Make sure they become golden all around. Set them on a cookie sheet with a rack or covered with paper napkins to drain the excess oil. You may serve them immediately or place them in the oven on low to keep them warm. When you are ready to serve, place some in a soup bowl the tomato “caldillo” with a chile on top.



CHILES RELLENOS DE QUESO

CHILE AND STUFFING INGREDIENTS:

8 Ancho chiles or Poblano Chiles

1lb 8 oz of cheese (Panela, Oaxaca, Farmer's, Monterey Jack, Gouda, any kind you like).

CHILE AND STUFFING PREPARATION FOR ANCHO CHILES:

Heat a "comal" or dry sauté pan that is not too hot or the chile will burn and taste bitter. Using a metal spatula press the chile down to the comal for a few seconds it will instantly become aromatic. Flip the chile and repeat the process. Roast all the ancho chiles one-by-one, making sure you roast both sides of each chile.

Place all the chiles in a bowl and cover with hot tap water. Put a plate on top of the chiles in the water so that they sink to the bottom. Let them sit in the water for no more than 20 minutes.

Take the ancho chiles out of the water, make a vertical incision on the side of each chile from the stem to the tip. Take out the seeds and veins.

Stuff the chiles making sure to be generous with the cheese placing it evenly from the stem to the tip of the chile. Leave enough seam in the opening of the ancho chile to keep it closed with the toothpick. Set the chiles aside.

CHILE AND STUFFING PREPARATION FOR POBLANO CHILES:

Broil the chiles over an open flame until they are evenly blistered all over. There should no green skin to be seen. They may be a little blackened but not ashy. Put them in a bowl and cover for at least 20 minutes to facilitate the process of taking off their skins. Remove the charred skin rubbing it off with your fingers. This should be done without rinsing the chiles because you will lose the smokiness of the blistering.

Using a paring knife make a slit from the base of the stem to the tip of the chile, leaving ½ inch unopened both at the top and the bottom of the chile. Open them, remove the bulb by cutting it off, and take out the seeds and veins. Make sure to be generous when stuffing the chiles with the cheese placing it evenly from the stem to the tip of the chile. Leave enough seam in the opening to place the toothpicks to keep it closed. Set the chiles aside.

SAUCE INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. of tomatoes	1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 garlic clove, peeled	2 quarts of chicken broth or water
1 white onion, thinly sliced	Salt

SAUCE (CALDILLO) PREPARATION:

Place the tomatoes and garlic in a saucepan. Add chicken broth or water. Let them come to a boil and cook for 5 minutes or until the skin splits after the water starts boiling. Let them cool (important or you will have a horrible burning accident!). After they are cool, place in a blender and purée — skins and everything. This is a rustic sauce or “caldillo.” “Caldillo” refers to the fact that this is more a flavored broth than a sauce.

In a saucepan, heat the olive oil and add the onion. Cook until transparent. Add the pureed tomato and cook for another 10 minutes. Add salt to taste. The sauce should be a runny broth with flavor and a little body to it, so if it is too thick, add more chicken stock or water.

EGG BATTER INGREDIENTS:

1 cup of all-purpose flour	2 quarts of lard or peanut, avocado or unflavored coconut oil. You need a high heat oil.
1 teaspoon of salt	
6 egg whites	8 Toothpicks (only for Poblano chiles)
6 egg yolks	

EGG BATTER PREPARATION:

On a plate, mix the flour and the salt. Then roll the stuffed chiles in this mixture, making sure you don't let the flour enter the chiles.

In a deep sauté pan (at least 3 inches deep) add the lard or oil and let it get hot for frying. The oil is sufficiently hot when bubbles appear on the submerged stem of a wooden spoon.

In an electric mixer, whip the egg whites and pinch of salt to stiff peaks, but not too dry. Add the egg yolks and fold in.

Dip the chiles in the fluffy egg batter one-by-one. Fry them by placing slowly into the hot oil seam facing up. Once the bottom is golden, turn around. Make sure they become golden all around. Set them on a cookie sheet with a rack or covered with paper napkins to drain the excess oil. You may serve them immediately or place them in the oven on low to keep them warm. When you are ready to serve, place some in a soup bowl the tomato “caldillo” with a chile on top.



CHILES RELLENOS DE QUESO Y SALSA BLANCA

Cheese-Stuffed Poblano Chiles in White Sauce

8 Poblano chiles, roasted and peeled	2 cups whipping cream
1lb 8oz of Asadero cheese or mild gouda cheese	1 cup crema or crème fraîche
1/2 cup white onion finely chopped	2 cups frozen sweet corn
1 garlic clove minced	2 teaspoons sea salt
3 tablespoons butter	½ teaspoon white pepper
2 cups chicken broth	

Broil the chiles over an open flame until they are evenly blistered all over. There should no green skin to be seen. They may be a little blackened but not ashy. Put them in a bowl and cover for at least 20 minutes to facilitate the process of taking off their skins. Remove the charred skin rubbing it off with your fingers. This should be done without rinsing the chiles because you will lose the smokiness of the blistering.

Using a paring knife, make a slit from the base of the stem to the tip of the chile, leaving ½ inch unopened both at the top and the bottom of the chile. Open them, remove the bulb by cutting it off, and take out the seeds and veins. To stuff the chiles make sure to be generous with the cheese placing it evenly from the stem to the tip of the chile. They should be fully stuffed but still close with a toothpick. Place the chiles in a baking dish.

In a 6-quart saucepan, heat the butter, add the onion and garlic. Let it get transparent. Add the corn and cook for 2 more minutes. Add the chicken broth, whipping cream, crème fraîche, and salt and white pepper to taste.

Add the white sauce to the poblano chiles that you stuffed with cheese. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes in a pre-heated 350F oven or until the cheese has melted.

CHILES EN NOGADA

This dish is one of the signature dishes of México representing in its colors the Mexican flag; green for the Chile Poblano, red for the pomegranates or “granadas” as they are called in Spanish, and white for the nut cream sauce. This recipe is one that was invented a century and a half ago and rivals mole for the most famous Poblano specialty dish in Mexico. While the name of the person who invented the dish has long been lost, what is known is that it was probably invented in a monastery by nuns. This recipe is for 8 to 16 people and has 2 hours of preparation with 30 minutes of cooking time. Truthfully it might take you more than 2 hours to make this dish peeling walnuts is a long but worth it process.

CHILE INGREDIENTS AND STUFFING:

16 or 8 poblano chiles, depending how big they are.	¼ teaspoon ground cumin
3 tablespoons of lard or olive oil	¼ teaspoon allspice
3 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced	½ teaspoon black pepper
4 tablespoons of chopped white onions	½ teaspoon of ground cinnamon
1 lb. of pork loin, chopped.	1 apple, cut into ¼ inch squares
1 lb. of ground beef	1 pear, cut into ¼ inch squares
2 ounces of ham, chopped	½ ripe but firm plantain, cut into ¼ inch squares
1 pounds Tomatoes blanched, seeded, peeled and chopped	peaches, cut into ¼ inch squares
1 cup of chicken broth	¼ cup raisins
½ cup dry brandy or sweet sherry	¼ cup almonds, peeled
a pinch of saffron	¼ cup pine nuts (optional)
¼ teaspoon ground clove	1 teaspoon of sugar
	Sea salt to taste

NOGADA SAUCE:

8 oz walnut halves or blanched almonds	Pinch of salt
1 cup milk	1 teaspoon sugar
1 cup whipping cream	1 oz brandy (optional)
3 ½ oz queso fresco or cream cheese	½ cup chopped parsley
Pinch of cinnamon	1 “Granada” or pomegranate

PREPARATION FOR POBLANO CHILES

Broil the chiles over an open flame until they are evenly blistered all over. There should no green skin to be seen. They may be a little blackened but not ashy. Put them in a bowl and cover for at least 20 minutes to facilitate the process of taking off their skins. Remove the charred skin rubbing it off with your fingers. This should be done without rinsing the chiles because you will lose the smokiness of the blistering.

Using a paring knife make a slit from the base of the stem to the tip of the chile, leaving ½ inch unopened both at the top and the bottom of the chile. Open them, remove the bulb by cutting it off, and take out the seeds and veins. If you don't mind a little spiciness, leave the veins in. Those who don't want the possibility of a spicy poblano, take out veins and may also bathe the chiles in hot water with salt for 20 minutes, but you lose roasted flavor.

STUFFING

Heat the lard or olive oil. Add pork and beef, adding salt and pepper along with half of the spices (cumin, cloves, cinnamon, and allspice). Once the juices of the ground meat have dried, add the ham. Allow the meat to brown for a couple of minutes. Move the meat to the sides of the pan creating a funnel in the middle. If the ground meat is lean, add some more lard or olive oil. Allow the pan to get hot and add the onion and garlic. Cook until the onion is transparent and then mix with the meat.

Add tomatoes, the chicken broth, ½ cup of brandy, the saffron, raisins and almonds along with the leftover spices (cumin, cloves, cinnamon, and allspice) and leave on medium flame until the mixture starts to dry and the meat becomes tender.

When everything is well-cooked and completely dry, add the fruit. Add the salt to taste and the sugar. Cook for another 10 minutes so fruit can soften and juices of the fruit flavor the meat. Take off of the heat. Fill the chiles and place on a baking sheet. Cover with foil paper and bake at 350F for 15 minutes - just enough to soften the chiles. Take out and bring to room temperature.

NOGADA SAUCE:

Clean the nuts by boiling in hot water for 5 minutes. Take off the brown skin and place them in the milk. If you don't want to clean walnuts, use blanched almonds instead.

One hour before serving the chiles, place the nuts with the cheese, 1 cup of milk, sugar, salt, cinnamon, and 1 oz of brandy (optional) in a blender and puree. If the sauce is too thick, you can add a little more

milk but do not make it too thin. This is a pretty thick sauce and should coat the back of a spoon. Add the whipping cream, but do not blend -- just stir. If you blend you will curdle the sauce. Taste to rectify salt and sugar.

To serve the chiles place them in a platter and cover the chiles with the nogada (walnut sauce) Sprinkle the pomegranate and parsley. I plate this chiles individually. This dish is served room temperature.

There are different versions of Chiles en Nogada. Many Poblanos swear by battered chiles as the authentic version but this is a dish that is representative of the flag. If you batter the chile, you lose the green of the Mexican flag. I unscientifically believe that unbattered is better for presentation and flavor. Using walnuts is traditional but you need to peel the walnuts which is time consuming. I have included an option for almonds.



MOLES

ADOBO DE CHILE PASILLA

10 Pasilla chiles chilies - veins and seeds removed
4 cups of water
2 garlic cloves, peeled
¼ teaspoon cumin

½ white onion
¼ cup sesame seeds
2 tablespoons of pork lard or olive oil
1 tablespoon of sea salt
4 cups of chicken stock

Heat a “comal” or dry sauté pan. Do not have the comal too hot or the chile will burn and make the sauce bitter. Using a metal spatula press the chile down on the comal for a few seconds. It will instantly become aromatic. Flip the chile and repeat the process on the other side. Roast the pasilla chiles one-by-one, making sure you roast both sides of each chile.

Place all the chiles in a bowl and cover with hot tap water. Put a plate on top of the chiles in the water so they sink to the bottom. Let them sit in the water for no more than 20 minutes. Take the reconstituted chiles out of the water in which they soaked, discarding the water as it may contain dirt from the chiles.

In a sauté pan heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil cook the onion and garlic until soften for about 5 minutes.

Mix the reconstituted chiles, garlic, onion cumin and half the salt in a blender until smooth, using the water as necessary. It should have a thick consistency.

In a hot saucepan, add the lard or olive oil and allow it to get very hot. When you drop a few drops of the sauce it should immediately sizzle. Add all the sauce to the pan and fry the chile paste. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes. Add the chicken stock or water as needed and cook for another 15 to 20 minutes.

Cook the chicken in this sauce for 10 to 15 minutes on high or if using pork for 30 to 40 minutes or until tender. You may also place it over fish and cook in the oven for another option. Note: to make “caldillo” for huanzontles adding more liquid to obtain the right consistency, for chilaquiles or for eggs add 2-3 roasted tomatoes to the chile mixture.

MOLE COLORADO

(Serves 12 to 14 people, 3 gallons of sauce)

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Chicken cut into pieces or 4 lbs. of legs and thighs or the pieces of your choice. | 3 Pasilla chiles, deseeded and cut into small strips |
| 3 quarts of chicken broth | 5 to 6 Cascabel chiles, deseeded and cut into strips |
| 1 White onion medium size, sliced | 1 Plantain ripe (Platano Macho) peeled and sliced |
| 4 Garlic cloves peeled | ½ cup Raisins |
| 1 Tomato, roasted | 1 Corn tortilla cut into triangles |
| 1 Tomatillo, roasted (if its available) | 1 slice of bread cut into 4 |
| 1 cup sesame seed | 1 cinnamon Mexican stick (about 5 inches long) or 1 teaspoon of cinnamon powder |
| ½ cup peeled green squash seeds (pepitas) | 1 teaspoon whole black pepper |
| ½ cup raw peanuts | 1 pinch of anis seeds |
| 3 Ancho chiles, deseeded and cut into small strips | 5 oz Mexican Chocolate (Ibarra or Mi Abuelita) |
| 2 Mulato chiles, deseeded and cut into small strips | 1 ¼ cup lard or canola oil |

If making your stock. In a deep pot (2 gallon) place chicken backs, wings or feet (about 2 pound total) or chicken bones left over from a couple of roasted chickens, one onion, 1 teaspoon of black peppers, 3 sprigs of parsley, 1 whole garlic clove, 1 carrot, 1 celery stick, 2 bay leaves and fill up with water. Bring to a simmer and take off the foam that will form while leaving the fat in the stock. Once there is no more foam forming bring broth to a boil and cook for at least 30 minutes to one hour.

Salt and pepper chicken pieces. Place in medium high heat a “cazuela” or a thick pot (4 gallon) heat with a ¼ cup of lard. Once the lard is hot, brown the chicken making sure not to crowd the bottom of the pot. Brown the chicken in batches. The point of browning the chicken is to flavor the pot with the chicken flavor so don’t worry if it the chicken doesn’t cook all the way though. We will cook it later. After the chicken is browned, place in a bowl and set aside. Take the pot off the heat and wait to use it later.

We will need a large bowl to place all the ingredients for the mole after they are dry roasted or sautéed. In a hot skillet, roast the chiles stirring constantly until they are aromatic. Be careful not to burn them. Do the same thing with the black pepper and cinnamon stick separately. Place in a large bowl.

Add ¼ cup of oil to hot skillet. Cook the onion until lightly golden. You will use this same skillet to cook each ingredient individually as listed ahead. Cook the garlic until golden, the plantain until golden, the raisins until they become little balloons, the peanuts until golden, and the tortilla and bread until crispy. Place all the ingredients in the bowl with the chiles and the rest of the spices. Add the chocolate and the roasted tomato and tomatillo to this same mixture and set aside.

In a hot dry saucepan, roast the squash seeds until puffy and add to the bowl with the already cooked ingredients (chiles, chocolate, onions, etc.). Add chicken broth to the bowl with all the ingredients and allow to soak for 20 minutes. Meanwhile in the same saucepan where you roasted the squash seeds, roast the sesame seeds until puffy and aromatic. After roasting the sesame seeds, place them in a blender and puree. Add some of the chile and chicken stock mixture and keep blending until smooth. Remember you will have to blend the rest of the ingredients in batches since they won't all fit together. You may use the extra chicken stock if needed. Place the blended mixture in a large bowl. Mole sauce should be smooth and silky so make sure to allow the blender to do its job.

Place the “cazuela” or a thick pot where you browned the chicken over a medium high flame and add the one cup of lard left over. When the oil is hot, add one drop of mole and it should instantly sizzle, add the chile and nut mixture. Bring to a boil and cook for at least one hour or until the oil appears at the top with a deep red color. Stir frequently to avoid burning the sauce at the bottom yet allow it to come to a boil. Once the oil has come up, add the chicken and cook for another 20 minutes. Enjoy with corn tortillas.

DESSERTS

ORANGE FLAN

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 can of condensed milk (397g) | 3 oz. Cream or Ricotta cheese |
| 1 can evaporated milk (356ml or 378g) | 1 tablespoon orange zest |
| 3 eggs | 7 tablespoons of sugar |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | A few drops of lime juice |
| 1 pinch of salt | |

At La Villa Bonita, we use a flan pan which is useful, but it is not necessary. You may use a ramekin or a cake mold (7.5 X 3.5 inch) as well. If using flan pan (particularly an Ecko brand) you can make the caramel directly in the flan pan.

Place the sugar and lime juice in a small pan (or flan pan) and caramelize. To caramelize, place the pan over medium low heat. Do not stir the wet area, it will start to bubble first, cover with the dry sugar using a wooden spoon. As the sugar melts evenly start stirring until the melted sugar turns into a dark amber. Don't let it burn. As soon as possible place the caramelized sugar in a flan mold and make sure to cover up to ½ inch of its walls with the caramel. If using an aluminum flan pan, take off the heat and swirl the caramel on to the walls of the pan until it doesn't move any more so the caramel cools and doesn't burn. Be careful with hot caramel as it is very dangerous.

Place the rest of the ingredients in a blender and blend. Add this mixture to the mold with the caramel. If using flan pan, cover with the lid. If your mold doesn't have a lid cover with foil paper and a rubber band.

Place the molds in a hot water bath for 1 hour in a pre-heated oven at 400F. When the flan is ready, it should be jiggly but firm in the middle and a toothpick should come out clean. The flan will set as it cools. Let the molds cool enough to be able to handle. Separate the flan from the edges and flip the flan onto a plate and refrigerate. The caramel left over in the mold can be loosened up to make more caramel sauce by adding about ¼ cup of water, place over a low heat and allow to dissolve. Add to the plate where the flan is cooling.

Another method of cooking the flan and my favorite is using a large shallow pot with a lid, big enough to hold the flan and place a steamer basket. Add about 2 to 3 inches of water or enough water to touch the bottom of the steamer basket but not the flan mold. Place the flan mold on the basket. Cover the

pot with a lid and place over high heat. Once the water is boiling bring the heat down to low and cook for 45 minutes. Make sure water in the pan doesn't run out during cooking process.



NIÑO ENVUELTO DE CAJETA Y NUEZ

Pecan cake roll filled with goatmilks caramel
(serves 8 to 10)

CAKE INGREDIENTS

9 egg whites
9 egg yolks
1 cups of sugar + ½ cup for assembling roll
1 cups of flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
1 cup butter, melted and cool
1 cup chopped pecans
1 ½ cups Cajeta (goatmilks caramel) dulce de leche also works. (Room temperature)
16 X 12 X 1 inches baking sheet. Greased and floured, place parchment paper in the bottom

SAUCE PREPARATION

1 cup milk
1 cup of whipping cream
1 vanilla bean or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
6 egg yolks
¼ cup sugar

CAKE PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 F. It is better if you can use a freestanding mixer, so you don't have to turn it off during the mixing process to add ingredients. If you are using a hand mixer, have someone help so you don't have to stop. It is also very important that you have all the ingredients measured out before you start. Mix the flour, salt, and baking powder in a small bowl and baking powder incorporating the dry ingredients.

Using a mixer with a whisk attachment in a bowl, start whipping the egg whites on high. As they start to froth, add the sugar one tablespoon at a time waiting 10 seconds between each additional tablespoon of sugar. Whip until high peaks.

Lower the speed of the mixer to the lowest speed. Add the egg yolks one at a time, waiting between each one so that they are well incorporated before adding the next one.

Using the lowest speed of the mixer incorporate the flour, salt, and baking powder mix and add one tablespoon at a time. Every time you see the tablespoon of flour disappear, add the next one. When the mixture is well incorporated, slowly turn off the mixer. The batter should be thick and make ribbons.

With a spatula fold in the vanilla extract and the melted, lukewarm butter. Add the butter a little at time as you fold in, being careful not to deflate the batter. Place the batter in the greased and floured parchment baking sheet mold. Sprinkle the chopped pecans on to the batter as evenly as possible. Place cake in the oven and bake for 20 minutes or until it is gold.

While the cake bakes, it is very important that you have a tea towel already laid out on a table. Sprinkle the ½ cup of sugar with the help of a small mesh strainer on the tea towel. Open the cajeta jar and have a spatula ready. Once the cake is out you need to move fast.

When the cake is golden and it separates from the edges, take it out of the oven and flip it over the tea towel. Take the metal sheet pan off as well as the parchment paper. Immediately spread the cajeta on the cake while it is still warm. Once it is all covered with cajeta, start rolling the cake. Use the tea towel to help the rolling process. If the cake is still warm it will be easy. Allow cake to cool off before moving to plate.

SAUCE PREPARATION

In a saucepan, mix the milk, cream and scrape in the vanilla bean. If using vanilla extract don't use yet. Place saucepan on medium low heat and bring to a slight simmer. In a bowl, incorporate the egg yolks and the sugar, whisking until the sugar has melted into the egg yolks. Slowly stream in the hot milk and cream. Whisking carefully make sure not to scramble the eggs, by adding the milk too fast.

Strain sauce back into the saucepan. Cook over medium low flame about 5 to 8 minutes or until the sauce can coat the back of a spoon. Allow to cool in the fridge. Serve cake with a mirror or sauce

NATILLA

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 5 cinnamon sticks | 1 quart whole milk |
| 2 cup of water | 4 tablespoons of cornstarch |
| 1 vanilla bean or 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract | Powdered cinnamon for decoration |
| 1 can sweetened and condensed milk | Raisins or berries for garnish |
| 1 can evaporated milk | |

In a saucepan (1 gallon), add 2 cup of water and the 5 cinnamon sticks. Bring to a boil and cook for 10 minutes or until the water is reduced to ½ cup, creating a concentrated cinnamon tea.

Dilute the 3 tablespoons of cornstarch into ½ cup of whole milk. Set aside for later use

Add to the saucepan, the sweetened and condensed milk, evaporated milk and whole milk, and the vanilla bean (if you are using the vanilla extract this should be added at the very end of the cooking process).

Bring to a simmer on high and then lower flame. Add to the simmering milk the ½ a cup of milk with corn starch make sure to stir again before adding on because the cornstarch can settle in the bottom. Mix little by little.

Milk should simmer while mixing constantly for 30 to 40 minutes or until you can coat the back of a spoon (if you are using vanilla extract don't forget to add the vanilla once the milk has a loose pudding texture).

Strain the hot mixture into a bowl and place the bowl in an ice bath stirring constantly.

After the natilla is cold, serve in martini glasses with sprinkle of cinnamon powder and raisins or raspberries. You may place in the natilla in the refrigerator for later use

GUAYABAS EN ALMIBAR

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. Guayaba or Guava, they should be ripe but firm.
6 cups water
6 cups sugar
1 cinnamon sprig

PREPARATION:

On medium high, heat the water with cinnamon in an olla or 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a simmer. When you can smell the cinnamon and once it has colored the water a little add the sugar. Let it reduce for 10 to 15 minutes or until it comes to a syrup consistency (230 to 234 F).

Meanwhile, wash and peel the guayabas. Cut the guavas in half or quarters in bite size.

Once the syrup is ready add the guayabas and let it simmer for 3 to 4 minutes. Take off the flame and allow to cool.

Serve in ramekins or martini glasses with a scoop of Greek yogurt or sour cream. Once you have used all the guayabas you will have some simple syrup left over. Don't throw it away. Keep it in a glass container in the refrigerator for up to 3 months for use in cocktails.

PASTEL DE TRES LECHES

CAKE INGREDIENTS:

9 egg whites	1 teaspoon baking powder
9 egg yolks	1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
1 cups of sugar	1 nine-inch cake mold greased and floured, place parchment paper in the bottom
1 cups of flour	
1 teaspoon salt	

PREPARATION FOR CAKE:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Note: It is better if you can use a freestanding mixer, so you don't have to turn it off during the mixing process to add ingredients. If you are using a hand mixer have someone help so you don't have to stop. It is very important that you have all the ingredients measured out before you start. Mix the flour, salt, and baking powder in a small bowl to incorporating the dry ingredients.

Using a mixer with a whisk attachment in a bowl, start whipping the egg whites on high. As they start to froth, add the sugar one tablespoon at a time waiting 10 seconds between each tablespoon of sugar. Whip until you achieve high peaks.

Lower the speed of the mixer to the lowest speed. Add the egg yolks one at a time, waiting between each one so that they are well incorporated before adding the next one.

Using the lowest speed of the mixer to incorporate the flour, salt, and baking powder one tablespoon of the mixture at a time. Every time you see the tablespoon of flour disappear add the next one. When the mixture is well incorporated, slowly turn off the mixer. The batter should be thick and make ribbons.

With a spatula fold in the vanilla extract. Place the batter in the greased and floured parchment paper cake mold and bake for 40 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean without batter. Take the cake out of the oven and place on a wire rack immediately or it will shrink. Allow to cool.

3 MILK MIXTURE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can of sweetened and condensed milk
- 1 cup of whipping cream
- 1 can of evaporated milk
- 1 cup of the liquor Rompope, if you cannot find Rompope add another liqueur like rum or tequila with whipping cream (¼ cup rum plus ¾ cup whipping cream)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

3 MILK PREPARATION:

In a saucepan, mix all the ingredients. Place a tray under the cooling rack where the cake cooled, so if liquid falls it can go on to the tray. With a fork make as many piercings on the cake as possible but be gentle since this is a very spongy cake. This will allow the milk mixture to absorb into the cake. Add the milk mixture to the cake one ladle at a time, from the outside in. Wait one minute between ladles of milk so the cake can distribute the milk. When finished place the cake on serving platter and in the refrigerator.

ICING INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups of whipping cream, cold
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
- 1 pint of strawberries or raspberries

ICING PREPARATION:

Whip the cream in a mixer an hour before you serve the cake, adding the vanilla extract and sugar early in the whipping process so it will dissolve properly. Whip until you have stiff peaks. Ice the cake with the whipped cream and decorate with the strawberries and/or raspberries.

MEXICAN DRINKS

AGUA DE JAMAICA

(Serves 6)

20 minutes of preparation time

The Jamaica flower water or “agua de flor de Jamaica” is a very common and extremely refreshing drink on a hot day. The Jamaica flower is usually sold dried in the mercados. It is a red flower that grows on a bush.

Pitcher and strainer

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups of dried Jamaica flower or Flor de Jamaica;
8 cups of water
sugar to taste
ice at the moment of serving.

PREPARATION:

Put the flowers and the 8 cups of water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. When the water turns a dark red, turn off the heat and let cool for a few minutes. Strain to take out the flowers. This will be your Jamaica concentrate.

To prepare the Jamaica water the proportions are not very exact since this depends on the kind of Jamaica flower you have available. But usually for a 2-quart (8 cups) pitcher you need 2 to 3 cups of Jamaica extract ½ a cup of sugar and 6 cups of water. Once again this is to taste. Serve cold and over ice.

AGUA DE PIÑA CON MENTA

Pineapple and mint flavored water

(Serves 6)

15 minutes of preparation time

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups pineapple cut into chunks

3 sprigs of mint

8 cups of water

Sugar to taste

Ice for serving

Pitcher and strainer

PREPARATION:

Place the water, pineapple, and mint into a blender and blend until pineapple is fully pureed. Put through a strainer. Place into a pitcher and mix in sugar. Sugar amount is to taste, and it also depends on how sweet the fruit is. Serve cold and over ice.

AGUA DE SANDIA

Watermelon flavored water
(Serves 6)
15 minutes of preparation time

INGREDIENTS:

8 cups watermelon cut into chunks, take of as many seeds as possible
10 cups of water
Sugar to taste
Ice for serving
Pitcher and Strainer

PREPARATION:

Place the water and watermelon into a blender and blend until watermelon is fully pureed. Put through a strainer. Place into a pitcher and mix in sugar. Sugar amount is to taste, and it also depends on how sweet the fruit is. Serve cold and over ice.

AGUA DE LIMON CON PEPINO

Lime cucumber flavored water

(Serves 6)

15 minutes of preparation time

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups cucumber cut into chunks

½ cup lime juice

8 cups of water

¼ cup sugar

Ice for serving

Pitcher and Strainer

PREPARATION:

Place the water, cucumber sugar and lime juice into a blender and blend until cucumber is fully pureed.

Put through a strainer. Place into a pitcher. Serve cold and over ice.

COCKTAILS

JAMAICA MARTINI

(Serves 3)

INGREDIENTS JAMAICA CONCENTRATE:

2 cups of dried Jamaica flower or Flor de Jamaica;
8 cups of water

PREPARATION:

Put the flowers and the 8 cups of water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. When the water turns a dark red and water has reduced halfway take off of the heat. Strain to take out the flowers. This will be your Jamaica concentrate which needs to be refrigerated for martinis.

INGREDIENTS JAMAICA MARTINI

3 oz Jamaica concentrate
1 oz lemon juice
2 oz simple syrup (or use the guayaba syrup)
2 oz vodka
1 oz orange liquor
Ice
3 pieces of Orange peel for garnish

PREPARATION JAMAICA MARTINI:

Chill 3 martini glasses. In a shaker place the Jamaica concentrate, lemon juice, simple syrup, vodka and orange liquor. Fill up with ice and shake. Serve on chilled martini glasses garnish with a ribbon of orange peel.

JALAPEÑO MARGARITA

(1-quart pitcher)

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup lime juice
1 cup 100% agave tequila of your choice
1 cup orange liquor
¼ to ½ cup simple syrup (or use the guayaba syrup)

5 serrano chile or jalapeño, roasted and cut into long strips. I like to leave the seeds in but you can take them off if you wish.
Sea or kosher salt for the rim
Ice

PREPARATION:

Using half a lime run around the rim of the glass then dip it in sea salt and set aside.

In a pitcher place the lime juice, tequila, orange liquor, simple syrup and cut half of one chile and stir into the pitcher. It will taste better if you allow chile to macerate for 10 to 15 minutes.

To serve, fill the glasses with ice - margaritas need a lot of ice so make sure fill it up. Place a sliver of jalapeño into each glass. Fill up with the margarita.

GAVILAN

(1-quart pitcher)

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup Ancho Reyes liquor

1/3 cup lime juice

1 ½ cup grapefruit juice

¼ cup simple syrup (use the guayaba syrup)

Club Soda

Sea or kosher salt for the rim

Ice

PREPARATION:

Using half a lime run around the rim of the glass then dip it in sea salt and set aside.

In a pitcher place the lime juice, grapefruit juice, simple syrup, and Ancho Reyes liquor.

To serve fill old fashion glasses with ice. Fill the glass halfway and top of with club soda. Stir.

TAMARIND MARGARITA

(1-quart pitcher)

INGREDIENTS FOR TAMARIND CONCENTRATE:

2 cups peeled tamarind or tamarind paste
8 cups of water

PREPARATION:

Put the tamarinds and the 8 cups of water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil for 5 to 8 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool. Place the water and tamarind into a blender and pulse a few times or until you can see the tamarind color de water. Strain. This will be your tamarind concentrate which needs to be refrigerated.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup tamarind concentrate
Juice of one lime
1 cup 100% agave tequila of your choice
1 cup orange liquor
¼ to ½ cup simple syrup (or use the guayaba syrup)
Tajin or chili salt or Sea or kosher salt for the rim
Ice

PREPARATION:

Using half a lime run around the rim of the glass then dip it in tajin and set aside.

In a pitcher place the tamarind concentrate, lime juice, tequila, orange liquor and simple syrup, stir into the pitcher. To serve fill the glasses with ice - margaritas need a lot of ice so make sure fill it up. Fill the glass.

SANGRITA

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 liter of tomato juice
- 1 orange (for its juice)
- 5 limes (for its juice)
- ½ onion
- 1 chile chipotle (canned) or two Serrano chiles sliced in half
- ½ teaspoon of pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco sauce
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

PREPARATION:

Mix all ingredients and allow them to marinate for a minimum of 1 hour in the refrigerator. For best results, let it marinate in the refrigerator overnight. Take out the onion and serve with tequila.

TEPOZTLÁN BASICS:

BACKGROUND AND A FEW SIGHTS YOU WILL SEE DURING YOUR STAY

Tepoztlan is a Nahuatl word for “the place of abundant metal.” Named the 4th “Pueblo Magico” or Magic Village by the Mexican department of tourism in 2002, this special designation denotes an inland town rich in pre- and post-Columbian history, religion and architecture. Tepoztlán is a mile-high town of 33,000 inhabitants that include a lively mix of subsistence farmers (corn, beans, and squash), lost hippies from the 60s, local artists, and weekend tourism primarily from Mexico City. During the week it is very tranquil with tourist primarily entering on Friday until Sunday. On the downtown circuit, you will notice the many vendors with stalls lining the start of the circuit selling local and non-local goods.



The local inhabitants called “Tepoztecos” are a very festive people celebrating birthdays, baptisms, the day of their personal, town or church saints, all major holidays, birthday and deaths of major historical figures as well as the beginning and ends of independence and revolutionary battles. In short, there is no shortage of opportunities to party. This can be evidenced by the Tepozteco’s penchant for firecrackers and fireworks at all hours of day and night. Traditions are very important to the Tepoztecos and strictly observed. It is the highest tradition to be the mayordomo or sponsor of the church or towns celebration. Locals will save for years just to sponsor the town or church party. In the early 90’s, Tepoztlan was made famous by the rejection of a Jack Nicklaus golf course that was planned to be built close to Tepoztlan. The town was roundly against the project as an affront to their traditions and way of life and consequently revolted. Tepoztecos stood watch on the major roads blocking access to all earth-moving equipment until the project sponsors gave up. Civil disobedience is in their blood. When Hernan Cortes conquered Mexico and set up shop in Cuernavaca, Cortes order the village leaders to appear. While Tepoztecos are very open and inviting people, they are fiercely protective of their traditions and they do not consider you to be a “Tepozteco” unless both of your parents were born here. In short, Tepoztlan is an ideal location to experience authentic Mexican tradition.

Neighborhood Catholic churches are focal points in the different sections of town for community gatherings. Almost all churches have elevated gazebos to host the local bands to add flavor to their celebrations. In the evening, you will also hear wafting live music as the surrounding valley clearly resonates the sound. It is also a common occurrence to hear mass being blared on loudspeakers for the convenience of those who were “too busy” to attend.



The Tepozteco Pyramid is one of the town's main attractions that you can see during your stay. On the weekends you will see a steady procession of tourists heading up the athletic "stair-master" trek to the top. The humble temple pyramid is located at the top of the mountains surrounding the city. It was a temple dedicated to the god of pulque (a fermented agave drink), fertility and the harvest. It was originally built by the *Xochimilcas* who were conquered by the *Mexicas* who later became the *Aztecs*. While the temple is nice, the main attraction is the view of the entire valley which is spectacular.

The local convent and cathedral are also major attractions in town. The entrance to the cathedral is made each year by local artists depicting scenes made of grains in mosaic style. The ex-convent also has a museum exhibits the history of the Franciscan monks who settled here as well as a smattering of Tepoztlan history. The cathedral is located right in the center circuit of town across from the market.



One local product is particularly famous that must be sampled – ice cream and "*nieves*" (or a kind of water-based sorbet). *Tepoznieves* is the store to experience an incredible variety of ice cream with every flavor and combination imaginable. There are multiple locations around the downtown allowing you to try all the flavors with the little plastic spoons until you find just the right ones. Some of the more interesting ones feature flavors such as corn, avocado, mamey, mango, mezcal, tequila, cajeta (goat milk caramel), among many others.

The town is remarkably set out on the grid pattern despite the creek beds and steep inclines that crisscross the town. The center of town has a circuit which you will easily see. The market and the cathedral/ex-convent are in the center as well as the zocalo (the official center of town with the main gazebo). There are many informal as well as formal shops and restaurants around the center circuit. As well, there are shops and restaurants that line the road to the Tepozteco pyramid. That road is the major road in town that passes the zocalo towards the mountains.

THE MOLCAJETE

Included in the important group of Mexican cooking tools is the molcajete. The word molcajete comes from the word *molcaxitl* in the ancient Náhuatl language which means “a wide bowl for salsas.” With the molcajete is the “la piedra” or stone which is used for grinding and crushing. The bowl and crushing rock are made of volcanic rock, the same way that they have been made for centuries and are used to crush and shred seeds and vegetables. To make a truly rich and delicious salsa, Mexicans swear by the process of making the salsa with the molcajete.

Before a molcajete can be used it must first be “cured.” To cure the molcajete it is best to grind a handful of wet, raw rice until the molcajete is smooth on the roughest edges of the bowl and the rice no longer comes out dirty. This is necessary sometimes because there may be loose pieces of volcanic rock in the grains of your molcajete or rough edges that should be smoothed out. When choosing a molcajete it is always better to choose one that is relatively smooth and doesn’t have extremely large grains or rough edges.

When grinding with the stone put the smallest end in your palm and spread your fingers out around the rest of the stone leaving the larger end free to do the grinding. Your fingers should be parallel to the length of the stone. Never wrap your fingers together around the stone as you may grind your knuckles against the side of the molcajete. Keep your wrist loose to allow you to rotate the stone easily around the bowl while exerting even pressure from your palm. Always start with the tough stuff or hard materials first then add in the softer and juicier stuff.

With the invention of the food processor and blenders, salsas have been modernized and quickened but not necessarily improved. What the molcajete and stone do is grind instead of cut like the processor. A chunky salsa of toasted jalapenos, tomatoes, and garlic comes out much clearer in flavor, more beautifully textured, and tastier than a salsa pulverized in the processor. This is because the flavors are squeezed out in the molcajete, allowing the flavors to intermix freely while maintaining the chunky nature of a good salsa. The processor tends to turn out more pulp and less real intermingling of flavors. If you must use the processor, gently pulse the machine instead of a letting it run continuously.

With salsa involving dried chiles, it can be very difficult to use the molcajete and a processor can be used. Dried chile skins are hard to grind since they don’t have liquid and can be cut up in the processor without sacrificing flavor.

On the bottom line, if you have a molcajete available it is well worth the effort to use it. It is fun, a good exercise, and generally adds great aroma and flavor to your Mexican dishes

CHILES

CHILES – BACKGROUND

Chiles are impossible to separate from the flavor of Mexican cooking. According to one of the early Spaniards to comment on the subject, Fray Bartolome de las Casas noted that “without the chile, the Mexicans don’t believe they are eating.” Since pre-Hispanic times, chiles have been used for medicinal, religious, and culinary roles in indigenous society and continue to play an extremely important role in “el sabor Mexicano” and legend as a staple food and spice. Chiles are such an integral part of the Mexican diet that they can even be found in desserts such as “ices” or “nieves,” sprinkled on sliced mangos, or used on dried fruits such as tamarindo, apples, pears, and pineapples.

Chiles come from the same *solanacea* family as the tomato and eggplants. It is suggested that the first chile may have come from South America due to the abundance of *capsicum* plants that flourish in Bolivia and Brazil, but there is still much uncertainty to the debate. What is certain is that chiles were spread primarily by birds who ate the chile with its seeds and spread them across Mexico, Central and South America during their migrations.¹ Apart from the historical debate on their origins, chiles first became a domesticated crop in the south of Mexico many thousands of years ago. Domesticated chile seeds have been found in archeological ruins dating back more than 5000 years ago.

THE PLEASURE OF CHILES: TASTE, SMELL, AND TEXTURE

The culinary pleasure of the chile is a combination of three sensory reactions: flavor, aroma, and texture. The flavor of the chile comes from the pericarp or outside shell of the chile. The “hot” part of the chile can be found in the placenta. The seeds and the placenta of the chile have very little flavor at all.

Generally, the more vibrant the color of the chile -- the stronger and more aromatic to the palate. For instance, the red chiles tend to have more flavor than the green ones. Dried chiles whether red, yellow, or green tend to lose their color during storage and accordingly dried chiles are milder in aroma than their fresh counterparts.

The “hotness” of the chile comes from the oils secreted in the placenta and veins of the chiles called *capsaicin*. Capsaicin has no flavor or smell and is produced in the top part of the fruit. The seeds are not actually hot in themselves but acquire that character because of contact with the placenta. Normally in

¹ Birds do not have the “hot” receptors that we have making them insensitive to the capsaicin in the chiles.

nature, the capsaicin does not spread to the outer shell of the chile or the seeds. Because of handling and transportation, however, the capsaicin tends to spread, making a chile seem hotter than others. This accounts for the great variation in “hotness” within the same chile variety as some chiles are shaken or bounced more than others during shipment to the store or market.

The level of capsaicin in chiles also varies because of the nighttime temperature during crucial growing stages. Capsaicin is produced in abundance in the chiles when grown in climates with high nighttime temperatures. This temperature correlation is also shown when chiles are heated before packed in cans; the capsaicin is dispersed evenly throughout the contents of the can. These canned chiles tend to be uniformly hotter on the palate as the oily capsaicin has been spread throughout the contents of the can.

A new method of measuring the “hotness” of chiles has developed in recent years measuring the hot nature of the chiles in units called *Scovilles*. *Scovilles* measure the “high-pressure liquid chromatography” of chiles which in effect measures the level of capsaicin. Generally, the hottest chiles tend to be *Habaneros* or *Scotch Bonnet*, *Chile de Arbol*, and *Chile Costeña* while the mildest are *Guajillo*, *Jalapeño*, and *Poblano*.²

TIP: The level of “hotness” will be evident during the preparation of fresh chiles as they will be pungent to smell and even irritate your eyes. It is generally a good idea to use rubber gloves when you are preparing chiles as the capsaicin will penetrate your skin and cause an uncomfortable burning sensation. If gloves are not available rub cooking oil on your hands. Also for obvious reasons, it is good to avoid rubbing your eyes during chile preparation. If you wish to reduce the hot nature of a chile, it is helpful to remove the placenta and the seeds without putting them in contact with the rest of the chile.

² The mildest member of the chile family is the Green Pepper as it has no capsaicins.

THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF CHILES

Chiles provided a very important piece of the nutrient puzzle for the Maya, Aztec, Toltec, Olmec, and Zapotec civilizations. Chiles were also used in pre-Hispanic times and still today to cure the pain associated with such maladies as cavities, muscle aches, coughing, hangovers, and gastritis. At the same time, it provides an extraordinary array of vitamins that supplements perfectly a diet rich in corn and beans. If the diet lacks any one of those three elements, the perfectly equilibrated diet fails to nutritionally satisfy the needs of the body. While the influence of the Spanish has added other elements to accompany the chile such as wheat, wheat flour, and beef, the main elements such as chiles, corn, and beans remain the staple foods of the Mexican diet.

The chile is rich in Vitamin C and A with small quantities of Vitamins E, P, B1(Thiamin), B2 (Riboflavin) and B3 (Niacin). With 3 or 4 grams of chiles per day, the body receives its recommended amount of Vitamin A.³ Such high quantities of Vitamin A can be found in both the fresh and dried chiles. The chile *Guajillo* has extremely high quantities of vitamin A. The green chiles such as Green Peppers and *Poblanos* in fresh form maintain very high quantities of Vitamin C. Green chiles have double the amount of Vitamin C found in citrus fruits. However, Vitamin C and capsaicin have an inverse relationship as the less “picante” the chile, the more Vitamin C is present.

From the pre-Hispanic times, the Aztecs used chiles to alleviate respiratory and digestive problems by mixing chiles with honey and roots of medicinal plants. They also used chile with mineral water to cure coughs. Today, researchers have confirmed that capsaicin works with the mucous membranes to alleviate respiratory maladies such as coughs, colds, bronchitis, asthma, and sore throats. The Aztecs also used chiles to alleviate the pain associated with birthing, cavities, infected ears, and constipation. Today, capsaicin has been shown to alleviate pain by its interaction with the P, a chemical messenger of pain to the brain. Consequently, capsaicin is now used in various topical creams for muscle strain, arthritis, rheumatism, and lumbago. Capsaicin has also been found to serve as a laxative and as an acid neutralizer in the stomach.

³ El placer del Chile pg. 25 (See Bibliography in final module).

KNOW YOUR CHILES: A CRASH COURSE

Chiles come in a variety of sizes, considered sweet or hot, vary depending on flavor and strength and are used in fresh, smoked, and dried form. They come in many varieties such as Jalapeño, Serrano, Chipotles, de Arbol, Piquines, Manzanos, Poblanos, Habaneros, Costeños, Mulatos or Moritas. Of these chiles, the Jalapeño, Serrano, and Poblano are the most popular today as sold in fresh form. And in dried form the most popular today are Anchos, Chipotles, Pasillas, and Guajillos.

CHILES JALAPEÑOS, CHIPOTLES AND MORITAS



Gaining its name from the city of Xalapa, Veracruz, the Jalapeño is one of the most versatile chiles in Mexican cooking.⁴ It has a variety of regional names such as Cuaresmeño, Gordo, Huachinango, and Chile de Agua, among others. It is used in fresh as well as smoked form, where it gains the name Chipotle, Mora, Morita, Meco or Tamarindo. The Jalapeño has a lot of industrial demand as it is easily packed sliced in cans with vinegar. The Jalapeño of good quality has a conical form, green intense color, and is 6-8 centimeters long. Its flesh is thick and meaty with a smooth skin when young and a scarred, veiny complexion when mature. It is an aromatic chile with a medium level of “hotness.” About 20% of its production is destined to be smoked or what are called Chipotle or Mora Chiles.

CHILE SERRANO



Also known as Green Chiles or Chile Verde, the Serrano is also one of the most popular in Mexico because of its long-standing inclusion in “Salsa Mexicana.” When it is of good quality, it has an elongated conical form, straight and smooth, having a dark green color, thick and firm walls with a lot of seeds and placenta in comparison to its size. As a result, the Serrano is hotter than the Jalapeño and is

⁴ Although the Jalapeño gained its name from Xalapa, other areas have overtaken Xalapa in its production. Currently, the Jalapeño is not grown in Xalapa.

considered a hot chile. Because it adapts easily to varied climates, it is grown in many parts of Mexico. It is consumed primarily in fresh form.

CHILE POBLANO, ANCHO Y MULATO



This chile is one of the most used in Mexican cooking because of its versatility. When fresh it is called Poblano and when dried it is called Ancho or Mulato according to the type of fruit. A good Poblano is big (more than 10 centimeters in length and 6 in width), truncated conic in form with a strong indentation or deflated look. It has sturdy walls with a wavy appearance that accentuates even more with maturity. It has a medium to light picante level and has a strong flavor. In color, it can be dark green or blackish. The green ones mature to brownish or dark reddish colors. When they are dried, they acquire a dark reddish color and wrinkle significantly. At this point, it acquires the name Chile Ancho. The blackish Poblano is roughly the same size as the green Poblano but has a darker color when mature and a slightly sweet flavor. The blackish Poblano is the predetermined chile for Chiles en Nogada.

When dehydrated, they obtain a shiny black color with a scrunched skin and has the name Chile Mulato. Up to 90% of the blackish Chile Poblano is destined for dehydration.

CHILE MIRASOL, GUAJILLO, PUYA, CATARINO, AND CASCABEL



The name “Mirasol” (“look at the sun”) or Miracielo (“look at the sky”) comes from the fact that this chile grows upward instead of underneath the plant like most chiles. It is not very hot and is used principally dried. This chile has a variety of forms and can be elongated like a pointed and skinny Serrano but can also be round and cherry-ish. All the chiles in this group mature to a lively red color and acquire a transparent cherry color when dried. The Guajillo, Puya, and Catarino are elongated chiles while the Cascabel (pictured to the left) has a ball form like a cherry.

When dried the Cascabel seeds become loose and create a Rattle-Snake-type sound when shaken -- hence the name “Cascabel” which is the word for Rattle Snake in Spanish. This chile is pictured.

CHILE CHILACAS AND PASILLAS



The name “Chilaca” is a modification of the Náhuatl word for “cane” which is a good description of this chile. A good Chilaca should be long, skinny, and wavy. Some Chilacas can grow up to 30 centimeters in length and grow in a semi-circle form with 2 or 3 interior cavities. It has a dark green color when young and a dark brown color when mature. It is moderately hot. It has other names such as Negro, Prieto, or Chile para Deshebrar (“Chile for Shredding”). Upon drying it acquires a black glassy tone and is called the Chile Pasilla (pictured to the left). It is primarily used in dried form.

CHILE DE ARBOL



Although eaten in fresh form, this chile is primarily sold dried. Chile de Árbol is a long, skinny, pointed and slightly curved chile that is sometimes called “cola de rata” or rat tail. It grows on a bush not from a tree as the name suggests. As it is very hot, it is preferred in the hot salsa and as a result of sometimes called Chile Bravo. When it is young it has an intense dark green color and when mature has a lively red color. This chile is often used with vinegar to preserve vegetables as well as the salsa for Jalisco’s famous “Tortas Ahogadas.”

CHILE PIQUÍN



This chile is considered “wild” and is widely disseminated by birds. This species is an ancient one that is the grandfather of almost many domesticated chiles in Mexico. This chile can be found in fresh form but is primarily sold dried. This chile comes in two forms – round and conical. One is round and found in roadsides and riversides in the north and is called “chiltepín.” The other form a more elongated form is smaller and is supposedly less picante. This form is known as “piquín.” Both are collected as wild and sold in the market for high prices.

CHILE CHILHUACLE, CHILCOXLE, COSTEÑO, AND CHILE DE ONZA



These regional chiles are found primarily on the Pacific Coast in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. In its green state, the Chilhuacle has a square-like appearance and is wider in the upper part than the lower. In its mature state, it takes on yellowish, black and red tones. This is the chile that gives the color and flavor to most of the Oaxacan Moles. The name “Chilcoxle” comes from the Nahuatl word for “yellow chile.” It is large, elongated with a snub nose. It acquires a mustard color when dried and is called “amarillito.” The “De Onza” Chile is another primarily dried chile. It is close to the Costeña but larger and upon drying it acquires a red transparent color. In its green state, the Costeño is called

Chile Criollo and is presented in a variety of colors and sizes. Generally, it is an elongated chile but can also be conical and oval. Its shell is very thin with a clear green to yellowish color in the green stage and when mature acquires a reddish tone and its skin becomes translucent and red. It is “picante” with great flavor. Costeño is used a lot with seafood.

CHILE MANZANO AND CHILE HABANERO



Originally from the Andes, the Manzano is one of the few chiles that doesn’t belong to the *Capsicum annuum* species or the predecessors of the Chile Piquín. The Manzano has seeds that are black and the plants have hairless leaves. It was introduced into Mexico at the beginning of the 20th Century and grows in the high and cold areas on a large bush that can grow to 3 meters. The fruit is spherical, green in the young stage and gradually acquires a red, yellow and orange color upon maturity. It is hot and is used in fresh salsas or as a chile to be filled. It can also be called “perón,” “caballo,” “ciruelo,” or “canario”

depending on the region of the country.



The Habanero (shown at the left) is one of the most *picante* chiles in Mexico and comes from the Brazilian rain forest. It made its way to Cuba where it was imported into Yucatan, which accounts for its Habanero name. It came to Mexico after the conquistadors and is the only chile used by the Yucatecos that doesn't have a Mayan name. It has the form of a pig's snout that can vary in length between 2 and 6 centimeters and in width between 2 and 4 centimeters. It has a clear green color when young and a salmon, red, brown, yellow, or orange when ripe. Its thick walls retain a lot of humidity and as a result are difficult to dehydrate. It is used primarily as a condiment for Yucatecan food.

CORN & THE TRANSFORMATION TO MASA



Corn is used to make corn tortillas and tamales but first, the corn has to be transformed into “*masa*.” *Masa* is not cornmeal dough, nor is *masa* made of sweet corn. *Masa* is made of dried non-sweet field corn more likened to hominy or grits.

To make the *masa* from the corn, you have to simmer the corn kernels briefly with “*cal*” in Spanish or mason’s lime. This process dissolves the hard, difficult-to-digest outer kernel of the corn which increases its nutritional value. The process of making the *masa* is the same process whether you are making *masa* from red, blue, purple, or white corn.

The simmered corn, then called *nixtamal*, is rinsed. At this point, if we are not making *masa*, the corn can be returned to the fire, whereby it becomes big and puffy. The corn at this stage is called *pozole* and is used for a soup of the same name. In the U.S. this type of corn is called hominy.

Once briefly simmered, the *nixtamal* can be made into *masa* when the insides of the corn are still a little chalky and dry. The *nixtamal* is then stone-ground into a dry paste in a stone-age, three-legged bowl called a *metate* and a rolling pin crusher. Today almost all of the store-bought dried *masas* are made with metal implements and according to the traditionalists, this process takes the entire flavor out of the *masa*. Nonetheless, most have succumbed to the convenience of industrialized *masa* because of the back-breaking labor of making your own.

While wet, the fresh *masa* is patted between the palms or placed in a press. Next, we will use our press and *comal* to make a perfect tortilla.

USING THE TORTILLA PRESS & COMAL

To make a tortilla, take the *masa* necessary. A good size of the diameter of the *masa* ball for your tortilla press is 4-5 centimeters or 2 inches. Before placing the *masa* ball on the press, take two sheets of clear plastic of about 20 by 20 centimeters. Place one sheet in the press in the center and place the *masa* ball in the center of the sheet. Then place the second sheet on top of the ball, exactly centered on top of the other sheet already placed on the press. Close the press strongly, wiggling it a little to make sure it spreads evenly. Obviously, the more pressure you place on the handle, the skinnier the tortilla. Open the press and peel off the top plastic sheet. Then take hold of the bottom sheet and flip the tortilla into your hand peeling gently the last sheet as it settles gently in your fingers. Generally, the tortilla should be about 1/8th inch in diameter when finished pressing.



Then take the tortilla and place it flat on the preheated *comal* or round metal sheet. When the tortilla begins to dry around the edges flip with the hand or cooking utensil. Then let the tortilla cook until the edges curl just a little and flip again. In this last flip, the tortilla should puff up. Let it cook until you can see a light brown mark on the bottom of the tortilla. The tortillas are then stored in a basket with a cloth napkin on the bottom of the tortilla stack and on the top. The baskets generally have a top to keep the tortillas warm.

As any good Mexican will tell you, recently made tortillas fresh from the *comal* are much better than cold or reheated ones. Recently made tortillas have one side that presents a thin skin that can be undone for the making of certain *platillos*. Day-old tortillas can be used for a variety of *platillos* and *antojitos* or snacks such as *chilaquiles* or *enchiladas*. Also, a day-old tortilla can be toasted on the *comal* until crunchy as a perfect complement to a good guacamole or refried beans.

FLOR DE CALABAZA

This is one of the true delicacies in Morelos along with the *huitlacoche* (or as it is sometimes spelled “*cuitlacoche*”). Squash blossoms or “*flor de calabaza*” compliment many of the regional dishes of Morelos such as squash blossom and mushroom soup, as a filling in quesadillas, as a filling in stuffed chicken breasts or stuffed with cheese, battered and fried. The flowers have a beautiful orange color and are usually sold in bunches with the top of the flower stems left on. The flavor is somewhat of a green flavor but very distinctive and light to the palate and as such mixes well in stews and soups. The blossoms that you will find in the Mercado are only males – the pistils are evident and no growing squash at the base. These blossoms come in varying sizes with the larger ones being perfect for frying.



To clean squash blossoms you take off the stem unless you are stuffing and frying them. Then take off the green sepals at the base of the flower. Then with your finger, enter the flower, break off the pistil and discard. Some people leave the bulbous base on but I think it has a hard texture so I take it off. It is best to use the blossoms as soon as possible as they will wilt and discolor very quickly. If there is good ventilation in your refrigerator and are not stored in a refrigerator that is too cold, they will last for a couple of days.

HUITLACOCHÉ



Along with *flor de calabaza*, *huitlacoche* is another one of the true delicacies of Morelos. *Huitlacoche* is what is generally referred to as “corn smut” in the United States and considered a plague as it grows on corn and distends and expands the kernels. Here in Morelos it is cultivated as a delicacy and has been treasured as such since pre-Hispanic times. Since it is a type of mushroom it grows during the rainy season but can be found at a higher price

generally all year round. It is also canned and can be found in many supermarkets in Mexico as well as the growing Mexican sections of American supermarkets but in the canned form it tends to lose some of its great taste. You can find them still attached to the cob or cut in the Mercado.

The distended kernels should not be too young as they will be tough and bitter, nor should they be too mature as the kernels will break and spores go everywhere. A ripe kernel is somewhere in between the two extremes.

BEANS

When the Spanish came to the new world, they encountered a veritable rainbow of beans – yellow, white, black, spotted, black and white, grey, small and large. Many of these beans were taken back to Europe and grown there influencing the development of European beans. At that time, beans were gifts from the gods and the tribal members to continue receiving said gift has to fulfill their rituals at every planting season and harvest. When the Spanish arrived they witnessed the consumption of basically the entire bean plant beginning with the roots, cooking the flowers with salt, eating the young pod, and the mature bean boiled with epazote and salt. They also ground the beans into a flour and ate the stalks. As an element in the pre-Hispanic diet, the bean was revered as nutrition and as a gift from the gods.

Beans along with corn, squash, and beans are the “trinity of the American Indians” as they were the three pillars of the indigenous diet. Since beef was introduced relatively recently, beans were an extremely important source of protein in the indigenous diet. The domestication of the bean took place roughly 7,000 years ago and of 180 species of edible beans, 126 come from America and of that group 70 come from Mexico alone.

Beans are still a primary staple of the Mexican diet. Today they are eaten in a soupy form such as “frijoles de la olla” or mashed and fried like “frijoles refritos” or refried beans. Because almost everyone consumes beans in Mexico it is often referred to as the “poor people’s meat” and because it adds a significant amount of protein to the diet. In the modern Mexican diet beans can accompany all meals during the day. Although many have tried the canned varieties refried and cooked beans, preparing them by hand adds a lot of fresh flavor that isn’t offered in the cans.

MEXICAN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

JÍCAMA (*PACHYRHIZUS EROSUS*)

FABACEAE, Legume Family

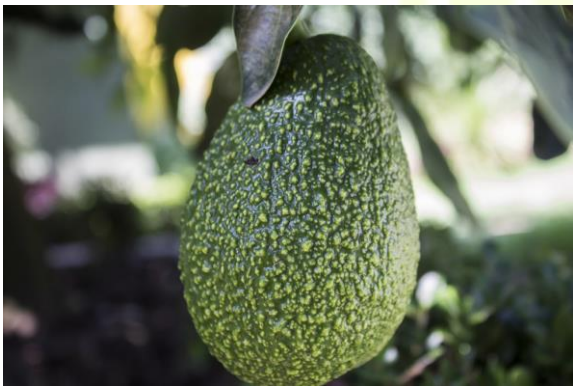


Jícama, yam bean, Mexican potato, or Mexican turnip (*Pachyrhizus erosus*) has been eaten in Central America for many centuries and is now a common commodity in U.S. stores. The jícama is a mildly sweet taproot that tastes and crunches like a crispy water-chestnut. The crop is cultivated in frost-free climates, grown in rows from seeds, and within a year this vine is harvested for its large taproot. To eat jícama, only the fibrous brownish peel must be removed. The rest of the plant, a legume with trifoliate leaves, is thrown away. You can find sliced jícama on the street and in the Mercado sold as a snack,

sprinkled with a chile powder and bathed in lime juice. It can also be used in salads. Be careful not to eat leaves, stems, pods as they may be poisonous.

AVOCADO (*PERSEA AMERICANA*)

LAURACEAE, Laurel Family



The avocado is the faithful companion to many delicious treats such as beef tacos and a meal as guacamole. While delicious and festive in color, the avocado or “aguacate” in Spanish, contains more calories per gram than about any other food (up to 2800 calories per pound)--the dieter's nightmare--but at least from the standpoint of triglycerides, the composition of the oil is quite healthy. Then again, who eats a pound of avocado flesh? Over 70% of the oil is polyunsaturated, usually oleic and linoleic acid and oleic acid is monounsaturated, which is reputed to be

best for reducing cholesterol buildup on arterial walls. Avocados are rich in B vitamins and some C and E, not A or K, and contain 60% more potassium than the banana (*Musa*).

The scientific name, *Persea americana*, tells us that its origin was in the Americas, specifically in Central America and southern Mexico. Records of its usage occur from 7000 B.C. in Mexico, of its cultivation from 6000 B.C. in Oaxaca, and of its continuous use at all levels in all of the famous archaeological sites in Mexico, including Tehuacán in Puebla, where the earliest maize fossils appeared. In these old habitations, the evidence is a seed, the structure from the center of the fruit. The seeds were small for thousands of years before there was selection for the large fruits that we find today in the stores and marketplaces. Some reports cast doubt on these old claims and note the origin of the avocado in 291 B.C. in Mexico.

The word avocado comes from the Aztec *ahuacatl*, translated by the Spaniards as *ahuacate* and *aguacate*. "Alligator pear" is probably a reference to the scaly, dark green peel, although some say that the colonists were too linguistically challenged to pronounce the Aztec word. "Midshipman's butter" refers, we think, to its early uses by sailors, who took American avocados with them to sea. Other regions of the Americas had different names; e.g., the Incas called it *palta*.

Three types of avocado fruits are easily recognized. Sometimes these are called varieties but generally are horticultural races, three extreme fruit forms in a continuum of design. The Mexican type, also called "drymifolia," has relatively small fruits, 75-300 grams in weight, a thin, smooth black skin, and a loose seed. This type has the highest oil content (sometimes 30%) and grows in the driest and coolest locations. The Guatemalan type is a large highland avocado, 500-600 grams in weight, has a thick, warty skin, a large, tight seed, and moderately high oil content. The West Indian type, which is large and has smooth green to reddish skin when ripe, tends to have the lowest oil content (as little as 7%). The West Indian type prefers Caribbean climates. Experts hypothesize that the three types of avocados were domesticated independently within Central America, and therefore the forms are so distinctive.

This berry is truly unusual, not only because it is oily, not sweet, but also because it never softens while still on the tree, where it remains hard and continues to grow. Avocados keep well while hard but can turn soft overnight. To ripen an avocado, place the fruit into a small paper bag, including an apple or banana if you are in a hurry. The exact mechanism of softening is not entirely understood but involves the softening of the middle lamella (pectin) cementing the mesocarp cells and appears to involve ethylene. Anyone who has prepared guacamole dip knows that the green flesh blackens rapidly, a process called a polyphenolic response, and this can be retarded by immediately mixing with lemon (acidic) juice. To keep the green flesh of a cut avocado from turning black, you can immediately wash the cut surface with cold tap water before wrapping in a plastic bag.

Mexico is the world's leading producer of avocados, and about 315,000 acres are devoted to its cultivation, mainly the Mexican and Guatemalan types. Israel and South Africa boast well-developed avocado industries, and Spain is up and coming. California farmers have fears of imported fruits, mostly

because they fear infestation risks to the industry, especially from Mexico, and the USDA now requires imported fruits to each bear a country of origin sticker.

MANGO (*MANGIFERA INDICA*)

ANACARDIACEAE, Sumac Family



The mango (*Mangifera indica*) is believed to have been native to the border region of India and Burma. Mango use dates at least 4000 years ago in India and 2500 years ago in Southeast Asia, and the fruit has been venerated in the Hindu religion. From Southeast Asia, the Portuguese introduced mango to Brazil during the early 1700s, and its cultivation spread then to the West Indies. This species does not tolerate freezing temperatures, so mango trees can only be grown in warm tropical to subtropical climates. In Mexico, mango is grown south of the Tropic of Cancer. Driving through the tropical Mexican countryside, one can often see mango trees, which are very large, full, tall, dark green plants with fruits that hang on chain-like

inflorescences, called panicles. Each chain usually has only one fruit.

The fruit is a drupe, which has a yellowish, often red-blushed exocarp, an orange yellow mesocarp, and a hard **endocarp** (stone) that is covered by tough fibers. The fleshy portion is cut away from the fibers. Inside the stone may be one seed, as in most Indian cultivars, or several embryos, as in most mango cultivars of Southeast Asia.

The unique flavor of the fruit is enjoyed for dessert, and each day mother sends the children out to pick up the fruits that have fallen from the tree. Some mangoes are used for cooking in specials salsas.

PAPAYA (*CARICA PAPAYA*)

CARICACEAE, Papaya Family



One of the most refreshing fruits with a soft but sweet flavor is the papaya. In Mexico, the papaya is primarily eaten in Mexico for breakfast or dessert with lime and a dash of sugar as well as made into drinks such as mixed with orange juice. It is one of the most popular of the sweet, tropical tree fruits. Cultivation of papaya began in Central America (no old records, unfortunately), but quickly after the discovery of the New World, seeds of papaya were carried to Old World tropical areas. One can commonly find papaya trees growing around homes in all tropical countries. Because home-grown crops are unregistered, it has been impossible to obtain reliable estimates of total world papaya production, but annual production must be several million metric tons.

The papaya tree is one of the most distinctive plants on earth. It is generally 4 to 5 meters tall and unbranched, but old plants may be 10 meters tall. The trunk looks a little like an upside-down, gray carrot. This plant has huge leaves, up to 75 centimeters across, that are palmately and then pinnately lobed.

One often sees several papaya plants growing around a home in the tropics. This may be because the papaya is an important, regular fruit in the diet, but it is also often necessary because papaya is usually dioecious, so that at least one male and one female plant are required for fruits to be produced.

The ripe fruit has a yellow and green skin (**exocarp**), often with tints of red and orange, and a sweet, semi-firm, yellow-orange pulp (**mesocarp**). Although shoppers in the United States are accustomed to seeing hand-sized papayas in the grocery store, Mexicans tend to eat papayas that are the size of a large cantaloupe or a small watermelon, i.e., 3 to 60 kilograms in weight, and fruits 50 centimeters in length are not uncommon.

GUANABANÁ (ANNONA MURICATA L.)



At the time of harvest, the guanabana skin is deep green in color, with small, soft spines covering the surface, along with geometric scallop grooves. When ripe, the fruit turns greenish yellow and becomes much softer. Small brown seeds sprinkled throughout the white juicy flesh, combine to provide a somewhat cottony texture and highly aromatic vanilla-like flavor. This fruit is growing increasingly popular, as trends in the tropical arena are now discovering the easy blending advantages of guanabana. The

guanabana produces an edible fruit 20 cm (8 inches) long and weighing up to 4.5 kg (10 pounds). Native to the American tropics, the tree has been widely introduced in the Old World tropics. Reaching about 8 m (26 feet), it has broad-ended, oval evergreen leaves about 12.7 cm long. The fruits are oval, spiny, green-skinned, and aromatic. The fibrous white flesh, which combines the flavors of mango and pineapple, is strained to make custards, ice creams, and drinks. It is also called Soursop in other cultures.

MAMEY (MAMMEA AMERICANA)



Also called Saint Domingo Apricot, fruit of *Mammea americana*, a large, primarily Mexican and West Indian tree of the garcinia family (Clusiaceae), with opposite, leathery, gland-dotted leaves; white, sweet-scented, short-stalked, solitary or clustered auxiliary flowers; and yellow or russet fruit, 7–15 cm (3–6 inches) in diameter. The bitter rind encloses a sweet, aromatic flesh, which is eaten raw and used for preserves. Its one to four large, rough seeds are bitter and resinous and are used as an anti-worming agent. An aromatic liqueur distilled from the flowers is called Eau de Créole. The acrid, resinous gum has been used locally for destroying skin-infesting chigoe fleas.

ZAPOTE NEGRO



Zapote also spelled Sapote, also called Marmalade Tree (species *Calocarpum mammosum*), plant of the sapodilla family (Sapotaceae), native to Central America but cultivated as far north as the southeastern United States. It grows to about 23 m (75 feet) tall, bears small, pinkish-white flowers, and has hard, durable, reddish wood. The edible fruit is rusty brown, rather spherical, and about 5–10 cm (2–4 inches) in diameter. The reddish flesh is spicy in flavor. When very ripe it turns almost black and is mixed with orange juice and cooled. In such a form it is served as a dessert and has a sweet flavor.

CHAYOTE



Chayote (pronounced "chy O teh" - rhyme it with coyote and you'll be close) is the perennial vine *Sechium edule*. It's a tropical relative of summer squash, and the flavor of the pear-shaped fruits is similar. Prime chayotes have smooth skin with virtually no wrinkles, spines or ropy lines, and no stringy interior fiber. Fruits range in color from ivory white to medium green. Most weigh 1/2 to one pound, but some reach nearly five pounds. The skin is edible when cooked but

it can be quite tough, so is usually peeled off. The chayote has a put that is usually taken out after being prepared as it can be difficult to take out when raw. The chayote is a great accompaniment to many dishes as it adds a fresh "wateriness" and to a lot of dishes with strong flavor or adds consistency to soups. The fruits remain firm after cooking and can be served as a side dish or used in soups, stir-fries, salads or casseroles. The large, tender seed, the leafy tips of the tendrils and the fleshy, starchy roots are also edible when cooked.

Chayote is native to parts of Mexico and Central America. Chayote is also relatively common and inexpensive throughout Florida and south Texas, as well as in Louisiana, where it's known both as vegetable pear and by its Cajun name of "mirliton." In early winter, you can even find a few chayotes displayed - at a fancy price - among the tropical fruits at produce counters in the East.

CALABACITAS

Calabacitas are a form of squash very similar to the zucchini but with a pale green/grayish complexion it can either be ballish in shape or can resemble a slender pear. It is not watery like its relative the chayote but has a compact denser texture and a slightly sweet flavor.



NOPALES AND TUNAS



One of the most recognized plants as a symbol of national identity is the nopal cactus. Tough, resistant, and thorny while hiding a lush heart and sweet fruit is what the nopal represents in legend and myth. They maintain a watery, even rubbery consistency but flavorful and very nutritious. Scientists have recently discovered that nopales combat diabetes. As well, nopales are rich in protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, and vitamins B, B2, and C.

The nopal or nopalitos are cultivated as a crop and are grown on 4 to 5-foot plants. The tender medium-size planks are selected. These paddles have little spine nodes that are cut off before making their way to the Mercado or supermarket. Some spineless varieties have also been developed. Mexico has started to export nopales to the U.S. because of all of the Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans who continue to demand the nopal in their diet.

The paddles are usually simmered in water until they become tender. After simmering the paddles, the slimy substance that comes out in cooking is removed by washing. The nopales are then sliced into strips or diced and mixed into other salads, sauces or condiments. The paddles can also be grilled or broiled until limp.

The fruit of the cactus or the “tuna” offers a very light and sweet flavor full of juice. They are often sold along the roadsides in Mexico to give relief to tired and weary travelers. Beware to purchase them without the spines as they can be frustrating to take out. Small and difficult to see, the spines of the tuna have infuriated many a traveler trying to get to the refreshing center. If you do purchase them with spines, use leather gloves while cleaning them.



To open the tuna, one cuts off the flat stub end and makes a small incision from top to bottom. Then open the incision and peel away the outer skin. The fruit has small seeds which can be eaten but not chewed. The tuna comes in a red, yellow and green color and all have slightly different flavors. Tuna is used in many desserts and ices as well as simply sliced by itself as a cool summer snack.

TOMATILLOS



These bright green spheres with the leaf wrappers are also a staple in the green salsas that you see across Mexico. Smaller and rounder than the normal tomato, the tomatillo is a staple part of many green salsas or “Salsa Verde.” They are also called “tomate verde” or just “tomate” while calling the red tomato a “jitomate” (pronounced hit-to-ma-te).

Tomatillos have a harder consistency than red tomatoes when raw, which permits good quality supply year-round. One should select tomatillos that “fill their shoes” so to speak, filling the husk. If they don’t do so, they are not ripe. Keep the husk on the tomatillo until they are ready to use and wash the fruit thoroughly to take off the sticky residue.

The taste is a sour citrus flavor that adds the flavorful kick to the Salsa Verde. Tomatillos are very rarely used raw and are delicious when broiled or roasted and then mashed in the molcajete with your fresh green chile of choice. Roast the tomatillos until they are dark but don’t over-roast or roast them at too high of a temperature because the skin is thin and will burn the tomatillo before the center is cooked.

EPAZOTE



Pronounced ehp-ah-ZOH-the, is a fresh herb that can be found in the purple or green varieties. It has a longer elongated leaf than cilantro and the stem is thicker. Epazote grows wild in Mexico. It is best to use epazote as soon as possible as it doesn't store well in the refrigerator. Even in a wilted form, it is still good and flavorful. Its flavor is strong, acidic, and even lemony. It is most often used to spice frijoles de la olla, especially with black beans. As a general rule, you can use about 2 six-inch sprigs of epazote for every pound of beans. Popular belief is that eating epazote will kill parasitic worms in humans and animals. It also has the fame to be carminative

or reduce the gas-producing qualities of beans.

CILANTRO



Cilantro is one of the most pungent Mexican fresh herbs that adorns many dishes, salads, and salsas because of its distinctive fragrance. Cilantro can be found everywhere in mercados and supermarkets. A close relative to parsley, cilantro can be distinguished from parsley with its pungent aroma whether fresh or cooked. The best-flavored bunches tend to be the medium to small-sized bunches with smaller leaves.

Keep cilantro moist but not too wet. The worst enemy of the cilantro is cool dry air found in refrigerators while the second enemy is being overly wet as the cilantro decomposes quickly. The best way to store cilantro is buying it with the roots attached and treating it as a living plant by putting its roots in water or buying it fresh and wrapping it in a barely moist but not paper towel.

When preparing cilantro, use a thin, sharp knife so as not to bruise the delicate leaves. While the leaves are more prized, the stems are also very delicious and add crunchiness to fresh salsas.