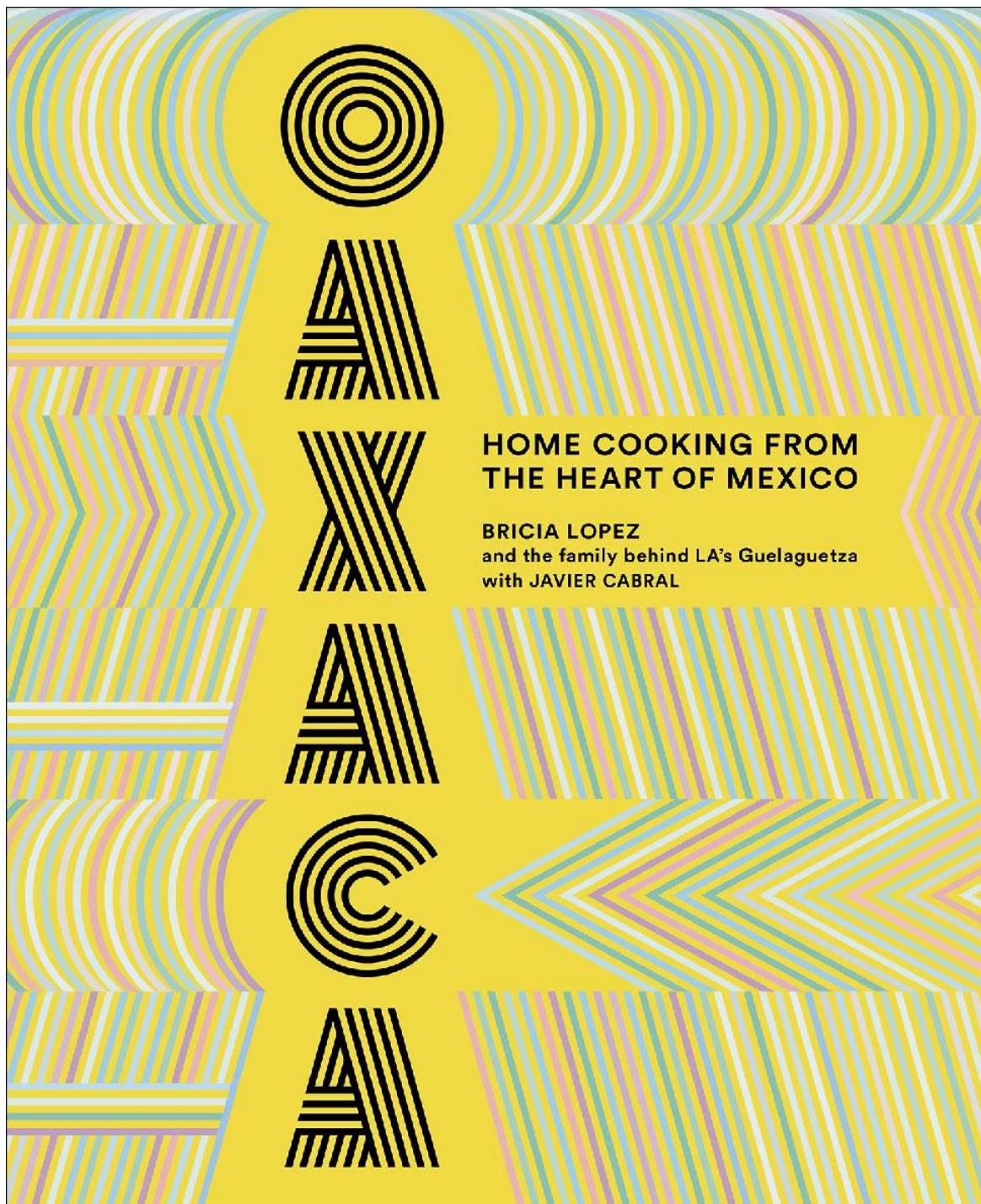




## HOME COOKING FROM THE HEART OF MEXICO

BRICIA LOPEZ

and the family behind LA's Guelaguetza  
with JAVIER CABRAL





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This book is dedicated to the millions of immigrants who every day fearlessly cross borders for a better life. May you continue to represent your culture and fight for your dreams. Don't ever allow anyone to tell you that your dreams are too big or too crazy. To all of our Oaxaqueños, Poblanos, Guerrerenses, and the rest of the Mexicanos who continue to be the backbone of the food industry in America, may your stories be heard. Don't be afraid to be you because that is your tradition. Our culture and our passion for a better life is what makes us stronger and more united than ever.

To Jonathan Gold, the man who changed our family's life. Thank you for championing food diversity in Los Angeles and in this country through your writing. Your spirit will forever be alive in our hearts. Los Angeles misses you.

And lastly, to our parents, Fernando Lopez and Maria de Jesus Monterrubio. Thank you for your bravery, your resilience, and your unconditional love as parents. Thank you for taking the leap and leaving everything you knew behind to provide your children with a better life. We hope to one day be as brave as you.

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# OAXACA

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ABRAMS, NEW YORK

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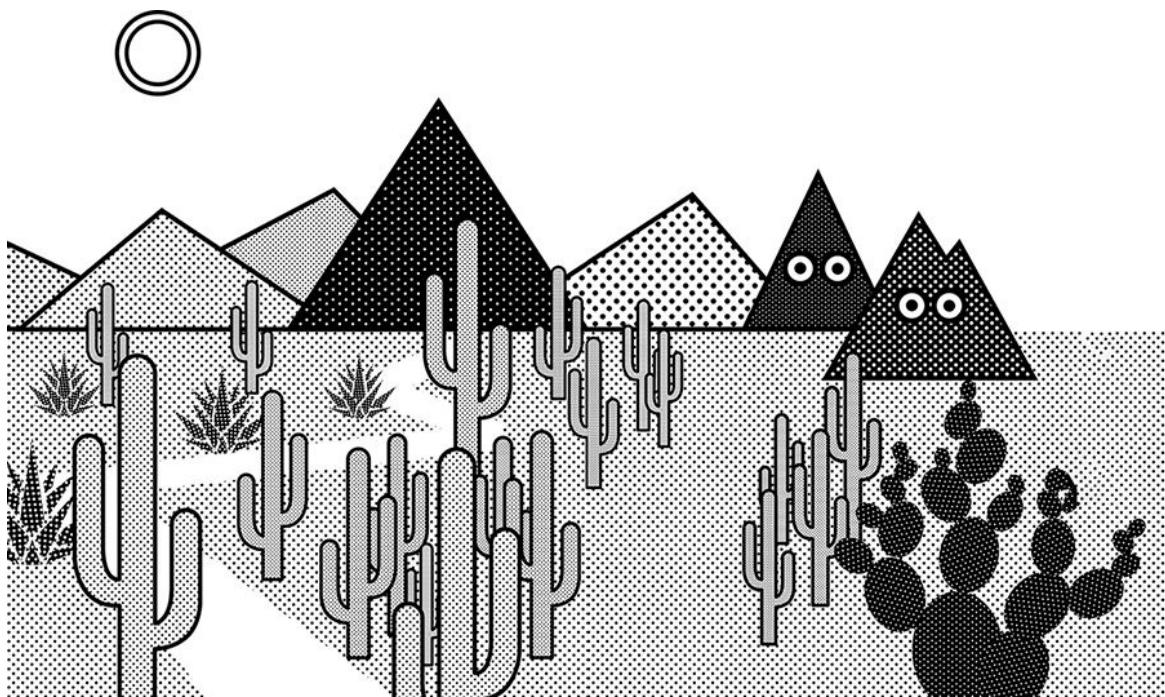
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## INTRO

At the southeastern reaches of Mexico, nestled alongside the Pacific Coast one state away from Central America, lies a land of rugged mountains, narrow canyons, arid flatlands, lush valleys, and a blue sky that goes on as far as the eye can see. It is a land of ancient villages and the home of Zapotecos, Mixtecos, Mazatecos, Mixes, and many other proud indigenous communities. Many know it as the land of the seven moles, and most recently, as the birthplace of mezcal. But believe me when I tell you: Oaxaca is so much more than that. The corn, the chiles, the herbs and spices, and the chocolate that form the foundation of the food here establish this beautiful state as the culinary heart and soul of the Mexican nation. And for those of you who are wondering, its name is pronounced “wah-ha-ka.” It is derived from the word *guaje*, a pre-Hispanic vegetable that grew abundantly in the region.

I grew up eating tortillas made from masa nixtamalized by my hardworking mother the previous night and ground fresh almost every morning. Our beans were cooked with wild herbs plucked fresh from the soil, and we ate every combination of chiles, tomatoes, tomatillos, onion, and garlic that you can imagine. I come from a long lineage of Oaxacan mezcaleros—craftsmen and cooks who specialize in making our famous liquor, now beloved around the

world, from roasted agaves. These deep Oaxacan flavors are ingrained deep inside me and have stayed with me throughout my life. These are the flavors my family has always strived to offer our guests at our restaurant, Guelaguetza, in Koreatown, Los Angeles. And, now, in this book.

We are sparing absolutely no secrets, and each recipe has been carefully selected not only to be inviting enough to cook for your loved ones at home but also to illustrate the story of my family in their journey from Oaxaca to Los Angeles.

My father, Fernando Lopez, founded Guelaguetza in Los Angeles in 1994. It has since become the center of life for the Oaxacan community in this city. The late Pulitzer Prize-winning *Los Angeles Times* food critic Jonathan Gold called it “the best Oaxacan restaurant in the United States,” and it was named America’s Classic by the James Beard Foundation in 2015.

Oaxaca leads all other Mexican states when it comes to the preservation of indigenous flavors, ingredients, and techniques through the centuries. Because of its rugged terrain, many of the indigenous communities were never conquered by the Spanish conquistadors. Some, like the Mixes, earned the nickname *los jamás conquistados*, which translates to “the [ones who were] never conquered.” Monte Alban (one of Oaxaca’s main archaeological sites) was the pinnacle of Mesoamerican society, and when it comes to biodiversity, tradition, and scenery, Oaxaca is one of the most stunning destinations in Mexico.

I am in love with everything Oaxaca, and I am confident that once you begin to cook from this book, taste it all, and read everything else I have to say about my hometown, you will be, too.

## GUELAGUETZA AND ITS MEANINGS

In Zapoteco—the indigenous dialect that is spoken throughout Oaxaca—*guelaguetza* is translated to mean “reciprocity” or “to give and receive.”

In everyday life, the word *guelaguetza* is used to describe the act of giving to one another in times of celebration. During baptisms, quinceañeras (a traditional Mexican-style birthday celebration for fifteen-year-old girls that signifies their growth into a young woman), graduations, weddings, anniversaries, and even death, families always come together to help each other out with both lavish and small gifts. This word embodies one of the core values of Oaxacan culture: to always share what you have with others no matter how much or little you may

have. As a receiver, the other side of this tradition is to receive everything with an open heart, selflessly, because eventually you, the receiver, will become the giver and so the tradition continues. It is a never-ending cycle of giving that transcends life spans and generations.





The *guelaguetza* tradition has been practiced in the villages of Oaxaca since before the arrival of the Spanish in the fifteenth century. To this day, many households in Oaxaca still have a “*guelaguetza* notebook” that gets passed down from generation to generation. Every single gift exchanged between families is documented in this notebook, so that future generations of the family can look

back and reflect on their own history of giving and receiving. It is a sacred exchange between families that outlives individual people and forms the foundation of the deeply generous community that is Oaxaca. I think this is one of the major reasons Oaxaqueños are regarded as some of the friendliest and warmest people in Mexico. *Guelaguetza* is an ongoing ritual of kindness that is embedded in our DNA.

Not too long ago my mom told me about a person who lived in her hometown who knocked on her door to ask about a *guelaguetza* my late grandma had pending. They brought their notebook along and in fact my grandma had received two sacks of beans from them many years ago, long before she passed away. It was now my mom's turn to return that favor in my grandmother's name. These occurrences are not uncommon and can go unclaimed or be reclaimed generations down the line. The gifts can range from a couple of freshly slaughtered turkeys, ready to be served with *mole negro* at a party, to a couple of five-gallon jugs of freshly distilled good-quality mezcal, also to be enjoyed at a party.

There is a deep sense of pride that comes with the act of giving in Oaxaca that is experienced by both the giver and the receiver. I'll never forget a moment during a trip I took with my dad to rebuild homes in Oaxaca after the 8.2 magnitude earthquake in 2017. We had just finished building a house for a man who had lost everything he owned. Nonetheless, he walked up to me and my dad and handed us a box of cookies. It dawned on me that those cookies were the only thing he had to offer us in gratitude. I received it with an open heart and cried later on that day when I opened it. It was such a profound feeling.

## **FOOD AND GENEROSITY GO TO THE VERY HEART OF WHO WE ARE AS A CULTURE**

La Guelaguetza, alternatively called Los Lunes del Cerro (Mondays on the Hill), is one of the biggest annual cultural festivals in all of Mexico. It is held at the Guelaguetza stadium in Oaxaca City on the last two Mondays of July. During this festive time, all the villages in Oaxaca come together to celebrate their regional styles and Oaxacan indigenous culture through food, mezcal, and dancing in front of thousands of people. Food plays such an integral role in this tradition, as foods like tortillas and sacks of beans are thrown into the crowd after each performance. If you love people and love to party, I recommend that you visit Oaxaca during this time of year.

One of my favorite memories is throwing fruit and bags of *tlayudas*—Oaxaca’s oversized tortillas—into a crowd after I finished dancing to “El Jarabe de Ejutla,” a folk song that every Oaxaqueño kid eventually learns and dances to in grade school. Imagine the scene of spiky pineapples, loaves of bread, sacks of beans, links of chorizo, and soda bottles filled with mezcal all flying through the air into a large group of people. Yes, sometimes those things hit people in the head (if they are lucky).

## THE JOURNEY TO GUELAGUETZA IN LOS ANGELES

No Mexican has ever been the same after the Mexican peso crisis of 1993. That was the year that the Mexican government cut three zeros from the value of the Mexican peso in an attempt to build it back up after years of hyperinflation: one thousand pesos suddenly became worth only one peso. This huge economic reset crippled the country’s economy. Millions of people lost their homes, jobs, and businesses. My father was left with almost nothing in his home country, so in order to provide for his family, he traveled north to Los Angeles on a tourist visa. He sold his black truck to pay off his debts and to buy a one-way plane ticket to LA. All he brought was a suitcase full of clothes, twenty liters of mezcal, and a hundred American dollars. He didn’t have the slightest idea what he was going to do for work, but he knew he had to figure something out. He moved into my aunt’s spare bedroom in her apartment in Culver City. It was just starting to be a hub of Oaxacalifornia culture in Los Angeles back then.

When he couldn’t find work, it came: “Maybe I can do the same thing that I did in Oaxaca and sell mezcal here in Los Angeles?” That idea, born of desperation, to sell mezcal and other Oaxacan goods, was the start of a brand-new chapter for my family. Until then, the only way for Oaxaqueños to get their hometown fix was by loved ones bringing carry-ons full of mole, *quesillo*, and bread from Oaxaca to share when they visited. This was a time when no one had even heard of the word “mezcal” in the States.

My father bought a used Toyota truck for \$300 with money he borrowed from my aunt. Loaded it up with mezcal, *tlayudas*, grasshoppers, and mole paste, and got lost around Southern California. He drove around fearlessly without a Thomas Guide or any other map in search of Oaxacan communities who missed their home flavors as much as he did. He knocked on thousands of doors to find Oaxaqueños like him and, soon enough, he found them in Santa Ana, Fresno, Selma, Madera, Santa Barbara, Oxnard, Moorpark, Huntington Park, Pomona, Northridge, San Fernando Valley, and so many more places.

Through food and mezcal, he found community.

“In Oaxaca, people don’t know bad food,” he would tell me. “Everyone eats good, simple, wholesome food every day and we don’t know how good we have it until we leave.” And he was right. He continues to be right. I’ve eaten food from all around the world, yet I always come back home craving my mom’s bowl of *frijoles* and fresh-made corn tortillas.

My father became known as “El Señor de Las Tlayudas,” and within a few months, the demand for Oaxacan products got so high that he had to start driving to Tijuana once a week to pick up a fresh shipment of products that my mother and I would pack and ship ourselves. We missed him dearly. I remember we flew up to visit him during Christmas that first year, and it was the first time I had French toast, ranch dressing, and cheeseburgers. He introduced us to Carl’s Jr, Sizzler and Bob’s Big Boy. These were all new exciting flavors to my father and he knew that if he loved it, the rest of his family would too. It always came back to food for us.

The following year, while selling on a street corner in Koreatown, he saw an empty space that used to be a Salvadoran restaurant, with a sign that read “For Lease.” By then, he was already accepted by the local gang and even paid them rent for “protection,” as they called it then. He barely understood or spoke English then, so he didn’t know what that sign meant, but he was intrigued. He asked his sister when he got home and found out it meant it was available to rent. However, when he went back to get more information, it was too late: the space had been leased. He was really upset at himself for not knowing and letting that opportunity pass him by. A few months later, to his surprise, the sign went up again, and this time he knew it was his time.





## **I'M DOING THIS, HE THOUGHT. I'M MEANT TO BE HERE.**

He recalls the exact moment when he shared the idea to open a Oaxacan restaurant in LA with his friends and family in 1993. “They all thought I was crazy.” Every single person doubted him, telling him things like “Who is going to eat Oaxacan food in Los Angeles? You are going to lose all of your money.”

Or his favorite: “Why don’t you just open a burger place instead?”

His response to all of them? “It is going to be Oaxacan food whether you like it or not, and, if it fails, so be it. I would be happy to return to Oaxaca knowing that I tried.” He was following the advice given to him by his brother before he passed away: “Never let anyone take advantage of you just because of where you come from. You have to go and expand your horizons by living in a big city and follow your dreams. Open your eyes to the world and learn how to stand on your own two feet. Don’t ever take no for an answer.”

He and my aunt partnered up, signed the papers, and took a leap of faith.

Even after he signed the lease and began to set up the space, everyone continued trying to talk him out of it. The health inspector who was assigned to the area told him his best chance was to sell the lease, or better yet, transfer the lease before opening. Many restaurants had come and gone in the same location without any luck. Good thing that my dad is among the most stubborn people I know. He stuck to his heart and started getting ready to open the restaurant, despite having zero experience running a restaurant.

“As Oaxaqueños, we truly are cut from a different branch of Mexico. If you deprive us of our native flavors—quesillo, mole, and the rest of our rich, indigenous ingredients—for even a week, we will start to feel like a part of us is missing. Some of us may even cry.”

The reality fortunately proved to be that a Oaxacan restaurant in Los Angeles was much needed, thanks to the increasing number of Oaxaqueño immigrants who were calling the United States their new home. There are cases where nearly entire villages have emigrated en masse, leaving their hometowns looking like ghost towns. You’ll see this for yourself if you’re ever in Oaxaca and driving through those small towns without a soul in the street.

My dad recalls that coyotes charged \$300 to bring people over to the United States in those days, and it was guaranteed they would arrive. Unlike now where coyotes' prices start at \$15,000 and don't guarantee that you will make it. "There were very few opportunities in Oaxaca in the late 1980s and 1990s, so as soon as kids turned sixteen, they started their journey to the U.S."

In August 1994, I saw my father again after half a year of not seeing him. He was picking my family up in Tijuana. I had a backpack heavy with mezcal. My brother had one full of *tlayudas* and my older sister had quesillo in hers. My mom was carrying a bag full of *pan de yema* in one hand and my baby sister in the other. We walked across the San Ysidro border entry and met my father. I was ten years old but I remember walking toward two golden arches like it was yesterday. Our first meal in the States as a family again was burgers and fries. The plan was to stay only for a year or two. Little did I know then that we would never return to Oaxaca.

Those first days of Guelaguetza's being open were rough. All six of us lived in my aunt's spare bedroom in Culver City for the first six months that we lived in Los Angeles. Both of my parents worked up to twenty hours a day. My father didn't know anything about running a restaurant except what an accountant friend had loosely advised: "Just make sure to sell at least \$300 a day, and you will be okay." Our opening menu only had four items: our *mole negro*, *mole estofado*, *tlayudas*, and *tamales de mole negro*. My dad didn't know what food costs were and he didn't have the slightest idea how much to charge for things.

He likes to tell the story of how we initially arrived at the price of our tamales. When our first customer on opening day asked for our now-coveted tamales de mole, my father responded: "Well, how much would you pay for them if you were having them at a restaurant?" She replied, "Umm, five dollars?" My dad bobbed his head and said, "That works!" He priced the rest of our opening menu the same way with the first customers who walked in. On that first day alone, we made \$600. Then that \$600 turned into \$900 the next day. He had tapped into Oaxaqueños and their love of food.

My father warned all of us that Oaxaqueños are extremely demanding about how our food should taste, and that it would always come back to "Well, it's not as good as my grandma's, but it's okay."

By the time our first Sunday service came, word of a new Oaxacan restaurant in Koreatown had spread so fast that people were lining up out the door before we even opened. The customer who ordered our first *tamal* came back the next day

and wanted fifteen tamales to go, but we had only made fifteen for the entire day! We couldn't keep up with the demand.

My father had tapped into something big, an entire community of immigrants who were willing to support him as he brought familiar flavors to them in this strange new country that can often be very cold as you are adjusting to the American way of life.

## **JONATHAN GOLD FIRST CAME TO GUELAGUETZA IN 1995.**

My father had no idea who he was and served him like any other person. Shortly after that first visit, he kindly let my dad know ahead of time that his review for the *Los Angeles Times* was going to be published. Jonathan warned him that once the review was out, a lot more people might be coming in. My dad, of course, didn't believe him. A few days later the article was published. My father came in as he would any other day, and since he didn't read the *Times*, he had no idea what was coming. That day, he served more people than on any other day in the short history of the restaurant.

Word spread quickly, and, soon enough, Oaxacan Americans from all over California were making the drive to get a taste of their native flavors once again. In my father's eyes, they were the real food critics to please. "Be scared of a hungry Oaxaqueño with a discerning palate!" my dad always says in Spanish. "He will let you know right away if you've got the *sazón* or if you don't." It's true. If there is one thing that Oaxacans are proud of, it is the bold and earthy flavors of their birthplace. You can never fool a Oaxacan when it comes to their food.

It was fascinating to see our restaurant become a community hub. Our Oaxacan customers started to bring in their American friends. Then those American friends started bringing their own friends and family. Then the Korean Americans from the neighborhood started to embrace us and our cuisine that shared so many similar sweet and spicy flavors with theirs.

Pretty soon, we outgrew our original location. My father and aunt opened a second location on Palms Boulevard and Sepulveda, in a completely different and more affluent part of town. However, after a couple of years my aunt and father decided to part ways as business partners. My aunt decided to run the Palms location and left my parents and us to continue to nurture our original location in Koreatown.

In 2000, there was a large all-you-can-eat Korean buffet restaurant available on Olympic Boulevard and Normandie Street, just a few blocks from our original location. It was a lot bigger than the original location at 250 seats. It was exactly what my dad had always dreamed of. He always wanted a large space that could become a temple to the community. He envisioned live music, dancing, and a place where everyone could forget they were in the city for a bit. He wanted his *paisanos* (fellow immigrants) from Oaxaca to be able to close their eyes and imagine themselves in the middle of their beautiful home state. My dad bought the lease of the restaurant from its Korean owner, Mr. Bai. Neither my dad nor Mr. Bai spoke English. My dad had a Brazilian friend who spoke a very broken English help translate the deal with Mr. Bai's son (who also had broken English). To this day, I have no idea how my dad made that deal happen, but he did. And so my dad continued building his dream.

The day we opened our Olympic location, I was fifteen years old. I still remember being in disbelief at seeing so many people sitting in one place. I was a hostess. My mom was the cashier. My sister was a waitress and my younger brother was serving *aguas frescas* and bussing tables. My dad was everywhere from the kitchen to the bar, making sure every guest left with a full stomach and a smile. That first night at Olympic left us so tired but also filled with adrenaline after the number of people we'd just served. It was unprecedented. In my eyes, my dad had made it.

All my family has ever done is serve traditional Oaxacan food. It has never been and will never be anything other than what is true to our family. There's nothing fancy about our food. My dad always says, "I never reinvented the wheel. I just think that good flavor cooked with soul is universally loved."

There are no secrets. The only thing that my dad always tried to do was maintain the quality and most accurate Oaxacan flavor in our food, measuring himself against the highest bar possible. He imported his tortillas from Oaxaca in a time before heirloom corn in the States was even a thing. He knew the flavor and texture of Oaxacan corn were unmatchable. He brought hundreds of pounds of chiles, grasshoppers, mole, and chocolate from Oaxaca because he could never find products that replicated those flavors here in LA. He was so dedicated to flavor that he drove to Oxnard (about sixty-five miles from LA) because he found a farmer who was growing chilacayota squash for our restaurant's *agua de chilacayota*. Nothing was ever an obstacle to my father. And if it was, he found a way around it.

When I found out Jonathan Gold had passed, the first person I called was my father. We cried together. In my dad's words, "Guelaguetza wouldn't be what it is today if it wasn't for that man. I wish I had done more to repay him for everything he did for our family."

Mr. Gold's writing sparked the beginning of the rest of my parents' and siblings' lives—and my life, too.

## GUELAGUETZA, THE SECOND GENERATION

"If I didn't move back to Oaxaca, I would have died."

Ask my father why he decided to leave everything he built in the U.S. and go back to live in Oaxaca in 2013, and that's the answer he is likely to give you. He worked himself to the bone. At one point he was running five restaurants, founding and running *El Oaxaqueño*, a Spanish-only newspaper he made for LA's Oaxacan community, and also running a money-wiring service from Los Angeles to Oaxaca.

He's hustled his way through life this way since he was a young teenager, when both of his parents died within only a few years of each other. Work is the only way of life he knows. It's understandable that after a life of getting up early in the morning to open the restaurant and going to sleep late signing paperwork, he was exhausted and just wanted to go back home.

However, the real answer that he will only share with you after a few *mezcales* is that he wanted his children to step it up and learn the value of hard work and responsibilities from an early age, like him. For our family, this meant operating the restaurant. He knew that if he stayed in Los Angeles, we would always depend on him to solve the restaurant's problems, so the only solution was for him to move back to Oaxaca, where he would be out of reach.

It worked.

My siblings and I grew up in the restaurant and spent our childhoods bussing plates and doing our homework in the kitchen. None of us played any sports, because there was always work to be done around the restaurant. Weekend nights were spent doing dishes or helping my parents break down for the night and get the restaurant ready for the next morning.

With immigrant parents, it can go two ways. The first scenario is, they push you to study so you won't have to do backbreaking work like they did. The second one is, they bring you in to start learning the ropes of the family business as early as possible. For us, it was the second scenario all the way, and we never have looked back—work always came first and everything else came after. My dad never really forced us to get good grades at school or participate in any extracurricular activities. None of us ever played any instruments, but we all were skilled in being hostesses, servers, cooks, and restaurant administrators at a very early age.



As a result, when we grew up, my siblings and I never wanted to work in the restaurant and never imagined ourselves keeping the restaurant going. Instead, we wanted to run away from it all and just work in a corporate job somewhere. We didn't want to worry about running a business, because we knew what it takes to keep it running firsthand.

Everything changed on that day when my parents sat us all down and told us that they were done with their life in America and wanted to move back to Oaxaca to retire. My dad was going to close the restaurant and move on with his life. That was the moment when I realized that the restaurant life was the only life I wanted to live. My aspirations to work in a corporate job somewhere were just an American fantasy I had created to fight my real destiny.

I was faced with the reality of it all: Was this going to be the end of Guelaguetza and my family's legacy? I was in my early twenties and that possibility really freaked me out. Was all of my dad's hard work for nothing?

That was the turning point in my life: I saw the restaurant as a career and as my life, not just a job. I saw the value of my culture that day and realized the privilege that I had as an ambassador. I don't know if my children or my nieces are going to want to work here, but I look forward to teaching them the value of hard work just like my parents taught me. It's the Lopez legacy. There were many days when we wished we had our dad around—plumbing emergencies especially, oh my god—but we all figured it out as we went.

I really do believe him when he says that if he didn't move back home, he wouldn't last here. The Great Recession in the 2000s hit my family hard again. We lost our home and closed all but our flagship restaurant in Koreatown. After working himself to the bone, my dad lost everything all over again, and we had to start from scratch for the second time. My parents were deep in debt, and we as their children made it our mission to clear their name of every cent of it. We owed them that and much more. We made the last payment on their debt in 2015.

I'm grateful now that my dad did things the way he did. He admits it was hard for him as well and that he fell into a depression for the first two years he lived in Mexico without his family, but now he happily says, "My children are now even better than me, and there is no better feeling that a parent can feel than that."

"I don't even ask about anything anymore or even go in the kitchen," my dad says. His only responsibility is quality control, since every time he comes to Los Angeles, he eats at the restaurant three times a day to make sure everything is still as good as when he left it. "The kitchen is running faster now! How?" he asks me, so I think we are doing at least a decent job.

When my father opened the restaurant, he named it Guelaguetza because it signified the Oaxacan way of life, which is one of food and generosity. For us, the meaning has evolved. It became our *guelaguetza* to the city of Los Angeles. Food and culture are what we know and what we are giving back to the city. America and Los Angeles have given us so many opportunities and friendships. It has embraced us and we have embraced it. I always find myself reflecting on the mural that we have outside the restaurant on Olympic Boulevard. It is a little girl offering corn to a little boy who in return is offering his chicken, because one can't live without the other.

This is community and we need it to survive.

## CREATING YOUR OWN SAZÓN

*Sazón* is a word in Spanish that has no direct counterpart in English. It may be occasionally used to describe the degree of seasoning used in a dish, but in Mexico it is more commonly used to explain a cook's intangible, deft ability to balance flavor.

It is a talent of mastering acidity, seasoning, tradition, and technique. It is not a skill that one learns by simply going to cooking school or working at a nice restaurant. It is an ability to understand and communicate the flavors of ingredients successfully, time after time, no matter what you are cooking and how much you are making. In Mexican food, *sazón* is a major component, and you will know if a cook possesses it or not at first bite.

My mother refers to *sazón* as "the magic of the kitchen" or as a person's individual seal on food. You can give the same recipe to two different cooks and chances are it will taste different, especially in Oaxaca, where every single Oaxacan dish is made differently depending on what town you are in.

It's something that comes after making cooking a habit. My mother has developed her sense of *sazón* since she was a child. My grandmother was known for being really grouchy, and she would get angry with my mom for going to grade school. She had a rule in the house: My mother could not leave for school unless she cooked food for everyone in the house before school. It was hard for my mom at first, but she eventually got really good and didn't mind cooking after a while, since she did not think my grandma's *sazón* was very good to begin with.

She learned a lot from her grandmother on her paternal side. She only cooked in clay pots using woodfire and refused to use any other fat besides lard. Her food was simple. My mom vividly remembers eating her amazing beans with not just *nopales* but also nopal flowers. She recounts seeing her grandma leaving the pot of beans outside all night before cooking. According to my great-grandma and my mom, the secret was the early morning dew in Oaxaca's countryside that made her beans so damn delicious. My mom remembers that same grandmother being confused the first time she saw metal cookware. "Why do you cook with metal? Metal doesn't have any flavor!"

“Everything has its *sazón*,” my mom says. “Even things as simple as a pot of beans, and sometimes those simplest things are always the hardest to get right.”

My great-grandmother ground all of her spices using only a *metate* (Mexico’s famous mealing stone made from lava rocks) and refused to use a blender. My mom remembers asking her if she could make her a tortilla one day, only for her to respond, “What do you mean, make you one? Come, you are going to learn how to make one for yourself and for the rest of us!” My mom remembers shouting “Auuuuuhh!” the first time she felt the intense heat from the comal on her fingertips. It was this school of Oaxacan hard knocks that made my mom the fierce cook that she is today. During holidays, she will get up at 6 a.m. to start cooking and not rest until everything is done.

*Sazón* comes naturally for some people, and others have to develop it. In the pursuit of finding your own *sazón* in your own kitchen, my mom would like to remind you to practice patience and remember to make time to not only cook but explore your identity as a cook. It’s okay to follow recipes exactly, but it’s also okay to add a little more salt or a little bit more oil if you think the dish needs it, or serve the dish with more chicken than what the recipe recommends. And remember that it’s perfectly okay to make mistakes, especially if you’re cooking for a fairly large group of people for the first time. Remember to forgive yourself.

*Sazón* takes patience.

My mother married at seventeen years old, and since the first day she was married, she’s cooked every day for my father. She asked her grandparents and my dad’s family from Matatlán for recipes to make so he could be happy eating the *sazón* he grew up with. She kept this up as she raised me and my brother and sisters. She’s always been generous with her recipes with anyone who asks for them, as is evident in this cookbook.

In Zapoteco, the thousand-year-old indigenous language still spoken in Oaxaca, the word for *aciento* (pork rind paste) is the same word that is used for children, which is the name of Oaxaca’s toasted *chicharrón* paste that we smear on tortillas. That is how important food is to us. In our indigenous languages, we use our staple foods to describe us as children.

My mom’s hard work and dedication to her family are unmatched by anyone else I have ever met. She endured my dad’s temper and hardheadedness in addition to raising four rebel children and managing the administration of a growing business. At the same time, she was the head of our household. Many things have

been written about my father's journey and fearlessness. My mom, however, just stood in the background quietly cheering on her man and becoming the rock and foundation this family very much needed. Her food has the *sazón* of years of endurance and layers of years of love.

My dad once told me, "You don't have to know how to cook, you just have to know what things taste like." I think this is the food equivalent of another popular slogan, "Fake it until you make it!" For a very long time, I felt self-conscious about my cooking because I grew up eating these things and took it for granted. When you work in a restaurant and you are constantly tasting all day and making sure your customers are happy, sometimes you go a full day without eating a full meal. At that point, it can be easy to take cooking at home for granted.

It wasn't until I had my child and started my family that I got serious about re-creating those long-simmered flavors and smells that I thought I knew how to eat so well—but not cook. It was a trial-and-error process, like many other things in life, finding my way through every pasilla chile and epazote herb. Now I can't believe it took me this long to explore myself in the kitchen. My son helps me out at times now, and my husband can't get enough of my mole-covered egg tacos for breakfast. If I can do it, that means anyone is capable of creating their own flavor.

Then there are the issues of not realizing how good you have it until you're grown up and understand how precious your roots are. In my case, how blessed I am to be from Oaxaca. When my dad opened his restaurant, he started receiving all these accolades. But the cool food to eat in Los Angeles then (in the 1990s and early 2000s) was still considered to be all the Spagos and newest farm-to-table restaurants in LA. I fell for that food hype, too, and I took the *tlayudas* and *memelas* of my beautiful Oaxaca for granted, thinking they would never be a status food like an artisanal pizza or sushi.

I was falling victim to that double standard that often inflicts the cuisines of some immigrants in the United States, when people complain about a taco or Korean BBQ being "too expensive," yet they don't think once about paying more than \$20 a bowl for flour and water in the form of pasta at an Italian restaurant. Then one day while I was making *entomatadas*, cooking a few heirloom *tomates de riñon* (a meaty, heirloom tomato available all over Oaxaca) down until the tomato sauce got nice and thick, I realized how similar it was to a beautiful marinara sauce. And as I turned to grab my handmade tortillas from the hot comal, I couldn't help but also compare it to those long strings of homemade pasta I had seen on Food Network the night before. Mexican food in the United States in

2019 is at the same pivotal point Italian food was in the early 2000s, when the sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters of Italian immigrants started to take even more pride in the regional subtleties of their styles. My native flavors were officially validated when my family won a James Beard Award, an award usually reserved for the fanciest of the fancy restaurants.

That night at Lyric Opera of Chicago I got to see my parents up onstage. My dad was wearing a tailored-fit three-piece suit, and my mom was wearing a shiny white dress and high heels with her makeup and hair perfectly done. My dad delivered a short and sweet James Beard Award speech—all in Spanish. Aside from my giving birth to my first son and my wedding day, this moment was the best of my life. It was a culmination of my parents' journey to a foreign country. It was a testament to the tenacious immigrant spirit they both had and maintained up until that point.

It's important to reflect on where you come from to see how far you have come. Every morning when I wake up, I thank God for how far my family's come.





THE OAXACAN ESSENTIALS

TECHNIQUES

PREPARING CHILES

This is perhaps the most fundamental technique you will use as you cook your way through this book. The art of bringing dried chiles back to life is a critical component of all Mexican cuisine. Salsas, sauces, moles, stews, and many more dishes rely on the depth that only properly treated dried chiles can give.

First thing you need to do is put a pot of water on to boil, because you're going to need the hot water to rehydrate the chiles. The water doesn't have to be actively boiling as it is rehydrating the chiles and the amount of water isn't important because for most recipes, unless otherwise noted, you're going to discard the soaking liquid or maybe just use a bit.

While the water is warming up, remove the woody stems from the chiles by pinching them off. Next, tear open the chiles so that they are butterflied open. If you prefer for your food to not be spicy, this is your chance to remove all the seeds and whitish veins, which contain most of the heat in a chile. If you love chiles and everything they offer in terms of heat, disregard this last step and leave the seeds and veins in place (unless the recipe states otherwise).

Most of our recipes will call for you to toast the chiles in a hot comal, but if you don't have a comal a cast-iron skillet will certainly do. This dry-toasting activates a chile's nutty flavors and all you need is a minute or two on a hot comal. It's okay to burn the edges of your chile a bit, so don't toss it out if that happens. You can also lay them flat on a baking sheet and pop them in the oven at 375°F (190°C) for 4 minutes on each side if you need to toast a lot of them at a time.

Once the water starts to boil, remove from the heat and place the chiles in the pot. Cover and leave it alone for at least 20 to 30 minutes.

You'll know the chiles are ready when they are tender enough to rip with your fingertips.

## TYPES OF CHILES

### DRIED

***Guajillo*** This little dried red chile is the foundational flavor of many traditional Mexican and Oaxacan dishes, including mole, salsas, braised meats, and many other staple foods. It holds the perfect balance of spiciness and fruity flavor, making it very versatile.

**Pasilla Oaxaqueña** There is something in Oaxaca's soil that makes its pasillas almost an entirely different chile from a pasilla grown anywhere else in Mexico. It's so much more complex and you'll notice it right away when you use it in a simple salsa, giving it a mole-like complexity with just this one chile.

**Morita** This is a smaller variety of jalapeño that is left to ripen on the vine before getting smoked. It's similar to a chipotle but usually exposed to smoke for less time, so the chiles remain chewy and fruitier than a dried chipotle. If it is not easily available, you can substitute any recipe that calls for morita with equal amounts of dried chipotle chiles.

**Puya** This chile is similar to guajillo, but more slender and even hotter. Its heat level is sudden and intense, but also lasts shorter than other chiles that sting for a bit longer. It doesn't add much in terms of body to a sauce or salsa but when properly balanced, it plays well with other chiles.

**Ancho** This is the dried version of Mexico's beefiest chile that is everyone's favorite for stuffing, the poblano chile. Its thick, vegetable-like flesh makes it the best chile to use if you're trying to add body and texture to your salsa. If properly rehydrated, it can be stuffed in this state as well and is very delicious. While most anchos aren't spicy, there are very few wild ones in the pack that are ferociously spicy.

**Ancho negro (mulato)** Looking like a darker chile ancho, it is exactly that. The longer time on the vine makes its heat level increase drastically. It's an indispensable ingredient in our namesake mole negro because it adds that spicy kick that keeps you coming back for more in addition to that body that anchos are known for.

**Costeño** Contrary to this chile's name, derived from the word for "coast," it grows in Oaxaca's Mixteco region in the inland, which borders Puebla and Guerrero. It has very few seeds and packs heat. It can be hard to find in the States, so in a pinch, puya is a fine substitution.

**Chile de arból** This scrawny chile is a cook's best friend when you need to add an instant layer of bright, peppercorn-like heat to any dish or salsa. It's easily available and is a good universal chile to add to anything when you need to bring up the Scoville levels a bit.

**Chilhuacle rojo** Deeply red in color, this dried chile is lightly tart and gives a beautiful red color to anything it touches. It's an essential ingredient in mole rojo.

**Chilhuacle negro** This chile is tough to find in the U.S., but its bitter, smoky, tobacco-like flavor is what gives our mole negro its haunting aroma and deep, deep flavor.

## FRESH

**Chile de agua** This is the official (fresh) chile of Oaxaca. You'll find these chartreuse-colored jewels piled high in every market in Oaxaca and available as a side order in every eatery. They are usually simply charred and served with onions. It is as powerful as it is beautiful, so tear off pieces with caution. It is one of the few chiles in Mexico that you'll find sold by the piece and not by the pound.

**Anaheim** This Hatch-like fresh green chile makes a decent substitute if you can't find chiles de agua since they're very easy to find in the States. Their spiciness varies from one chile to another, but it's usually a snappy heat that burns really strong at first and dissipates right away.

**Serrano** Serranos deserve a permanent place in your refrigerator's crisper for their ability to somehow be simultaneously refreshing and spicy at the same time. When raw, its vegetal-flavor is refreshing in salsas and when charred, it gives salsas that addictive spiciness quality.

**Jalapeño** This classic chile needs no introduction. Its heat is reliable and very easy to control in recipes. Unlike other chiles, it adds both body and spiciness to salsas. We love it in chile toreado form with extra lime juice.

**Poblano** This is Mexico's powerhouse chile. Its bulbous size just begs to be stuffed with things and its generally mild temperament makes it a favorite of many people who otherwise can't hang with chile. It's the only chile that is eaten like a vegetable, as a main course in chiles rellenos.

## USING A TORTILLA PRESS

If you find yourself regularly cooking Mexican food at home, a good-quality tortilla press is one of the best investments you can make. Chewy, fresh, handmade tortillas are just a press and a flip away. Not to mention that most tortilla presses are heavy duty and will last you a lifetime. However, what no one seems to tell you is that tortilla presses don't really work unless you put a piece of plastic on each side. Otherwise, the masa for your tortillas will stick to the metal or wood and create a disaster in your kitchen. A quart-sized Ziploc bag that is cut

along the sides so that it makes two perfectly symmetrical halves will work. Make sure that both sides of the press are completely covered in plastic so that the freshly pressed raw tortilla can peel easily. Remember, practice makes perfect. When starting out, don't press too hard, since a thicker tortilla is easier to handle and less likely to rip in the delicate press-to-comal transfer. As you practice and get more confident in your tortilla-making skills, push harder to achieve the coveted handmade-thin tortilla.



Tortilla-making tip: Working with room-temperature masa is easier than cold masa straight out of the refrigerator, because it is less brittle. It is easier to shape and less likely to rip on you. Also, it's best to get your comal or cast-iron skillet as hot as you can get it before gently laying your tortilla on it. Only let that first

side of the tortilla cook just until it doesn't stick to the pan anymore, which is about 30 seconds. After 30 seconds, flip to the other side and let that side cook for a minute or two, then flip it back to that first side to finish cooking. The tortilla is ready when it starts to puff up. A nonstick pan or thick griddle will also do the trick.

## SKIMMING MEAT BROTHS

Many of our recipes start by cooking chicken, pork, and beef in water. My mom is obsessed with using a round skimmer to remove all the foam made from fat and scum that rises to the top of those bubbling meat broths. Technically speaking, that foam is harmless and will eventually get integrated back into the broth after simmering for a while, though it will make the broth cloudy and a bit gray. This technique is mostly for aesthetic reasons to have a crystal-clear broth, but it also produces a cleaner-tasting stock.

## CURING AND USING A MOLCAJETE

A salsa or guacamole made in a blender or food processor will never replace the velvety, chunky texture of a salsa made in a molcajete. It is Mexico's premiere pre-Hispanic piece of cooking equipment that hasn't changed for thousands of years. To make a salsa, add the ingredients and use the *tejolote* (the smaller stone to grind and mash things) to mash until all the ingredients are evenly incorporated.

When grinding spices, add the whole spices to the molcajete and grind in a circular motion until the spices are finely ground.

Before using a molcajete for the first time, it is of the utmost importance to season it. Just like a cast-iron pan needs a good layer of seasoning before using it for the first time, it's the same with a molcajete. This is done by grinding a tablespoon of salt and a couple of big spoonfuls of any variety of white rice in it. Keep grinding in a circular motion for 5 minutes.

After this, add 2 tablespoons of any cooking oil you have on hand, a chopped-up jalapeño or any other green chile, and a clove of garlic. Keep grinding this mixture for another 5 minutes.

After 10 minutes of grinding and you feel like your arm is going to fall off, wash with soap and warm water and your molcajete is ready for a lifetime of amazing salsas.

## USING A MOLINILLO

Before steam wands and electric frothers, there were wooden molinillos. Their intricate grooves are specifically designed to incorporate air into sipping chocolate and create a thick head of foam. In Oaxaca, if your chocolate doesn't have any foam, whoever prepared it didn't do it properly. To use a molinillo, place the end with all the grooves in the pot with hot chocolate and rub the other end of the wooden rod between your palms so that it spins back and forth in the liquid. Continue this circular movement for a few minutes until froth starts to form in the chocolate and serve immediately.

## USING A STRAINER

In order to achieve that velvety, restaurant-like finish on a lot of our sauces, aguas frescas, atoles, and even some moles, it is of the utmost importance to purchase a high-quality strainer with a double-fine mesh. In some cases, you may have to strain things twice to get them as smooth as possible. This is the best way to mimic the smoothness of sauces and atoles in Mexico that could only be achieved through local molinos, which are the neighborhood shops that offer fine stone-grinding services.

## INGREDIENTS

**Sea salt** My mom has always used Mexican sea salt for all of her recipes. Because of that, all of the recipes in this cookbook call for sea salt.

**Dried field corn** Corn is the foundation of Oaxacan cuisine. Sometimes called “dent” corn, this is the kind of dried corn you will need to have on hand when making your own nixtamal for tortillas, atole, moles, tamales, and any other dish that calls for fresh masa. These kernels are fatter than the smaller corn grown for popcorn. In Mexico, it is available in yellow, blue, white, and red varieties. In the U.S., you’ll find yellow field corn the easiest. Don’t get turned off if you only see 25-pound bags available to purchase online; it goes fast and stays fresh for a few months. We recommend buying organic field corn if you can.

**Masa** There are two types of masa that you can typically find made at Latino markets. The first and most common one will be masa for tortillas, which is an evenly ground fine masa that will work for most recipes such as tortillas, *memelas*, *molotes*, *chochoyotes*, and quesadillas. The second type is masa for tamales, which is a rougher grind and perfect for tamales called *masa quebrajada* or *masa quebrada*. This masa will usually be prepared with lard or vegetable

shortening and seasonings, so you can just spackle it onto corn husks or banana leaves as is. I will say one thing: There is nothing like making your masa from scratch. The texture and flavor are unlike any other. Think of it as handmade pasta dough versus store-bought pasta dough. Because it forms the foundation of so many simple dishes in this cookbook, you should stay away from low-quality shortcuts such as Maseca. It's just not the same. The only instant masa mix that we are willing to endorse as a quick alternative to freshly nixtamalized masa is Bob's Red Mill Organic Masa Harina.

**Hoja santa** Oaxaca is the land of hoja santa. You'll find this powerful herb in soups, sauces, stews, moles, empanadas, and in cocktails. It tastes of vegetal licorice and is also known as the root beer plant because it smells and tastes a lot like it. Fresh hoja santa is always preferred. If not available, it can be substituted with equal parts fresh marjoram, fresh thyme, and fresh mint.

**Avocado leaves** If you taste an anise-like flavor in something while in Oaxaca, it probably has avocado leaves in it. It's used like a bay leaf while cooking and imparts a deeply earthy flavor to things. If you can't find fresh, you can find dried online, and they are just as good, especially in black beans. In Oaxaca, cooks use fresh avocado leaves because they are easy to find in *mercados*. At our restaurant and for this book, we always refer to dried avocado leaves. They are just as delicious and are imperative in many recipes.

**Epazote** This is a delightfully pungent herb that goes great with cheese in a quesadilla or empanada. It can also be used like basil as an herb to beautifully perfume a pot of black beans or salsa. It's a lot more powerful than cilantro, so use very carefully.

**Nopales** Nopales are the tender paddles of those cactus plants you see all over Mexico. They are Mexico's most widely eaten vegetable. The flavor is slightly sour and, if cooked properly, has a very satisfying, meaty, tender texture. Always make sure to boil them in salted water with onion and garlic for up to 30 minutes to remove all of their slime, unless you are curing in salt for our nopal salad featured on [this page](#).

**Huitlacoche** This is a jet-black fungus that grows on corn and is revered around Mexico for its deeply earthy flavor and texture. It's received the moniker of "Mexican truffle" because of its mushroom-like essence and appearance. In Oaxaca, it is a favorite filling for empanadas.

**Dried shrimp** Chintextle salsa and some stews rely on the umami-packed seafood funk of dried shrimp to complete their flavor. When purchasing dried shrimp, always buy whole—never pre-ground—to grind yourself, and look for the plumpest, deepest orange specimens.

**Tejocotes** This is like a smaller, starchier mix of an apple and a quince. It must be cooked a bit to make it edible. It is an indispensable ingredient in ponche when the holidays come around, and the tender, chewy texture is extremely satisfying.

**Tomatillos** Tomatillos originated in Mexico and are a pre-Hispanic ingredient. They play an integral role in many salsas and braises. The flavor is tart, and it adds a welcomed layer of contrasting acid to anything it touches. When shopping for them, look for the smaller, multicolored “milpero” ones that are about the size of a large marble and prized for their intense flavor.

**Mexican crema** Somewhere in between sour cream and crème fraîche, Mexican crema is a tangy, runny, slightly thickened dairy product that adds a layer of instant richness to anything you add it to. If you can’t find Mexican crema, add a bit of salt and water to sour cream to thin it down a bit.

**Mexican key limes** These tiny limes are every Mexican cook’s best friend. Their sour flavor is tropical, fruity, and without the bitterness associated with the medium-sized Mexican limes that are more easily available. Nonetheless, these are the best type of limes to use anywhere you see lime in this cookbook. We wouldn’t be mad at you if you added them to every single recipe, because they are that good.

**Guías** In Oaxaca, the tube-like green vines that connect squashes to the rest of the plant are a delicacy. They are usually cooked in a soup and have a tender, vegetal texture and a light squash flavor.

**Flor de calabaza** Squash blossoms are an essential filling for Oaxaca’s empanadas. Their flavor is subtle and tastes lightly of squash. Their shelf life is extremely short, and they start to wilt immediately after being plucked. If planning on using fresh, try to buy them on the same day or one or two days before the day that you plan on eating them. If not, sauté them with a little bit of garlic, onion, and chile to preserve them as a *guisado* that will last a week.

**Piloncillo** Essentially cones of unrefined cane sugar, this is the preferred sweetener of Mexico. It imparts a deep, caramel-like flavor.

**Tunas** Also known as cactus pear fruit, these are the apples of Mexico, since there are so many colors and varieties. These are the fleshy fruits that grow on cactus paddles all over Mexico. In Oaxaca, the most consumed variety are the burgundy-colored ones, and their watermelon-like flesh with tiny, crunchy, kiwi-like seeds and flavor is what gives horchata in Oaxaca its unique pink hue.

**Chayote** Known as mirliton squash in English, this tender gourd cooks up like a mix between a potato and a squash. It is usually cooked in Mexican soups and absorbs the flavor of whatever it is cooked in.

**Chilacayota** This is the official squash of Oaxaca. It can grow to be as big a watermelon, and its fibrous, spaghetti squash-like flesh is boiled into a spiced syrup for agua de chilacayota.

**Chochoyotes** This is the name of the chewy corn dumplings found in soups all over Oaxaca. They are formed by combining fresh corn masa with a little bit of caramelized lard.

**Totopos** In Mexico, you don't say "tortilla chips." They are called *totopos*, which is derived from the word *totopoch*, meaning a very well-toasted tortilla in Náhuatl, the indigenous language of central Mexico.

**Chicharrón** Kettle-fried pig skin is an essential protein in Oaxaca. It is puffy and, surprisingly, not as greasy as you might think. It is typically braised in a salsa until it is just slightly tender but still a little crispy. There are so many types of chicharrón. When using them in a recipe, I suggest buying the variety found under the heat lamps in the meat department at your local Latino market. It is usually sold by the pound there. But if you cannot find the Mexican stuff, the American-style fried pork rinds sold in the chip aisle also do the trick.

**Chorizo** These are the bright-red links of ground pork you'll see all around Oaxaca. This sausage is highly seasoned with dried chiles, spices, and vinegar. Oaxaca's chorizo is brighter in flavor than chorizos found in other parts of Mexico, thanks to a little more vinegar used when making it. Unlike Spanish chorizo that is cured, Mexican chorizo needs to be cooked to be eaten.

**Tasajo** Tasajo is Oaxaca's steak cut. It's a slice of heavily salted, paper-thin beef, usually from the top round cut of the cow. It tastes amazing simply grilled.

**Cecina** This is a paper-thin cut of pork loin that is rubbed in a guajillo chile adobo paste. It is a tasty protein to complement many Oaxacan tortilla-based

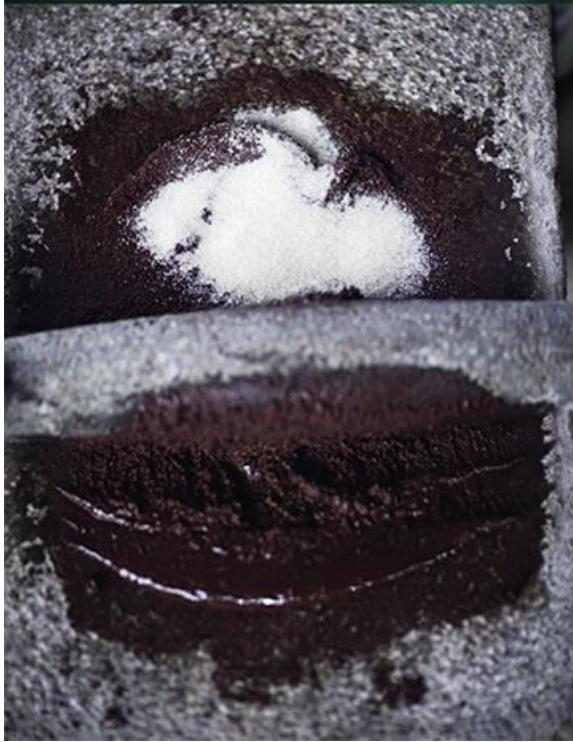
dishes like *entomatadas* or *enfrijoladas*.

***Quesillo*** This is the official cheese of Oaxaca. It is a semi-hard, unaged cheese that is similar to good mozzarella and has the texture of string cheese. In Oaxaca, it is usually very finely shredded and used as a melting cheese for empanadas and *tlayudas*. It is made from unpasteurized milk there, giving it a salty, briny flavor. “Queso Oaxaca” is the American version of quesillo, though the texture is more like a Monterey Jack.

***Carmine powder*** In Oaxaca, cochinilla (cochineal) bugs grow on the paddles of nopales (cactus) all over the land. They look like white speckles and are picked by hand, dried under the sun, then crushed in a pestle, leaving a beautiful, vibrantly red powder called carmine behind. In villages like Teotitlán del Valle, they dilute this powder and use this naturally derived food coloring to dye their signature wool textiles, but it is also sold in mercados all around Oaxaca to use in *nicuatole* and sweet tamales. It has no discernible flavor, but it does make everything it touches a striking shade of pink. You can find carmine online in the U.S. to crush at home, but you can also use artificial red food coloring to achieve a similar effect.

***Poleo*** A wild herb that grows around Oaxaca that is used often to infuse an herbaceous flavor into beans. It originated in the mountains of Picacho in the San Bartolomé Quialana valley region.

***Vegetable oil*** I know vegetable oil isn’t the sexiest or trendiest oil to cook with, but it’s the oil that most Oaqueños use in their kitchens, including my family. We are respecting that. Not to mention, it gets the job done.





































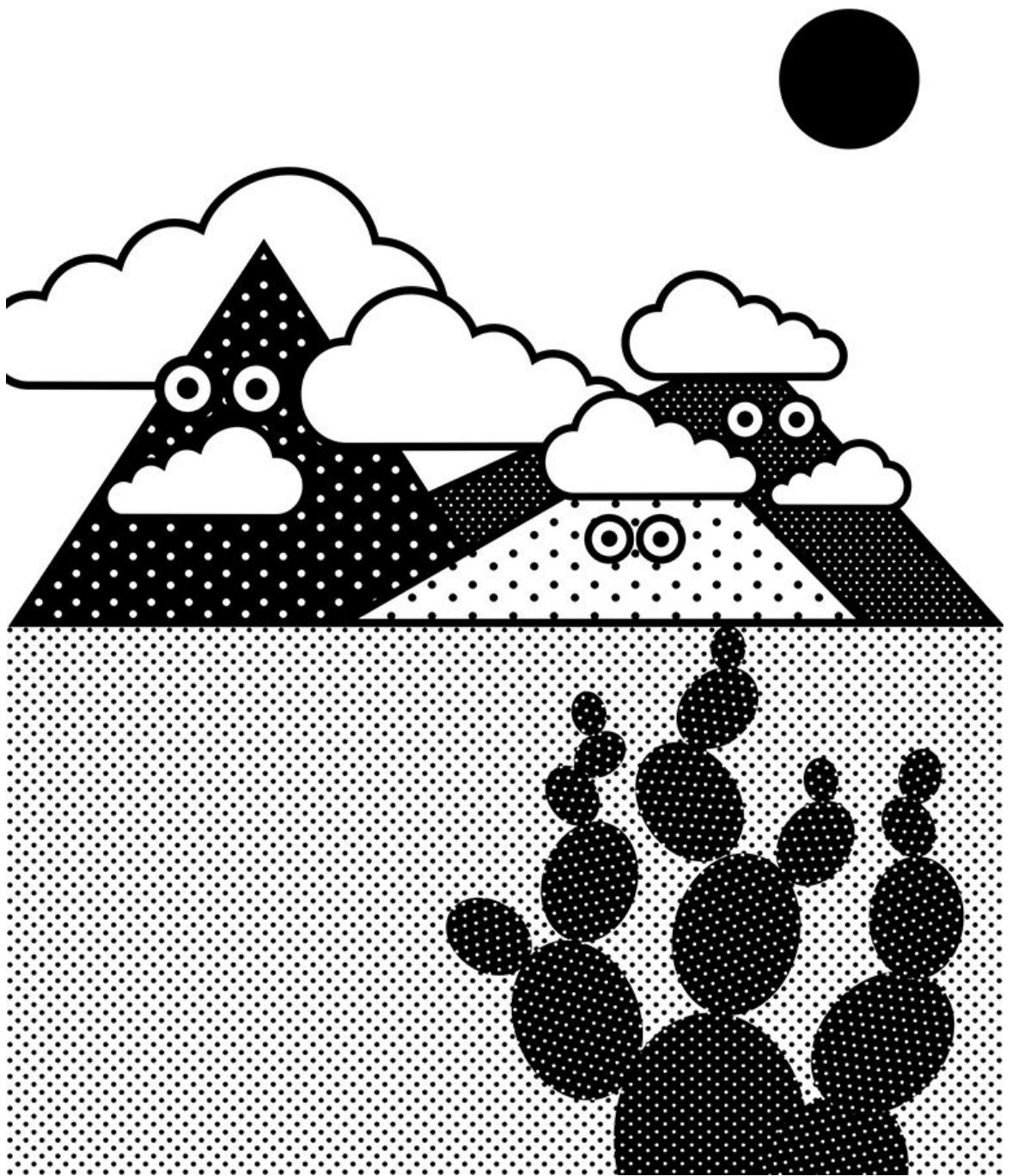












**ONE**  
**THE STAPLES OF OAXACA**

**These are the essential dishes of Oaxaca that have formed the foundation of our diet through the generations. All of the dishes are eaten at all hours of the day. Oaxacan food is much more than just mole.**



## Masa

Masa is the essence of Mexico. It is the foundation of Mexican cooking. In Oaxaca, a lot of families still make their own nixtamal at home to supply their daily masa consumption. Nixtamal is the process of treating dried corn with an alkaline solution to make it more nutritious. Slaking lime—also known as pickling lime, a naturally occurring mineral compound—has been used for thousands of years for this process. After a night of soaking, the nixtamalized corn is ground and transformed into masa. This technique has been passed from generation to generation, especially in Oaxaca. Every night before my mom goes to bed, she nixtamalizes a batch of corn so she can make fresh masa the next morning. It's part of her nightly routine.

We make nixtamal daily at the restaurant for our masa use. I bring some of this masa home and I take this convenience for granted. Lately, many anti-carb diets have deemed tortillas “unhealthy,” but don’t let these fads deter you: homemade corn tortillas are among the world’s healthiest staple foods. They are a whole-grain product, easily digestible, filling, and satisfying. Try making masa as a weekend project. The trickiest part might be grinding it, and for that I recommend a tabletop wet stone mill or a hand-cranked wet grinder. I like Premier’s Small Wonder 1.5-liter tabletop wet grinder, available on Amazon.

Believe me, there is nothing more fulfilling than making your own masa at home.

**MAKES ABOUT 5 POUNDS (2 KG) MASA, OR 32 TORTILLAS. THE MASA WILL STAY FRESH FOR UP TO A WEEK.**

**½ cup (56 g) pickling lime**

**4.4 pounds (2 kg) white field corn**

### VARIATION

*Masa quebrada* (also called *quebrada*) is a little chunkier and adds a rustic texture to *atole*, tortillas, and anything else you use it in (see [this page](#)).

In the largest heavy-bottomed pot you have, dissolve the pickling lime in 5¼ quarts (5 L) water. Once all the powder has dissolved, add the corn. The corn should be completely submerged in water. If not, add more water so there is at least 2 inches (5 cm) of water above the corn.

Place the pot over low-medium heat and gently simmer for 1 hour.

When the nixtamal changes from white to yellow and the corn easily peels away from its skin, turn off the heat. Let sit for at least 16 hours or more.

The next morning, dump the pot into a colander on top of your sink and discard the water. Rinse until the water comes out clear. You'll know the corn is ready for masa when it is tender to the bite. It should be al dente like pasta.

If using a tabletop wet stone grinder, carefully add about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water in batches to grind a pound (450 g) of cooked nixtamal. Smooth masa for tortillas takes about 40 minutes, and *masa quebrajada* for tamales and atole takes about half that time. Repeat until you've gone through all the masa. Make sure to follow the instructions and safety guidelines of your grinder.

Using your hands, work the masa until a dough forms. When all the dough has stuck together and a putty has formed, it is ready.



## Frijoles de la Olla

Beans Cooked in a Pot

There is one thing that is never, ever missing in my house: A fresh pot of beans. I understand that we all live busy lives and the convenience of just grabbing a can of beans from the store and having it there for whenever you need it, but it is incredible to see how different the quality is when you cook beans yourself. There is nothing more beautiful than a pot of black beans to me. Not to mention that black beans are also the heart of Oaxacan food so if you perfect your *frijoles de la olla*, you are halfway to becoming a legit Oaxacan cook.

I would love to go to my children's homes when I get older and see that they are cooking their own pot of beans. I encourage people to give it a try because, despite what many people may think, beans aren't hard to cook. I think that people get turned off because of the time involved, which, yes, can go up to an hour or more at times. But remember that most of it is inactive time. You're not constantly stirring or anything like that. You just leave your beans simmering and you can do whatever you want around the house until they're done. You might also burn a few pots along the way—I sure did the first time I tried to make my own beans. But once you get the hang of it and see the difference in flavor, you'll ask yourself why it took you so long to get into this healthy and essential cooking habit for all Mexican food.

**MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS (.75 L), DRAINED**

**2 pounds (910 g) black beans, rinsed and soaked in water for 3 hours**

**6 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed (18 g)**

**1 small white onion (100 g), peeled, quartered**

**2 sprigs fresh epazote, rinsed**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

In a large pot, combine the beans, 8 cups (2 L) water, garlic, and onion. Bring to a boil.

Once boiling, lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the beans are softened. This should take about an hour. After an hour, stir in the epazote and salt. Remove from heat.

Discard the onion and garlic before serving.



## Huevo en Frijol

Fried Omelet Cake in Black Beans

This is one of the easiest things to cook of all Oaxacan food and also one of the most filling. Just fry a hard omelet—called a *huevo en torta* in Spanish—and throw it in a bowl filled with leftover half-mashed beans along with some chopped epazote for some freshness. Serving with some chiles *toreados* and fresh-cut lime really makes this dish.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**¼ of an onion (25 g), chopped**

**8 cups (2 L) cooked black beans ([this page](#)), not drained**

**2 fresh epazote leaves**

**8 eggs, beaten**

**Sea salt**

In a large skillet over medium heat, add 1 tablespoon of oil. Once the oil is hot, add the onion to season the oil. When the onion starts to soften and caramelize, about 10 minutes, remove.

Lower the heat and very carefully add the beans with their liquid. Smash with a masher until about half the beans are smashed. Add the epazote and simmer for 5 minutes. Season with salt to taste.

Meanwhile, in a small nonstick pan over medium heat, add a little of the remaining oil. When hot, pour the eggs into the pan in batches and fry without disturbing until the omelet is slightly golden brown, then salt to taste. Flip the omelet and cook well on the other side. Remove from the pan and taste for seasoning. Repeat until you've used all the eggs and oil.

Tear the omelets into large pieces and add them to the simmering beans. Simmer for another 3 minutes and serve.



## **Chicharrón en Frijol**

Crackling Pork Skin in Black Beans

*Chicharrón*'s texture when it soaks a bit in black bean broth is an essential Oaxacan experience. It's not completely crunchy and yet not completely tender, and, when eaten in black beans with torn pieces of tortillas, it makes such a filling breakfast. It hits the spot when you need just a little bit more out of your pot of beans.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**8 cups (2 L) cooked black beans ([this page](#)), not drained**

**2 fresh epazote leaves**

**Sea salt**

**10½ ounces (300 g) chicharrón, broken into 2-inch (5-cm) pieces (see [this page](#))**

Very carefully add the beans to a large skillet over medium heat. Smash with a masher until about half the beans are smashed. Add the epazote and simmer for 5 minutes. Season with salt to taste.

Add the chicharrón to the beans in batches and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes until the cracklings just start to soften. The texture of the chicharrón should be crisp-tender. Serve immediately.



## Pasta de Frijol Negro

Black Bean Paste

Avocado leaves are the aroma of Oaxaca, and they are the main flavor in this indispensable staple. So many things can be created out of this little bean paste flavored with anise-y avocado tree leaves. It is the base for *memelas*, *tlayudas*, *molletes*, *enfrijoladas*, and so much more. Growing up, we stopped at the market in Tlacolula—a small village located near Oaxaca City—just to buy the paste, already made, in little plastic bags. You buy some *tasajo*, you grill it, you get some fresh *tlayudas*, some salsa, and then you spread some of this paste all over your tortilla like it is a savory cake frosting. It is Oaxacan pâté. The texture is similar to cream cheese and it is addictive.

## **MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS (1 L)**

**1 pound (455 g) black beans, cleaned and rinsed**

**4 cloves garlic, peeled (12 g)**

**½ of a small white onion, cut in half (50 g), plus ¼ cup chopped white onion (30 g)**

**Sea salt**

**1 chile de arból, stem removed**

**2 dried avocado leaves**

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

In a large stockpot, combine the beans, garlic, and onion quarters. Cover the beans with water and bring to a boil.

Cover the pot, lower the heat to a simmer, and cook until the beans are tender. This can take anywhere from 1 to 2 hours, depending on how old the beans are. If the liquid is evaporating too fast and the beans start to show, bring another cup or two of water to a boil and add it to the beans. Once the beans are cooked, salt to taste, stir, and continue cooking for 10 minutes.

Once the beans are tender to the bite, remove and discard the garlic cloves and transfer the beans to a blender. Add the chile de arból and avocado leaves and puree until smooth.

Heat the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Once hot, add the chopped onion and cook until it starts to soften. Add the black bean puree and fry it for 15 minutes, stirring until the bean mixture has thickened.



## **Frijoles Refritos**

### **Refried Black Beans**

People in Oaxaca hardly ever eat guacamole and tortilla chips as a starter dish (and if they do, you best believe it is sprinkled with a few *chapulines* ). One famous dip at every party, however, is these *frijoles refritos*, some of the best refried beans you'll ever have in your life. At weddings, Oaxaqueños usually serve barbacoa, but every table will have a platter of refried beans paired with a big pile of chips so you can get your appetite going before the main course arrives. These beans and chips go really well with a michelada or some mezcal, like many other things in Oaxaca. The texture is thicker and drier than the refried beans you are probably used to. Serve this at your next party in place of guacamole.

**MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS (250 G)**

**3 chiles de arból, stems removed**

**5 avocado leaves**

**4 cups (960 ml) cooked black beans ([this page](#)), drained (reserve 1 cup/240 ml bean broth)**

**¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil**

**¼ cup (30 g) chopped white onion**

**Sea salt**

Put the chiles and avocado leaves (or their substitution) in a comal or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Stir and toast until aromatic, for about 3 minutes. Remove from heat.

In a blender, combine the beans, reserved bean broth, avocado leaves or their substitution, and chiles and blend until smooth.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onion and blended bean mixture and stir to combine. Lower the heat to its lowest setting and cook for about 40 minutes, stirring frequently, scooping and folding the beans

repeatedly. Be vigilant to make sure the beans don't stick to the bottom of the pan. Season with salt to taste.

Once the refried beans reach a smooth, paste-like consistency, they are ready to serve.



## Aciento

Pork Rind Paste

Chances are, if you're not oaxaqueño and grew up in this last generation in Mexico or the United States, you've probably been taught to think that pork fat like *aciento* —Oaxacan-style *chicharrón* paste—is not good for you, and that you should always cook and eat things made with a plant-based oil instead. It's normal to think this way. That is, until you go to Oaxaca and see that *aciento* is a way of life and that a lot of elders live to be more than one hundred years old eating the stuff on a daily basis. You'll also realize that it is amazingly flavorful and really completes a lot of masa-based Oaxacan dishes such as *tlayudas*, *memelas*, empanadas, and *chochoyotes*. Think of it as a Oaxacan brown butter. If you do it right, it should taste nutty and toasty, not like lard or like fat. I also understand that a lot of people may not have the time to properly render *chicharrón* into a paste, so this shortcut version using olive oil is much quicker and tastes almost as good. Plus, you have the added heart-healthy benefits of olive oil, so you can feel better about indulging. Don't eat *aciento* by the pound, but do have a smear and enjoy yourself. If you can't find or don't have access to fresh *chicharrón*, American-style pork rinds also work well.

**MAKES 3 CUPS (720 ML)**

**13 ounces (375 g) chicharrón**

**¾ cup (180 ml) olive oil**

Place the ingredients in a food processor and process until smooth and the *chicharrón* is broken down to a chunky paste, about 3 minutes.

This *aciento* will keep in the refrigerator for a month.



## Vegan Aciento

I first had vegan *aciento* maybe eight years ago during a trip to Oaxaca. I was taken by surprise. It was the first time I had ever heard of a plant-based aciento. It

made me think about all the traditional Oaxacan dishes that are accidentally vegan. In Oaxaca, food selection is not about health or animal rights, it's about economics. My mom grew up eating meat only on Sundays. Back then, if you had a chicken or a cow, it just made more sense to eat its eggs and milk over many years instead of killing the animal and feeding yourself only a couple of times with the meat. I think you'll find that the toasted seeds in this vegan aciento mimic the flavor of *chicharrón* pretty well. We use it for our vegetarian *tlayudas* at the restaurant.

**MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS (600 ML)**

**20 cloves garlic (generous 2 ounces/60 g), peeled**

**1½ cups (310 g) nonhydrogenated vegetable shortening**

**1 cup (130 g) pumpkin seeds**

**1 cup (140 g) sunflower seeds**

**¼ cup (150 g) raw peanuts, skins removed, if any**

**1½ teaspoons sea salt**

In a large skillet over medium heat, fry the garlic in the shortening until lightly browned and aromatic, about 2 to 3 minutes. Work in batches if necessary.

Put the pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and peanuts in a comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat and mix well to toast, about 5 minutes. Be careful not to burn.

Transfer the seeds and nuts to a food processor and pulse until they are fully ground. Add the fried garlic with the shortening and the salt. Process until the aciento has become a thick paste, similar to a peanut butter. It will thicken as it cools. This should take about 2 minutes of undisturbed processing.



## Oaxacan Adobo

Oaxacan Adobo Paste

This universal adobo rub is used on our chorizo, pork ribs, *cecina*, and chicken breasts. Just slather this paste all over whatever meat you choose, let it sit for a bit, and then sear, grill, or fry the meat. It has so much flavor that whatever you end up making will taste great on top of a tortilla or over a salad.

**MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS (510 G)**

**22 guajillo chiles (125 g), stems and seeds removed**

**2 teaspoons dried thyme**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**6 whole cloves**

**12 whole peppercorns**

**4 whole allspice berries**

**½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

**¼ cup (35 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**3 bay leaves**

**1 cinnamon stick**

**1 cup (110 g) diced white onion**

**½ cup (160 ml) white vinegar**

**Sea salt**

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Remove from the heat, add the chiles, and cover. Leave for 30 minutes or until the chiles are very tender. Drain, reserving ½ cup (120 ml) of the soaking liquid.

In a molcajete or spice grinder, grind the thyme, oregano, cloves, peppercorns, allspice, cumin, and garlic.

Put the softened chiles with the reserved soaking water into a blender, along with the bay leaves, cinnamon stick, onion, ground spice mixture, and vinegar. Blend

until smooth and salt to taste. (It should be on the saltier side.)



## Arroz Blanco con Plátano

## White Rice with Banana

This is my mom's classic white rice recipe. When she first came to Los Angeles, she fell in love with jasmine rice. She loved how good it smelled and how fluffy it got. Now, she uses it for everything, including horchata. This is a very simple way of making rice. Growing up, I thought everyone ate their white rice with sliced raw, ripe bananas—not fried plantains—on top, but when I told people this, I realized that Oaxaqueños are the only crazy ones who eat rice this way! Don't knock it until you try it. The sweetness of the bananas complements the savory rice perfectly.

**SERVES 4**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**¼ cup (35 g) chopped white onion**

**2 small tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**1 cup (190 g) jasmine rice**

**Sea salt**

**1 sprig of fresh parsley**

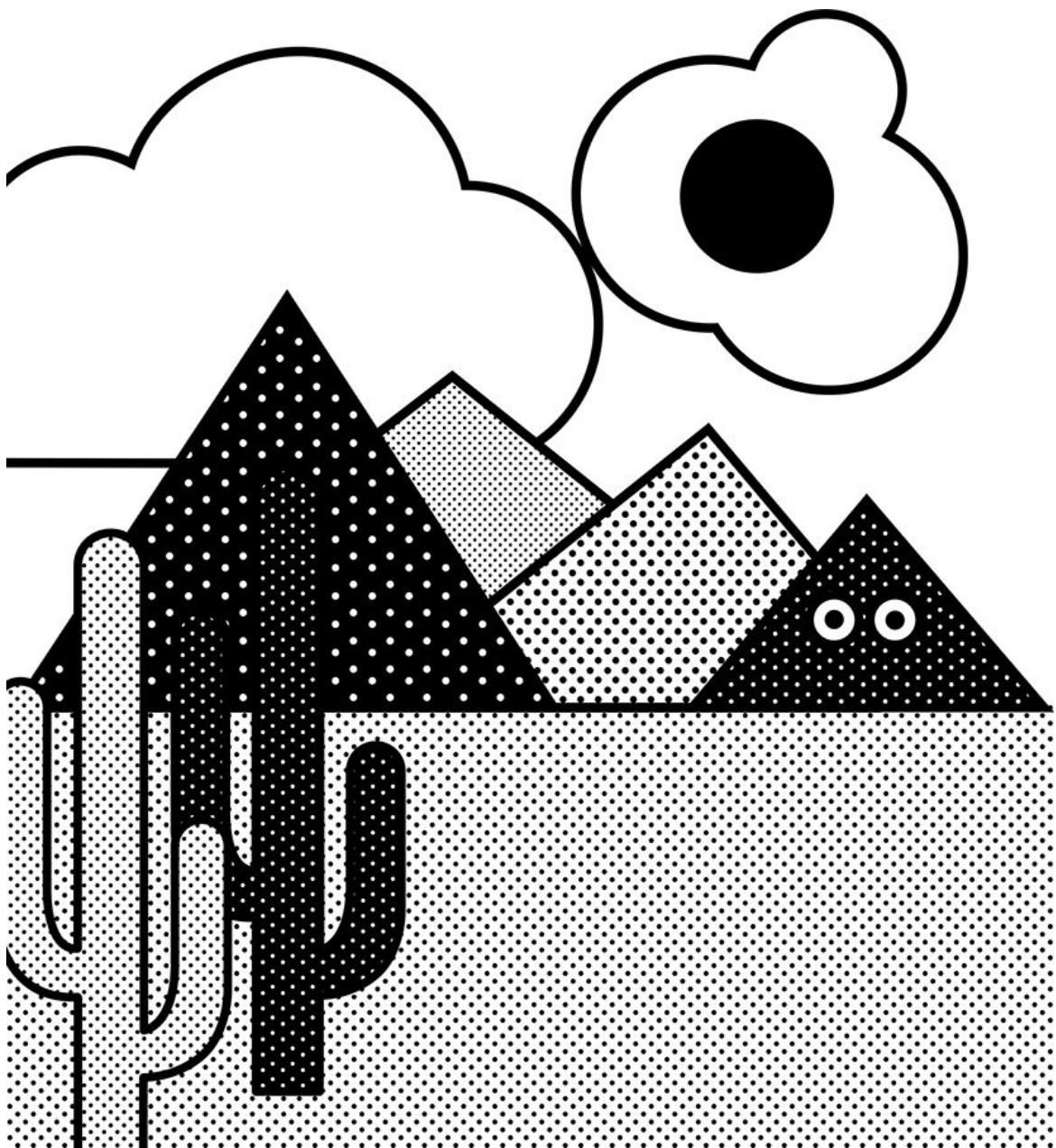
**4 bananas, peeled and sliced into rounds, for serving**

In a blender, combine 1 cup (240 ml) of water with the garlic, onion, and tomatillos. Blend until smooth and pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer. Reserve.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart (3.8-L) saucepan over medium heat and sauté the rice in the oil for about 4 minutes.

Add the blended onion water and another 1 cup (240 ml) of water. Add salt to taste and the sprig of parsley as a garnish over the rice. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and let cook for 18 minutes or until the rice is tender.

Remove from the stove and fluff the rice. Serve with freshly sliced ripe bananas on top.



**TWO**

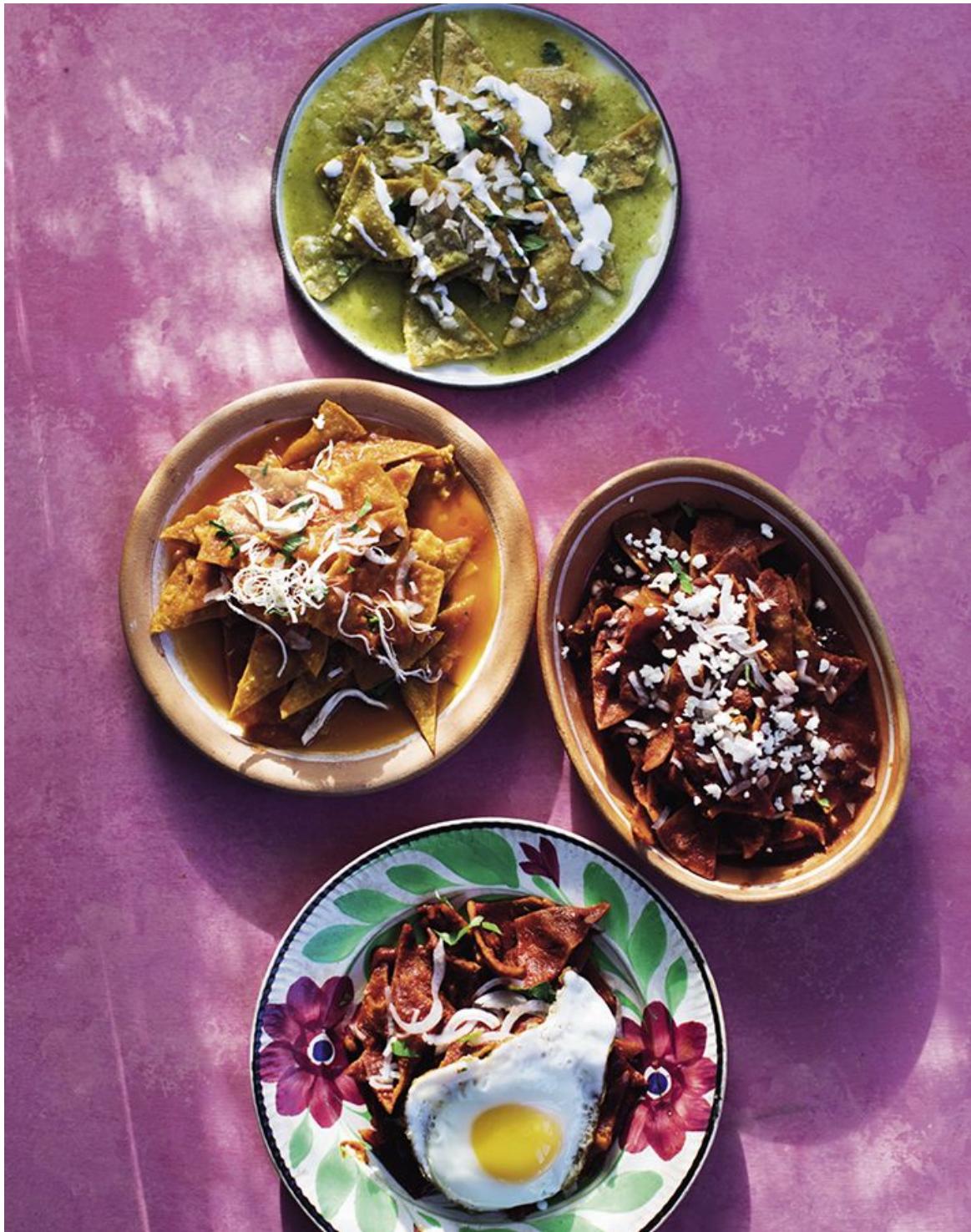
## **BREAKFAST**

While there are dishes that are normally eaten during breakfast time in Oaxaca, like *salsa de huevo* and chilaquiles, our food is very flexible. It is as completely normal to have chicken soup at 8 a.m. as it is to have it in the

afternoon for lunch. The same can be said about *enfrijoladas* with a juicy piece of seared tasajo on top. Same with empanadas, *memelas*, mole, enchiladas, *patitas de puerco* (pig feet), and many other dishes a lot of people in the United States wouldn't consider breakfast food.

As soon as the sun comes out, anything is fair game. One of our most famous *tlayuda* variations at the restaurant is one topped with our mole negro and scrambled eggs, and it always tastes good. At home, breakfast tends to be a makeshift feast made from salsa, cheese, beans, avocados, eggs, and tortillas, since these ingredients will always be in our fridge and they are all highly nutritious. My mom always had these ingredients on hand so that no matter what, we had a breakfast at the ready.

The concept of having a light breakfast, like toast or fruit with coffee, only to wait to have a heavier lunch or dinner isn't too common where I come from. Many Oaxaqueños work hard-labor jobs in the fields or in the cities. Whether it's slashing agaves, picking nopales, or making tortillas by hand by the hundreds at a *puesto* (stand) or restaurant, filling up in the morning is essential. This is why breakfast is one of Oaxaca's heaviest—and most delicious—meals of the day. From the tastiest chilaquiles, or pan-fried tortillas covered in black mole served with a side of perfectly sweet *atole*, breakfast in Oaxaca is the real breakfast of champs.



## Chilaquiles

These are the kinds of chilaquiles I grew up with. They should always be a combination of crispy and tender, never soggy. When I moved to the States and

had American-Mexican-style chilaquiles that can often be more like a casserole or nachos, I was a little culture shocked. The fact that they're still a little crispy is half the fun! The secret to great chilaquiles is laying your tortillas to dry out either the night before or a couple of hours before frying so they stay crispy longer when drenched in salsa. Choose your own adventure below.

#### **EACH VARIATION SERVES 4**

#### **TO FRY TOTOPOS (TORTILLA CHIPS)**

**10 (6-inch/15-cm) corn tortillas, preferably store-bought**

**1 cup (240 ml) peanut oil or vegetable oil**

**Sea salt**

#### **GARNISHES FOR ALL THE CHILAQUILES**

**Mexican crema**

**Cilantro, minced**

**White onion, minced**

**Queso fresco, crumbled**

#### **PROTEINS FOR ALL THE CHILAQUILES**

**Fried or scrambled eggs**

**Crumbled chorizo**

**Black bean paste ([this page](#))**

**Shredded chicken**

**Grilled tasajo**

**Grilled cecina**

#### **MAKE THE TOTOPOS**

Slice the tortillas into 2-inch-wide (5-cm) triangles. In a large skillet, heat the oil to frying temperature, just below the smoking point. Working in batches, add the tortilla triangles to the hot oil and let them fry for 3 minutes or until golden brown. When the pieces puff up, they are ready. Remove the tortilla chips from the oil and place them on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb excess oil. While the chips are warm, sprinkle with a pinch of salt.

### **CHILAQUILES ROJOS (IN RUSTIC OAXACAN TOMATO SAUCE)**

**4 cups Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

In a large skillet over medium heat, bring the rustic Oaxacan sauce to a simmer. When hot, slowly add the totopos and mix them until the tortilla chips are completely covered in sauce. Serve immediately.

### **CHILAQUILES VERDES (IN SPICY TOMATILLO SALSA)**

**2 pounds (910 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**1 serrano chile, stem removed**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**12 sprigs fresh cilantro**

**Sea salt to taste**

Put the tomatillos, chile, and ½ cup (120 ml) of water into a pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, lower to medium heat, cover, and cook for 20 minutes.

Drain the tomatillos and chile and put them in a blender with the onion, garlic, cilantro, salt to taste, and 1½ cups (360 ml) of water. Blend until smooth and set aside.

Slowly add the warm totopos and mix until the tortilla chips are completely covered in the sauce. Serve immediately.

## **CHILAQUILES EN MOLE NEGRO (IN BLACK MOLE SAUCE)**

**4 cups (960 ml) Mole Negro ([this page](#))**

In a large skillet over medium heat, bring the mole negro to a simmer. When hot, slowly add the totopos and mix until the tortilla chips are completely covered in the sauce. Serve immediately.

## **CHILAQUILES EN SALSA DE PASILLA (IN PASILLA CHILE SAUCE)**

**4 ounces (110 g) pasilla chiles, stems removed**

**Sea salt**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**3 tablespoons chopped white onion**

**3 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 sprig of fresh epazote**

Toast the dried chiles on a hot skillet until the chiles start to get dark on the corners and fragrant, about 30 seconds to 1 minute. Place in a container with 2 cups (480 ml) of warm water and let soak for about 20 minutes. Once softened, remove the chiles and place them in a blender. Blend until smooth and salt to taste. Strain through a double-fine-mesh strainer and set aside.

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Fry the onion and garlic in the oil for 1 minute. Slowly and carefully add the blended chile mixture and sprig of epazote.

Season with salt. When the mixture starts to boil and thicken to the consistency of heavy cream, it is ready.

Slowly add the warm totopos and mix until the tortilla chips are completely covered in the sauce. Serve immediately.

## **CHILAQUILES EN SALSA DE GUAJILLO (IN SPICY GUAJILLO SALSA)**

**1½ cups (250 g) chopped tomato**

**10 guajillo chiles (50 g), stems and seeds removed**

**¼ cup chopped white onion (25 g)**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**Sea salt**

Place ¼ cup (60 ml) of water and the tomatoes in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat for 20 minutes, until the tomatoes completely dissolve into a sauce. Set aside.

Bring 1¼ cups (300 ml) of water to a boil in another pot. Once boiling, remove from the heat. Add the chiles and let soak for 30 minutes or until the chiles soften up.

In a blender, combine the guajillo with its soaking water, the tomato, onion, and garlic and blend until smooth.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Once the oil is hot, add the blended chile mixture and the tomato sauce. Cook for about 3 minutes.

Slowly add the warm totopos and mix them until the tortilla chips are completely covered in the sauce. Serve immediately.



## Higaditos

Chicken-Tomatillo Soup with Whipped Eggs

If you're at a traditional wedding in Oaxaca, chances are that you will eat a big bowlful of this hearty soup for breakfast. It will most likely be washed down with a steaming cup of hot Oaxacan drinking chocolate, a side of tortillas, and freshly baked bread, too. Weddings in Oaxaca are a big deal. They start early in the morning, and the *padrinos* (godparents) are responsible for feeding guests something in the morning to hold them over until the real party begins later in the day. This breakfast tradition will usually be at the groom's house, where women have been cooking since the night before. Despite the dish's name and its direct translation as "small livers," this dish has zero liver. Instead it is a shredded chicken soup flavored with tart tomatillos, floral saffron, and earthy cumin. What makes this dish extra special is the 30 whipped egg whites that get incorporated into the soup. Don't ask why a dish needs this ungodly amount of egg whites, but it does. It also takes a bit of technique, since the eggs have to be whipped to medium peaks. However, the best part and what makes this dish the star of the show is the fruity red salsa that cuts through all the richness. The salsa is served in a huge bowl in the middle of the table and passed around to the guests. It ties all the flavors together, which a good salsa should always do.

## SERVES 12

### FOR THE SALSA

**2 pounds (910 g) tomatillos**

**8 guajillos (40 g), stems removed**

**8 chiles de arból (8 g), stems removed**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**Sea salt**

### FOR THE CHICKEN

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces**

**5 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed**

**1 small white onion (about 100 g), halved**

**Sea salt**

**24 eggs, yolks and whites separated**

**1 pound (455 g) tomatillos, husked, rinsed, and quartered**

**½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

**A generous pinch of saffron**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) ), for serving**

### **MAKE THE SALSA**

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting. Place the tomatillos on a rimmed baking sheet on your broiler's highest rack and broil for 20 minutes, mixing them around at the 10-minute mark to make sure all of the tomatillos are cooking evenly. The tomatillos should be lightly charred and change color to a light yellow. Set aside.

In a comal or dry skillet, toast all of the chiles for about 1 minute until the edges are slightly darkened. Fill a small saucepan with enough water to cover the chiles and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the chiles to the hot water, cover, and allow them to soften and get tender for about 20 to 30 minutes. Drain and reserve.

In a blender, combine the roasted tomatillos, chiles, and garlic and blend until pureed and smooth. Add salt to taste, about 1 teaspoon. Makes about 2 cups (720 ml) salsa.

### **MAKE THE CHICKEN**

In a 6 quart or larger stock pot, place the chicken, 3 cloves garlic, onion, and salt and fill with water. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and let cook over medium heat until the chicken is tender and fully cooked. This will take about 45 minutes.

Remove the chicken from the broth to cool. Turn off the heat and reserve the broth in the pot. Once the chicken is cool enough to handle, shred the meat by hand. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the egg whites to medium-stiff peaks in three batches. Once the whites are set, continue beating and slowly add all the egg

yolks back in. Set aside.

Remove the onion and garlic from the pot of broth. Bring 4 cups of the reserved broth (passed through a strainer) back up to a simmer. Add the tomatillos and simmer until they start to fall apart, about 20 minutes.

In a molcajete, add the remaining 2 cloves of garlic, cumin, and saffron. Grind until you have a paste. Add that to the simmering mixture.

Slowly and carefully add the eggs, and stir well over low heat until the eggs are all cooked, 10 to 15 minutes. The mixture will look like it's curdling at first, but then the texture will start looking more like scrambled eggs. Add the shredded chicken and keep stirring until warmed through. Salt to taste.

Ladle the soup into bowls. Serve with a big pile of warm tortillas and the salsa for drizzling over the soup.





## Molletes

Black Bean Toast

When all you have in your fridge are leftovers from the week and it's one of those lazy mornings, this dish is the one to make. It captures the idea of not having anything but yet having so much when you really think about things. It requires just three simple, wholesome main ingredients, each packed with flavor. It tastes great with a fried egg and jalapeños on top, if you need those extras in the a.m. If not, just the beans and some great queso fresco will do.

## SERVES 2

**2 bolillo Mexican bread rolls (can substitute French bread)**

**½ cup (120 g) Black Bean Paste ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (56 g) shredded queso Oaxaca (Oaxacan string cheese)**

**Pickled jalapeños, salsa, and chorizo, for garnish (optional)**

**Fried eggs, for serving**

Split the bread rolls in half, lengthwise. Generously smear both halves of the rolls with the black bean paste. Layer with string cheese and top with jalapeño slices. Place each half on a baking pan with the bean-and-cheese side facing up.

Turn on your oven's broiler to its low setting. Place the baking pan with your molletes on the middle rack and cook for 3 minutes or until the cheese starts to melt and get browned on the edges.

Serve open-faced topped with a fried egg, salsa, chorizo, or any other leftover meats you may have in your refrigerator.



## Enfrijoladas

Pan-Fried Tortillas in a Spicy Black Bean Sauce

This is my favorite dish to have every time we go to Oaxaca. It is a breakfast made from beans, meat, cheese, and tortillas that really fills you up and jumpstarts your morning. The combination of flavor and nutrients keeps you going all day. In Oaxaca, *enfrijoladas* signifies abundance and good fortune, because if you have these ingredients on hand, it usually means you are doing okay in life. To make sure not one ounce of delicious bean salsa is wasted, it is traditionally served with a fresh bread roll to sop up every little bit. Since this dish relies so much on the flavor of the beans, I recommend using homemade beans instead of canned. You will need a little more bean broth for the recipe than what is available in canned versions, too. Though we won't tell if you use chicken or vegetable broth.

## SERVES 4

**1 chile de arból, stem removed, dry-toasted in a comal or skillet**

**2 avocado leaves**

**2 cups (370 g) cooked black beans ([this page](#)), drained, but liquid reserved**

**3 cups (720 ml) of the reserved warm black bean broth ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

**Sea salt**

**12 (6-inch/15 cm) corn tortillas (store-bought preferred)**

## FOR THE GARNISHES

**Thinly sliced white onion**

**Minced fresh parsley**

**½ cup (62 g) queso fresco, crumbled**

In a blender, combine the toasted chile, avocado leaves, beans, and warm black bean broth. Blend until smooth.

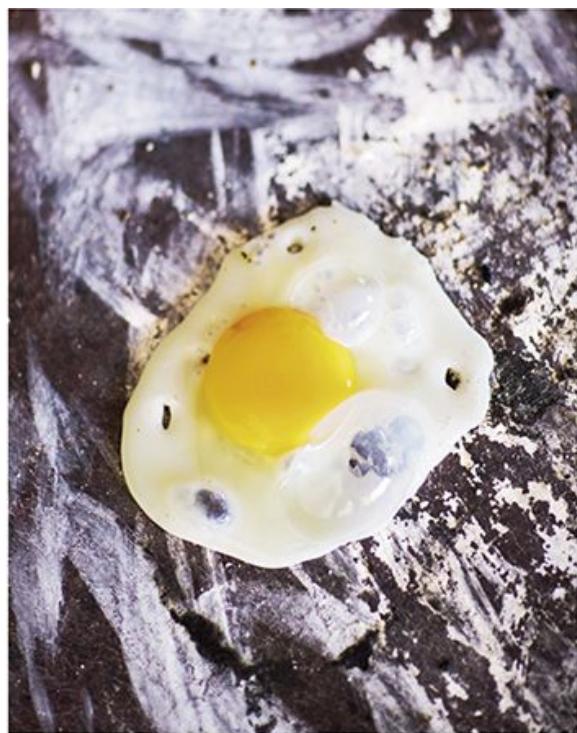
In a medium pot, heat 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil over medium heat. Once the oil is hot, add the bean paste and cook, stirring frequently, until the bean paste

starts to boil. Taste and adjust the salt as necessary. The texture should be like heavy cream. Set aside.

Heat the rest of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat until hot. Using metal tongs, dip each tortilla one by one into the oil to lightly fry them, turning them once or twice so that both sides get fried evenly. They are done when they are soft and pliable (be careful not to leave them in the oil for too long or they will get crispy). Stack the fried tortillas on a paper towel-lined plate.

When you are ready to serve, dip each tortilla into the hot bean paste for about 1 minute, flipping it at the 30-second mark with tongs. The tortilla should be fully covered with beans on both sides.

Fold each black bean tortilla once like a taco and place on a plate, along with another three to five tortillas per person. Garnish with raw onion, parsley, and queso fresco and serve.



## Huevos al Comal

Dry-Toasted Egg

This is the simplest Oaxacan dish of all time. It almost doesn't even need a recipe. Sure, Oaxacan food can be heavy, but then it is balanced with dishes like this one, essentially an egg toasted in a pan, with absolutely no oil, on top of Oaxaca's sacred leaf, hoja santa. The egg gets a little crispy on the edge and soaks up all the flavor of the leaf. From the naturally occurring fat on its own, the flavor is so pure. We grew up eating this every single day in Oaxaca. There were days when we didn't have enough money for meat, but we always had eggs. After all, in Mexico, eating meat used to be a symbol of wealth. Growing up, my mom used to eat meat maybe once or twice a week. Eggs cooked in this way receive a tasty layer of smokiness. I have eaten six of these in one sitting! With tortillas, a little bit of cheese, and salsa—it is all you need. If you can't find hoja santa, the eggs toasted on their own will be more than enough. If you don't have a comal, a cast-iron or non-stick skillet will also achieve a similar effect.

## **SERVES 1**

**2 hoja santa leaves (optional)**

**2 large eggs**

**Sea salt**

Heat a comal or a griddle over medium heat. When hot, place the leaves on the griddle and crack one egg directly on top of each leaf. Let cook for 2 to 3 minutes without moving them. With a spatula, carefully flip the eggs so that the other side cooks as well (if you wish). Transfer to a plate and season with salt. Serve with a tortilla and salsa.



## Huevos con Ejotes y Chorizo

Scrambled Eggs with Green Beans and Chorizo

This is yet another way of making eggs exciting. The rest of Mexico does *huevos con chorizo* but the addition of fresh green beans gives this dish a bit more texture, makes it a little more nutritious, and really filling. It comes together very quickly, too, and is great for a fast weekday dinner after school or work.

## SERVES 4

**Sea salt**

**3 cups (330 g) green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces**

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**1 cup (225 g) chorizo**

**1½ cup (40 g) chopped white onion**

**2 cloves garlic, minced**

**1½ cups (270 g) chopped Roma tomatoes (about 3 tomatoes)**

**6 large eggs, beaten**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) ), for serving**

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the green beans and cook until the green beans are soft, about 10 minutes. Drain.

Heat the vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat and fry the chorizo until it is cooked through, about 7 minutes. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for about 5 minutes, then add the green beans and tomatoes. When the tomatoes are softened, add the eggs and scramble until cooked to your liking. Serve immediately with tortillas.



## Huevos con Nopalitos

Scrambled Eggs with Tender Cactus

Nopales (cactus paddles) in general are a very instrumental part of the Oaxacan diet. We grill them, boil them, and drink them raw in Mexican-style *jugos verdes* (green juices). Whenever I think about traditional foods that are very good for you, I always think of my grandparents and an old Oaxaca that was built on these ingredients. Sometimes, all you had were fresh nopales and beans to eat, and really what else did you need? Nopales are also Mexico's most readily accessible vegetable, which explains why it is everywhere and on everything.

## SERVES 4

### FOR THE NOPALITOS

**4 cups (440 g) of nopal, dethorned, sliced into ½-inch strips**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**2 teaspoons plus 1½ teaspoons sea salt**

### FOR THE EGGS

**8 eggs, beaten**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**¼ cup chopped onion**

**½ cup (90 g) chopped tomatoes**

**1 teaspoon white vinegar**

**2 tablespoons minced epazote**

**Freshly ground pepper to taste**

Fill a medium pot with water and 2 teaspoons salt and allow to come to a boil. Add the sliced nopales and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, until the slime of the nopales is released. Drain.

Fill the pot with water again and allow to come to a boil. Add the 1½ teaspoons of salt, garlic, onion, and nopales again. Cook for another 10 minutes. Drain and

discard garlic, onion, and water.

In a large pan over medium heat, add vegetable oil. When hot, add the chopped onions and stir until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and the cooked nopales. Stir well and add vinegar. Stir for 5 minutes. Add the epazote.

Carefully add the eggs and start to scramble until all of the egg is cooked. Taste for salt and serve when the egg is no longer runny.



## Enmoladas

Mole Enchiladas

*Enmoladas* are Oaxaca's version of enchiladas. They are exactly as their name implies: enchiladas made with mole instead of a tomato or chile sauce. They are delicious at any time of day, especially during breakfast. This dish is perhaps the best way to use leftover mole, too.

## SERVES 4

**12 (6-inch/15-cm) corn tortillas (store-bought preferred)**

**5 cups (1.2 L) Mole Negro ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

**Crumbled queso fresco, for garnish**

In a comal or dry skillet over medium heat, toast each tortilla until pliable, about a minute for each side. Set aside.

In a medium-sized skillet over low heat, bring the mole negro to a low simmer.

Heat the oil in a large skillet. When hot, using tongs, briefly dip each tortilla into the oil until the tortilla starts to get crispy on the edges and then immediately but briefly dip the tortilla into the mole negro.

Fold the tortillas in half twice to form a triangle shape and serve three to a plate. Top with crumbled cheese and a little more sauce and serve.



## Huevos Rancheros

Fried Eggs over Crispy Tortillas in Rustic Oaxacan Sauce

**6 tablespoons (90 ml) vegetable oil**

**8 corn tortillas, (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) )**

**5 cups (1.2 L) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#) )**

**8 large eggs**

**Sea salt and black pepper**

**Refried beans ([this page](#) ), for serving**

Heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of the oil in a medium-sized skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, working one at a time, carefully dip each tortilla into the oil using tongs and leave the tortilla in the oil until it puffs up and gets golden brown and crispy. Carefully set aside on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb excess oil and repeat this process with the rest of the tortillas.

Pour the rustic Oaxacan sauce into a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan over medium heat and bring the sauce to a simmer.

Meanwhile, place the largest nonstick skillet you have over medium heat and add the remaining 2 tablespoons (30 ml) oil. When hot, crack the two of the eggs into the pan. Add a pinch of salt and pepper to each egg. Cook until your preferred yolk texture is reached. When the eggs are done, carefully set aside on a plate and repeat this process with the rest of the eggs.

When you are ready to assemble the huevos rancheros, place 2 tortillas on each plate and carefully transfer an egg onto each tortilla. Ladle about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups (300 ml) of hot salsa over each serving. Serve with refried beans. Serves 4.

## **Salsa de Huevo**

Puffy Omelet in Rustic Oaxacan Sauce

I love eating this dish with a quick green salad to round it all out. I grab any greens I find in the fridge (my favorite is watercress), add a few sliced radishes, squeeze some limes, drizzle a great citrusy olive oil all over it, and season with salt and pepper. It's a go-to breakfast when I visit my parents in Oaxaca, since it's the most flavorful and balanced way to start your day. I also really enjoy taking bites of raw serrano or jalapeño chiles in between bites for even more heat. I suggest you heat up more corn tortillas than you think you will eat, because you are going to want to scoop up every bit of salsa left on the plate.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**10 large eggs, beaten**

**5 cups (1.2 liters) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

**3 sprigs of fresh cilantro**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#)), for serving**

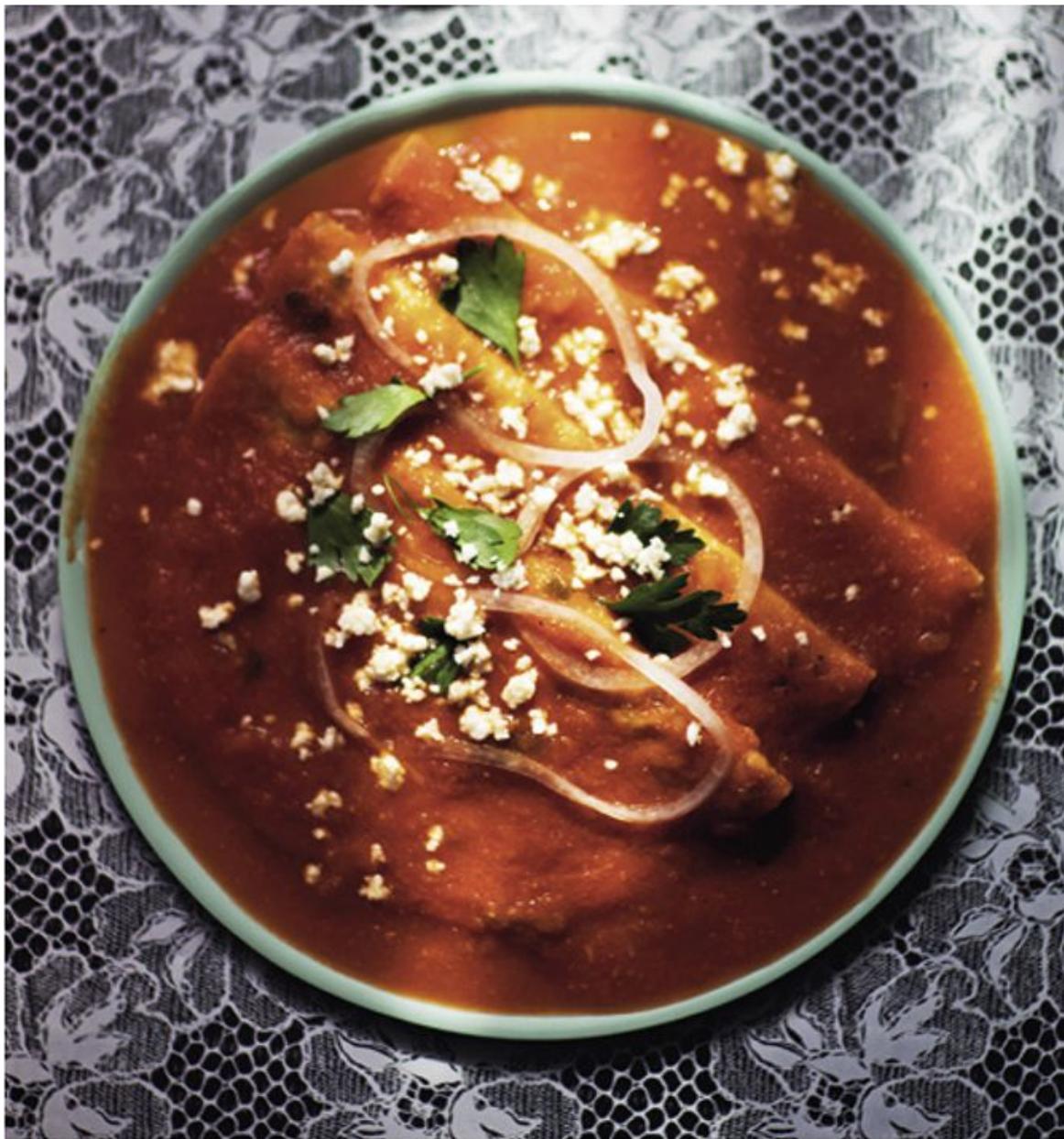
**Fried epazote leaves, for garnish (optional)**

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

When the oil is hot, add the beaten eggs in four to six batches to fry individual cakes for each person you are serving. Flip each cake when the egg is lightly browned and make sure to cook the cakes in the same way on the other side. Remove the omelets to a plate and set aside.

In the same skillet, add the rustic Oaxacan sauce and cilantro and bring to a simmer. Keep simmering for 5 minutes to allow the cilantro to infuse flavor into the sauce.

Return the omelets to the pan and carefully mix them with the sauce to make sure they are completely covered. Serve with tortillas and garnish with fried epazote leaves, if desired.



## Entomatadas

Rustic Tomato Salsa Enchiladas

**12 (6-inch/15-cm) corn tortillas (store-bought preferred)**

**5 cups (1.4 L) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Crumbled queso fresco**

**Fresh parsley**

**Thinly sliced onion**

In a comal or dry skillet over medium heat, toast each tortilla until pliable, about a minute per side. Feel free to wet your fingertips with water and splash the tortillas a bit as they are warming up, so they get even more flexible, especially if they are older tortillas. Set aside and keep warm.

In a skillet over low heat, bring the rustic Oaxacan sauce to a low simmer.

Heat the oil in another skillet over medium heat. When hot, using tongs, briefly fry each tortilla in the oil and then briefly dip them into the simmering tomato sauce to coat. Set aside.

Fold the tortillas in half and serve three to a plate. Top with crumbled cheese, parsley, onion, and a little more sauce and serve.

**SERVES 4.**



## Salsa de Chicharrón

Crackling Pork in Rustic Oaxacan Sauce

I try to always have a steady supply of *chicharrón* in my pantry for guests, and you can bet it will always have a place on my charcuterie boards, because it goes perfectly with cheeses and spreads. Cooking the crackling inside the salsa soaks up the amazing flavor of the salsa and softens it to a crisp-tender texture. Feel free to pair this with a side of radishes for extra brightness if you need it.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**5 cups (1.2 liters) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

**1 sprig of fresh epazote**

**8 ounces chicharrón, broken up into pieces**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#)), for serving**

In a large skillet over medium heat, combine the salsa and epazote and bring the salsa to a simmer. Add the chicharrón and simmer for 10 minutes or until the pork cracklings are tender. Serve with tortillas.



## Salsa de Queso

Griddled, Crispy Cheese in Rustic Oaxacan Sauce

**20 ounces (565 g) queso fresco**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**5 cups (1.2 L) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

**2 sprigs of fresh epazote**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#)), for serving**

Slice the queso fresco into 1-inch-thick (2.5-cm) pieces. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, fry the slices of cheese until brown and crispy on both sides.

Carefully add the salsa along with the epazote to the pan to warm it. When the salsa starts to simmer, serve the salsa and fried cheese with tortillas.



## Salsa de Chorizo

Grilled Chorizo in Rustic Oaxacan Sauce

Chorizo plays a significant role in our eating culture. Every family in Oaxaca has either a secret recipe or their preferred butcher who they swear makes the best chorizo in town. Growing up, chorizo was not always available to us. It was something we ate on weekends when we visited my grandma in Mitla. My family made a pit stop at the Tlacolula Sunday tianguis, the region's largest market, where you can find everything from live turkeys to every single type of dried chile known to man. In the meat section of the market, endless chains of chorizo hang from the vendors' stalls. As a customer, you choose how much chorizo you want, and they grill it over a live fire on the spot. When we arrived at my grandma's house, she whipped up a quick salsa out of it and we had an amazing meal in just a few minutes. The salsa can be made ahead, and I suggest you buy great-quality chorizo for this, since it is the star of the dish. It's great for a weekend brunch.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

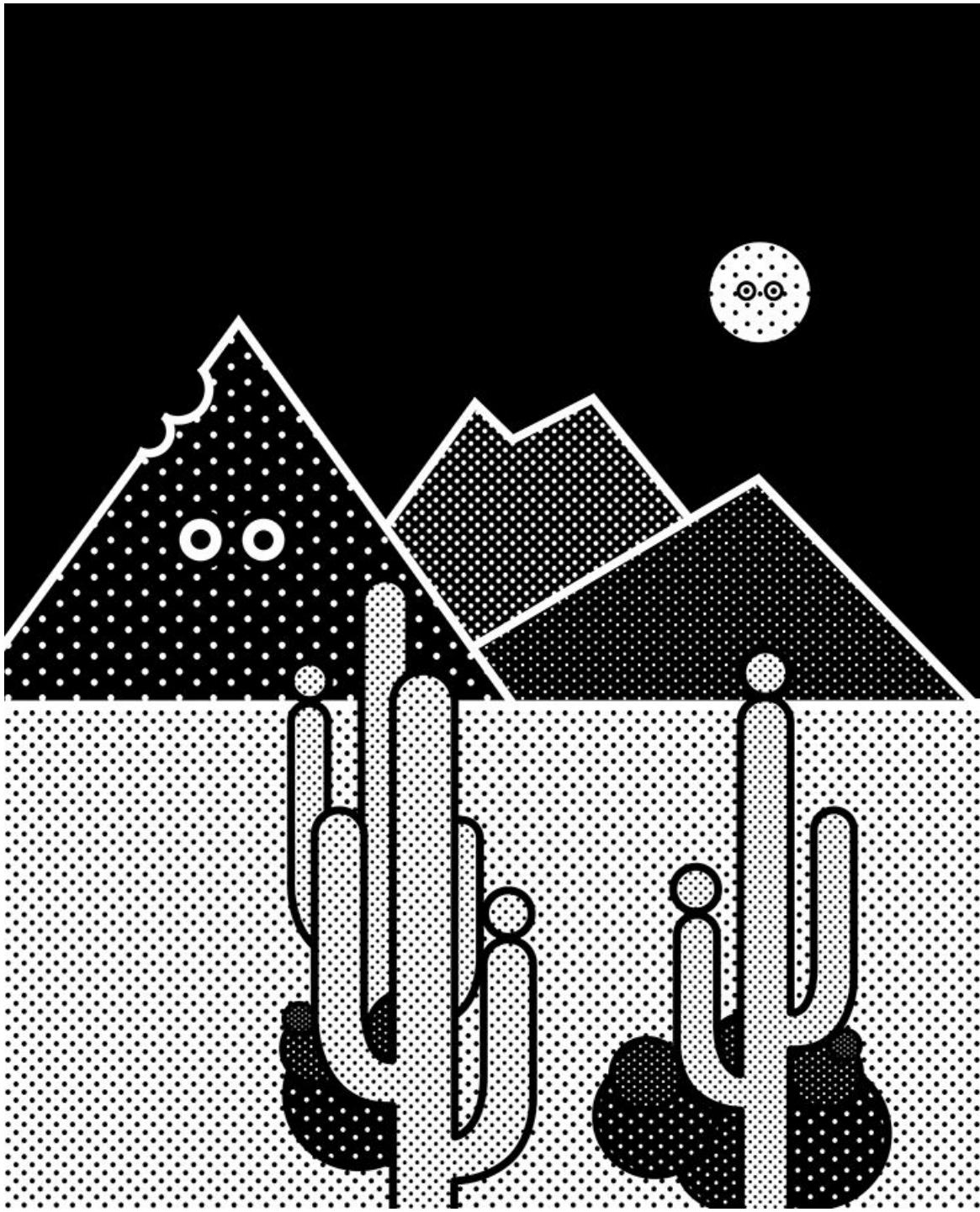
**1 pound (455 g) chorizo**

**5 cups (1.2 L) Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce ([this page](#))**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#)), for serving**

Put the oil and chorizo in a large skillet over medium heat and cook chorizo until the chorizo is fully cooked, about 6 minutes.

Carefully add the rustic Oaxacan sauce to the pan and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve with tortillas.



**THREE**

## **ANTOJITOS OAXAQUEÑOS TAMALES AND FINGER FOODS**

*Antojitos* in Mexico are usually found from a vendor on the street or in small dinner-only operations called *cenadurias*. Many times, they are also found in bars and *centro botaneros* (bars where the more you drink, the more food they serve you). *Antojitos* directly translates to “little cravings” because it is the type of food you crave at night in Mexico. It is usually something that takes just a few bites to eat. It will also most likely be masa based, either grilled or fried, and usually eaten with lots of salsa of some kind.







## Tamales de Mole Negro

Tamales Filled with Chicken in Black Mole

These are the tamales that I believe made our restaurant so famous around Los Angeles and the world. Before our *tamales de mole*, LA was used to seeing tamales wrapped the traditional way, in corn husks. But not us; our tamales de mole are steamed in banana leaves, adding yet another layer of flavor to the complexity of the inside. Wrapping these is fun, but opening them up is even more fun. It's like opening up the perfect present on Christmas morning. When you make black mole, make sure to double the recipe to make these the next day. You will thank me. These tamales also freeze great so feel free to make ahead of time and save for holiday presents.

## **MAKES 16 TAMALES**

### **FOR THE MASA PREPARADA**

**Generous 2 pounds (1 kg) fresh masa quebrajada (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1¼ cups (250 g) lard**

**1 cup (240 ml) water**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

### **FOR THE TAMALES**

**8¾ ounces (250 g) banana leaves**

**5 cups (975 g) shredded chicken**

**4 cups (960 ml) Mole Negro ([this page](#))**

**Corn husks, for lining the steamer**

### **MAKE THE MASA PREPARADA**

In a large mixing bowl, add the masa and fluff it up for about 3 minutes using your hands or a rubber spatula. Slowly start incorporating the lard and 1 cup (240 ml) water while continuing to mix. Add the salt. Keep on mixing for about 5 minutes or until the masa has a velvety, melted chocolate-like texture.

Set aside.

### **MAKE THE TAMALES**

Fill a large, heavy-bottomed pot with water and place it over high heat. When boiling, add the banana leaves and leave them in the water for 10 minutes to soften. Remove and let cool.

When the banana leaves have cooled, lay them out on a flat surface and cut them into 12 by 14-inch (30 by 35-cm) squares.

Gently and evenly spackle each leaf with about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 g) of the prepared masa using the back of a spoon or a rubber spatula. In the middle, put  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (30 g) of chicken and 2 heaping tablespoons of mole. Fold each leaf over horizontally to meet in the middle and then again vertically to form a nice rectangle.

Fill a tamal pot with the indicated amount at the bottom of the steamer. Line the bottom of the steamer with enough corn husks to cover the exposed metal. Place the tamales next to each other with the folded edges facing down.

Once all the tamales are neatly assembled, cover everything with plastic wrap and a kitchen cloth. Steam for 45 minutes to 1 hour. The tamales are ready when the masa is fluffy and tender.



## Tamales de Frijol

Tamales Filled with Black Bean Paste and Avocado Leaves

This is a great example of how some Oaxacan dishes are actually vegan without trying to be vegan. This tamal is traditionally made with zero lard or oil, just the masa, avocado leaves, and the seasoned bean paste. This style of tamal is unique because it is more of a supplement to a meal than a main course tamal. Because it has no fat, it replaces tortillas at times, like when eating barbacoa or when having it with a fried egg for breakfast.

## **MAKES 20 TAMALES**

**5 pounds (2.3 kg) fresh masa quebrajada (recipe on [this page](#) )**

**2 tablespoons sea salt**

**4 cups (960 g) Black Bean Paste ([this page](#) )**

**24 fresh avocado leaves (can substitute dried)**

**20 corn husks (previously soaked at least 2 hours in water)**

Put the masa in a large mixing bowl. In a cup, mix together 1 cup (240 ml) water and the salt. Little by little, add the water to the masa and work it in with your hands. Keep kneading until you get a nice soft mixture.

Assemble small balls measuring 2 inches (5 cm) wide (about 50 g each). Place the balls in a tortilla press lined on both sides with plastic and apply pressure until you get a thin, round tortilla.

Remove the tortilla from the press onto the palm of your hand and gently spread 3 tablespoons of black bean paste in the middle. Top with an avocado leaf. Carefully transfer the raw tortilla with black bean paste to a corn husk and fold it from left to right, so that the left side of the slathered husk covers three-quarters of the leaf. Do the same with the other edge of the husk to close it up. Fold the pointy top toward the center of the tamal and set aside, folded side facing down. Repeat this process until all tamales are done.

Arrange the folded tamales in a circular pattern, lengthwise, with the open edge facing up in your tamal steamer filled with the indicated amount of water at the bottom of the pot. Once all the tamales are neatly arranged, cover everything with plastic wrap and a kitchen cloth. Steam for 1 hour. Tamales are ready when the masa easily peels off the corn husks.



## Tamales de Rajas

Tamales Filled with Chicken and Sliced Jalapeño

Tamales are a blank canvas, really. You can put almost whatever you want inside and it will be delicious. In Oaxaca, our tamales de rajas are a bit different than the rest of Mexico. They are made from sliced jalapeños and chicken, instead of chiles with cheese. The tomato adds some nice brightness.

## **MAKES 10 TAMALES**

### **FOR THE MASA PREPARADA**

**1 pound (455 g) fresh masa quebrajada (recipe on [this page](#))**

**5½ ounces (150 g) lard**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

### **FOR THE FILLING**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**½ cup (65 g) chopped onion**

**2 jalapeños, cut lengthwise in strips**

**1½ cups (295 g) shredded cooked chicken breast**

**1 pound (455 g) roughly chopped tomatoes**

**½ teaspoon sea salt**

**¼ teaspoon dried oregano**

**4 large epazote leaves**

**10 corn husks, soaked at least 2 hours in water**

### **MAKE THE MASA PREPARADA**

In a large mixing bowl, add the masa and fluff it up for about 3 minutes using your hands or a rubber spatula. Slowly start incorporating the lard and ½ cup (120 ml) water while continuing to mix. Add the salt. Keep on mixing for about 5 minutes or until the masa has a velvety, melted chocolate-like texture. Set aside.

## **MAKE THE FILLING**

In a large skillet over medium heat, add the vegetable oil. When hot, add the onion and sauté until translucent. Add the jalapeños and keep cooking for 2 minutes until fragrant.

Add the chicken, tomatoes, salt, oregano, and epazote. Keep cooking for 10 more minutes until the chicken and tomatoes come together nicely.

When you're ready to assemble the tamales, lay a soaked corn husk flat on your hand and spread a thin layer of masa on each corn husk. Add a tablespoon of chicken filling and fold it from left to right, so that the left side of the slathered husk covers three-quarters of the leaf. Do the same with the other edge of the husk to close it up. Fold the pointy top toward the center of the tamal and set aside, folded side facing down. Repeat this process until all the tamales are done.

Arrange the folded tamales in a circular pattern, lengthwise, with the open edge facing up in your tamal steamer filled with the indicated amount of water at the bottom of the pot. Once all the tamales are neatly arranged, cover everything with plastic wrap and a kitchen cloth. Steam for 1 hour. The tamales are ready when the masa easily peels off the corn husks.



## Tamales de Dulce

Sweet Tamales

These tamales are considered a dessert, and, like many other desserts, they are best enjoyed with a cup of *atole* for breakfast. Consider it the Oaxacan version of a croissant and coffee. The deep-pink color of the masa traditionally comes from cochineal bugs, which is a natural, traditional source of red food coloring that many American and European products now use. What makes these tamales particularly special is the rougher grind of the masa, which means you'll get mouthfuls of sweet, chewy corn bits mixed in with the masa.

## MAKES 11

**½ pound (225 g) lard**

**2 ¼ pounds (1 kg) fresh masa quebrajada (recipe on [this page](#))**

**2 cups (400 g) sugar**

**1 teaspoon baking powder**

**1 (3-inch/7.5 cm) cinnamon stick, freshly ground in a molcajete (2 teaspoons when ground)**

**1 teaspoon anise seeds, freshly ground in a molcajete or a spice grinder**

**¼ cup (20 g) shredded coconut**

**½ cup (60 g) raisins**

**½ cup (125 g) canned pineapple chunks in syrup, plus ¼ cup (60 ml) syrup**

**1½ cups (360 ml) water**

**A dozen corn husks, soaked in water for at least 2 hours**

## FOR CORN HUSK COLOR SOLUTION

**2 teaspoons carmine powder, dissolved in ¼ cup (60 ml) water**

In a large mixing bowl, add the lard and use your hands or a rubber spatula to beat until the lard is whipped. This should take around 5 minutes.

Slowly add the masa to the lard and continue whipping.

Add the sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, anise, coconut, raisins, pineapple chunks in syrup, and 1½ cups (360 ml) water, and continue mixing. The masa for this sweet tamal should be runnier than for the savory ones you're used to.

When ready to assemble the tamales, lay a soaked corn husk flat on your hand and, using a kitchen brush, apply a thin layer of the carmine dissolved in water on the corn husk in an upward motion. Once the husk has been colored a vibrant pink color, apply a layer of the masa. Fold it from left to right, so that the left side of the slathered husk covers three-quarters of the leaf. Do the same with the other edge of the husk to close it up. Fold the pointy top toward the center of the tamal and set aside, folded side facing down. Repeat this process until all tamales are done.

Arrange the folded tamales in a circular pattern, lengthwise, with the open edge facing up in your tamal steamer filled with the indicated amount of water at the bottom of the pot. Once all the tamales are neatly arranged, cover everything with plastic wrap and a kitchen cloth. Steam for 1 hour. The tamales are ready when the masa easily peels off the corn husks.



## STEP ONE

**Beat using your hands or a rubber spatula until the masa and lard are well-mixed and fluffy.**

## **STEP TWO**

**Add the sugar, baking powder, ground cinnamon, anise, shredded coconut, and raisins.**

## **STEP THREE**

**Add the pineapple chunks in syrup, and water.**

## **STEP FOUR**

**Continue mixing until all of the ingredients are fully incorporated and the masa is smooth.**



## Garnachas Istmeñas

Isthmus-Style Crispy Thin Masa Cakes with Finely Ground Beef and Pickled Cabbage

You'll see these crispy masa disks everywhere in Oaxaca's isthmus of Tehuantepec, the hot and humid narrow piece of land where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans are just a little over one hundred miles apart. I fell in love with the crispy texture the first time I tried them. The pickled slaw with strips of pasilla chile is particularly refreshing in muggy weather. The secret to this dish is to add a bit of salsa while the masa cake is crisping up in the pan so it absorbs enough to flavor the masa.

### **MAKES 50 *GARNACHAS***

#### **FOR THE SLAW**

**2 cups (190 g) shredded cabbage**

**½ cup (50 g) shredded carrot**

**1 pasilla chile, stems removed, thinly sliced**

**Sea salt**

**½ cup (120 ml) apple cider vinegar**

#### **FOR THE BEEF**

**Sea salt**

**3½ pounds (1.6 kg) aguayón cut of beef, rump steak, or another stew meat cut**

**1 small white onion (100 g), quartered**

**6 cloves garlic, peeled**

#### **FOR THE GARNACHAS**

**4½ pounds (2 kg) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#) )**

#### **FOR THE TOMATO SALSA**

**3 cups (510 g) chopped tomatoes**

**¼ cup (30 g) chopped onion**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**Sea salt**

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

## **FOR ASSEMBLY**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Guacamole**

**Mexican crema**

**Queso fresco**

## **MAKE THE SLAW**

Combine the cabbage, carrot, and pasilla chile strips in a bowl, mix well, and add salt to taste. Add the vinegar and mix again. Let sit overnight if possible so the cabbage can break down, or you can just massage the slaw with a fat pinch of salt to break it down manually.

## **MAKE THE BEEF**

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil, add the meat, half of the onion, and the garlic, and lower the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook until the beef is tender. This should take about 45 minutes. Remove from the pot and let cool. Once the meat is cool enough to touch, trim excess fat and silverskin from the beef.

In batches, add the beef and the other half of the onion to a food processor and pulse for 1 minute. You may have to stop the motor, use a spatula to scrape all the meat from the edges back into the blades, and pulse. The texture of the beef and onion mixture should be very finely ground. Salt to taste.

## **MAKE THE GARNACHAS**

Assemble the masa into balls measuring about 2 inches (5 cm) wide (weighing 30 g each, about the size of a key lime) and set aside.

One by one, place each ball in a tortilla press lined with plastic on both sides and apply light pressure so that the masa disk is thicker than a handmade tortilla. Each garnacha tortilla should be 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (12 mm) thick.

Heat a comal or skillet over medium heat. Once hot, gently place each garnacha on the comal and toast on both sides until they puff up. Once toasted on both sides and puffed up, remove and set aside. Repeat this process for all of the garnachas.

Allow the garnachas to cool. With a knife, split the garnachas in half. Set aside.

### **MAKE THE TOMATO SALSA**

Boil the tomatoes and onion in 1/2 cup (120 ml) of water for 20 minutes or until the tomatoes start to fall apart. Season with about 1/2 teaspoon salt. Remove from heat.

In a food processor, combine the tomatoes and their cooking water with the onion and garlic. Pulse until pureed.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, place the pureed tomato mixture into the pan. Add 1/2 cup (120 ml) water and boil for 10 minutes. The salsa will be done when the texture is similar to an Italian tomato sauce. Makes 1 cup (510 g) salsa.

### **ASSEMBLE THE GARNACHAS**

One tablespoon at a time, heat the vegetable oil in a large pancake griddle or a comal over medium heat. While the pan is getting hot, add a tablespoon of the beef mixture to the flat side of each masa cake. Repeat this process with the garnachas.

When the oil in the pan is hot, add the loaded garnachas, meat side up, into the pan, along with a bit of salsa. Be careful not to overcrowd it so each garnacha has enough space to get crispy. When the garnacha's underside gets golden brown and crispy, about 3 minutes, remove from the pan and let rest on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb excess oil.

Repeat this process with all of the garnachas.

Top each crispy garnacha with a tablespoon of slaw, salsa, guacamole, crema, and queso fresco. Serve.





## Molotes de Masa con Papas y Chorizo

Crispy Masa Rolls Filled with Potatoes and Chorizo

I remember eating *molotes* every day from a lady who sold them at the corner by my house while growing up in Oaxaca with my family. Their torpedo shape and flavor are forever etched into my brain because I ate so many of them. I craved them waking up in the mornings. For this recipe, feel free to use any store-bought chorizo—even vegan Soyrizo—for the filling. At home, it makes for a great appetizer to serve at a big gathering.

## **MAKES 34 MOLOTES**

### **FOR THE POTATO AND CHORIZO FILLING**

**7 medium white potatoes (about 2 pounds/910 g)**

**Sea salt**

**2 cups (415 g) chorizo, casing removed**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

### **FOR THE MOLOTES**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**¼ cup (60 ml) warm water**

**2 pounds (910 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#)), plus more if needed**

**1 cup (240 ml) vegetable oil**

### **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Guacamole**

**Black Bean Paste ([this page](#))**

**Salsa**

### **MAKE THE POTATO AND CHORIZO FILLING**

In a large pot over medium-high heat, cover the potatoes in salted water and bring to a boil. Cover, lower the heat to a simmer, and cook the potatoes for 50 minutes or more. The potatoes should be bursting and purposely overcooked. Once the

potatoes are cooked, remove from the water and let cool. Once the potatoes are cool to the touch, remove the peels with your hands.

Place the potatoes in a large mixing bowl and mash with a potato masher until completely smashed. Salt to taste.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a separate large pan over medium heat. When hot, add the chorizo. Break up the sausage in the pan with a spatula and cook for 10 minutes or until evenly cooked. Add the mashed potato and mix well. Salt to taste and set aside.

## **MAKE THE MOLOTES**

Combine the salt and warm water in a cup and mix until fully dissolved.

Put the masa in a large bowl. Add the salted water to the masa and mix with your hands. Knead the masa until all of the salted water is absorbed. The masa should be slightly more moist than usual but not sticky. (If sticky, add more masa.) Assemble masa balls measuring 2 inches (5 cm) wide (weighing about 50 g each) and set aside.

One by one, place each ball in a tortilla press lined on both sides with plastic wrap and apply light pressure so that the masa is still a little thicker than a handmade tortilla. Each molote tortilla should be 5 inches (12.5 cm) wide.

Peel off the tortilla from the press and place it in your hand. Add 1 tablespoon of the chorizo-potato mixture to the center of a molote tortilla. Fold over the tortilla and press the edges together and carefully form a torpelo shape until all the filling is sealed in. No filling should be visible. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and filling.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the molotes. Working in batches so as not to overcrowd the pan, turn each molote to the other side to make sure both sides are fried and crispy, about 2 to 3 minutes. When golden brown, remove the molotes from the oil onto a paper towel-lined plate to absorb excess oil.

Serve hot and top with garnishes.

## **Patitas de Puerco en Escabeche**

## Pickled Pork Feet

This is yet another good drinking snack. (There is actually a whole category of drinking food in Mexico called *botanas*.) I know “pig trotters” may sound weird, but when properly cooked, the texture of pig feet just melts in your mouth. Believe it or not, it’s one of the most popular items at our restaurant. Once you have it, you’ll probably think: Why haven’t I had pig feet before?!

### SERVES 10 TO 12

#### FOR THE CHILES EN ESCABECHE

**½ cup (120 ml) extra-virgin olive oil**

**2 small white onions (200 g), quartered**

**6 small cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 cups (280 g) carrots, peeled and sliced into strips**

**8 jalapeños (200 g), rinsed and sliced into strips**

**2 bay leaves**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**6 sprigs of dried thyme**

**Sea salt**

**½ cup (120 ml) of apple cider vinegar**

#### FOR THE PORK FEET

**6 pounds (2.7 kg) pork feet (ask the butcher to cut them in quarters; should be four pieces from each trotter)**

**½ small white onion (50 g), quartered**

**¼ cup (35 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**5 whole cloves**

**2 allspice berries**

**2 bay leaves**

**1½ tablespoons dried oregano**

**2 teaspoons sea salt**

TIP

**Best served warm, but can also be eaten at room temperature. Use the leftover pickled vegetables in the escabeche anywhere you would use canned jalapeños.**

### **MAKE THE ESCABECHE**

Heat the oil in a wide pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the onions and garlic. Sauté for 3 minutes until aromatic and translucent. Add the carrots and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the jalapeños and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the bay leaves, oregano, and thyme and keep sautéing for 15 minutes more. Salt to taste and mix for 2 more minutes.

Pour in the apple cider vinegar and simmer for 2 minutes. Turn off the heat.

Let rest, covered, for at least 10 minutes.

### **MAKE THE PORK FEET**

Rinse the pork feet really well under hot running water.

In a pot, combine the pork feet and 3 quarts (2.8 L) water and bring to a boil. Once boiling, lower the heat to medium and add the onion, garlic, cloves, and allspice berries.

Simmer for 30 minutes. Once impurities from the broth start to rise, skim. Ten minutes after the first 30 minutes, add the bay leaves and oregano.

About 35 minutes later, add the salt. Cover and keep simmering for 3 hours until three-fourths of the broth has evaporated. At that point, the pork feet should be falling apart. Add 1 cup (about 100 g) of the escabeche mixture to the cooked pork feet and serve.



## **Chileajo**

Vegetables in Guajillo Sauce

If traveling around Oaxaca with a vegan friend or family member, *Chileajo* will be your best friend. It's just a bunch of tender vegetables dressed up in a bright chile sauce and it tastes so good. If you can add a little cheese, that rounds it all out. But if you can't, no worries, the flavor will still be there. It's a common street food around Oaxaca and tastes really great on top of a freshly fried tostada or *chalupa*, or on a *torta* in between fresh bread. The sauce comes together really quick and the longer the vegetables sit in the marinade, the better they taste.

## SERVES 4

**Sea salt**

**1 bay leaf**

**1 cup (110 g) trimmed and chopped green beans, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**

**1½ cups (170 g) peeled and diced carrots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**

**1¼ cups (170 g) peeled and cubed potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**

**1/2 cup (75 grams) peas, fresh or frozen**

**9 guajillo chiles, stems and seeds removed**

**6 cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar**

**¼ teaspoon ground cumin**

## FOR THE GARNISHES

**Shredded cabbage**

**Crumbled queso fresco**

**Guacamole**

Bring a 3-quart saucepan of salted water and the bay leaf to a boil.

Add the green beans, carrots, and potatoes and cook until tender but firm, about 7 minutes. Add the peas and cook for 3 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Fill a small saucepan with enough water to cover the chiles and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the chiles to the hot water, cover, and allow them to soften and get tender for about 20 to 30 minutes. Reserve  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml) of the warm chile water for the next step.

In a blender, combine the softened chiles and the reserved chile water, the garlic cloves, vinegar, cumin, and salt. Blend until smooth and the texture is thick.

Pour the sauce over the cooked veggies and stir until every vegetable is covered in the sauce.

For serving, slice a bread such as *bolillo* into 2-inch (5 cm) pieces and top with mixture and garnishes. It is also delicious on tostadas or a chalupa (fried piece of masa).



## Tacos de Chapulin and Chicharrón

Sautéed Grasshoppers with Pork Crackling Tacos

File this recipe under “yet another way to trick people into trying grasshoppers.” When eaten alongside crispy pieces of chicharrón, you’ll see that the savory umami factor that chapulines have isn’t too different than that of chicharrón. It’s a secret menu item at our restaurant, so if you know, you know.

## **MAKES 4 TACOS**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**1 tablespoon finely chopped onion**

**1 tablespoon seeded and minced jalapeño**

**½ cup (90 g) chopped tomatoes**

**½ cup (60 g) dried chapulines**

**½ cup (30 g) crushed chicharrón**

**4 corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) )**

**1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and cubed**

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onion and jalapeño. Sauté until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and continue sautéing until cooked. Add the chapulines and chicharrón. Stir for 2 minutes and remove from the heat.

Assemble the tacos with freshly toasted tortillas, a couple of tablespoons of the chapuline-chicharrón mixture, and fresh avocado.



## Memelas

I didn't grow up eating fluffy pancakes on weekends. I grew up eating *memelas*. They are griddled masa disks that get a little crispy on the edges but stay tender

on the inside. Instead of eating syrup, I ate bean paste. And instead of adding fresh fruit compote, I opted for salsa and queso fresco. Memelas defined the childhood of me and my siblings. We've been eating them since before I can remember, and to this day it is one of the first meals we have when traveling back to Oaxaca. Some of my favorites are found inside the mercado in Mitla, served by a woman named Flavia.

## MAKES 16 MEMELAS

**2 pounds (910 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**¼ cup (50 g) Aciento ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (120 ml) Black Bean Paste ([this page](#))**

**10 ounces (280 g) queso fresco, crumbled**

## FOR THE GARNISH

**Any salsa you have on hand**

Assemble the masa into balls measuring 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide (weighing 55 g each) and set them aside. Press each one individually on a plastic-lined tortilla press. Each ball should be about 5 inches (12 cm) in diameter after pressing.

Place a nonstick griddle or cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Carefully transfer each memela to the comal. Cook each side for about 2 minutes until the tortilla is fully cooked.

Using your fingertips while the memela is still really hot, fold up a quarter inch of the edges so that the memelas start to look like little boats. Using a knife, make a few slits in the middle. Spread about ½ teaspoon of aciento on each memela, and layer with another 1½ teaspoons of beans on top.

Return the memelas to the hot comal, bean side up, and cook until the bottoms get a bit crispy. Top with crumbled queso fresco. Allow the cheese to get warm on the tortilla, then top with salsa. Remove from the heat and serve hot.



## Quesadillas Fritas con Epazote

Crispy Quesadillas with Epazote

Whenever you're ready to graduate to master quesadilla level, add a few fresh epazote sprigs and dip the quesadilla in bubbling oil and behold the transformation. When you fry fresh masa, it's so different than frying a tortilla because you get so many layers. A properly fried quesadilla is reminiscent of a flaky croissant and shouldn't be greasy at all. Growing up, when my parents were at work, I made these fried quesadillas for myself every day for lunch. Also, after you have quesadillas with epazote, you're not going to be able to eat quesadillas without it again. You'll see what I'm talking about when you take that first bite. It's a really resilient plant so I recommend you grow your own epazote at home to always have it on hand.

## **MAKES 16 QUESADILLAS**

**2 pounds (910 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1½ teaspoons sea salt**

**1 pound (405 g) quesillo (Oaxacan string cheese), shredded**

**16 fresh epazote leaves**

**2 cups (480 ml) vegetable oil**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Black Bean Paste ([this page](#))**

**Guacamole**

**Salsa**

**Queso fresco**

Mix the masa with the salt. Assemble 16 balls of masa measuring 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide (weighing about 55 g) each. Press each one individually on a plastic-lined tortilla press. Each ball should be about 7 inches (17 cm) after pressing.

Bring a comal to medium heat and add a tortilla. Flip the first side of the tortilla after a minute of cooking (be careful not to overcook the first side).

Spread a small handful of string cheese in the center of the tortilla, top with 1 epazote leaf, and fold over like a quesadilla. Press on the edges to keep the cheese

from oozing out.

Cook on both sides until the quesadilla is cooked through and the cheese is melted.

Repeat with the remaining tortillas, string cheese, and epazote. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and, one by one, fry the quesadillas on both sides. As they finish cooking, place them on a paper towel to remove excess oil.

Serve hot, topped with bean paste, guacamole, salsa, and queso fresco.



## Ensalada de Nopalitos con Chile Guajillo

Tender Cactus and Guajillo Chile Salad

Nopales are an essential part of the Oaxacan diet. Oftentimes, they are the only vegetable that people eat in a day. It helps that they are a very satisfying one due to their mushroom-like meaty texture and pleasantly sour flavor. When cured in salt, their flavor is even more intense, and it retains nopales' natural jungle-green color. I created this recipe that combines salt-cured nopales with the time-honored way of cooking them by boiling them in water. Together, they make the perfect salad to have when feasting on anything wrapped with a tortilla.

## SERVES 4

**5 cups (550 g) nopales, dethorned and sliced into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (2.5 cm) strips**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled, plus 1 teaspoon minced garlic**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**2 teaspoons plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons sea salt, plus more to taste**

**1 tablespoon olive oil**

**1 guajillo chile, stems and seeds removed, cut into thin strips**

**1 chile de arból, stems and seeds removed**

**$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons oregano**

**1 dash of freshly ground cumin**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**1 teaspoon white vinegar**

Fill a medium pot with water and add 4 cups (440 g) of the nopales, the whole garlic cloves, and the onion. Let cook for 10 minutes over medium heat. Once the nopales change color to a light green, pour into a colander over the sink, and discard the water. This first batch of water removes the goo from the nopales.

Fill the pot with more water, add 2 teaspoons of salt and the nopales. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes. Drain again and remove the garlic cloves.

In a separate bowl, combine the remaining cup of raw nopales with 1½ tablespoons of salt. Allow to rest until the nopales have softened and have released all of their slime, about 20 minutes. Rinse well and set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over medium heat. When hot, add the minced garlic, guajillo, chile de arból, boiled nopales, oregano, cumin, black pepper, and salt to taste. Cook and stir well for 5 minutes. Add the vinegar, stir for 1 minute more, and remove from the heat.

Toss in the cured nopales and serve in a large bowl.



## Molotes de Plátano

Crispy Plantain Rolls Stuffed with Black Beans

This is another recipe from the isthmus region that showcases some of the Caribbean food influences that Oaxaca has from Central America. The crispy, custardy, sweet, and savory profile makes it dangerously easy to eat five of these rolls in a minute, so it's probably a good idea to make double the amount and just live it up.

## **MAKES 8 MOLOTES**

**5 ripe plantains, nubs trimmed, sliced in half (about 1 kg)**

**½ teaspoon sea salt**

**½ teaspoon sugar**

**1½ tablespoons bread crumbs**

**½ cup (125 g) Black Bean Paste ([this page](#))**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Mexican crema or sour cream**

**Cotija or any dry, salty cheese**

Bring a pot of water to a boil and add whole plantains (peel left on). Cook in boiling water for 20 minutes or until the peel starts to peel off the flesh. Place a colander over the sink and dump the contents, letting the plantains drain of as much liquid as possible.

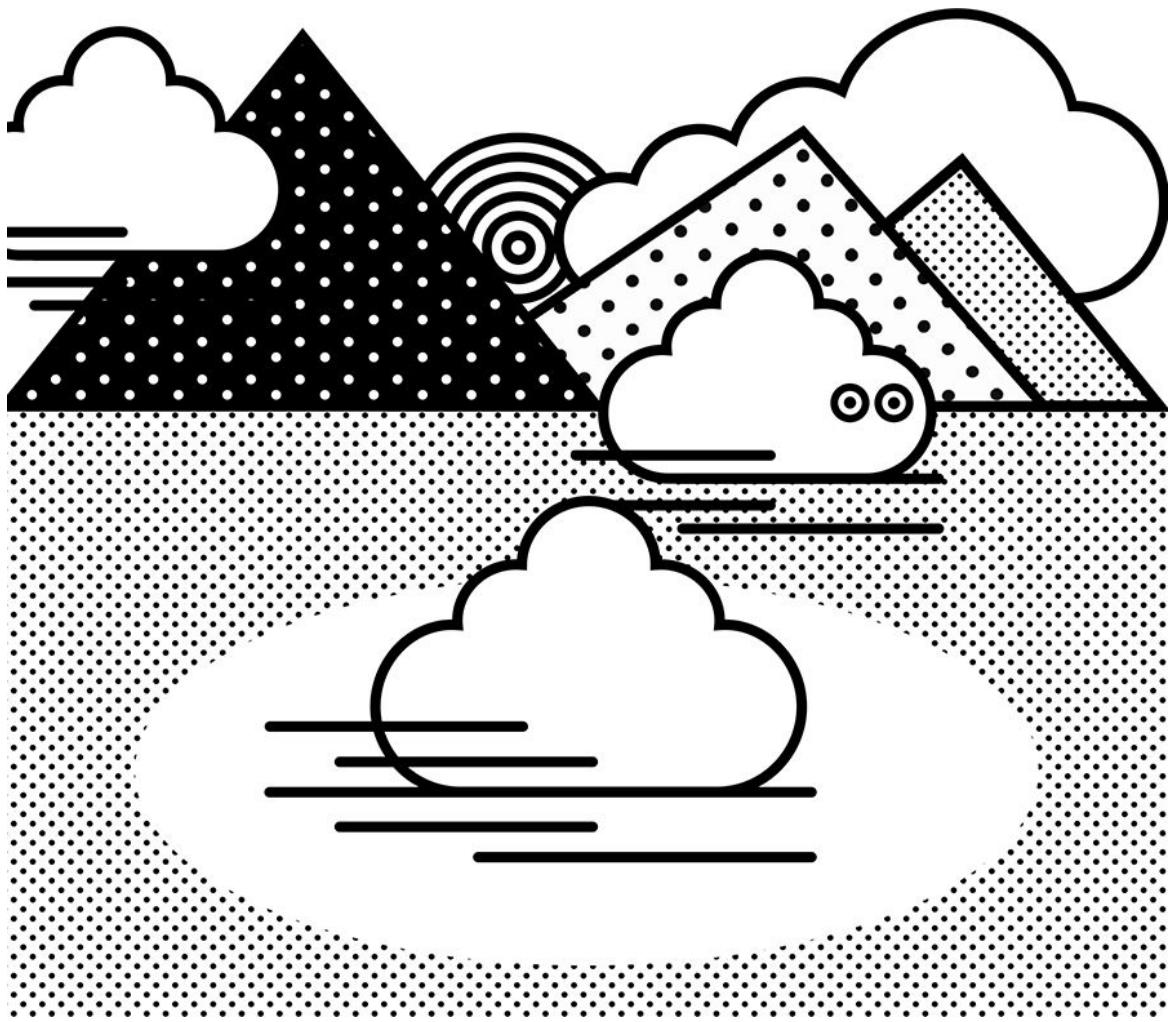
When the plantains cool, remove their peels and mash with a potato masher. Add the salt, sugar, and bread crumbs until the texture is like a paste.

When cool enough to touch, grab a handful and flatten into a 3-inch (7.5 cm) disk about ¼-inch thick on the palm of your hand. Add a tablespoon of black bean paste in the middle and start to close the disk into a torpedo shape. Make sure the bean paste is sealed inside.

In a large skillet over medium heat, add the vegetable oil. When the oil gets hot, add the molotes, one by one. Working in batches to not overcrowd the pan, turn each molote to the other side to make sure both sides are fried and crispy. When

golden brown, remove the molotes from the oil onto a plate lined with paper towels to absorb excess oil.

Serve with Mexican crema or sour cream and cotija cheese.



## FOUR

### SOPAS Y CALDOS SOUPS

Oaxaqueños love their stews and soups. It's the best way to stretch ingredients or, as my mom always said, "fool the stomach into getting full." Just a gentle reminder that, if possible, make any soup or stew ahead of time and let it rest awhile, because there is nothing better than day-old soup.



## Frijol Blanco con Bacalao Capeado

White Beans with Battered Salted Cod

Every single year without fail, my mom has made this soup for lent. It was the only dish that actually got all of my family out of the restaurant, because my mom only made it at home. It's a seasonal dish, so we usually eat it only once or twice a year. During the Lenten season, when people who grew up Catholic refrain from eating meat on Fridays, they turn to a salted fish from the isthmus region called *lisa*, similar to mullet fish. Like salt cod, it's heavily salted to preserve it, but once you remove the salt by soaking it, then batter and braise it with white beans, it adds so much flavor to the pot. In fact, the true name of this dish is "Frijol Blanco con Lisa Capeado," and the original recipe calls for *lisa*, but salted cod is a fine replacement and easier to find in the U.S.

## SERVES 8

**About 3 pounds (1.4 kg) salted cod fillets, without bone, cut into 2 x 4-inch strips**

**2½ pounds (1 kg) navy beans, drained**

**1 tablespoon plus 1½ cups (360 ml) vegetable oil**

**½ cup (50 g) finely chopped white onion**

**4 cloves garlic, 2 cloves roughly chopped and 2 cloves minced**

**2¾ cups (500 g) chopped tomatoes**

**4 whole cloves**

**4 whole allspice berries**

**1 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**1 cup (40 g) minced fresh cilantro**

**1 sprig of fresh epazote**

**1 cup (120 g) all-purpose flour**

**8 egg whites plus 6 egg yolks**

**Sea salt, if needed**

## Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) )

Rinse the salted cod under running water and rub off as much of the salt as you can with your fingertips.

Fill a large container or mixing bowl with water, add the fish, cover, and let soak overnight to remove as much salt as possible. After a night of soaking, the fish should have softened slightly.

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, combine the beans and 5 quarts (4.7 L) of water. Bring to a boil, cover, and lower the heat to a simmer. Cook until tender, about 45 minutes to an hour. Once cooked, pour the beans through a colander and discard the cooking water. In the same heavy-bottomed pot, heat the 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, roughly chopped garlic, and tomatoes and cook until the tomatoes change color to a lighter red, about 5 minutes. Add the beans, stir well, and let cook for another 5 minutes. Add 8 cups (2 L) of water back to the pot and bring to a low simmer while you make the next steps. Season lightly with about 1 teaspoon of salt, keeping in mind that the fish is salted.

Meanwhile, in a molcajete, grind the minced garlic, cloves, allspice, and cumin seeds until finely ground. Add this paste to the soup, along with the cilantro. Keep simmering for another 10 minutes.

In another large heavy-bottomed pot, bring  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cups (1 L) of water and the epazote to a boil. Lower to a slow simmer, add the pieces of fish and cook for 2 minutes. Remove and place on a plate. Pat dry with a paper towel.

Place the flour on a wide plate and lightly dredge each piece of fish on both sides.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until medium-stiff peaks form. Add the egg yolks and mix well. Using a pair of tongs, dip each piece of floured fish into the beaten eggs. Shake excess batter from the fish.

Pour the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups (360 ml) oil into a large skillet and bring to frying temperature. When hot, using tongs, carefully drop each piece of fish into the oil and fry for about 2 minutes on each side, until both sides are golden brown. When done, remove to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess oil.

Bring the simmering beans to a boil. Once boiling, gently add the fried pieces of cod into the pot of beans. Continue boiling the beans with fish for 2 minutes.

Taste for seasonings and add salt if necessary (remember that the fish is already salty).

To serve, ladle stew into bowls and serve with tortillas.

**TIP**

**Whipping egg whites until medium peaks, reincorporating the egg yolks into the mixture, and then using it to batter ingredients like fresh chiles, vegetables, and dried seafood is a classic Mexican cooking technique that adds an extra layer of seasoning to food along with a unique, satisfying, cloud-like texture. Make sure you have a nice handheld mixer handy to get the peaks just right. The secret to the perfect fluffy texture is to practice getting those peaks just stiff enough where they don't jiggle anymore, but also not too stiff, where the meringue starts to break. Once you attain this desired texture, make sure to add the egg yolks back in very slowly and gently.**





## **Patitas de Puerco en Frijol Negro**

Pork Feet in Black Beans

This dish is all about its toppings. It is a rib-sticking bean stew made with quick-pickled pork feet that amplify the umami flavor of the beans. When my mom comes to visit us in L.A., this is my sister Paulina's number one requested dish. We all gather to enjoy this soup with an array of toppings and sides that only make every single bite better, until we get to the last few droplets of broth at the bottom, then all bets are off, and slurping it down, even licking the bowl, is fair game. There is nothing like sucking on pig feet, trust me.

## SERVES 6

**2 pounds (910 grams) pork feet (ask the butcher to cut them in quarters; should be 4 pieces)**

**2 tablespoons white vinegar**

**2 pounds (910 grams) black beans, rinsed**

**1 medium onion (100 grams), quartered**

**4 cloves garlic (20 grams)**

**1½ tablespoons of sea salt, plus more to taste**

**10 epazote leaves**

## FOR THE TOPPINGS

**Sliced pickled jalapeños and their pickling liquid**

**Minced onion**

**Lime wedges**

Put the pork feet in a bowl with enough water to cover. Add the vinegar and let soak for 5 minutes. Rinse.

In a heavy-bottomed pot, bring 3 quarts (3 L) of water to a boil. Add the beans, pork feet, onion, and garlic. When it starts to boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, for about 30 minutes. (If the water evaporates along the way, add hot water to cover.)

Add the epazote and salt to taste. Continue cooking until the pork feet are soft and the beans are tender and cooked through, about 40 minutes or more.

Serve in bowls and offer sliced jalapeños and their pickling liquid, minced onion, and lime wedges as toppings.



## **Caldo de Fandango del Valle**

### Oaxacan Chicken Soup

What's the difference between Oaxacan food and the food from the rest of Mexico? That's a question I get a lot. I usually think of this soup, because it is honestly a very different kind of chicken soup than you'll find in any other Mexican cookbook. Who would have thought to blend bread into a chicken soup? We did. Because grinding cumin, peppercorns, and dried oregano wasn't enough. Oaxaqueños always find a way to intensify and layer our flavors to give our dishes that extra dose of *sazón*. Then, just like that, you'll be wondering why you've never had a bread-thickened chicken soup before. It's so hearty and so darn good.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**3 tablespoons sea salt**

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces**

**½ small white onion (50 g), quartered, plus ½ cup chopped white onion (50 g)**

**1 slice (90 g) white bread**

**½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

**⅛ teaspoon black peppercorns**

**3 whole cloves**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**3 cloves garlic, minced**

**1½ cups (300 g) chopped tomatoes**

**3 serrano chiles, stems removed**

**FOR THE GARNISHES**

**4 to 6 limes, sliced**

**2 tablespoons chunky sea salt**

**White rice ([this page](#))**

### **Warm tortillas**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, bring 10½ cups (2.5 L) of water to a boil and add the salt. Put the chicken and onion half in the pot. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for 40 minutes. Once the chicken is cooked, remove it from the broth and set aside. Remove and discard the onion.

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the bread and 1 cup (60 ml) of the chicken broth. Once the bread has soaked up all the broth, put the bread in a blender with another ½ cup (60 ml) of broth and puree.

In a molcajete or spice grinder, grind the cumin seeds, peppercorns, cloves, and oregano until finely ground.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the chopped onion, garlic, spices and oregano, and tomatoes. Stir and cook for 8 minutes or until the tomatoes start to change color.

Put the tomato mixture, chicken, serrano chiles, and pureed bread in the pot of broth. Bring the chicken soup back to a simmer and continue to simmer for 10 minutes more or until the chiles change color.

Serve with sliced lime, a chunky salt, white rice, and tortillas.



## **Pollo en Salsa Verde con Papas y Nopales**

Chicken in Green Salsa with Potatoes and Cactus

This is what I call a “mom dish.” It is something that your mom would have ready for you on a Wednesday afternoon in Oaxaca after coming home from school. A staple that is somewhere between a soup and a *guisado*, it only takes about half an hour of active time to prepare. It is packed with flavor and at least one ingredient every single member of your family will enjoy—they’ll even ask for seconds. For deeper flavor, brown the chicken for a couple of extra minutes to get that perfect sear.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces**

**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**1 cup (170 g) peeled and halved baby potatoes (see Tip)**

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) tomatillos (preferably the purple Milpero variety), husked and rinsed**

**¼ cup (35 g) chopped white onion**

**3 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 serrano chile, stem removed**

**1 cup (40 g) chopped cilantro**

**3½ ounces (100 g) nopales, dethorned and sliced into 1-inch (2.5 cm) strips**

**1 cup (240 ml) chicken broth**

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) ), for serving**

### TIP

**The potatoes can be substituted with summer squash or green beans.**

Generously season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper.

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven or other heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. When hot, add the chicken pieces and brown them for about 5 minutes on each side until a very light golden coating forms. Lower the heat. Add the potatoes and cook for another 5 minutes, lightly stirring so the potatoes get a little brown as well.

Meanwhile, in a blender, combine the tomatillos, onion, garlic, serrano chile, and cilantro with 1 cup (240 ml) of water and blend until smooth.

Carefully add this raw salsa and the chicken broth to the pot. Raise the heat and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Bring back down to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Taste for salt and adjust as necessary. Add the nopales and simmer for 5 minutes more. Serve with tortillas.



## Caldo de Pata

Cow Foot Soup

I know it's weird to think about a beef foot soup and this recipe does take a long time, but the broth itself is so rewarding when served with all the fixings. To me there is no better beef broth than this, and it's absolutely bursting with collagen. If for no other reason, make this soup and store it in your freezer to bump up the flavor of any soup or dish calling for beef broth.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

### FOR THE BEEF

**2 tablespoons sea salt**

**2½ pounds (1.2 kg) cow foot, sliced by your butcher**

**1 small white onion, cut into wedges**

**½ head of garlic (about 6 cloves), plus 5 cloves (15 g), peeled**

**6 guajillo chiles (30 g), stems removed**

**½ cup (75 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**4 whole cloves, freshly ground**

**1 teaspoon freshly ground cumin seeds**

**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black peppercorns**

### FOR THE GARNISHES

**Corn tortillas (store-bought or homemade, [this page](#) ), for serving**

**Minced fresh cilantro**

**Minced onion**

**Lime wedges**

### MAKE THE BEEF

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, bring 3 generous quarts (2.8 L) of water to a boil and add the salt, cow foot, half the onion, and the ½ head of garlic. Lower to a

simmer and cook, covered, for 4 to 6 hours. Skim any impurities that rise to the top of the broth. When the cow foot is the texture of gelatin and falling apart, turn off the heat. Remove any onion and garlic that hasn't broken down into the broth.

Meanwhile, in a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan, bring 2 cups (480 ml) of water to a boil. Turn off the heat, add the chiles, and let soak for 30 minutes or until the chiles have softened. Drain.

In a blender, combine the tomatillos, chiles, onion, garlic, and ground spices. Blend until smooth. Pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer and add the puree to the broth. Bring the soup up to a simmer and continue simmer for 10 minutes more.

Taste for salt and adjust as necessary. Serve with tortillas and fresh cilantro, onion, and lime wedges for garnish.



## **Guías en Mole Verde y Chochoyotes**

Squash Vine in a Green Mole Soup with Crispy Masa Dumplings

This is guias 2.0. It is the evolution of guias soup, thanks to the addition of hearty green mole and crispy *chochoyotes*, the latter of which have one of the most fun textures in the world of Mexican food, somewhere in between mochi and pasta. This dish has become my new go-to family birthday dinner dish because it's so comforting and wholesome. You'll know the soup is done when it has the texture of a very light chowder.

## SERVES 6

### FOR THE CHOCHOYOTES

**¼ teaspoon sea salt**

**8¾ ounces (250 g) fresh masa quebrajada (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1 teaspoon plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

### FOR THE SOUP

**8 cups (800 g) guias (squash vines), woody stems removed, leaves reserved, or substitute with fresh spinach**

**3½ cups (400 g) chopped summer squash**

**2 teaspoons sea salt**

**10½ ounces (300 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1 tablespoon *poleo* (optional)**

**½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

**½ cup (50 g) white onion**

**4 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 serrano chile, stem removed**

**¼ cup (40 g) tomatillos, preferably the purple Milperos variety, husked and rinsed**

**⅓ cup (60 g) chopped green tomato**

## **MAKE THE CHOCHOYOTES**

In a glass measuring cup, dissolve the salt in 3 tablespoons of water. In a mixing bowl, combine the broken masa, salted water, and 1 teaspoon of the oil. Mix until the ingredients turn into a paste.

Using your hands, assemble small balls weighing about 10 grams each (about the size of a cherry tomato). You should have enough masa to make around 24 balls. Use your thumb to press down on each ball to create an imprint.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil in a skillet over medium heat to just below the smoking point. Working in two batches, fry chochoyotes until golden brown on both sides, about 2 to 3 minutes per side. Remove each one to a paper towel-lined plate and reserve.

## **MAKE THE SOUP**

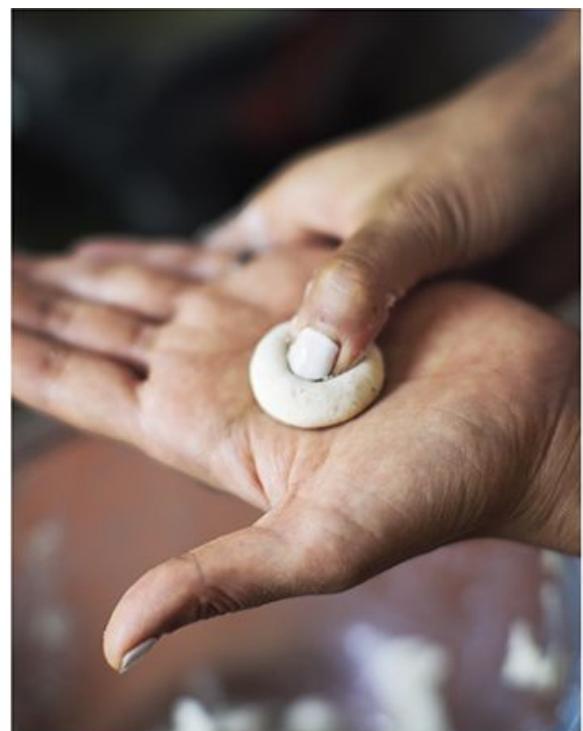
Separate the squash vine leaves and stems in different containers. In a large heavy-bottomed pot, bring 8 cups (2 L) of water to a boil. Add the squash and cook for 5 minutes. Add the guia stems and the salt. If using spinach, add spinach with leaves and stems attached all at once and cook for 5 minutes. Lower the heat to a simmer while you prepare the masa slurry.

In a blender, combine the masa and 2 cups (120 ml) of water. Blend until smooth and pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer. Pour the masa slurry into the simmering pot of squash. Bring back up to a boil. When boiling, add the squash leaves. Lower the heat to a simmer and continue to cook for about 7 minutes while you prepare the salsa base.

Heat a comal or dry skillet over medium heat and toast the poleo (if using) and the cumin for 2 minutes or until fragrant. Grind the spices in a molcajete or spice grinder until finely ground.

In the blender, combine the onion, garlic, chile, tomatillos, tomato, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water and blend until smooth. Add the toasted, ground spices and blend until evenly incorporated. Add the vegetable mixture to the simmering pot and simmer for 8 minutes more. Add salt, about 1 teaspoon or more. Taste and adjust seasonings if needed.

Serve the soup in bowls with crispy chochoyotes placed on top.





## Caldo de Res con Guajillo Chile

Beef Soup with Guajillo Chile

Take your time while cooking this dish. You want the beef to be butter-tender and have it melt in your mouth as soon as you start chewing. It's a very simple dish so try to get the best-quality ingredients you can. I cook with grass-fed beef at my home in L.A., because I find it's the most similar to the beef you can find in Oaxaca.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**2 tablespoons sea salt**

**2 pounds (910 g) bone-in short ribs, sliced by your butcher**

**2 pounds (910 g) beef shank, sliced by your butcher**

**2½ cups (300 g) chopped carrots**

**4 cups (600 g) sliced potatoes**

**2 cups (220 g) sliced chayote**

**2 cups (220 g) trimmed green beans**

**4⅓ cups (400 g) sliced cabbage**

**5 guajillo chiles (25 g), seeds and stems removed**

**1 small white onion (100 g), quartered**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 teaspoon freshly ground cumin seeds**

**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black peppercorns**

**2 whole cloves, freshly ground**

**½ cup (75 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**½ cup (20 g) fresh cilantro**

**1 sprig of fresh mint**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Minced onion**

**Minced serrano or jalapeño chiles**

**Lime slices**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, bring 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water to a boil and add the salt, short ribs, and beef shank. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for 90 minutes. Skim any impurities that rise to the top of the broth.

Add the carrots, potatoes, and chayote to the pot. Simmer for 20 minutes. Add the green beans and cabbage. Continue to simmer for 20 minutes while you rehydrate the chiles.

Bring the 2 cups (240 ml) of water to a boil in a small pot. Turn off the heat then add the chiles and soak to rehydrate them.

After 10 minutes, put the softened chiles in a blender along with the onion, garlic, spices, and tomatillos. Blend until smooth. Strain through a double-fine-mesh strainer and add the puree to the simmering broth. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add the cilantro and mint. Turn off the heat and let the soup sit for 10 minutes. Serve with onion, chiles, and lime.



## Pozole Mixteco

This pozole is a prime example of how a Mexican dish that is already perfect gets even better with the Oaxacan treatment. I know, I'm sure you swear that your

mom or grandma probably makes the best pozole ever but let me elaborate. This pozole comes from the Mixteco region of Oaxaca, which is in the highlands. The actual pozole starts off as a clear pozole, but the star of this dish is a deeply flavored mole paste that you swirl into it to your liking. In short, this is a pozole and mole hybrid and will probably change your life. If you live close to a Mexican market, you might find huge bags of nixtamalized *maiz pozolero* (hominy) in the refrigerated section ready to go. If not, buy as many cans of cooked hominy as you need to hit 4½ pounds of drained hominy. This resulting recipe will be worth it.

## SERVES 12

### FOR THE MOLE

**2 cups (480 ml) vegetable oil**

**3 ancho chiles (50 g), stems removed**

**6 pasilla chiles (50 g), stems removed**

**10 guajillo chiles (50 g), seeds and stems removed**

**7 mulato chiles (50 g), seeds and stems removed**

**10 chiles de arból (10 g), seeds and stems removed**

**8 costeño chiles (10 g), seeds and stems removed**

**¼ cup (35 g) whole raw almonds**

**¾ cup (100 g) diced white onion**

**⅔ cup (100 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**1 ripe plantain (about 250 g), peeled and sliced**

**1½ cups (215 g) chopped tomatoes**

**6 ounces (170 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**1⅓ cups (145 g) sliced apples**

**⅓ cup (50 g) seedless raisins**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**½ cinnamon stick**

**Sea salt**

**TIP**

**If you can't find chile costeño, substitute chile puya.**

## **MAKE THE MOLE**

Heat  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, fry all of the chiles in batches, about 1 minute each batch. The chiles should be brown and crispy but not burnt. Set them aside and discard the oil.

In the same pan over medium heat, heat another  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of oil and fry the almonds until they puff up, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove the almonds and set them aside. (All of the ingredients, separate from the fried chiles, can be piled on top of each other after frying.) In the same oil, sauté the onion until translucent, about 5 minutes. Remove and set aside. Repeat this process with the garlic cloves, plantain, tomatoes, tomatillos, apples, and raisins. Add the oregano and cinnamon stick to the pile of fried items.

In a blender, working in batches, blend half of the chiles with 2 cups (480 ml) of water until smooth. Remove and set aside. Add the other half of the chiles with another 2 cups (480 ml) of water and blend until smooth. Remove and set aside.

In the same blender, combine the fried almonds, onion, garlic, plantains, tomatoes, tomatillos, apples, raisins, cinnamon, and oregano with 1 cup (120 ml) of water. Blend until pureed and smooth. Depending on your blender, you may need to add more water to make sure that the texture is smooth and uniform.

Once you have your pile of blended chile paste and your pile of the rest of the blended ingredients, heat 1 cup (120 ml) of the oil in a large pot over medium heat and wait until it gets hot. Drop in all of the chile paste and stir for 8 minutes until the paste starts to change to a darker color. Remove from the heat and set aside.

After the chile paste changes color, add the blended fried mixture to the pot of cooked chile paste. Over medium heat, mix until the rest of the ingredients are mixed in with the chile paste. Taste for salt and season accordingly. Lower the heat and mix and mix until the mole is reduced by half. This should take about 1 hour and the bottom of the pot should be visible. Keep mixing and mixing. It will all be worth it. The final texture should resemble a pasty hummus.

## **FOR THE BROTH**

**4½ pounds (2 kg) cooked hominy, drained and rinsed**

**Sea salt**

**2 pounds (910 g) pork spine (*espinazo*), sliced by your butcher**

**2 pounds (910 g) pork knuckle (*codillo*), sliced by your butcher**

**1¾ pounds (800 g) pork leg (*pierna*), sliced by your butcher**

**1 cup (125 g) chopped white onion**

**¼ cup (35 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**6 fresh hoja santa leaves (you can substitute with dried)**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Minced raw onion**

**Lime slices**

## **MAKE THE BROTH**

In a large stockpot over high heat, bring 8 quarts (7.5 L) of water to a boil. Once boiling, add the hominy. Lower the heat to medium and simmer for 45 minutes. Taste for seasoning and add salt accordingly.

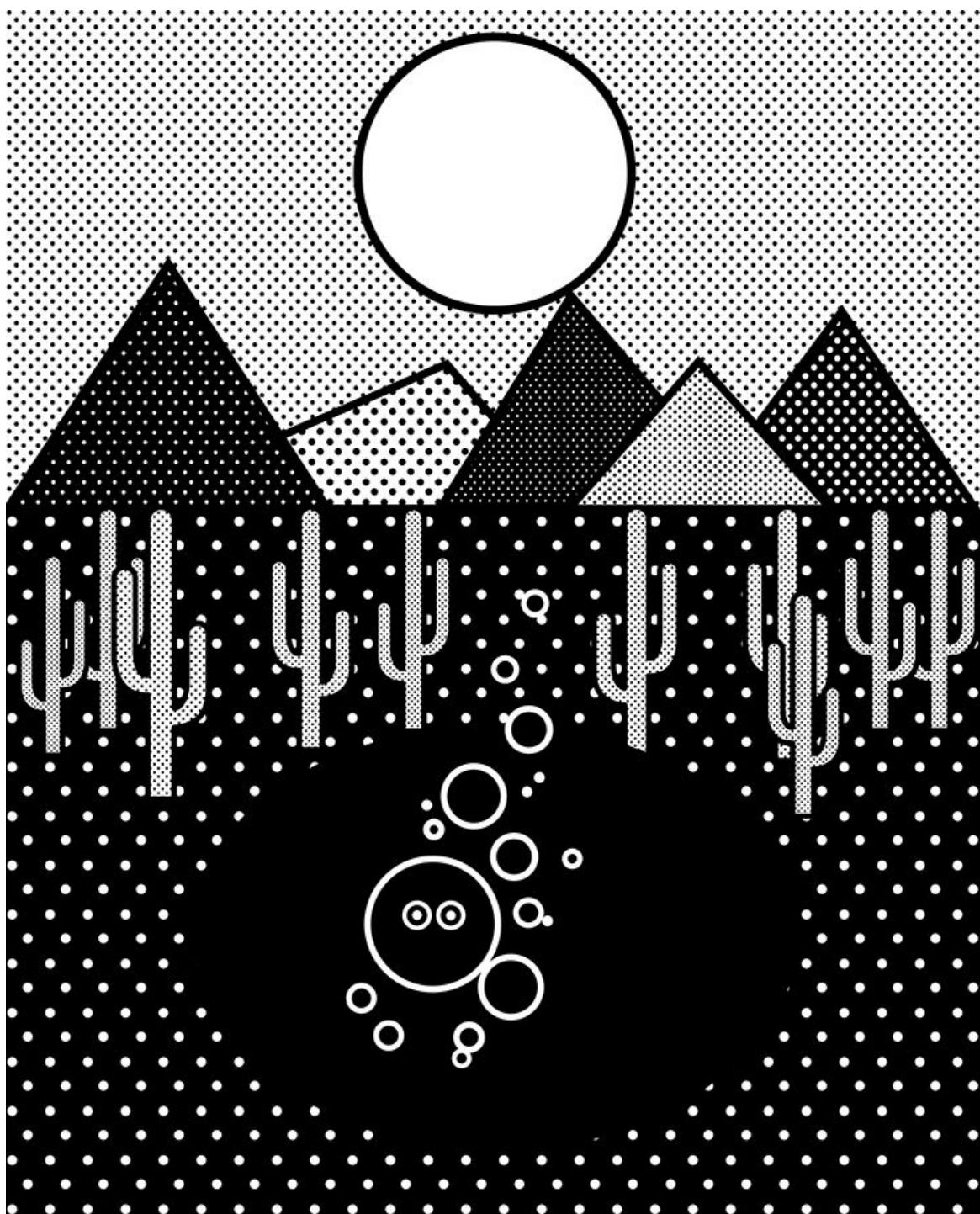
Add all the meat. Keep simmering. After 30 minutes, skim all impurities that rise to the top, then drop in the onion and garlic. Boil for another 45 minutes.

Once the meat starts to become tender, about an hour later, add the hoja santa, and season with salt. Cover the pot and lower the heat to a slow simmer. Leave at a

simmer for another hour. Once the meat is starting to fall apart, the pozole is ready.

Serve with minced raw onion and lime slices, adding the mole paste to your pozole to your liking.





**FIVE**  
**OUR MOLES**

**Mole is the essence of Oaxaca. The word triggers so many emotions for me: my memories; my grandma; my family; all the weddings that I've been to in my life; and all the Día de Muertos festivities I have ever celebrated.**

**It may just be a four-letter word, but it's so much more than that. I'm not alone. If you're from Oaxaca or Puebla, chances are you feel the same way. It's a dish that sings community and it's a dish that makes me proud of being Oaxacan because of all the ingredients in it that Mexico gave to the world: chocolate, chiles, corn, and tomatoes.**

**I love the fact that it also depends on so many ingredients from around the world to complete it: cinnamon, cumin, sesame seeds, and oregano. It is a dish of fate and destiny, because everything had to happen the way it did for all of the ingredients to find themselves in Mexico at the right moment for mole to be born.**

**It has become the dish that defines Oaxacan cuisine. It plays a role similar to the one that barbecue sauce does for American BBQ or curry for Indian food.**

**All of these are staple cultural flavors that you recognize as soon as you taste them. Mole's complexity lies in its flavor, not the process. When people say "it takes days to make mole," they don't realize they mean it takes days to make mole when making it for dozens of people (which is traditionally the context in which mole is made). If you are making mole for just you and your family, it should only take you a couple of hours.**

**That doesn't mean that mole isn't laborious work. In Oaxaca, women are usually the ones in the kitchen making mole. It used to be that men weren't even allowed in the kitchen during the process. Women in Oaxacan society have always been the ones feeding the community. They really were the ones in charge.**

**Mole is a currency in Oaxaca. My brother Fernando said it best: "Oaxaca is a party-based economy." Oaxaca's residents pride themselves on throwing the absolute best party in town. It doesn't matter what day of the week it is —Monday night or Saturday night—you will always hear a loud party happening nearby. It can be a first communion, graduation, confirmation, baptism, quinceañera, wedding, wedding anniversary, or just a town getting a new mayor. Oaxaqueños always find a reason to celebrate.**

**Because of this, neighbors try to out-party each other, and there are rivalries between neighboring towns to see who can throw the biggest, baddest, loudest, and most delicious party.**

**In the center of all of this is mole.**

**The following are my family's recipes that have been preserved from generation to generation. It is hard for me to eat another mole and feel the same way about it.**

**But that's mole, a dish that is equal parts emotionally charged and delicious.**



TOP LEFT: Mole Negro; TOP RIGHT: Coloradito; BOTTOM LEFT: Segueza; BOTTOM RIGHT: Mole Rojo

## Mole Negro

## **Black Mole**

The secret of this mole is in the deep level of toasting and frying of the ingredients. That's how it gets its haunting pitch-black hue and really complex flavor profiles. I'm not saying to burn the ingredients all the way, but get as close as you can without burning it all.

### **MAKES ABOUT 14 CUPS**

#### **FOR THE CHILES**

**1 cup (240 ml) vegetable oil**

**3½ ounces (100 g) ancho mulato chiles, seeds and stems removed**

**3½ ounces (100 g) chilhuacle negro chiles, seeds and stems removed (can be substituted with cascabel chiles)**

**1¾ ounces (50 g) pasilla chiles, stems removed**

#### **FOR THE REST**

**2/3 cup (100 g) sesame seeds**

**1 teaspoon plus 3 teaspoons sea salt**

**1 teaspoon dried thyme**

**¼ cup (9 g) dried oregano**

**3 whole cloves**

**¼ teaspoon allspice berries**

**⅛ teaspoon black peppercorns**

**1 (3-inch/7.5 cm) cinnamon stick, freshly ground (2 teaspoons if using ground)**

**1 onion (160 g), chopped**

**½ cup (240 ml) vegetable oil, plus ½ cup (120 ml) to fry the mole paste**

**6 (30 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (100 g) almonds**

**1 $\frac{3}{4}$  ounces (50 g) María Mexican cookies (can be substituted with animal crackers)**

**6 ounces (170 g) ripe plantains, peeled and chopped into 2-inch (5 cm) rounds**

**1 cup (125 g) cubed apples, unpeeled**

**$2\frac{3}{4}$  ounces (75 g) fresh pineapple, core removed**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (100 g) raisins**

**$2\frac{1}{3}$  cups (400 g) chopped tomatoes**

**2 dried avocado leaves**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (100 g) sugar**

**7 ounces (200 g) Oaxacan chocolate, finely chopped**

**$4\frac{1}{2}$  cups (1 L) chicken stock**

In the largest skillet you have over medium heat, add 1 cup of oil for the chiles.

When hot, add the chiles and fry until all the chiles are deeply toasted and crispy, almost burnt. Make sure to keep gently stirring the chiles. This should take 5 to 7 minutes. You may need to do it in batches.

Turn off heat and reserve oil.

Remove the chiles from the oil and put in a colander or on a wire rack so they completely cool. Reserve the oil.

While the chiles cool, bring 8 cups (2 L) of water to a boil. When boiling, remove from heat and add the chiles. Cover and let the chiles soak for 30 minutes or until they are all rehydrated.

In a comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat, add the sesame seeds and 1 teaspoon salt and toast for 2 minutes. Reserve.

In the same comal, add the thyme, oregano, cloves, allspice berries, peppercorns, and cinnamon. Toast for 5 minutes, until the spices are aromatic. Grind the herbs and the spices in a molcajete until finely ground. Set aside.

In the comal, add the onion and garlic. Toast for 10 minutes or until the onion and garlic have started to char a bit. Set aside.

In a large skillet, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of the vegetable oil over medium heat. When hot, fry the following ingredients for a few minutes individually, until each is deeply toasted and aromatic, and then set aside: almonds, Maria cookies, plantains, apples, pineapple, and raisins. Make sure each ingredient is deeply golden brown for the best flavor in the finished mole. All ingredients can be combined at the end.

In a saucepan over medium heat, add the tomatoes and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water. Cover and let cook for 12 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Remove the chiles from soaking and add to blender with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups (360 ml) of chile soaking water. Blend until smooth. You may need to do all the chiles in batches. Pass through a double-fine-mesh metal strainer and set aside.

In the same blender, add the sesame seeds, the ground herbs and spices, onion, garlic, almonds, cookies, plantains, apples, pineapple, and raisins with about 1 cup of water to make sure everything is blended nice and smooth. Pass this mixture through a double-fine-mesh metal strainer and set aside.

Blend the cooked tomatoes until smooth. Pass that mixture through a double-fine-mesh metal strainer and set aside.

In the largest pot you have, add the last  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of oil and place over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the blended chile paste. Let this paste cook for 5 minutes without interrupting. After 5 minutes, add the blended seed mixture, mix, and let cook for another 5 minutes. After those 5 minutes, add the blended tomatoes and continue simmering.

Add the avocado leaves, sugar, Oaxacan chocolate, and 3 teaspoons salt. Keep simmering for another 10 minutes. Last, add the chicken stock and bring to a boil.

When boiling, taste for seasoning. You may need to add a little more salt and sugar.

## Mole Rojo

### Red Mole

One of the most common questions we get at the restaurant is about the differences among moles. It's not just the color. The flavor profiles of the red, black, green, yellow, *coloradito*, *chichilo*, and every other mole are very different. The red and black moles are the closest in flavor, because they share a lot of the same ingredients, but a few chiles and techniques change in the process. Unlike mole negro, where the chiles are fried to achieve a glossy, pitch-black color, mole rojo calls for the dried chiles to be smoked or dry-roasted. In Oaxaca, trimming, seeding, and roasting the chiles becomes a social gathering. At these gatherings, spicy dark smoke overflows the house and penetrates every inch of your hair and clothing. I absolutely love it. The smell of roasted chiles will forever remind me of my grandma, great-aunts, and every woman in my family. When I make this recipe at home, where I don't have an outdoor comal and want to minimize the smoke inside, I opt to toast the chiles briefly, laid out on a baking sheet. It's a great hack to give those chiles the perfect layer of smoke and toast but still stay in total control.

### SERVES 8 TO 10

**3½ ounces (100 g) ancho chiles, stems and seeds removed**

**3½ ounces (100 g) chilhuacle rojo chiles, stems and seeds removed**

**1¾ ounces (50 g) guajillo chiles, stems and seeds removed**

**⅔ cup (100 g) sesame seeds**

**¾ cup (105 g) raw almonds**

**⅔ cup (100 g) roasted peanuts**

**1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves**

**¼ cup dried oregano**

**3 whole cloves**

**¼ teaspoon allspice berries**

**⅛ teaspoon peppercorns**

**1 large cinnamon stick**

**¾ cup (180 ml) vegetable oil**

**1½ cups (160 g) chopped onions**

**10 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 large ripe plantain (about 170 g), peeled and chopped**

**¾ cup (120 g) peeled and chopped apple**

**⅔ cup (100 g) raisins**

**3½ ounces (100 g) pan de yema (can be substituted with bread crumbs or challah)**

**1⅓ cups (250 g) chopped tomatoes**

**1 cup (125 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**½ cup water**

**2 bay leaves**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

**1¾ ounces (50 g) Oaxacan or Mexican chocolate**

**4 teaspoons sea salt**

**4½ cups (1 L) chicken stock**

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).

Carefully place the ancho chiles on a baking sheet with a rim and bake for 8 minutes, turning at the halfway point so that the chiles get evenly toasted.

Repeat this process with the chilhuacle chiles, but toast them for 4 minutes. Repeat with the guajillo chiles for only 3 minutes. Once all the chiles are toasted, let cool.

Bring 8 cups (2 L) water to a boil. Add all of the chiles to the water, turn off the heat, cover, and let sit for 30 minutes or until all the chiles are fully rehydrated.

In a comal or skillet over medium heat, individually toast the sesame seeds, almonds, and peanuts in batches until lightly browned and aromatic. Be very careful not to burn them. Set aside.

In the same comal or skillet over medium heat, toast the thyme, oregano, cloves, allspice, peppercorns, and cinnamon. Grind the spices in a molcajete or spice grinder until finely ground and set aside.

In the largest skillet you own, heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of the vegetable oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook until translucent and aromatic, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the onions and garlic from the oil, place them in a mixing bowl, and set aside. Add the apple and plantain to the pan and fry for 7 minutes or until golden brown and crispy. Remove and add to the bowl with the onions and garlic. In the same skillet, fry the raisins for 5 minutes. Remove and add to the rest of the pan-fried ingredients. Lastly, add the pan de yema and toast it in whatever oil is left in the pan until the bread gets golden brown.

In another saucepan over medium heat, combine the tomatoes and tomatillos with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (60 ml) of water. Cook for 15 minutes or until the tomatillos start to change color.

In two batches, add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups (360 ml) of water to the blender and half of the sesame seeds, almonds, raisins, peanuts, cinnamon, onion, garlic, plantain, apple, and pan de yema, and ground spices. Blend until smooth. Repeat this process with another  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups (360 ml) of water with the remaining ingredients, combining the two batches into one.

In a 5-quart (4.7 L) saucepan, heat  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of the vegetable oil over medium heat.

When the oil is hot, carefully add this blended mixture and mix well.

Remove the chiles from the hot water and reserve 1 cup (240 ml) of the warm chile liquid. Add all of the chiles and 1 cup (240 ml) of water to the blender and blend until smooth. Add this chile mixture to the simmering saucepan and keep mixing.

Blend the cooked tomato and tomatillo mixture until smooth. Pass it through a double-fine-mesh strainer and add that to the simmering mixture as well.

Add the bay leaves, sugar, chocolate, and salt to the mole mixture and continue to simmer for 15 minutes. Pour in the chicken stock and taste for salt. When the sweet and salty flavors are balanced, the mole sauce is ready. You've just made one of Oaxaca's most prized moles.



## Amarillo de Pollo

Chicken in Yellow Mole

This bright-tasting mole relies on raw jalapeños and is enjoyed like a stew. It's hearty and perfect for a cold night; the masa transforms the texture into a chowder-like experience. This is the mole recipe that I recommend if you are looking to make a plant-based mole, because the chicken stock can be easily substituted for a vegetable stock. It will be just as satisfying, if not better.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

### FOR THE CHICKEN

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces**

**3 cloves garlic**

**¼ white onion**

**2 hojas santa leaves**

**Sea salt**

### FOR THE MOLE

**6 guajillo chiles, seeds and stems removed**

**2 ancho chiles, seeded and stems removed**

**½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

**10 black peppercorns**

**4 whole cloves**

**1 onion, quartered**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 chayote, quartered**

**8 ounces (225 g) green beans, trimmed**

**8 fingerling potatoes (or 4 medium potatoes, quartered)**

**4½ ounces (120 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**3 medium Roma tomatoes, halved**

**3 tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Key limes, quartered**

**Chopped jalapeños**

**Minced garlic**

In a large stockpot over high heat, combine the chicken, garlic cloves, onion, and salt with 8 cups (2 L) of water. Bring to a boil. Cover, lower the heat to medium, and cook until the chicken is tender and fully cooked. This will take about 45 minutes. Remove the chicken, garlic, and onion from the pot. Reserve the chicken in a bowl. Discard the garlic and onion and add the hoja santa leaves to the broth in the stockpot.

In a saucepan, bring 4 cups (960 ml) of water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat a comal or a cast-iron skillet over medium heat. When hot, briefly toast the chiles for a minute or two until aromatic. Set aside.

In the same hot comal over medium heat, toast the cumin seeds, peppercorns, and cloves for just a couple of minutes, until aromatic, and set aside. Next, add the onion and garlic, respectively, until each is charred a bit, about 7 minutes. Set aside when done as well.

When the water is boiling, remove from the heat and add the toasted chiles. Let sit for 20 minutes or until the chiles are tender and completely rehydrated.

Fill a separate pot with water and bring the water to a boil over high heat. Cook the chayote, green beans, and potatoes until tender. This should take about 40 minutes. When the vegetables are tender, remove from the water and set aside.

In a blender, blend 1 cup (240 ml) of water and the masa until smooth. Strain the mixture through a double-fine-mesh strainer and into the pot filled with chicken stock. Turn on the heat to medium and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring constantly to prevent any masa from sticking to the pan.

In the blender, add the tomatoes, tomatillos, toasted onion, toasted garlic, and the softened chiles. Blend until smooth. Pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer and pour into the simmering pot of chicken broth. Stir for 5 minutes.

In a molcajete or spice grinder, grind the cumin, peppercorns, and cloves until finely ground. Add this spice mix to the pot and simmer the mole for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Lower the heat and return the cooked vegetables and chicken to the pot. Keep simmering for an additional 5 minutes until the chicken is warmed through. Serve in bowls and accompany with tortillas.

#### TIP

**If you are not making your own masa for this recipe, opt for a masa for tortillas and not a masa for tamales. For a vegetarian option, feel free to swap the chicken broth for vegetable broth and use oyster mushrooms instead of chicken.**





## **Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos**

White Beans, Nopales, and Dried Shrimp in Yellow Mole

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) of navy beans, rinsed**

**Sea salt**

**5 ounces (140 g) nopalitos, dethorned and cubed**

**8½ ounces (250 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1 cup (240 ml) hot water**

**5 guajillo chiles (25 g), stems and seeds**

**2 cups (480 ml) hot water**

**½ cup (55 g) chopped white onion**

**4 cloves garlic (12 g), peeled**

**3 whole cloves**

**6 black peppercorns**

**1 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**1 teaspoon dried oregano**

**2 medium Roma tomatoes (about 200 g), halved**

**1.7 ounces (50 g) whole dried shrimp**

**3 avocado leaves**

In a 5-quart (4.7 L) Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, combine the beans, 2 tablespoons of the onion, 1 clove of garlic, and 8 cups (2 L) of water. Bring to a boil and then lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and let cook for an hour. After an hour, add 1 teaspoon of sea salt. Test the beans for doneness. If tender, turn off the heat and set aside to cool. If the beans are still hard, cook for 15 minutes more.

When cooled, drain the beans in a colander and discard the bean water. Put the beans back in the Dutch oven and add 6½ cups (1.5 L) water.

In a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan, combine the nopales, 2 tablespoons of the onion, 1 garlic clove, and 4½ cups (1 L) of water. Bring to a boil and cook for 30 minutes or until the nopales change color. Pour the nopales into a colander and discard the cooking liquid. Rinse with cold water. Set aside.

Heat a comal or skillet to medium heat and toast the rest of the onion and garlic. When charred, set aside. Next, individually toast the cloves, black peppercorns, cumin seeds, oregano, and avocado leaves. When aromatic, set aside. Lastly, toast the chiles and then let them soak in hot water for 30 minutes.

Combine the masa with 1 cup (240 ml) of water in a blender and blend until smooth. Pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer and add the strained masa to the beans. Bring the mixture to a boil, then lower the heat to a low simmer. Make sure to mix well and constantly scrape the sides with a spatula so that the masa doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan.

Meanwhile, in a molcajete or spice grinder, grind the cumin, oregano, peppercorns, and cloves until finely ground. In the same blender, combine the rehydrated chiles, charred onion and garlic, and freshly ground spices with ¼ cup (60 ml) of the chile soaking liquid. Pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer and pour the puree into the simmering beans.

In a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan, bring 2 cups (480 ml) of water to a boil. Quickly dip the shrimp into the boiling water and remove right away to remove any excess smell of dried shrimp.

Add the nopales to the beans, along with the blanched dried shrimp and toasted avocado leaves. Continue simmering for 8 minutes and taste for seasoning. The soup is done when the shrimps have softened, which should be about 15 minutes after you've added them.

## **Coloradito**

Coloradito is the mole that we serve on top of tortilla chips at the restaurant as soon as you arrive at your table. For many of our guests, it serves as the gateway mole and hooks you in to explore the rest of the moles we offer. It is the mole that we make the most and the foundation of our signature enchiladas. It's just the perfect amount of sweet and spicy.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**6 dried guajillo chiles (45 g), stems removed**

**5 cups (900 g) chopped tomatoes**

**½ cup (75 g) sesame seeds**

**2 tablespoons ground cinnamon**

**¼ cup (25 g) breadcrumbs**

**1 teaspoon dried oregano**

**1 teaspoon dried thyme**

**8 whole black peppercorns**

**6 whole cloves**

**¼ cup (35 g) raisins**

**½ cup (70 g) raw almonds**

**1 small white onion (100 g), quartered**

**¼ cup (35 g) garlic cloves, peeled**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**2 bars (6½ ounces/184 g) Mexican chocolate**

**Sea salt**

**3 cups (720 ml) chicken stock**

**2 bay leaves**

**2 hoja santa leaves**

Fill a small saucepan with enough water to cover the chiles and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the chiles to the hot water, cover, and allow them to soften and get tender for about 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from the water and set aside. Reserve 2 cups of the chile soaking liquid.

Place the tomatoes in a pot with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) water. Cook over medium heat until the tomatoes change color. Set aside.

In a comal or skillet, toast the sesame seeds, cinnamon, breadcrumbs, oregano, thyme, peppercorns, and cloves.

Place the toasted spices in a molcajete or spice grinder and grind until finely ground. In a blender, combine the chiles and 1 cup (240 ml) of the reserved chile water, the raisins, almonds, onion, and garlic. Blend until smooth.

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the chile mixture and warm through. Add the other cup of reserved chile water. Simmer for 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes and chocolate. Taste for salt and adjust accordingly.

Add the chicken stock, bay leaves, and hoja santa leaves. Simmer for another 10 minutes until the texture of the sauce resembles heavy cream.

Serve over cooked chicken, over chips with a little bit of queso fresco, with eggs, or anything you like.

## **Chichilo**

There is a joke that goes around that Mexicans can't eat anything without dousing it in lime juice. For me this mole is that dish. The lime adds so much to the toasty, bitter flavors of this mole made from borderline-burned ancho chiles. I usually eat this savory mole with chicken and a side of raw serranos in lime juice and sea salt. It's a flavor bomb.

### **MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS**

**3½ ounces (100 g) ancho chiles, plus 1 tablespoon of the chile's seeds**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**1 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**3 whole cloves**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon allspice berries, about 8**

**1 teaspoon dried thyme**

**3 tablespoons (25 g) sesame seeds**

**8 cups (2 L) chicken stock**

**1 (2-inch/5 cm) cinnamon stick**

**10 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 large onion (170 g), quartered**

**2 hoja santa leaves**

**10 $\frac{3}{4}$  ounces (300 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).

Remove the stems from the chiles, make a slit on the side of each chile, and open with your fingertips to remove the veins and seeds, reserving 1 tablespoon of chile seeds.

Toast the chiles in the oven for 10 minutes, turning at the 5-minute mark to make sure both sides get evenly toasted. Let cool.

In a skillet over medium heat, add the reserved seeds and purposely burn them in the skillet.

In a large saucepan over high heat, bring the 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (1 L) of water to a boil. Once boiling, remove from the heat and add the toasted chiles and seeds to rehydrate. Leave for 30 minutes or until the chiles have softened. When the chiles are tender, drain chiles from the water and reserve 3 cups of the chile soaking liquid for later.

Meanwhile, bring a comal or dry skillet to medium heat and individually toast the oregano, cumin, cloves, allspice, and thyme. Place all toasted ingredients in a molcajete or spice grinder and grind until finely ground. Toast sesame seeds separately and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring the chicken stock to a simmer.

In a blender, combine the chiles, cinnamon, garlic, onion, hoja santa, sesame seeds, ground spices, and 1½ cups (360 ml) of the reserved chile soaking water. Blend until smooth. When smooth, add the remaining 1½ cups (360 ml) of chile water and the masa. Blend that until smooth, too.

Add this masa mixture to the simmering chicken stock. Add salt, raise the heat, and cook for 15 minutes while stirring constantly. The mole is ready to serve.



## Mole Verde con Puerco

Green Mole with Pork

This mole is also eaten like a soup, similar to the yellow mole ([this page](#)). If you can't find pork spine, feel free to substitute with a whole chicken or bone-in pork ribs.

## SERVES 6

### FOR THE BEANS

**1 cup (185 g) navy beans, rinsed**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

### FOR THE PORK

**3½ pounds (1½ kg) pork spine, sliced by your butcher and trimmed of excess fat (can be substituted with pork shank)**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

### FOR THE MOLE

**1 cup (180 g) sliced green tomatoes (can be substituted with red tomatoes when green tomatoes are not available)**

**¾ cup (105 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**1½ serrano chiles, stems removed and chopped into large pieces**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**½ cup (50 g) chopped white onion**

**1½ teaspoons freshly ground cumin powder**

**5¼ ounces (150 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**2 hoja santa leaves**

**10 fresh parsley sprigs**

**10 fresh epazote leaves**

## **MAKE THE BEANS**

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, combine the beans and 8 cups (2 L) water. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the beans are softened. This should take about an hour. After an hour, add the salt. Once the beans are tender, taste for seasoning and turn off the heat.

## **MAKE THE PORK**

Meanwhile, in another large heavy-bottomed pot, bring a generous 3 quarts (3 L) of water to a boil and add the pork spine, onion, garlic, and salt. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for 1 hour. Skim any impurities that rise to the top of the broth. When the pork is falling apart, about 1 1/2 to 2 hours, depending on the cut of meat used, remove from the heat and remove the onion and garlic from the broth.

## **MAKE THE MOLE**

In a blender, combine the green tomatoes, tomatillos, chiles, garlic, onion, cumin, and 1 cup (240 ml) of water. Blend until smooth. Add this mixture to the broth.

Put the masa and 1 cup (240 ml) water in the same blender and puree until smooth. Add 2 cups (480 ml) of hot broth. Blend again, being careful not to get burned by the liquid. Add the masa broth back to the pot. Over medium heat, bring the pot full of broth and pork spine to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes, stirring constantly so that it doesn't stick to the pan. Add salt and taste, adjusting as needed.

Once the broth is hot, add the cooked beans with a slotted spoon, so just the beans get transferred and not the broth. Keep simmering.

In the blender, combine the hoja santa, parsley, and epazote with 1 cup (120 ml) of water and blend until smooth. Pour into the pot and stir until just combined. Season to taste. Remove the pot from the heat and serve in bowls, piping hot.



## Estofado de Pollo

Chicken in Mole Estofado

This is the mole that my mother has made the most throughout our life. I have many memories of asking her to make this dish for my birthdays growing up. I would say that it is probably my favorite of them all. It was also the first mole that I learned how to cook, since it is the most approachable and easiest to make. The dish's briny, bright flavors are quite different from many other moles because there aren't any dried chiles involved. The main flavor comes from pickled jalapeños and olives, so try to get the highest quality of those two ingredients available. To bump it up a notch, substitute cooked cow's tongue for the chicken.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed, plus 10 cloves, peeled**

**1 small white onion (about 100 g), peeled and halved**

**¼ cup (56 g) vegetable oil**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**¾ cup (105 g) whole almonds, shelled**

**½ cup (75 g) sesame seeds**

**1½ cups (220 g) raisins**

**½ cup (15 g) dried oregano**

**¼ cup (11 g) dried thyme**

**4 sprigs fresh parsley**

**12 black peppercorns**

**3 whole cloves**

**½ cinnamon stick**

**5¾ cups (about 1 kg) chopped tomatoes**

**6 tomatillos (135 g), husked and rinsed**

**½ cup (100 g) sugar**

**½ cup (75 g) pitted green olives, such as Manzanilla**

**½ cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

**1 small can (7 ounces/198 g) sliced jalapeños in escabeche, drained**

**Sea salt**

Place the chicken, 3 cloves smashed garlic, and halved onion in a stockpot filled with salted water. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and let cook over medium heat until the chicken is tender and fully cooked. This will take about 45 minutes. Remove the chicken from the stock to cool. Strain the stock and reserve 3 cups (720 ml).

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting. On your oven's highest rack, broil the chopped onion on a baking sheet for 10 minutes, until lightly charred. Add the raw garlic to the sheet and keep broiling for another 5 minutes. Set aside.

In a Dutch oven or the largest skillet you have, heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of the oil over low heat. Fry the almonds and sesame seeds in the oil until they are golden brown, stirring very frequently so they don't burn. This should take about 2 minutes. Once they are fragrant, carefully remove them from the hot oil into a mixing bowl using a slotted spoon. Add the raisins and fry them in the oil until they plump up. This should take about 5 minutes or less.

In a comal or griddle, toast the oregano, thyme, peppercorns, cloves, and cinnamon over low heat. Once aromatic, grind the spices in a molcajete or spice grinder until finely ground.

In a separate pot over medium-high heat, combine the tomatoes and tomatillos with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of water, stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes until the tomatoes and tomatillos have changed color. Transfer the tomatoes and tomatillos to a blender and blend until smooth. Pass the puree through a double-fine-mesh strainer into the pot and reserve.

In a food processor, add the almonds, sesame seeds, raisins, oregano, thyme, peppercorns, cloves, onions, garlic, cinnamon, and parsley and process until it is a paste.

In a large stockpot, heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of the vegetable oil. Add the almond paste and fry until fragrant, stirring continuously. Add the tomato-tomatillo puree, sugar, and 3 cups (720 ml) of strained chicken stock. Salt to taste.

Simmer for 10 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the olives and 3 to 5 jalapeños. Remove from the heat, cover, and let sit for 10 minutes.

Serve the estofado over sliced chicken with additional jalapeño slices.



## Segueza

Coarse Heirloom Corn Mole

This is a minimalist mole, where corn plays a major part in its complexity. The corn is coarse and adds a tender, chunky texture to the mole sauce. I suggest you double the recipe, because this mole will have you reaching for seconds.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

### **FOR THE PORK**

**½ cup (100 g) dried field corn**

**3½ pounds (1.6 kg) pork spine, chopped by your butcher and trimmed of excess fat (can be substituted with pork shank)**

**¼ of a small white onion (25 g)**

**5 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1½ tablespoons sea salt**

### **FOR THE MOLE**

**10 guajillo chiles (50 g), stems and seeds removed**

**2 chiles de árbol, stems and seeds removed**

**6 freshly ground black peppercorns**

**4 freshly ground cloves**

**1 teaspoon freshly ground cumin seeds**

**8 cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 hoja santa leaves**

**½ cup (55 g) chopped white onion**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**1 teaspoon dried thyme**

**1¼ cups (225 g) chopped tomatoes**

## **Sea salt**

In a cast-iron skillet over medium heat, toast the corn for 7 to 10 minutes, moving the corn around with a spatula to make sure it all gets evenly toasted. Let cool. Put the corn in a blender or food processor. Pulse until the corn is coarsely chopped but not ground.

Soak the chopped corn in a large mixing bowl full of water for 20 minutes. The corn skins should float to the top; remove them with a double-fine-mesh strainer. You may have to rinse the corn again a few more times to remove all the skins. Once the corn rinsing water runs clear, drain the corn.

Fill a large pot with 3 quarts (3 L) of water and bring to a boil. Add the pork, lower the heat to a simmer, and cook for about 30 minutes, skimming all impurities that rise to the top. Add the onion and garlic and keep simmering for another 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Reserve 1 cup of broth.

While the pork is cooking, heat a comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Toast the chiles well on both sides. Bring 3 cups (720 ml) of water to a boil. Turn off the heat, add the chiles, and let soak for 30 minutes or until they are completely softened.

In the same comal or skillet over medium heat, quickly toast the spices until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Blend the spices in a molcajete or spice grinder.

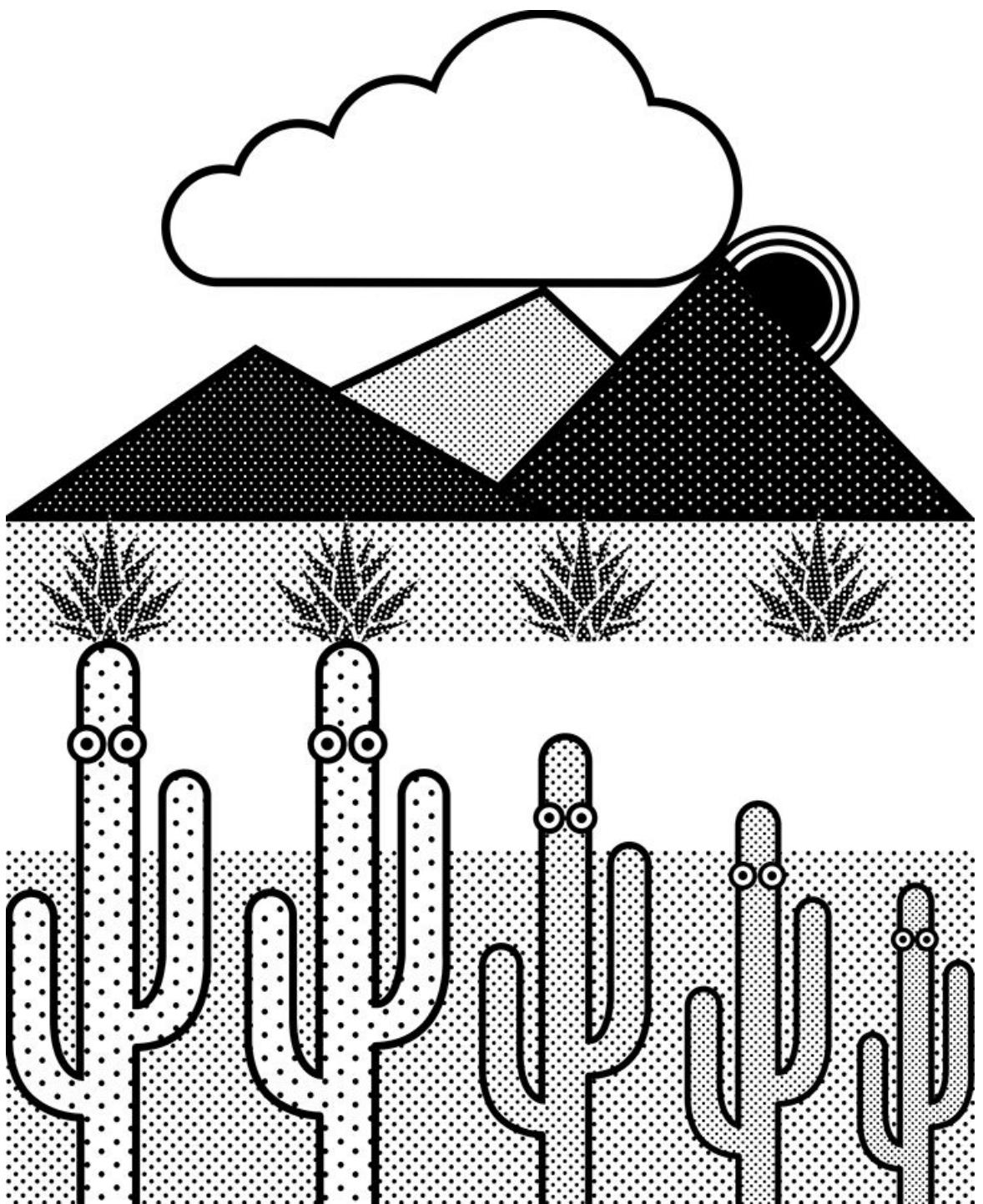
Heat your oven's broiler to its low setting. On a baking sheet, broil the garlic and onion for 10 minutes. Set aside.

In a blender, combine the soaked chiles with 1 cup (240 ml) of their soaking liquid, the roasted onion, garlic, and toasted, ground spices. Blend until completely smooth. Add crushed, soaked corn and pulse until the corn is broken down into a coarse, chunky texture and set aside.

After the pork has simmered for an hour, remove the garlic and onion. Add the chile and corn mixture to the pot. Add 1 cup of reserved broth and simmer for 30 minutes. Add more broth if needed for a thick, heavy cream texture.

After 30 minutes, add the hoja santa, thyme, oregano, tomatoes, and the chile and spice mixture to the simmering meat broth. Keep simmering for another 2 hours. Mix the corn bits around a bit so they don't stick to bottom of the pot while

cooking. After 2 hours of cooking, the dried corn bits should be tender and al dente. Season with salt and serve.



SIX

FAMILY MEALS

**As you are cooking your way through this cookbook, you'll find that a lot of our recipes make enough food to feed a big family and guests and still have leftovers. In Oaxaca, family-style dining is oftentimes the only way people know how to eat. This is because, yes, we have very large families, but also because Oaxaca has a culture of friends and family just stopping by your house unannounced, and the worst thing that can ever happen is to be caught without any food to offer. When it's time to eat, my parents bring out a large stack of *tlayudas* (our version of tortillas), a bowlful of salsa, and beans, and put the main course right in the middle of the table. Everyone is free to eat as much as they want.**



## Pollo Enchipotlado

Chicken in a Creamy Chipotle Sauce

This is an everyday dish for my family. When I was pregnant, I once had three plates of *pollo enchipotlado* and still didn't feel full. I couldn't get enough of the creamy chipotle sauce; it's so decadent. It is similar to a *tinga* and is one of those dishes that you don't really find in restaurants in Oaxaca. It is more of a dish that you cook for yourself and your loved ones to enjoy at home—a “mom dish,” as I like to call them. The perfect way to eat this is by tearing off big pieces of tortilla and repetitively using them as a utensil to pick up the tender pieces of chicken. No forks or spoons necessary. Adding the crema on top at the end amplifies the richness of the sauce.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into 8 pieces**

**Sea salt and freshly ground pepper**

**2 tablespoons Dijon mustard**

**5½ cups (about 945 g) chopped tomatoes**

**½ of a small white onion (50 g), chopped**

**4 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 tablespoon olive oil**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**3 whole chipotles in adobo plus 2 tablespoons adobo sauce (add an extra tablespoon of sauce for a spicier dish)**

**3 bay leaves**

**Mexican crema, for garnish**

Season the chicken generously with salt, pepper, and the Dijon mustard. Let sit for 10 minutes.

Cook the tomatoes in a pot over medium-high heat with just enough water to cover them, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes.

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting. Place the chopped onion on a baking sheet and broil for 10 minutes on your oven's highest rack, until lightly charred. Add the garlic to the pan and broil for another 5 minutes. Set aside.

Heat the oil and butter in a very large, deep skillet or saucepan over medium-high heat. When the fat starts to smoke, drop the seasoned chicken into the pan and brown it on each side for about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a blender, mix the charred garlic and onion, the cooked tomatoes, and the chipotle chiles and adobe sauce until finely pureed. Pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer for a velvety texture.

Add the chipotle mixture to the skillet along with the bay leaves and mix well with the chicken. Bring to a simmer, cover, and let cook for 10 minutes. Once the sauce starts to change color and the texture resembles heavy cream, it is ready.

Drizzle with Mexican crema.



## **Pollo al Oregano**

Oregano Fried Chicken

This is our version of fried chicken—except we don't use any extra oil or fat. It gets crispy in its own luscious chicken fat that is rendered as it cooks. It sings with the beautiful floral aroma and flavor of oregano, which adds an herbaceousness to chicken that keeps it from being too heavy. I like my chicken super crispy, almost even burnt, so I let the chicken go until it gets really, really golden brown.

## SERVES 4 TO 6

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces, trimmed of excess fat and skin**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**2 tablespoons fresh lime juice**

**1 head of garlic (36 g), cloves separated and peeled**

**$\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon peppercorns (about 10 peppercorns)**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**$\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon cumin seeds**

**1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed and cooked**

Season the chicken with the salt and lime juice. Let sit for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a mortar and pestle, grind the garlic, peppercorns, oregano, and cumin.

In a large skillet, bring 2 cups (480 ml) of water to a boil and add the chicken. Cook for about 45 minutes, removing any impurities that rise to the top. When the water evaporates, add the ground spices.

Lower the heat and stir constantly, allowing the chicken to brown, scraping up every bit of brown on the pan. Toss in the cooked potatoes and allow them to get crispy. Taste for seasoning and serve.



## Picadillo de Pollo

Shredded Chicken in a Savory, Sweet Tomato Sauce

Rotisserie chicken is really big in Mexico. When traveling in Oaxaca and many other parts of Mexico, you'll probably eat it or at least be tempted to eat it, since it looks like there is a place on every corner just tempting you with juicy roast chicken. When I was a little girl, there was a place called Pollo del Oriente that was a few blocks away from our home. I remember having taquitos de picadillo there for the first time. Picadillo is eaten all around Mexico and sometimes it is made from ground beef, but it will usually have a tomato sauce to hold it all together. Oaxaca's picadillo is very different from the other picadillos of Mexico. It is a little sweet, but it balances out beautifully once you fold it in a chile relleno or taquito. In this recipe we use boiled chicken, but feel free to use any leftover chicken you have handy, including rotisserie chickens from supermarkets.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**2 bone-in chicken breasts (about 16 ounces/450 g)**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled and left whole, plus 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**

**1 cup (125 g) chopped white onion**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**2 cups (360 g) chopped tomatoes**

**3 tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**½ teaspoon dried oregano**

**¼ teaspoon dried thyme**

**¼ teaspoon black peppercorns**

**2 whole cloves**

**1-inch cinnamon stick, broken into pieces**

**¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil**

**18 blanched almonds, finely chopped**

**½ cup raisins (75 g), finely chopped**

**1¾ cups (270 g) olives, pitted, finely chopped**

**1 cup (35 g) minced fresh parsley**

**¼ cup (60 ml) apple cider vinegar**

**3 tablespoons sugar**

Place the chicken, whole garlic cloves,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (30 g) of the onion, and salt in a large stockpot filled with water. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and let cook over medium heat until the chicken is tender and fully cooked. This will take about 35 minutes. Remove the chicken from the broth and reserve 1 cup (240 ml) of the broth.

Let the chicken cool. Shred the breast meat with your hands as thinly as possible and set aside.

Place the tomatoes, remaining  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (95 g) onion, the tomatillos, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of the chicken broth into a blender. Blend until smooth and set aside.

Place the oregano, thyme, peppercorns, cloves, and cinnamon in a molcajete or spice grinder. Grind to a fine powder. Set this aside.

Heat the vegetable oil in a sauté pan over high heat. Once hot, add the blended tomato mixture along with the minced garlic. Lower the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the almonds, raisins, olives, and last  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of chicken stock. Stir for 1 minute and then add the parsley. Stir for 2 minutes and add the shredded chicken breast. Stir for 2 minutes more, then add the ground spices. Salt to taste and stir. Add the apple cider vinegar and sugar; stir.

Simmer for another 15 minutes until the chicken has absorbed all the juices in the sauté pan. Serve.



## Taquitos de Picadillo de Pollo

Chicken Picadillo Crispy Tacos

This is the recipe I share the most with my friends when they ask me about meal planning for the week. It is a great and satisfying dinner that can be easily warmed up for lunch the next day. The taquitos, once cooked, can also be frozen and warmed up in a toaster oven or in a skillet with a little bit of oil in just a few minutes. They are a life-saver on those nights when you're pulling up blanks for dinner. The recipe calls for frying, but feel free to bake them with drizzled olive oil and salt. Just make sure to heat up your tortillas first before assembling each taquito, to make it more pliable. I enjoy these topped with either our guacamole, mole coloradito, bean paste, or sometimes a mixture of these. It calls for shredded cabbage on top, but feel free to use any greens you have in your fridge instead. They're also great to make for game-day parties with a tomatillo salsa and a little bit of crumbly cheese.

## **SERVES 10 TO 12**

**45 corn tortillas, store-bought preferred**

**1 recipe Picadillo ([this page](#))**

**Toothpicks**

**3 cups (720 ml) vegetable oil**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Cotija cheese, crumbled**

**Mexican crema**

**Guacamole ([this page](#))**

**Minced cabbage**

Bring a comal or cast-iron skillet to high heat and, one by one, heat up the tortillas until soft and pliable. This should take a minute per side or less.

As the hot tortillas are coming out, add 2 tablespoons of picadillo to the center of each tortilla and tightly wrap it up. Use a toothpick or two to pierce the tortilla together and hold it in place.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over high heat (see Tip). Once hot, lower the heat to medium and add the taquitos in batches of three or four at a time. Fry

on both sides until golden brown. Use tongs to flip the taquitos over so both sides cook equally. Continue this process until all the taquitos are fried. Drain the taquitos on a large plate lined with paper towels to absorb any extra oil. Serve immediately with cheese, crema, guacamole, and minced cabbage.

**TIP**

**Throw a small piece of tortilla into the oil before frying your taquitos. Once the tortilla turns golden brown, that's when you'll know your oil is ready to go.**



## **Chiles Rellenos de Picadillo**

Oaxacan-Style Chiles Rellenos

One of the first surprises that you may encounter when dining out in Oaxaca or in a Oaxacan restaurant is when you order a chile relleno. Instead of it being stuffed with cheese like many in Mexico, it will be filled with this mixture of shredded chicken. It is sweet, salty, spicy, and one of the most versatile dishes to just always have in your refrigerator. The combination of the spice and sweet of the picadillo are the perfect complement to one another. Traditionally in Oaxaca, chiles rellenos are made with chiles de agua. If you don't have access to a Oaxacan grocery, you can substitute fresh Anaheim chiles.

## SERVES 6

**12 chiles de agua (or substitute Anaheim chiles)**

**1 recipe Picadillo ([this page](#))**

**6 large egg whites**

**4 large egg yolks**

**1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour**

**1 cup (120 ml) vegetable oil**

To prepare the chiles, place them directly over your stove's gas flame at its highest setting, turning constantly until charred on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes.

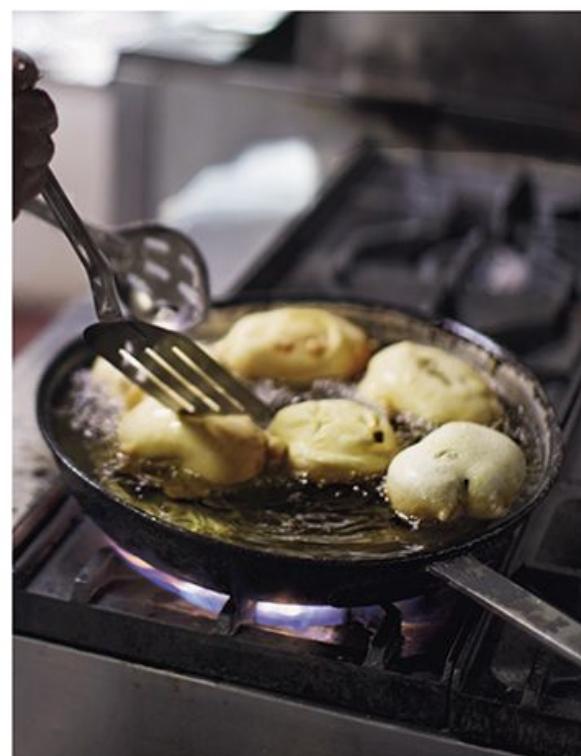
Put the charred chiles in a medium bowl and cover with a large plate for a few minutes so the chiles can soften in their own steam. This will make peeling the burnt skin off easier. Cover until cool enough to handle.

Once the chiles are cool to the touch, use your fingertips to pull the charred skin back from each chile and discard it. Using a paring knife, make a small 2-inch (5 cm) incision lengthwise in each chile and carefully remove the seeds. Stuff each of them with the chicken picadillo.

Beat the egg whites on high with a hand mixer until medium-stiff peaks form. Add 1 egg yolk at a time and continue to mix until the yolks are combined. Individually, toss each chile in the flour and dip in the egg mixture.

Place a large skillet over high heat and add the vegetable oil. Once the oil is bubbling hot, lower to medium heat. With a large slotted spoon or tongs, place the

coated chiles in the oil and fry both sides until golden brown. Transfer to a large plate lined with paper towels to absorb any extra oil. Serve immediately with a side of beans, sliced avocado, and tortillas.







## Tortitas de Papa en Caldillo

Potato Fritters in Broth

This dish perfectly captures the art of making something from nothing. In this case, this dish is always there for you when you forgot to buy vegetables or meat but still need to put food on the table. These fritters are essentially mashed potato patties fortified with a little whipped egg and cheese to make them surprisingly substantial and delicious. This dish becomes a main course real quick when you ladle tomato salsa over it and serve it with rice, beans, and a pile of tortillas on the side.

## SERVES 6

**2½ pounds (1 kg) potatoes**

**Sea salt**

**3 large eggs**

**2 tablespoon panko breadcrumbs**

**½ cup (75 g) crumbled queso fresco**

**¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil**

## FOR THE CALDILLO

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) Roma tomatoes**

**¼ cup (30 g) chopped white onion**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**3 sprigs fresh parsley**

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, put the potatoes and enough water to cover by 2 inches (5 cm), along with a fat pinch of salt. Bring to a boil, cover, and cook for 40 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Dump the pot over a colander in the sink and discard the water.

When the potatoes are cool to the touch, use your fingertips to peel them and place them in a large mixing bowl. Mash them with a masher, add the eggs and 1

teaspoon salt, and continue to mash until you form a dough. Add the breadcrumbs and queso fresco and keep mixing until everything is incorporated.

Roll the potato mixture into balls about 2 inches (5 cm) in diameter. Flatten each ball to make 4-inch (10 cm) disks that are about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (12 mm) thick.

Heat the oil in a deep skillet. Once hot, add the potato disks and fry on both sides. Remove and reserve on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb any excess grease.

## **MAKE THE CALDILLO**

In a blender, combine the tomatoes, onion, garlic, and 1 cup (240 ml) of water. Blend until smooth.

Heat the oil in a skillet and carefully add the tomato mixture to the pan. When it starts to boil, add another  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water and the parsley. Simmer for 5 minutes more.

To serve, arrange a few potato patties on each plate and ladle a bit of the tomato salsa over each patty.



## Spaghetti in Poblano Salsa

My mom made this during thanksgiving one year and upon tasting it, we knew we had to have it every year for the rest of our lives. My family and I absolutely

love Thanksgiving. I think it was because it was the only day of the year (aside from Christmas Eve) that my parents were forced to close the restaurant early. We embraced this tradition, making every Thanksgiving meal traditional with dishes like stuffing, mashed potatoes, and cranberry sauce. This green spaghetti (and our black bean puree) was how we made Thanksgiving our own, beginning a new tradition for our family that blended both cultures. I really hope it becomes one of yours, too.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**3 poblano chiles**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**¼ cup (13 g) fresh flat-leaf parsley**

**1 cup (240 ml) whole milk**

**½ cup (120 ml) Mexican crema**

**1 tablespoon salted butter**

**1 pound (455 g) bucatini pasta**

**2 bay leaves**

**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Cotija cheese, crumbled**

**Olive oil**

To prepare the chiles, place them directly over your stove's gas flame at its highest setting, turning constantly until charred on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes.

Once the chiles are charred, put the chiles in a medium bowl and cover with a large plate for a few minutes to soften and steam. This will make peeling the

burnt skin off easier. Cover until cool enough to handle, then remove most of the skin with your fingers.

In a blender, combine the chiles, onion, garlic, parsley, milk, and crema and blend until smooth.

In a medium-sized pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the pureed chile sauce to the pan and allow to simmer for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, cook your pasta with the bay leaves for 1 minute less than the package directions indicate.

Drain the pasta and add it to the pot with the poblano sauce. Discard the bay leaves. Stir or toss the pasta to coat with the sauce.

Turn off the heat and give a big sprinkle of cheese and a drizzle of high-quality olive oil. Toss or stir vigorously.



## **Tacos de Barbacoa de Chivo**

Goat Barbacoa in Broth

If you ever find yourself hungover in Oaxaca, a few bites of this and a michelada will bring you right back to life. My favorite place to get barbacoa in Oaxaca is at Adolfa's at the Sunday market in Tlacolula. If I'm in Oaxaca on a Sunday, you will always find my family and me eating barbacoa at her stand, paired with a chocolate *atole* and a big pile of freshly made bread and tortillas. The best way to eat this taco is like a French dip sandwich, dipping the taco directly into the broth and topping it with bits of onions, jalapeños, and lime.

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

**2 avocado leaves**

**3 teaspoons sea salt**

**2 $\frac{1}{4}$  pounds (1 kg) goat neck (see Note)**

**1 cup (110 g) trimmed and chopped green beans**

**1 cup (140 g) cubed carrots**

**1 cup garbanzo beans, soaked overnight**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon allspice berries**

**$\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon black peppercorns**

**4 whole cloves**

**1 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**1 ounce (30 g) guajillo chiles, stems removed and toasted**

**6 cloves garlic, peeled**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (60 g) chopped onion**

**$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (50 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**18 corn tortillas (preferably homemade, [this page](#))**

## **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Chopped serrano chiles**

**Minced onion**

**Limes slices**

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, bring 3 quarts (2.8 L) of water to a boil and add the avocado leaves and salt. Add the meat and lower the heat to a simmer. Cook for 45 minutes, skimming any impurities that rise to the top of the broth. Add the green beans and carrots and continue simmering for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a molcajete or spice grinder, grind the allspice, peppercorns, cloves, and cumin seeds until finely ground.

In the blender, add the rehydrated chiles, garlic, onion, tomatillos, ground spices, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of the chile soaking liquid. Blend until smooth and pass through a double-fine-mesh strainer into the simmering pot. Simmer for 35 minutes more or until the meat is fall-apart tender. Serve with chiles, onion, and lime slices.

While the meat is simmering, start to make your handmade tortillas and start piling them in a tortilla warmer so they stay warm.

When the goat meat is starting to fall apart, turn off the heat and remove all the meat from the broth and shred using two forks or with fingertips. Remove bones.

To serve, assemble a handful of goat meat over each tortilla and serve 2 to 3 tacos to a person. Serve a ladleful of broth along with the tacos to dip.

## **NOTE**

**If goat neck isn't available, you can also use goat ribs or any bone-in cut of goat.**



## Barbacoa de Borrego

Lamb Barbacoa

*Barbacoa de Borrego* is eaten during a lot of festivities in Oaxaca. It is always served family style at parties so you can eat as much as you can handle. My fondest memory of eating barbacoa was during a get-together with friends in an agave field recently. We cooked a whole lamb in a pit underground, had live music, everybody showed up, and there was free-flowing mezcal for everyone. It was one of the most beautiful, most perfect days of my life, because what else do you need other than friends, family, tender seasoned meat, and good mezcal?

## SERVES 6 TO 8

**7 guajillo chiles (35 g), stems removed, seeded**

**9 cloves garlic (27 g), peeled**

**1 cup (75 g) chopped white onion**

**1½ teaspoons ground cumin**

**2 tablespoons dried oregano**

**1 sliver of a cinnamon stick**

**¼ teaspoon dried thyme**

**2 whole cloves**

**4 black peppercorns**

**2 bay leaves**

**2 teaspoons sea salt**

**3 pounds (1.4 kg) bone-in lamb shoulder roast, cut into pieces by your butcher**

**10 avocado leaves**

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).

Bring 3½ cups (840 ml) water to a boil in a medium pot. Turn off the heat and add the guajillo chiles. Let soak for 20 minutes or until the chiles are softened. Reserve ¼ cup (60 ml) of the soaking liquid.

In a comal or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, toast the following ingredients for 5 to 7 minutes until evenly toasted: cumin, oregano, cinnamon, thyme, cloves, black peppercorns, and bay leaves. While the spices are toasting, lightly char the garlic cloves and onion.

In a molcajete or food processor, grind the garlic, onion, cumin, oregano, cinnamon, thyme, cloves, and black peppercorns as best you can.

In a blender, combine the softened chiles and reserved soaking water, the bay leaves, salt, and spices.

In a 5-quart (4.7 L) Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, place the lamb and slather in the spiced chile mixture from the blender. Add avocado leaves. Mix well, cover, and cook in the oven for an hour. The lamb should be fall-apart tender, and the sauce should be the texture of a pan sauce.

If the lamb still isn't tender, cover and cook for another 20 minutes or as long it takes for the lamb to be falling off the bone.



## Pollo en Barbacoa

Chicken Barbacoa

This dish is a holiday tradition for our family. We make it every year for our Christmas dinner. The adobo rub is full of warm spices and it is great on turkey, too. I remember my grandma used to make it, then my mom made it, and now I make it for my family.

## **SERVES 4 TO 6**

**10 guajillo chiles (50 g), stems and seeds removed**

**10 cloves garlic, peeled**

**½ cup (50 g) chopped white onion**

**¼ teaspoon black peppercorns**

**3 whole cloves**

**1 sliver of a cinnamon stick**

**1 tablespoon dried oregano**

**1 cup (180 g) chopped tomatoes**

**⅓ cup (50 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**1 whole chicken (about 2 pounds/1 kg), butchered into eight pieces, trimmed of excess fat and skin**

**10 avocado leaves**

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).

Bring 4½ cups (1 L) water to a boil in a medium pot and add the chiles. Turn off the heat and let soak for 20 minutes or until chiles are softened.

In a comal or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, toast each of the following ingredients separately for 5 to 7 minutes until evenly toasted: garlic, onion, black peppercorns, cloves, cinnamon, and oregano.

In a molcajete or mini-chopper or food processor, grind the garlic, onion, peppercorns, cloves, cinnamon, and oregano as best as you can until finely ground.

In a small pot over medium heat, combine the tomatoes, tomatillos, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) water. Boil for 25 minutes or until the tomatillos start to pop.

In a blender, combine the softened chiles, cooked tomatoes and tomatillos, the ground onion, garlic, and spices, and the salt. Blend until completely smooth.

Put the chicken in a 5-quart (4.7 L) Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot and add the spiced chile mixture from the blender, and avocado leaves. Mix well, cover, and cook in the oven for an hour (see Tip). The chicken should be fall-apart tender and the sauce should be the texture of a pan sauce. If the chicken still isn't tender, cover and cook for another 20 minutes.

#### TIP

**If chicken is fatty and too much fat has been rendered, remove from the oven, remove the excess fat with a ladle, and continue to simmer on your stovetop.**



## **Chiles Rellenos de Queso Fresco con Epazote**

For this vegetarian queso fresco version of a chile relleno, epazote with its grassy punch makes all the difference. I like using queso fresco because it doesn't melt

and its milky flavor gets even more concentrated inside the chile, but feel free to experiment with any other cheese you have on hand. Cacique makes a great queso Oaxaca and queso fresco that works well with this recipe. Traditionally in Oaxaca, chiles rellenos are made with fresh chiles de agua. This recipe calls for Anaheim chiles, which are more readily available in the United States, but you can also use rehydrated chiles pasillas as a substitute.

## SERVES 6

### **6 Anaheim chiles**

**7 ounces (200 g) queso fresco, sliced into 2-inch-wide strips**

**½ cup (20 g) fresh epazote leaves, whole**

**4 large egg whites**

**2 large egg yolks**

**½ cup (65 g) all-purpose flour**

**1½ cups (360 ml) vegetable oil**

## VARIATION

**These chiles can also be stuffed with picadillo instead of cheese.**

To prepare the chiles, place them directly over your stove's gas flame at its highest setting, turning constantly until charred on all sides, about 5 to 7 minutes.

Put the charred chiles in a medium bowl and cover with a large plate for a few minutes so the chiles can soften and steam. This will make peeling the burnt skin off easier.

Once the chiles are cool to the touch, use your fingertips to pull the charred skin back from each chile and discard the skin. Using a paring knife, make a small 2-inch (5 cm) incision along the length of each chile and carefully remove the seeds.

Cut the queso into 2-inch strips and gently stuff inside chile. Once cheese is inside chile, stick an epazote leaf over the cheese and gently close the chile. Set aside.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over high heat. While oil gets hot, in another mixing bowl, beat the egg whites on high with a hand mixer until medium-stiff peaks form. Add 1 egg yolk at a time and continue to mix until the yolks are combined. Individually, toss each chile in a plate with the flour and dip each chile into the egg mixture to completely batter it.

Once the oil is bubbling hot, lower the heat to medium and, with a large slotted spoon, place the coated chiles in the oil and fry both sides until golden brown, about 3 minutes. Place on a large plate lined with paper towels to absorb any extra oil. Repeat this process until all the chiles have been battered and cooked. Serve immediately.



## Empanadas

Unlike the empanadas of the rest of Latin America made from bread, our empanadas are giant quesadillas cooked directly on a hot comal, using freshly

made masa and things like *quesillo*, squash blossoms, and sometimes *mole amarillo*. Oaxaca prides itself in being one of the few states in Mexico that still uses 100-percent nixtamal anywhere masa is needed without cutting it with Maseca (corn tortilla flour). Our empanadas showcase our masa and offer a filling for every mood of the week. Whether you're craving the earthy, muddy flavors of *huitlacoche* or want to go clean with a handful of squash blossoms, empanadas are always a safe and solid choice when traveling in Oaxaca. At home, with a few salsas, they are an easy and satisfying quick lunch or dinner. The only exception is *empanadas de San Antonino*, which is a cheeseless empanada filled with an oozy, rich yellow mole with chicken redolent of cilantro. Empanadas de San Antonino are truly one of a kind. You can find women selling these out of a basket in the mercados across Oaxaca. They are best eaten with a touch of lime and *chiles toreados*.



## Empanadas de Flor de Calabaza

Masa Empanadas Stuffed with Squash Blossoms

Squash has a special place in the Oaxacan diet. From our *sopa de guias* made with squash vines to our rich *agua de chilacayota*, it is a vegetable that we return to for both sweet and savory applications. The squash blossom is yet another part of the squash that we treasure for its subtle, earthy flavor. It's an iconic empanada filling in Oaxaca that begs to be posted on Instagram because of its vibrant bright-yellow color. It's almost too pretty to eat. I love having *flor de calabaza* at the peak of their season in Oaxaca, because they can look as big as sunflowers. They cook down to a tender texture when lightly steamed in an empanada. If you're feeling it, spread the thinnest layer of *aciento* between the cheese and tortilla for an instant flavor booster. With our fruity tomatillo salsa, it's one of the easiest and most wholesome meals you can assemble at any time of the day.

## **MAKES 10 EMPANADAS**

**2½ pounds (1 kg) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#))**

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) queso Oaxaca (Oaxacan string cheese)**

**7½ cups (225 g) squash blossoms, cleaned**

**40 fresh epazote leaves**

Heat a comal over medium heat. Grab  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (100 g or 3½ ounces) of masa at a time and press it in a tortilla press. When the comal is hot, carefully transfer the tortilla to the comal and lightly toast one side, 1 to 2 minutes. Carefully flip it to the other side and, on the freshly toasted side, place a handful (50 g) of cheese on top and layer with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (22 g) of squash blossoms followed by 4 epazote leaves, evenly spread out.

After the other side of the tortilla is lightly toasted, carefully fold the tortilla in half and press down on the edges so that it is a little bit sealed. Flip the quesadilla to the other side. When both sides are toasted with some dark spots, the quesadilla is ready to serve.



## Empanadas de San Antonino

Griddled Crispy Empanadas Stuffed with Yellow Mole and Chicken

Every time I visit Oaxaca, my sister demands that I bring her at least half a dozen of these special empanadas back from every trip. When we finally nailed the recipe at the restaurant and successfully re-created it, it was as if she had won the lottery, because that meant she can finally enjoy them at home. She really can't get enough. This empanada is completely different from any other because of its cooking process. The rich yellow mole is slowly cooked inside the tortilla over the comal, making it ooze out a bit and pierce through the masa to develop an attractive reddish color from the mole. It takes a bit longer for it to cook than the rest of the empanadas, because it needs to slowly crisp up on the comal. (I leave it on even longer, because I like it almost burnt.) They're great served at room temperature, too, so they are perfect for a picnic. I like to serve these empanadas with a few chiles toreados on the side to give them that much-needed acid punch. It's the perfect bite of Oaxacan flavors.

## **MAKES 16 EMPANADAS**

### **FOR THE MOLE AMARILLO FILLING**

**2 pounds (910 g) guajillo chiles, stems and seeds removed**

**3½ cups (350 g) roughly chopped onions**

**6 cloves garlic (45 g), peeled**

**1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**10 whole cloves**

**10 black peppercorns**

**1/2-inch (2.5 cm) cinnamon stick, broken into pieces**

**1½ tablespoons dried oregano**

**2 bay leaves**

**1/2 teaspoon dried thyme**

**1 pound (455 g) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#) )**

**1/2 pound (227 g) lard, melted**

**2 teaspoons sea salt**

**1 pound (455 g) chicken breast, cooked and shredded**

**20 sprigs of fresh cilantro**

#### **FOR THE EMPANADAS**

**2 1/4 pounds (1 kg) fresh masa (recipe on [this page](#) )**

#### **FOR THE GARNISHES**

**Limes, quartered**

**Pickled onions**

**Chopped jalapeños**

**Chopped serranos chiles**

#### **MAKE THE FILLING**

In a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan over medium-high heat, bring 2 cups (480 ml) of water to a boil. Turn off the heat add the chiles. Cover and let sit in the hot water for 30 minutes or until the chiles have softened.

Meanwhile, in a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, add the chopped onions and turn once or twice so the onions are cooked and lightly charred, about 12 minutes. Remove from the skillet and set aside.

Repeat with the garlic until the garlic is roasted and slightly charred as well. Remove and set aside.

Lastly, in batches, bring down the heat to low and toast the cumin seeds, cloves, peppercorns, cinnamon, oregano, bay leaves, and thyme in the skillet until aromatic, about 2 minutes. Transfer the toasted spices to a molcajete or spice grinder and grind until finely ground. Set aside.

When the chiles have softened, remove them from the soaking water and add them to a blender with 3 cups (720 ml) of water, along with the onions and garlic. Blend until smooth and set aside.

In batches, add half of the chile mixture with half of the masa to the blender and blend until smooth to make a slurry. Empty out the blender and do the same with the other half of the masa and the chile mixture.

Place the lard in a large skillet over medium heat. Once it is melted, add the masa-chile mixture and ground spices to the skillet. Stir well with a wooden spatula to combine. Season to taste, about 1 1/2 tablespoons of salt.

## **MAKE THE EMPANADAS**

To assemble and cook the empanadas, make balls of masa that are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (about 125 g) each. With a tortilla press, press down to make a round tortilla.

As each tortilla is pressed and ready, in a comal or nonstick griddle over medium heat, carefully place the tortilla on the grill and cook one side. Turn over after 1 minute. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of yellow mole, a fat pinch of shredded chicken, and a sprig of cilantro.

Fold over like a quesadilla and cook on the edges of the comal where it's not as hot. The mole will cook inside the empanada and requires a longer cooking time on top of the comal than a traditional quesadilla. The tortilla will turn a reddish color after all of the filling's juices have expanded inside the masa. Continue until all the masa, chicken, and mole are gone.

Cook until the masa is fully cooked, about 15 minutes in total, about 5 minutes on each side. The outside crust should be crispy and the interior creamy.

Serve hot, with lime, pickled onions, chopped jalapeños, and serranos.





## Salsa de Carne Frita

Crispy Pork in a Morita Salsa

This is a staple Oaxacan dish that is not made anywhere else in Mexico. The essence of this dish comes from deeply caramelized pork. It is fried in its own rendered fat until it's so hard that it is almost *chicharrón*. You want the little bits of pork to stick to the pot, so when you add the salsa, it picks it all up and develops into a deeply nutty savory salsa.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**2 pounds (170 g) pork spare ribs, cut into 3-inch (7.5 cm) strips**

**Sea salt**

**8 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed**

**¼ cup chopped white onion (25 g)**

**1 pound tomatillos (140 g), husked and rinsed**

**2¾ cups (about 480 g) chopped tomatoes**

**4 morita chiles (or chipotle) (8 g), stems removed**

Place the ribs in a stockpot and cover with 3 cups (720 ml) of water and some salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. When the water begins to boil, skim all brown foam off with a double-fine-mesh strainer. Keep repeating until the water no longer has any foam. Add the garlic and onion. Allow the ribs to boil for 5 minutes more.

Lower the heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove 1 cup (120 ml) of broth and set aside. Continue to cook over medium heat until all the liquid has evaporated and the ribs start to get crispy and browned on each side. Remove the ribs piece by piece and place them in a dish. Do not wash the pot, as you will be using it again and all the brown bits stuck to the bottom will add great flavor to this dish.

In another pot, bring ¾ cup (180 ml) of water to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer, add the tomatillos and tomatoes, cover, and let cook for 10 to 12 minutes. Dry-toast the chiles on a comal or griddle until fragrant. Add them to the cooking tomatoes and tomatillos. Once the chiles are soft, place the chiles, tomatillos, and tomatoes in a blender and blend until finely pureed.

Remove any excess grease from the stockpot you used to brown the pork, if necessary, leaving just enough to fry your sauce, about 1 tablespoon. Do not remove any brown bits, as these will contribute a deeper flavor to the sauce. Over medium heat, add the tomato puree, the cup of liquid you reserved, plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of water to the pot. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the ribs to the sauce and keep simmering for another 5 minutes. Serve in a bowl with some black beans and a pile of warm tortillas on the side.



## Papa Istmeña

Baked, Isthmus-Style Mashed Potatoes

This is another dish from the isthmus region of Oaxaca, which means it is exceptionally rich. It combines potatoes with sour cream, mayonnaise, eggs, and a little bit of vegetables to make you feel just a little better about it all. It is a side dish and you'll see it everywhere when you're visiting that beautiful, humid part of Oaxaca. Think of it as Oaxacan mashed potatoes. It's hard to just have one scoop of the stuff because the end result is a velvety masterpiece.

## SERVES 8

**Sea salt**

**4½ pounds (2 kg) white potatoes**

**1½ cups (200 g) carrots, peeled and chopped**

**½ cup (65 g) peas**

**1 cup (240 ml) mayonnaise**

**⅔ cup (210 ml) Mexican crema**

**2 tablespoons yellow mustard**

**¼ cup (35 g) minced white onion**

**2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

**2 large eggs, beaten**

**1 pinch of ground nutmeg**

**1 pinch of freshly cracked black pepper**

**1 tablespoon butter, for greasing the baking dish**

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

Fill a large pot with salted water, add the potatoes and carrots, and bring to a boil. Cover and cook for about 30 minutes or until tender. Remove from the pot and let cool.

Fill another small pot with salted water and add the peas, bring to a boil, and cook until the peas are tender, about 5 minutes. Remove from the pot and reserve.

When the potatoes are warm to the touch, peel them with your hands. In a large mixing bowl, mash the potatoes with a masher until all of the potatoes are completely mashed. One by one, mix in the peas, carrots, mayonnaise, crema, mustard, onion, parsley, eggs, nutmeg, and pepper until well combined.

Butter a 4-quart (3.8 L) baking dish and spread the potato mixture evenly in it. Cover with aluminum foil and bake on the middle rack of the oven for 45 minutes. Remove the aluminum foil and continue baking for 15 minutes. Let cool a little bit before serving.



## **Costillas con Verdolaga**

Pork Ribs with Purslane

This is one of the first dishes I asked my mom to teach me how to make. The first time she cooked for my now-husband, this is the dish I asked her to make for him. I knew it would be the perfect first impression. We are happily married now, so I guess the magic of the dish worked. The trick to this recipe is browning the ribs as much as possible, making them extra crispy. The sauce will scoop up every bit, making it that much more delicious.

## SERVES 6 TO 8

**4½ pounds (2 kg) pork spare ribs, cut into 2-inch (5 cm) pieces by your butcher and trimmed of excess fat**

**1 head of garlic (25 g), cloves separated and peeled**

**1 tablespoon sea salt, plus more to taste**

**2 pounds (910 g) Roma tomatoes, halved**

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) tomatillos, peeled and rinsed**

**5 morita chiles (can be substituted with chipotle chiles) (10 g)**

**2 cups (90 g) purslane leaves**

In a large skillet, bring 6 cups (1.4 L) of water to a boil. Add the pork ribs and lower the heat to a simmer. Skim impurities that start to rise to the top. When no more impurities are surfacing, add the garlic and salt. Keep simmering. In about 20 minutes, reserve 1 cup (240 ml) of pork broth. Keep simmering until all the water has evaporated. This process should take about 45 minutes.

Keep the heat at a consistent level and make sure that all sides of the pork get evenly brown and crispy. Once all sides are crispy, remove the ribs from the pan. Remove any excess pork fat, too, but make sure to leave at least 1 tablespoon in the pan. If the garlic cloves didn't fall apart, remove any cloves that are still around. Turn off the heat.

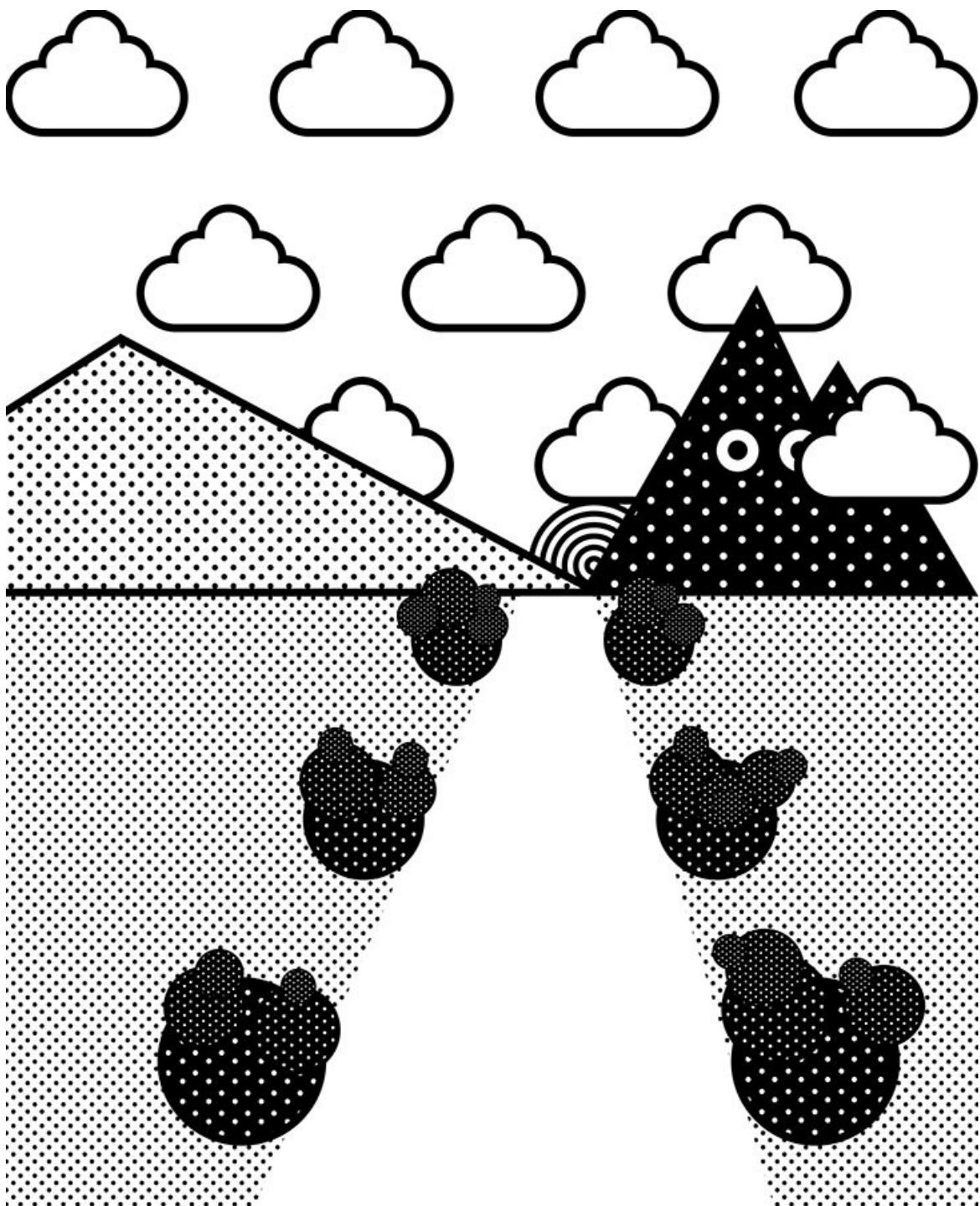
In a 4-quart (3.8 L) saucepan, add the sliced tomatoes, tomatillos, and 1 cup (240 ml) of water. Bring to a simmer and cook until the tomatoes and tomatillos start to change color. Once they do, turn off the heat.

In a comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat, briefly toast the dried chiles for a minute or two on each side and then let soak in hot water for 20 minutes, or until tender.

In a blender, combine the cooked tomatoes and tomatillos and their cooking water along with the chiles and blend until smooth.

Heat the pan you used to cook the pork over low heat and add the tomato-tomatillo mixture and the reserved cup of pork broth. Add salt to taste and bring to a simmer, and scrape the bits of pork that stuck to the bottom of the pan so that it flavors the stew. Add the purslane leaves and continue to simmer, covered, for another 5 minutes.

Add the fried pork ribs back to the pan and simmer until the meat is warmed through. If the salsa is too thick, feel free to add a little more water to thin it down a bit. The texture should be like a nice salsa, not a paste. Serve the ribs with the purslane and salsa.



**SEVEN**

**SWEETS**

**Desserts in Oaxaca are not so much an additional course at the end of a dinner, but a full experience in the streets or at a table full of family with coffee, Oaxacan drinking chocolate, and *sobremesa*, the kind of conversations that can only happen right after dinner when your belly is full and your heart is happy. Think of things like the dulce de leche known as *jamoncillo*, enjoyed while perusing handmade crafts in Oaxaca's centro, or roasted plantains smothered with sweetened condensed milk after a nice meal.**



## Plátanos al Horno

Roasted Plantains

In Los Angeles, we have *eloteros* selling corn on carts all throughout the city and, in Oaxaca, you have the plantain and sweet potato cart guy. He comes through neighborhoods pushing a makeshift aluminum cart with a fire going strong inside of it. You know he's arrived at your corner of town because you'll hear the notorious steam-powered whistle that sounds more like a speeding train than a street food vendor. When you order from him, he opens a drawer full of roasted plantains covered in pineapple, watermelon, and banana peels. The smell and flavors of roasted fruit are incomparable. He serves it with sweetened condensed milk and sugar, or sometimes *crema* and sugar. It was always a real treat for us and now you can enjoy it at home.

## SERVES 4

**4 ripe plantains (2½ pounds/1.2 kg)**

**1 pound (455 g) pineapple peels**

**1 cup (250 ml) Mexican crema**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

**¼ cup (30 g) chopped walnuts (optional)**

**Sweetened condensed milk, for serving**

Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C).

Peel the plantains and lay the peels flat on a 4-quart (3.8 L) baking dish. Layer the plantains over the peels and then top with the pineapple peels so that the plantains are completely covered. Pour 1 cup (240 ml) of water over the top and cover tightly with aluminum foil.

Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 10 minutes.

To serve, whisk the crema with the sugar until evenly mixed. Place a plantain on a plate, make an incision in the middle, down the length of the plantain, drizzle with crema, and sprinkle with walnuts. Repeat with the rest of the plantains and serve hot with sweetened condensed milk.



## Nicuatole

Toasted Corn Pudding

It's hard to explain *nicuatole* without comparing it to a type of gelatin dessert, because of its bouncy texture, but it has zero gelatin in it. The way it gets that gelatin-like consistency is through all the starches naturally occurring in corn. When you're cooking and reducing the corn, it thickens the milk, giving it a tender, slightly chewy texture. I sometimes wonder if someone just left their *atole* in the pot for too long, turning it into *nicuatole*, and that's how this dessert was created. However it came to be, I'm glad it did. Think of it as a lightly sweet Oaxacan panna cotta with toasty undertones. It's become iconic in Oaxaca because of its two-tone pink and white signature look. The majority of cooks use naturally derived carmine powder from nopales to achieve the striking color.

## SERVES 8

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) dried field corn kernels**

**1½ cups (300 g) sugar**

**4 cups (960 ml) milk**

**½ of a stick of cinnamon**

**2 tablespoons carmine powder**

In a large pan of any kind over medium heat, toast the dried corn until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat.

In a large heavy-bottomed pot, combine the toasted corn and enough water to completely submerge the corn by 2 inches (5 cm). Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then cook, covered, for 30 minutes or until the corn kernels are al dente.

Remove the corn from the heat and allow it to continue to soak and cool for a couple of hours, or overnight. Once the liquid is back to room temperature, pour the corn through a colander and discard the water.

In a blender, combine the cooked corn with 4 cups (960 ml) of water. Blend until smooth. Pass the corn mixture through a double-fine-mesh strainer into a bowl.

Pour the strained masa water with the sugar, milk, and cinnamon into the large heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly with a

wooden spoon. Let boil for another 10 minutes. The nicuatole mixture should be thick enough that you can see the bottom of the pot as you stir.

Add a fat pinch of the carmine powder to the bottom of each of 8 ramekins to form a thin layer on each. Pour the nicuatole mixture into the ramekins. Let cool to room temperature and serve. When cool, flip the ramekins onto a bowl so that the red side is at the top.

#### NOTE

**Nicuatole can be stored in the refrigerator for 2 weeks, if it makes it that long without being eaten!**



## **Chocoflan**

Layered Chocolate and Flan Cake

This dessert marries the two all-time favorite desserts of every Mexican kid I knew growing up: a moist chocolate cake and a custardy flan. It is a very traditional chocolate cake and the flan is ridiculously creamy thanks to the addition of cream cheese. My mother always baked cakes growing up and this was everybody's favorite. At one point, my mom's flan cakes got so popular that our neighbors even started to put in orders for their own chocoflans. To this day, it remains our best-selling dessert at the restaurant.

## **SERVES 12**

### **FOR THE CARAMEL**

**½ cup (85 g) white sugar**

### **FOR THE FLAN**

**1 can (430 ml) sweetened condensed milk**

**1 can (360 ml) evaporated milk**

**8 ounces (225 g) cream cheese**

**4 large eggs**

**1 tablespoon vanilla extract**

### **FOR THE CHOCOLATE CAKE**

**3 large eggs**

**1 cup (200 g) white sugar**

**½ cup (120 ml) milk**

**½ cup (120 ml) canola oil**

**⅔ cup (85 g) all-purpose flour, sifted**

**¼ cup (25 g) cocoa powder**

**1 teaspoon baking powder**

**2 teaspoons vanilla extract**

**1 pinch of sea salt**

## **MAKE THE CARAMEL**

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and 1 tablespoon of water over medium heat. Stir constantly until the color starts to change to a dark-brown caramel color. Have your 10-inch (25 cm) round cake pan at the ready and carefully drop the caramel into the pan. You might need to spread the caramel all over the pan. Set aside.

## **MAKE THE FLAN**

Put all of the ingredients in a blender. Lightly blend in pulses for about 1 minute until the ingredients are combined. Slowly pour the flan mixture into the caramel-lined cake pan.

## **MAKE THE CHOCOLATE CAKE**

Preheat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Put the eggs and sugar in a mixing bowl. With a hand mixer or stand mixer, beat until evenly mixed. Add the milk and oil and keep mixing until thickened. Once all the ingredients are well mixed, lower your mixer's speed to the lowest setting and gently drop in the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and lastly, the vanilla and sea salt. Stop mixing as soon as the flour is mixed in. (Small clumps are okay.)

Drop the cake batter into the cake pan on top of the flan mixture. Make sure that it is evenly distributed, using a spatula to create an even layer of chocolate cake batter.

Fill a roasting pan with water and gently place the cake pan in it. Carefully transfer to the oven and bake for 35 minutes or until a fork inserted into the cake comes out clean.

Remove the cake from the oven and hot-water bath, and let cool to room temperature. Place the chocoflan in your refrigerator and wait until it is completely cold to slice and eat.



## Barquillos Rellenos de Lechecilla

Custard-Filled Sugar Cones

These *barquillos* are called *dulces regionales* (regional candy) in Oaxaca, but they are more of a pastry than a candy. When walking the mercados in Oaxaca, you'll see vendors selling the biggest assortment of these sweet pastries through the sights and sounds of the mercado's corridor. These barquillos somehow have always stood out as my favorite. The perfect custard filling and the thin crust gives them the right amount of decadence. You can find the cone molds online.

## SERVES 15

### FOR THE CONES

**4 cups (500 g) all-purpose flour**

**½ cup (100 g) vegetable shortening**

**¼ ounce (10 g) active dry yeast**

**2 tablespoons (25 g) sugar, plus ½ cup (100 g) to sprinkle the cones**

**¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil to glaze the cones**

**15 (4½-inch/11 cm) baking cream horn pastry roll molds**

### FOR THE CUSTARD

**4½ cups (1 L) whole milk**

**¾ heaping cup (110 g) cornstarch**

**4 large egg yolks**

**1 cup (200 g) sugar**

**½ cinnamon stick**

**4 tablespoons (55 g) unsalted butter**

### MAKE THE CONES

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Put all the flour on a work surface and make a small well in the middle of the pile.

Add the shortening, yeast, 2 tablespoons sugar, and 1 ¼ cups (300 ml) water and gently form into a dough. The dough should be soft and elastic. Form into a rectangle shape that is about ⅛ inch thick. Using a pizza cutter, cut into 1¼-inch-wide (3 cm) strips lengthwise.

Grease a cone mold and wrap the strips of dough around it, pressing the outer edge parts over each other so that a tight-sealed cone shape is formed. Brush with oil and then sprinkle with a bit of sugar. Repeat with the remaining molds and strips of dough. Dough should make 15 cones. Place the molds upright, pointy side up, on a baking sheet and bake for 15 to 18 minutes or until golden brown.

## **MAKE THE CUSTARD**

In a mixing bowl, combine ½ cup (120 ml) of the milk, the cornstarch, and egg yolks. Mix well. Set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine the remaining 4 cups (960 ml) milk, the sugar, and cinnamon and bring to a gentle simmer. Add the cornstarch slurry and mix vigorously in a single direction to avoid any clumps. Reduce the heat to low and keep mixing. When you scrape the bottom of the saucepan and it is visible, the custard is thick enough. Remove the cinnamon and remove from the heat and add the butter. Stir until the butter is evenly mixed in.

Let the custard cool to slightly above room temperature, while lightly stirring once every 3 minutes to prevent a crust from forming. While the custard is still warm to the touch, add enough custard to each cone to fill up to the top, about 4 tablespoons. Allow the barquillos to come to room temperature before serving.



## Arroz con Leche con Dulce de Garbanzos

Rice Pudding with Candied Garbanzos

In Oaxaca, arroz con leche is traditionally served with candied garbanzos because we are extra like that. This combination sounds weird, but it's actually very good. Think of it as the Oaxacan version of those sweet red bean desserts in Japan. The candied garbanzos have a similar texture to candied sweet potatoes and add a nice layer of caramel flavor into the milky spiced rice.

## SERVES 12

### FOR THE CANDIED GARBANZOS

**12 ounces (4 cones/340 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined brown sugar)**

**1 (3-inch/7.5 cm) cinnamon stick**

**2 tablespoons star anise, tied in a sachet**

**1 cup (200 g) sugar**

**1 (15-ounce/425 g) can garbanzo beans, drained**

### FOR THE ARROZ CON LECHE

**4 cups (760 g) jasmine rice**

**4 (12-ounce) cans evaporated milk**

**1 pound (455 g) sugar**

**2 (3-inch/7.5 cm) cinnamon sticks**

**½ teaspoon grated lime zest**

### MAKE THE CANDIED GARBANZOS

In a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, combine 2 cups (480 ml) of water, the piloncillo, cinnamon stick, star anise, and sugar. Bring to a simmer and mix until the piloncillo has fully dissolved. Add the garbanzo beans and continue simmering until the garbanzos are completely tender and a syrup starts to form. Once the syrup is the texture of honey, about 5 minutes total, remove from the heat. It is ready.

### FOR THE ARROZ CON LECHE

In a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, bring 6 cups (1.4 L) of water to a boil. Add the rice and lower the heat to a simmer. When the rice is cooked, about 15 minutes later, add the evaporated milk, sugar, cinnamon sticks, and lime zest. Keep simmering for about 10 minutes more, until the sugar is dissolved and the texture of the rice and milk is thick, like a traditional pudding.

When ready to serve, serve the rice pudding with the candied garbanzos on top.



## Gelatina de Tres Leches con Jerez

Tres Leches and Sherry Gelatin Dessert

*Gelatina* is a lifestyle in Oaxaca and the rest of Mexico. You'll see it in all shapes, designs, and colors. Entire books could be written about the gelatina culture of Oaxaca. Sherry is something that you probably wouldn't think to drink in gelatin form, but it's mysteriously great, especially when it's combined with the creamy tres leches gelatina layer. It creates a delicious and refreshing Creamsicle-like effect.

## SERVES 20

### FOR THE SHERRY GELATIN

**30 grams unflavored gelatin**

**¾ cup (150 g) sugar**

**1½ cups (360 ml) Mexican sherry wine (Tres Coronas)**

### FOR THE TRES LECHEZ GELATIN

**30 grams unflavored gelatin**

**1 can (430 ml) sweetened condensed milk**

**1 can (360 ml) evaporated milk**

**1 (½-inch/12 mm) cinnamon stick**

**1 cup (240 ml) of half-and-half**

**¼ teaspoon vanilla extract**

### PREPARE THE SHERRY GELATIN

Mix together the unflavored gelatin and ½ cup (120 ml) of water. Let it sit until gelatin starts to form.

In a small saucepan, bring 3 cups (720 ml) of water and the sugar to a boil and mix until the sugar is just dissolved. Remove from the heat and add the sherry wine.

In a bain marie setup, warm the unflavored gelatin mixture until it is in liquid form. Add the sherry mixture and mix well.

Pour the sherry gelatin mixture into a greased gelatin mold of your choice, filling it to the halfway point (reserve the other half of the space for the tres leches gelatin) and place in the refrigerator until it is set up, about 2 hours.

## **PREPARE THE TRES LECHES GELATIN**

Mix together the unflavored gelatin and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water. Let it sit until gelatin starts to form.

In a small saucepan, combine 2 cups (480 ml) of water with the sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, and cinnamon and bring to a boil. Stir in the vanilla and remove from the heat.

Let the milk mixture cool to room temperature. Remove the cinnamon stick. Add the half-and-half and unflavored gelatin and mix until the gelatin completely dissolves.

Carefully pour the mixture over the chilled sherry gelatin and put back in the refrigerator until it is chilled and set, at least a couple of hours. Once the tres leches gelatin is set, the dessert is ready to serve.



## Dulce de Calabaza

Piloncillo-Candied Squash

This is a seasonal dessert that is typically eaten during Día de Muertos season in Oaxaca. The belief is that its spiced, sweet aroma is so tantalizing that it attracts the spirits to come and indulge. The sweet smell brings me back to the beautiful colors of my favorite time of year in Oaxaca. Muertos has always been a big part of my family's culture. I still remember the smell of *copal* incense, *cempazuchitl* (marigold) flowers, mole, and this dulce de calabaza taking over my grandma's house. She had a special room in her house dedicated to making an altar for my grandpa, who had passed on. I still remember spending Muertos week helping her get ready for my grandpa's visit. It was so beautiful, and it is a tradition that I still keep alive today in my home. In Oaxaca, when cooking this dish, they use a type of firm pumpkin named *calabaza de castilla*. In the States, I use kabocha squash because of the similarities in flavor and texture. Eat it for dessert on a windy fall day.

## SERVES 8 TO 12

**4½ pounds (2 kg) kabocha squash, sliced into 4-inch (10 cm) pieces**

**2 pounds (910 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined brown sugar), broken up into pieces**

**2 whole cloves**

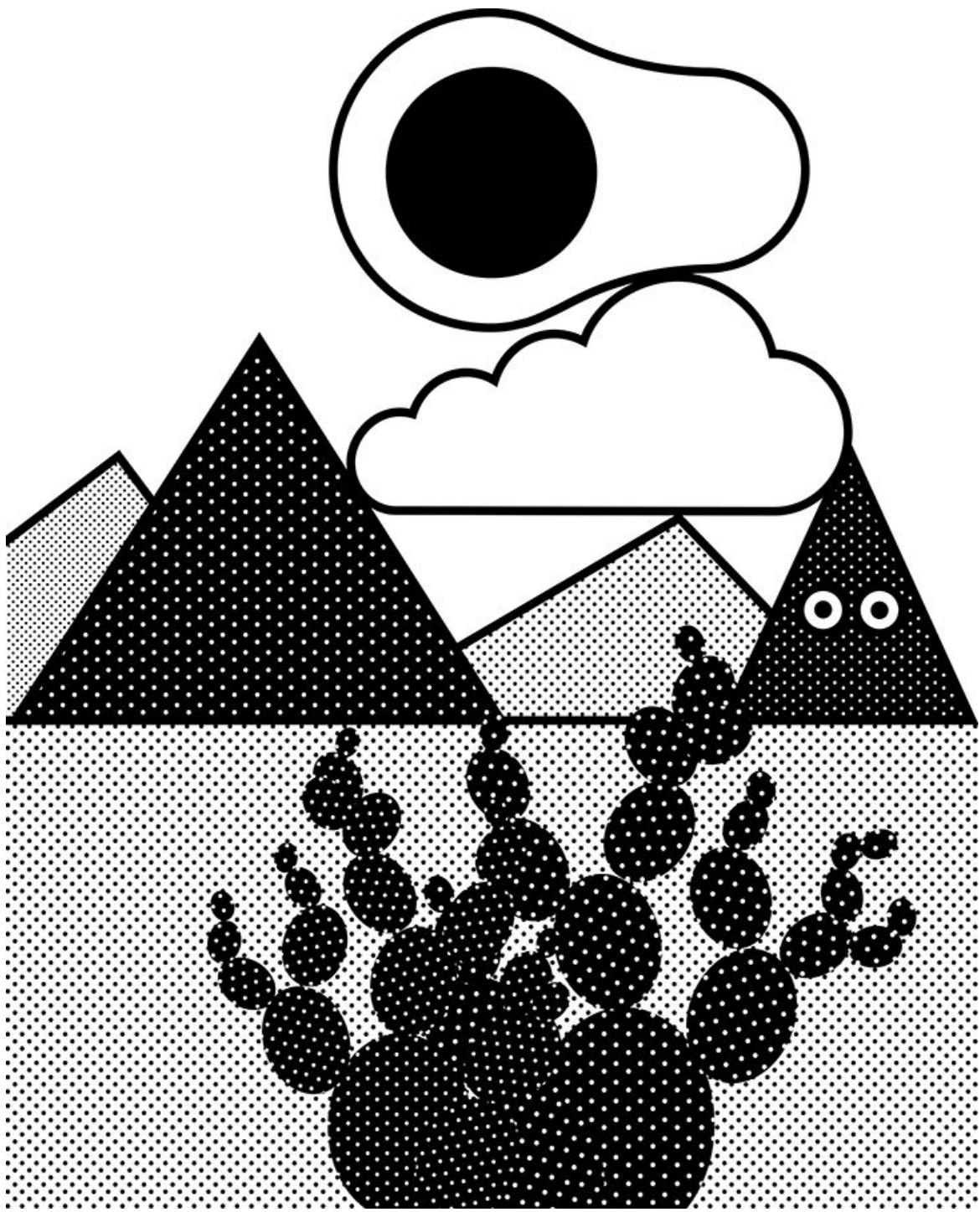
**½ tablespoon anise seeds wrapped in a sachet**

**10½ ounces (300 g) sugar cane, peeled and cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) pieces**

**1 (4-inch/10 cm) cinnamon stick**

Put the pumpkin, skin-side down, in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat and add 1 cup (240 ml) water, the piloncillo, cloves, anise seed sachet, sugar cane, and cinnamon stick.

Bring to a simmer and cook for 45 minutes to an hour, until the piloncillo and water form a honey-like syrup. Serve warm.



**EIGHT**

**SALSAS**

**In Oaxaca, you can't have a good meal without a great salsa. In my home in Oaxaca and in Los Angeles, you'll never catch any of us without a salsa that is ready to be enjoyed with eggs, beans, tortillas, or whatever. Salsas are your secret weapon. You'll eventually find your favorite salsa and, before you know it, preparing it will be second nature to you. Red, green, oil-based, pungent, spicy, thick, thin . . . there is a salsa for every occasion.**



## Salsa de Chapulines

Grasshopper Salsa

It always boggles my mind when people think it's weird that I eat *chapulines*. I remember in middle school I would take chapulines to school as a snack and I was known as "that girl who ate grasshoppers." I ate them like popcorn. But I always loved them and embraced my reputation. I was never ashamed. Every time someone comes into my restaurants and thinks it's weird to eat grasshoppers, I always ask them: "Well, do you like shrimp?" I ask them to analyze the diet that shrimp eat and to compare it to the diet of grasshoppers, and I prove to them that they're not that far apart. If you eat one, you can eat the other. Chapulines adds umami, depth, brightness, and texture to any dish. Not to mention that they are one of the most sustainable proteins to grow and eat. I think of them as just being salty raisins. This salsa made with blended grasshoppers is the perfect gateway dish to show people just how delicious chapulines can be. We sell the best food-grade grasshoppers imported from Oaxaca at our online store. I recommend that you serve this salsa to your guests—assuming they're not vegan or vegetarian—and don't tell them what's in it until after the compliments start pouring in.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (480 ML)**

**Generous 1 pound (500 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**4 morita chiles (can substitute with chipotle chile), stems removed**

**¼ cup (25 g) dried grasshoppers**

**1½ teaspoons sea salt**

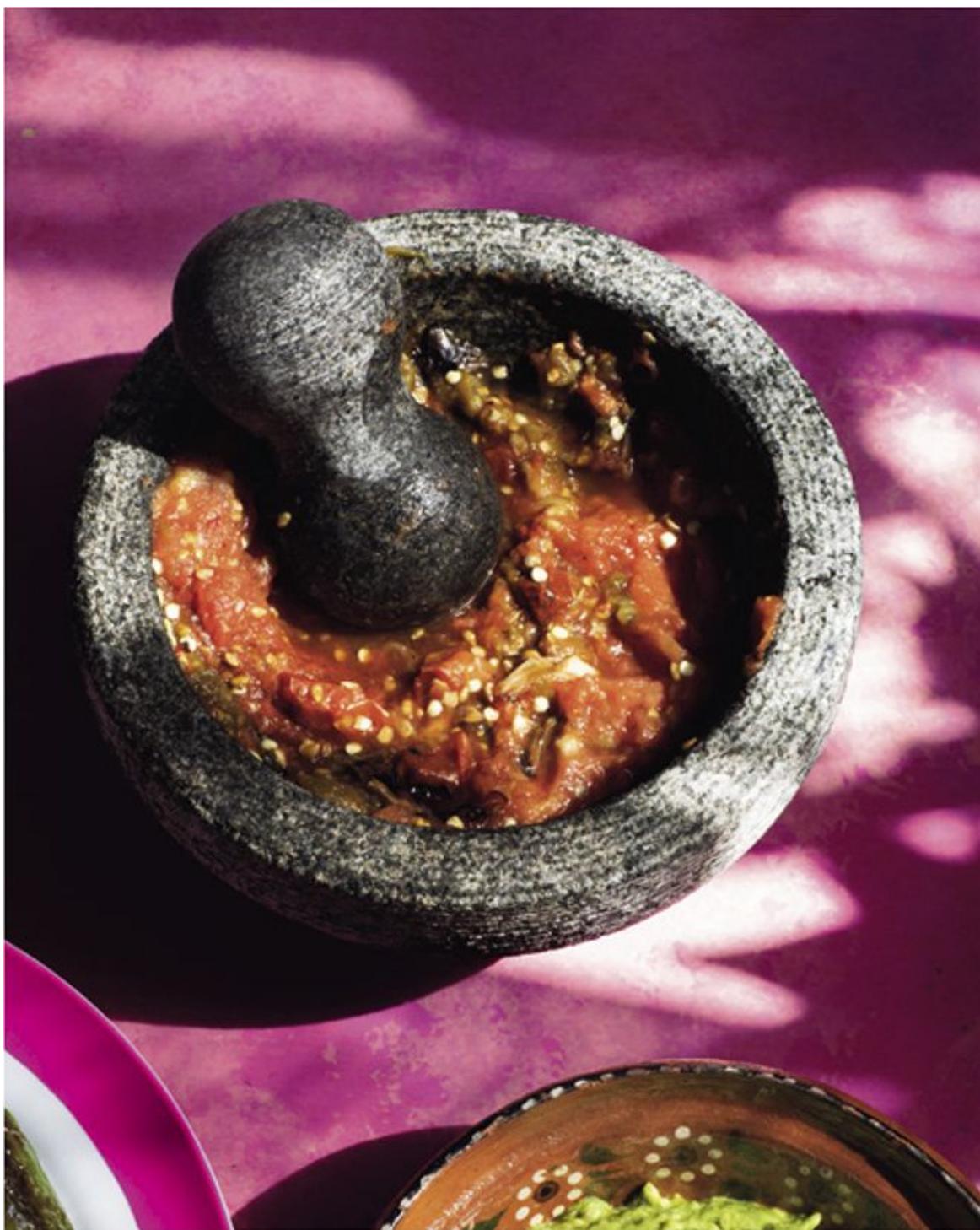
**1 tablespoon fresh lime juice**

In a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the tomatillos and ½ cup (120 ml) water and heat to boiling. Reduce the heat to medium, cover, and boil for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatillos have changed from a dark to a light green color. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a large pan over high heat. Add the onion and garlic, reduce the heat, and mix well. Sauté until the garlic and onion are golden brown, then

remove from the pan and reserve. Add the chiles to the pan and toast them for about 1 minute or until the color changes to a bright red. Remove from the pan and reserve. Add the grasshoppers and fry for another 5 minutes, until they appear to look slightly crispy.

In a blender, puree the tomatillos, chiles, and garlic and onion mixture along with the grasshoppers,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml) water, and the salt. Stir in the lime juice and taste for salt.



## Salsa de Molcajete

Fresh Salsa

This is a salsa that my mom busted out so effortlessly. She made it in 5 minutes, and it was always the most delicious salsa you've ever had. It goes really well spooned on top of a fried egg for breakfast, or on top of anything really. It is a simple salsa that is meant to be added to a simple dish. It tastes of Oaxaca. You can give the same four basic ingredients needed to make this salsa to ten different cooks from different towns and the results will all taste a little bit different, even if you watch them while they are making it. It just blows my mind. If possible, substitute big, meaty heirloom tomatoes because they make a better salsa. In Oaxaca, we use a local heirloom variety there called *tomates de riñon*.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (255 G)**

**10 Roma tomatoes (about 1.2 kg), sliced in half**

**½ onion (50 g), quartered**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**3 small jalapeño chiles, stems removed**

**Sea salt**

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting.

Arrange the tomatoes, onion, garlic, and jalapeños in a single layer in a roasting pan or a baking pan with a rim. Place underneath the broiler until the tomatoes are charred, about 4 minutes. Remove from the oven, flip all the vegetables over, and return to the broiler to char the other side as well, another 5 minutes. Be careful that the garlic cloves don't burn; remove them earlier if necessary.

Once all the vegetables are charred, place them in a molcajete or mini-chopper or food processor and mash until you get a nice, chunky texture. Add salt to taste and serve.



## Guacachile

Creamy Serrano Salsa

This is my favorite bar snack salsa. When I think of this salsa, I think of being in my favorite *centro botanero* in Oaxaca, an old-school bar named La Giralda. There, when you order your beer or michelada, they bring you taquitos and some of this salsa to dip them in, and it's absolutely perfect with a cold beer or michelada to add to the heat. Despite its name, it has nothing to do with avocado; it gets its creaminess from the oil that is used to fry the chiles. When you blend it, the oil emulsifies the chiles and it looks like a taqueria guacamole. But don't be deceived, it is some powerful stuff.

#### **MAKES ½ CUP (120 ML) OF EXTREMELY POTENT SALSA**

**3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**10 serrano chiles (100 g), stems removed**

**¼ cup (25 g) chopped white onion**

**1 clove garlic**

**1 tablespoon fresh lime juice**

**Sea salt**

Heat the oil in a medium pan over high heat. Once pan is hot, add the chiles and fry them for about 10 minutes. Make sure to move them around so that all sides of all the chiles get blistered and brown.

Once the chiles are brown on all sides and their color starts to change to a lighter green, transfer them to a blender and use a spatula to scrape all of the oil in there as well. Add the onion, garlic, 3 tablespoons of water, and the lime juice and blend until smooth. Salt to taste.

#### **Salsa Verde Cruda**

**Raw Green Salsa**

This raw salsa is what I crave when eating tacos, especially crunchy chorizo tacos on a scorching hot day, because it is somehow refreshing, despite its electric-like heat. My mouth waters just thinking about it. It is also one of the easiest salsa recipes you will find in this book. The reason why I have included so many salsas recipes is because I want you to always have options to whip up at a moment's

notice, depending on what you're in the mood for. And if you're in the mood for a refreshing, instant heat, you now know where to get that. There is no shame in cutting down on the amount of serrano; feel free to use only half. The flavor will still be there.

#### **MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (480 ML)**

**1 pound (455 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**¼ cup (10 g) minced, fresh cilantro**

**1 clove garlic, peeled**

**1 serrano chile, stems removed**

**Sea salt**

Place all of the ingredients in a blender and blend until the tomatillos are pureed and smooth. Salt to taste and serve.

#### **Salsa de Tomatillo**

Green Salsa

This is the table salsa that we use at the restaurant and it's so beautiful what you can achieve with just four ingredients. I hope this is one of the recipes that you do over and over again and always have in your fridge. You can pull it out when those unannounced guests come over, or you can spoon it over your scrambled egg tacos every morning. Look for Milpero tomatillos, the small purple-stained ones, because their flavor is tart and perfect.

#### **MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (480 ML)**

**1 pound (455 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**1 serrano chile, stem removed**

**¼ cup (35 g) chopped white onion**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**¼ cup (10 g) chopped fresh cilantro**

## **Sea salt**

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting.

Place the tomatillos, chile, and onion on a rimmed baking sheet on your broiler's highest rack and broil for 20 minutes, mixing the vegetables around at the 10-minute mark to make sure they are cooking evenly. The tomatillos should be lightly charred and change color to a light yellow. Add the garlic to the baking sheet and continue to broil for 5 minutes.

Transfer the broiled vegetables to a blender, add the cilantro and 2 tablespoons of water, and blend until smooth. Taste for salt and serve. This salsa will stay fresh in the refrigerator for a week.

## **Salsa Roja Básica**

### Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce

This salsa is very versatile and is the basis for a lot of recipes that my mom has made for me throughout my life. There are many variations of dishes that you can make with it. But after living in Los Angeles for so long and loving Italian food as much as I do, I can't help but compare it to marinara sauce. Of course, I wouldn't recommend having it with spaghetti but do pour it over your fried eggs, braise it with *chicharrón*, or stir it with fried tortillas for breakfast. My favorite *entomatadas* in Oaxaca are from a tiny place called Fonda Florecita because the heat is just right, which for me means spicy enough to make you realize they've got some chiles in them, but also not spicy enough to prevent you from eating a big pile of them in just a few minutes. Like with any other chile-based salsa, feel free to add or decrease the chile count. It's all good. This salsa is served hot.

**MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS (1.2 L)**

**3 pounds (1.4 kg) Roma tomatoes, quartered**

**½ cup (50 g) chopped white onion**

**2 cloves garlic**

**2 serrano chiles, stems removed**

**Sea salt**

### **1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

In a medium pot over medium heat, combine  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water, the tomatoes, onion, garlic, chiles, and salt to taste. Cook, covered, for 20 minutes. Transfer the cooked tomato mixture to a blender and blend until smooth.

In a skillet over medium heat, add the oil and carefully add the blended tomato mixture to the oil along another  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 ml) of water. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes and it's ready.

## **Salsa de Canela Botanera**

### **Savory Cinnamon Salsa**

My mom invented this salsa and it's really unique. It was a way to give a different flavor to our everyday tomato-based dipping salsa for the table at home. It was one of the only salsas that we ate with chips as a snack because of the strong cinnamon flavor. It goes to show you how Oaxaqueños will find a way to spice up even the simplest things. Serve it as a pre-game snack. It also goes great with a cold, dark Mexican beer.

### **MAKES 2 CUPS (480 ML)**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**4 chiles de árbol (4 g), stems and seeds removed**

**8 $\frac{3}{4}$  ounces (250 g) Roma tomatoes, stemmed and left whole**

**2 slivers (4 g) of a cinnamon stick**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**3 tablespoons finely chopped white onion**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (10 g) finely chopped fresh cilantro**

In a comal or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, dry-toast the garlic and chiles, mixing them well, for about 5 minutes.

Bring 1½ cups (360 ml) water to a simmer in a medium pot. Add the tomatoes and cinnamon and cook, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. Add the toasted chiles, cover, and continue cooking for another 10 minutes.

When the tomatoes have changed color and the chiles have softened, remove the tomatoes and chiles and let cool. Discard the cinnamon sticks and reserve ¼ cup (60 ml) of the cooking liquid. When the tomatoes are cool enough to handle, remove the skin with your fingers.

In a food processor, combine the skinned tomatoes, chiles, the reserved cooking liquid, garlic, and salt. Pulse until all of the ingredients are pureed and smooth.

Pour into a bowl and add the onion and cilantro. Serve with chips.

## **Chiles Toreados**

### **Seared Fresh Chiles**

There are certain dishes that I just can't eat without a side of fresh *chiles toreados*. It is as indispensable as a good salsa. Something magical happens when you get a pan really, really hot and drop a few jalapeños in there with a little lime and salt. Sometimes when I visit a restaurant and I don't like the salsa, I'll ask for these to be made. Because even though you may not have a good salsa, there will always be a fresh chile around to take a bite of.

**SERVES 2**

**¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil**

**4 jalapeño chiles**

**¼ cup (30 g) thinly sliced onion**

**2 tablespoons fresh lime juice**

**Sea salt**

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, carefully add the chiles and onion and fry until all sides of the chiles are golden brown and slightly crispy, about 4 minutes per side.

Remove the chiles and onions to a small bowl. Stir in the lime juice and sprinkle the salt over all. Serve immediately.



## Guacamole

The texture of our guacamole is very different from your average “table-side” guacamole at your favorite Mexican restaurant. It’s somewhere in between a runny taqueria guacamole, a chunky homemade one, and the super-bright sauce traditionally used for *aguachile*. Throughout Mexico, guacamoles are usually only served at restaurants that cater primarily to tourists. Obviously, everyone loves avocado, but in Oaxaca you have these thin-skinned, smaller aguacates criollos that you mostly eat in wedges with your food—never smashed. At Guelaguetza, we never did a chunky guacamole because it’s not what we grew up eating, but it does taste really good on top of anything with a base of crispy masa. To fit that need, we came up with this version, which seems to be at every other table on any given night.

**MAKES 2 CUPS (400 G)**

**6 tablespoons (90 ml) fresh lime juice**

**1 teaspoon sea salt**

**1 cup (40 g) fresh cilantro, chopped**

**1 serrano chile, stem removed**

**¼ teaspoon dried oregano**

**3 avocados, pitted and peeled**

In a blender, combine the lime juice, salt, cilantro, chile, and oregano and blend until smooth.

In a large mixing bowl, mash the avocados. Pour the lime juice mixture over the top and mix until everything is well combined. Serve with *totopos*.



## Cacahuates Botaneros

Oaxacan-Style Snacking Peanuts

When drinking around Oaxaca's old cantinas and bars, there will always be a bowl of these ultra-savory peanuts around to snack on and make you crave even more micheladas. They're garlicky, spicy, and just salty enough to turn into the perfect drinking snack when you squeeze a little lime juice over them. They're great to have on hand in case any unexpected guests come over, too, though chances are you'll probably finish them before they even arrive. For extra heat, add a bit of Valentina hot sauce on top, the preferred hot sauce for Mexican drinking snacks.

#### **MAKES ABOUT 3½ CUPS (525 G)**

**16 cloves garlic (50 g), peeled**

**1 pound (455 g) raw peanuts**

**5 chiles de arból (5 g), stems removed**

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

**2½ teaspoons sea salt**

**Mexican limes, halved, for serving**

In a large pot over medium heat, combine all of the ingredients and stir well. Cook, stirring frequently, until the peanuts and garlic are deeply but evenly toasted. This will take about 20 minutes. You'll know the peanuts are done when they turn deeply golden brown.

Wait until everything cools and serve with halved Mexican limes to squeeze over the top.

### **Salsa Borracha**

#### **Mezcal Salsa**

This simple salsa combines two of my favorite things: mezcal and chiles. It reminds me of the old *cantinas* or *centro botaneros* of Mexico, where the more booze you drink, the more (drinking snacks) magically show up to your table. While it is amazing simply with some fresh *totopos* and a michelada, this smoky salsa also hits the spot when spooned over juicy grilled meat or melted cheese on tortillas. Or, you can just take a shot of it on its own. As when using a cooking

wine to make a nice sauce for other cuisines, the mezcal you use doesn't have to be top-shelf but do make sure it is 100-percent agave.

### **MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS (360 ML)**

**1 pound (455 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**6 morita chiles (you may substitute with ½ ounce/12 g chipotle chiles), destemmed**

**2 cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar**

**2 tablespoons mezcal**

**2 bay leaves**

**Sea salt**

Preheat your oven's broiler to its highest setting.

Place the tomatillos on a baking sheet with a rim, on your broiler's highest rack, and broil for 20 minutes, mixing them around at the 10-minute mark to make sure all of the tomatillos are cooking evenly. The tomatillos should be lightly charred and change color to a light yellow. Set aside.

Meanwhile, in a comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat, toast the dried chiles and garlic until slightly charred and fragrant. This should take about 30 seconds for the chiles and about 5 minutes for the garlic.

Bring about a cup (240 ml) of water to a boil. Pour the boiling water into a bowl, add the toasted chiles, let them sit for about 20 minutes or until they are soft and tender. Drain and set aside.

In a blender, combine the reserved tomatillos, chiles, and garlic with the apple cider vinegar, mezcal, 2 tablespoons of water, and the bay leaves. Blend until smooth. Taste for salt and serve. This salsa will stay fresh in the refrigerator for a week.

**Chintextle**

## Dried Shrimp Salsa Paste

In Oaxaca, this is known as the poor man's—or woman's!—salsa. But believe me, there is nothing poor about its flavor. It uses only ground chiles and dried shrimp with no tomato or anything else. You can buy this salsa already made in little plastic bags by the ounce in any Oaxacan market, almost as if it were some sort of drug! You tear a hole in the bag and spread it in a tortilla to eat with a little cheese, and it is one of the best things you'll ever eat. (And it never goes bad.) It is really salty, though, so be careful. This is a simple flavor that I crave when I go to Oaxaca and it might just blow your mind. If you can't find chile pasilla Oaxaqueño, use regular pasillas or just one more guajillo chile.

**MAKES 1½ CUPS (ABOUT 340 G)**

**5 guajillo chiles (25 g)**

**4 morita chiles (40 g)**

**1 chile pasilla Oaxaqueño**

**8 cloves garlic (24 g), peeled**

**3 avocado leaves**

**1 ounce (30 g) dried shrimp**

**1½ teaspoons sea salt**

In a comal or dry skillet over medium heat, toast all three kinds of chiles, mixing well so the chiles get evenly toasted on all sides, about 2 minutes.

Bring 2 cups (480 ml) water to a boil in a small pot. Remove from the heat and add the toasted chiles. Let sit for 20 minutes, covered, or until the chiles are softened. Drain, reserving ½ cup (120 ml) of the soaking water.

In the same comal over medium heat, combine the garlic, avocado leaves, and dried shrimp. Toast for about 5 minutes, mixing well so all of the ingredients get evenly toasted.

In a food processor, combine the softened chiles and the toasted garlic, avocado leaves, and shrimp with the salt and start blending. Gradually add the reserved chile soaking water and keep processing for about 10 minutes. You may have to

use a spatula to scrape down the sides to make sure everything is evenly processed. Taste for salt and adjust as necessary. When the texture is a thick paste, it is ready to serve.

## **Salsa Roja de Morita**

### **Smoky Morita Salsa**

This is my go-to salsa to whip up if I want to impress somebody. I remember being at a friend's party and being so blown away by it that I grabbed an empty bottle and took some home with me because it was that amazing. It's a showstopper and once people taste it, they will think you are the best salsa maker in the world. The secret ingredient is the morita chile, which is a fiercer variation on a smoked jalapeño than a chipotle.

**MAKES 2 CUPS (480 ML)**

**6 morita chiles (12 g)**

**3 guajillo chiles (15 g), stems and seeds removed**

**6 cloves garlic (12 g), peeled**

**1 pound (455 g) tomatillos, husked and rinsed**

**Sea salt**

In a comal or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, combine both kinds of chiles with the garlic, mixing well, and toast the chiles for 30 seconds to a minute, and garlic for about 5 minutes.

In a medium pot over medium heat, combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) of water and the tomatillos. Cook for 15 minutes or until the tomatillos start to pop. The tomatillos will release a lot of liquid.

Meanwhile, bring 2 cups (480 ml) of water to a boil. Once boiling, turn off the heat and add the chiles. Let soak for 30 minutes. When softened, remove the chiles from the water and reserve their soaking liquid.

In a blender, combine the garlic, tomatillos, and, using a slotted spoon, the chiles. Blend in pulses until roughly smooth and add salt to taste.



## Salsa Macha

Peanut and Olive Oil Salsa

A lot of people take the power of a great salsa for granted. I get a lot of e-mails from people who want to open their own restaurant or business and my number one piece of advice to them is don't overcomplicate your menu. And to just make sure you have incredible salsas! The power of a salsa is sometimes bigger than your menu because you can't get away with having bad, watery salsas. This salsa macha is the perfect example of that. Many people taste this and are surprised that it is a basic Mexican salsa, because it has no tomatoes or fresh ingredients like other salsas, just oil and dried chiles. Because of the nuts, it's really crunchy, and the best part is that it lasts forever. Use whatever nuts you have on hand, it doesn't have to be peanuts. This salsa works great on top of any savory breakfast toast.

**MAKES 2 CUPS (470 ML)**

**1 cup (240 ml) olive oil**

**1 cup (240 ml) vegetable oil**

**½ cup (55 g) raw peanuts**

**12 morita chiles (you can substitute with chipotle) (25 g), stems removed**

**3 cloves garlic, peeled**

**2 tablespoons sesame seeds**

**Sea salt**

Add both oils to a pot over medium heat. When hot, add the peanuts, morita chiles, garlic, and sesame seeds. Stir until the peanuts start to turn brown, about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and let cool.

When the mixture has completely cooled, add the salsa mixture, complete with the oil, to a blender and blend until all the ingredients are semi-ground, about 1 minute or less. Salt to taste and serve.

This oil-based salsa will stay fresh in the refrigerator for a year.



NINE

# **MEZCAL COCKTAILS, AGUAS FRESCAS, AND OUR MICHELADA**

**I've known mezcal as long as I've been alive.**

**Ask any Oaxaqueño what mezcal means to them, and they will give a similar answer. They may have a family member who distills it or is involved with it in one way or another. My great-grandfather made mezcal, my grandfather made mezcal, all of my uncles make mezcal, and my father used to have a mezcal brand in Oaxaca as well. My family's life has always revolved around mezcal.**

**My dad had one of the first branded mezcal shops in Oaxaca in a little tourist town close to the city named El Tule, known as the home of the oldest tree in the world. My sister Paulina and I were responsible for the shop when my dad was out delivering mezcal. I remember how my dad would take the mezcal out of the barrels and transfer it into bottles using a cutoff water hose. He would suck on the hose and suck in the mezcal, and then he would let it go inside the bottles. I remember trying to do that once and mezcal came out of my nose and ears! That's when I first learned the power of mezcal.**

**It was baptism by fire—or, in this case, mezcal. My dad was one of the first people to introduce the spirit to Los Angeles in 1994. He sold it under the table to our customers at the restaurant. Back then, mezcal was viewed as the poor person's drink next to tequila. It was not nearly as popular as it is now.**

**I love introducing people to it, because it is part of who I am and it helps people understand where I come from. I think it is amusing when new mezcal brands come to me as vendors and try to sell me my culture in a bottle.**

**I think the conversation about mezcal today should be centered around the well-being of the people who produce it, the respect for agave as a plant, and the rest of the environment. I understand the economic benefits of it, but I would like to see more transparency in brands. Are they paying fair prices to their *mezcaleros*? Are they planting more agaves for the future? It's not about a brand when it comes to mezcal. It's about the people and the land**

**behind it. We need to appreciate them and the plants behind the mezcal—not the brands.**

**Mezcal is meant to bring joy and be used in times of celebration. Sip it, savor it, and kiss it, and make sure to take a moment to reflect on it, appreciate it, and understand it.**

**My mom made a different agua fresca for dinner every single day for us growing up. She would make one in a few minutes from any overripe fruit she had lying around the kitchen or any fruit that called out to her during her daily trip to the *mercado*. It's always a great idea to have a pitcher of it waiting in your fridge to drink, instead of reaching for soda (my son and niece are obsessed with Agua de Jamaica). An agua fresca is not a juice per se, but it's also not plain ol' flavored water. It's somewhere in between, and the point of it is to refresh you in between any hearty meals. A perfect aguas fresca will allow you to taste the fruit or ingredient that you're using, so adjust the sugar quantity to your liking.**



## Michelada de Pasilla

We've been serving our michelada since 2000 and it's been amazing to see it take on a life of its own, thanks to my brother Fernando. He even created a "MicheMobile" and installed a few michelada taps, a legit sound system, a big

monitor, and a DJ setup in an old Volkswagen bus. The flavor is inspired by our favorite bar in Oaxaca called La Giralda that makes what we think are the best micheladas in the world. When my brother and I are in Oaxaca, we love going there to kill an entire day just drinking and eating. Their food is a bonus and magically arrives after every round of drinks. The more you drink, the bigger the plates of food get. It's a good spot to chill for a few hours, drink, and have some hearty, homestyle grub. It is not fancy at all and that is its beauty.

Our brown michelada was inspired by theirs and it's extremely refreshing. It's the perfect drink for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon with friends or family. It's also the perfect brunch drink. It's perfect for a soccer game. It goes great with tacos or any dish that packs a punch. People eventually started coming to the restaurant just to buy the mix to bring to their family parties. We used to sell it to them in empty tequila bottles because nobody was selling michelada mixes back then. Now, you can find our mix on the shelves of stores all over the city or even order it online.

This recipe is not what you will find in our bottled michelada mix but a spin on it and something closer to what La Giralda has. Although, I don't think we will ever be able to replicate their amazing flavor.

## **MAKES 2 CUPS OF MIX, ENOUGH FOR 5 MICHELADAS**

**2 pasilla chiles, stems removed, seeded and toasted**

**¾ cup (180 ml) tomato juice**

**5 ounces (150 ml) orange juice**

**¼ cup (60 ml) lime juice**

**1½ tablespoons sugar**

**1 tablespoon sea salt**

**½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**¼ cup (60 ml) Worcestershire sauce**

**Tajin for rimming**

Fill a small saucepan with enough water to cover the chiles and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the chiles to the hot water, cover, and allow them to soften and get tender for about 20 to 30 minutes.

Remove the chiles from the hot water. Allow to cool and come to room temperature. Add chiles and the rest of the ingredients (minus the tajin and beer) to a blender and blend everything until smooth.

Rim a cold beer glass with tajin. Pour in about 3 ounces of the mix and then 16 ounces of cold lager to combine. Serve cold.





## **La Santa**

**2 hoja santa leaves**

**4 slices green apple**

**1 ounce (30 ml) fresh lime juice**

**1 ounce (30 ml) pineapple juice**

**1 ounce (30 ml) Licor 43**

**2 ounces (60 ml) mezcal**

Muddle the hoja santa and green apple in a tumbler. Pour in the rest of the ingredients and shake all the ingredients together in the same glass.

Strain, serve over ice, and use a hoja santa leaf as garnish. Makes 1 cocktail.

## **Sal de Chile**

Dried Chile Salt

**1 puya chile, stems and seeds removed**

**1 guajillo chile, stems and seeds removed**

**1¾ tablespoons sea salt**

Heat a comal or dry skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the chiles and toast on each side for a minute or two until aromatic.

In a molcajete or mini-chopper or food processor, grind the toasted chiles until finely ground. Mix with the salt and it is ready to rim a glass. Makes enough to rim 12 glasses.



## **Garra de Tigre**

This cocktail was invented by my uncle Abel Lopez in Oaxaca. I consider it the original mezcal margarita. He produces mezcal and has a few brands. He wanted to create something different from the Donaji, which was the first mezcal cocktail.

ever made. It is blended with ice and extremely refreshing. We started selling it in the restaurant and it has become a customer favorite. The kicker is the spicy salt.

## **MAKES 1 COCKTAIL**

**1 cup (240 ml) ice**

**2 tablespoons (30 ml) simple syrup**

**2 ounces (60 ml) fresh lime juice**

**2 ounces (60 ml) mezcal**

## **FOR THE GARNISH**

**1 lime, halved**

**½ teaspoon chile salt (¼ teaspoon chile powder mixed with 2 tablespoons of a chunky salt)**

Rub the rim of wide-rimmed cocktail glass with the halved lime. Dip the rim into the chile salt mixture to evenly coat. Set aside.

Pour the ice, simple syrup, lime juice, and mezcal into a blender. Blend until smooth and icy. Pour the drink into the glass. Bottoms up.

## **Flor de Piña**

**2 ounces (60 ml) pineapple juice**

**1 ounce (30 ml) honey**

**4 ounces (120 ml) coconut water**

**2 ounces (60 ml) mezcal**

**½ ounce (15 ml) Bénédictine liqueur**

Combine all the ingredients in a mixing tin and shake with ice. Strain into a chilled glass over ice. Makes 1 cocktail.



## Margarita Guelaguetza

**3 slices cucumber**

**1 ounce (30 ml) melon liqueur**

**1 ounce (30 ml) Triple Sec**

**½ ounce (15 ml) limoncello**

**2 ounces (60 ml) mezcal reposado**

**1 ounce (30 ml) fresh lime juice**

**1 ounce (30 ml) simple syrup**

#### **FOR THE GARNISH**

**Sal de chile ([this page](#))**

Rim a cocktail glass with sal de chile. Add the cucumbers to the glass and muddle until the cucumbers have fallen apart.

In a shaker, combine the lime juice, simple syrup, Triple Sec, melon liqueur, limoncello, and mezcal with ice.

Shake and pour over ice. Makes 1 cocktail.



## **Donaji**

**2 ounces (60 ml) mezcal reposado**

**4 ounces (120 ml) orange juice**

**Splash of grenadine**

**For the garnish:**

**Sal de chile ([this page](#))**

Combine mezcal and orange juice in a mixing tin and shake with ice.

Coat the rim of a cocktail glass with sal de chile.

Serve in a cocktail glass over ice and splash with grenadine. Makes 1 cocktail.





## Pasión de Oaxaca

**1 ounce (30 ml) grapefruit juice**

**1 ounce (30 ml) passionfruit concentrate**

**1 ounce (30 ml) mango puree (¼ cup frozen or fresh mango chunks blended smooth with 1 ounce simple syrup)**

**½ ounce (15 ml) simple syrup**

**½ ounce (15 ml) triple sec**

**1 ounce (30 ml) mezcal**

**1 ounce (30 ml) tequila**

#### **FOR THE GARNISH**

**Tajin**

Combine all the ingredients in a mixing tin and shake with ice. Dip the rim of a cocktail glass in tajin. Serve the cocktail over ice. Makes 1 cocktail.



## Horchata de Oaxaca

Toasted Rice Water

Our *horchata* is inspired by the one created and still served at the Mercado 20 de Noviembre in Oaxaca City. In the middle of the market there is an area where all they sell are aguas frescas and nieves (Mexican-style ice cream). Even on your busiest of days, it's part of daily life in Oaxaca to buy an agua or a nieve and take a moment to just sit, people-watch, and enjoy life along with it. This recipe is an ode to Doña Casilda. She founded the popular booth in the mercado that specializes in aguas frescas. She is also known as the lady who, in 1890, invented this Oaxacan variation of Mexico's most famous agua fresca, with a splash of red cactus fruit syrup, toasted walnuts, and sliced ripe cantaloupe. It is naturally dairy free. The key to this horchata recipe is getting the most aromatic jasmine rice you can find, toasting it, soaking it, and passing it through a double-fine-mesh strainer a couple of times and then finally passing it through cheesecloth to get that delicious milky texture.

#### SERVES 4

**1 cup (95 g) white jasmine rice**

**1-inch (2.5 cm) piece of cinnamon stick**

**6 cups (1.3 L) room-temperature filtered water**

**¼ cup (50 g) cane sugar**

**1 cup (160 g) chopped ripe cantaloupe**

**½ cup (60 grams) pecans, chopped**

**¼ cup (120 ml) fresh red tuna (prickly pear) juice or blended fruit + ½ cup of water, passed through a mesh strainer (optional; see Note)**

In a large skillet under low-medium heat, add the rice and toast, while stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 4 minutes. Let cool.

Soak the rice and cinnamon stick in 1 cup (120 ml) of the water for 2 hours. Once softened, grind the rice mixture on your blender's highest setting for at least 2 minutes until consistently smooth. In a large pitcher, combine the remaining 5 cups (1.2 L) of water with the sugar and stir until the sugar fully dissolves.

Strain the blended rice mixture through a cheesecloth or double-fine-mesh strainer into the pitcher and stir.

Serve over ice, top with the chopped cantaloupe and pecans, and drizzle a bit of prickly pear syrup on top.

#### NOTE

**Prickly pears grow abundantly in Oaxaca and give the regional variation of this agua fresca its opaque pink hue. If not available near you, you can juice or blend fresh strawberries with a bit of water, pass that through a mesh strainer, and use this base to get this color as well.**

### **Agua de Limón con Chia**

Limeade with Chia Seeds

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

**4½ cups (2 L) filtered water**

**½ cup (120 ml) freshly squeezed lime juice**

**1 tablespoon chia seeds**

Mix the filtered water and sugar in a large pitcher and stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Add the lime juice and mix.

Soak the chia seeds in the 1 cup (240 ml) of water, stirring until they have doubled in size, about 20 minutes. Pour the seeds and their soaking liquid into the limeade. Chill before serving.

#### **SERVES 6**

### **Agua de Hierba de Limón con Piña**

Lime Leaf Water with Pineapple

My parents have always had a do-it-yourself style and when it comes to food, grow-it-yourself. Their garden in our home in Mitla is the stuff of fairy tales, with fruit trees, an avocado tree, tomatoes, herbs, and a lime tree. My mom blends the lime tree leaves to add a subtle lime flavor to this agua fresca. The flavor mimics that of lime zest without the work of zesting every lime. Make sure you use fresh lime leaves and use a very fine double-mesh strainer, add the remaining water.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

**5 lime leaves**

**3 cups (495 g) ripe, fresh pineapple chunks**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

**8 cups (2 L) filtered water**

In a blender, combine the lime leaves, sugar, and half of the water. Blend until smooth. Pass through a fine-mesh strainer, add the remaining water, and serve over ice.



## Agua de Chilacayota

Candied Squash Water

This is a staple drink to have while perusing the aisles in Oaxaca's vibrant markets. Chilacayota is a big green squash with white speckles that has a fibrous texture, and when it is made into an agua fresca, it is almost like having a dessert in a cup. I consider this drink the mole of aguas frescas, because of its complexity and satisfaction. Unlike many other aguas frescas that can be found all over Mexico, agua de chilacayota can only be found in Oaxaca. Think pumpkin spice, chai, and caramel when it comes to chilacayota's cooked flavor. When it's served to you in markets, having a long spoon is a must, as the experience demands that you chew on the tender flesh and sip at the same time. I also love chewing into the seeds as I go (similar to chewing on sunflower seeds).

## SERVES 8

**1 chilacayota squash (about 6 pounds/2.7 kg), quartered**

**8½ cups (2.1 L) filtered water**

**8 key limes, zested**

## FOR THE PILONCILLO SYRUP

**1½ pounds (700 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined brown sugar)**

**2 cinnamon sticks**

**2 cups (480 ml) filtered water**

Place the sliced squash in a deep pot and cover with enough tap water to completely submerge all pieces of the squash. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer and let the squash cook for 45 minutes or until the peel has softened. After the squash has softened and the squash fibers are starting to shred on their own, turn off the heat and allow the squash mixture to cool completely.

## MAKE THE PILONCILLO SYRUP

Boil the piloncillo and cinnamon with the water until the sugar has completely dissolved and the liquid has started to thicken, about 10 minutes.

Once the squash is cool to the touch, remove it from the water, dispose of the cooking liquid, and scrape the fibrous insides of the squash with a spoon to get all the meat out. Dispose of the peel. Continue to shred the flesh with your hands

until all of the fibrous tissue has been pulled apart. (It should have a texture similar to a spaghetti squash).

Combine the fibrous tissue, syrup, zest, and the zested whole limes in a pitcher and stir in the filtered water. Serve over ice and enjoy with a tall spoon.

#### NOTE

**The limes are there to infuse flavor, not to eat whole.**

### **Agua de Jamaica**

Hibiscus Water

**1½ ounces (40 g) dried hibiscus flowers**

**1 sliver of cinnamon stick**

**1-inch (25 cm) piece of fresh ginger, peeled**

**8 cups (2 L) filtered water**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

In a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat, bring the hibiscus flowers, 1½ cups (360 ml) tap water, cinnamon, and ginger to a simmer. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Remove from the heat and allow to steep for 10 minutes. Pass through a double-mesh strainer and into a pitcher with the 8 cups (2 L) of filtered water. When straining, apply pressure to the hibiscus leaves so you get every last little bit of juice.

While the water is still lukewarm, add the sugar and mix well until mostly dissolved. Serve over ice.

### **SERVES 4 TO 6**

### **Agua de Tamarindo**

Tamarind Water

Tamarind is a way of life in every Mexican child's life. Its tart flavor is one of the first we experience as children, because it flavors so many candies. It's usually layered with a spicy chile powder and probably explains why we can handle our spicy food. There are tamarind-chile *paletas*, tamarind-chile *raspados* (shaved ice), and sweetened tamarind balls coated in chile powder. Agua de tamarindo is another popular way we consume this fruit. It's what we crave on a hot summer day in Oaxaca, no matter how old we are. I often judge a Mexican restaurant by its agua de tamarindo. It's a great way to gauge how serious they take those small details we often take for granted as restaurateurs. Don't ever trust a place that uses syrups or doesn't go above and beyond to make their agua de tamarindo from scratch. You can find quality tamarind pods or pulp at many Latino, Asian, or Indian markets.

## SERVES 4

**1 cup (100 g) tamarind paste**

**2 tablespoons (25 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined sugar)**

**8 cups (2 L) filtered water**

**½ cup (100 g) white sugar**

In a 2-quart (2-L) saucepan over medium heat, combine 2 cups (480 ml) of tap water, the tamarind paste, and piloncillo. Cook for 20 minutes until the pulp around the seeds starts to soften and the fruity flesh is tender. Allow to cool.

Once cool enough to put your hands in the water, break up any clumps in the pulp. Pass this tamarind concentrate through a double-mesh strainer into a pitcher. Add the filtered water and the white sugar. Stir well and serve over ice.



## **Agua de Pepino**

Cucumber Water

**8 cups (2 L) filtered water**

**1½ cucumbers (1 pound/455 g), skin on**

**¼ cup (13 g) fresh mint**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

**¼ cup (60 ml) freshly squeezed lime juice**

Pour 4 cups (1 L) of the water into a blender with the cucumbers, mint, sugar, and lime juice. Blend until smooth and pour through a double-mesh strainer. Add the rest of the water and mix well. Serve over ice.

**SERVES 6**



## Sparkling Limonada

Sparkling Limeade

This bubbly agua fresca brings back memories of chilling in Oaxaca's zocalo, the main square, on a hot day. The zocalo can be a very touristy area, but it is also a meet-up spot for locals to just go and chill. The cafés around this part of town usually offer international things like club sandwiches and grilled chicken breast. However, one very Oaxacan offering that you will find is this sparkling limonada, which goes well with any type of dish. It also hits the spot if you are trying to avoid alcohol for any reason.

**SERVES 4**

**3 cups (720 ml) filtered water**

**2 tablespoons sugar**

**½ cup (120 ml) freshly squeezed lime juice**

**1 (12-ounce/360 ml) bottle sparkling water**

In a pitcher, mix the filtered water and sugar and stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Add the lime juice and mix.

When ready to serve, add the sparkling water.

Serve over ice.



## **Agua de Sandía**

Watermelon Water

**4½ cups (675 g) seedless watermelon cubes**

**8 cups (2 L) filtered water**

**¼ cup (50 g) sugar**

Add all of the ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth. Pass through a double-mesh strainer. Serve chilled.

**SERVES 6**

## **Agua de Melón**

Cantaloupe Water

**4 cups (640 g) sliced and seeded cantaloupe**

**3 cups (960 ml) filtered water**

**2 tablespoons sugar**

Combine all of the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Pass through a fine-mesh sieve and serve over ice.

**SERVES 4**



## Chocolate de Agua

Oaxacan-Style Drinking Chocolate

Chocolate is as important to Oaxaca as mole. You can't have one without the other. Chocolate is a way of life, and it is something you drink every single day because it traditionally uses water instead of milk. During the Day of the Dead celebrations, chocolate is on every single altar in Oaxaca. In my mom's hometown of Mitla, when somebody dies, it is tradition to bring their surviving family cacao beans at the wake as an offering. When you go to a wedding or baptism, the first thing they greet you with is a cup of chocolate and *pan dulce*. It's not your regular hot chocolate and it is definitely not Abuelita's brand chocolate, which is not even real chocolate to begin with. I highly recommend that you take the time to seek a true Mexican chocolate made with real stoneground cacao beans that actually tastes a little bitter. Always look at the ingredient label to make sure you're not just buying chocolate-flavored tablets as opposed to ground-up cacao. Real Mexican chocolate is usually a little more expensive. We sell Villa Real in our online shop.

## SERVES 4

### TIP

**The water can be substituted with milk if you prefer a richer drinking chocolate.**

### **5¼ ounces (150 g) Mexican chocolate**

In a large saucepan, bring 4 cups (1 L) of water (see Tip) to a boil. Right before it boils, add the brick of chocolate and turn off the heat.

Using a molinillo or whisk, mash the chocolate as best as you can until it dissolves and then whisk until frothy.



TOP LEFT: Atole de Fresa; TOP RIGHT: Atole de Coco; BOTTOM LEFT: Chocolate de Agua; BOTTOM RIGHT: Champurrado



## Atoles

Atole is one of the most pure and wholesome beverages in all of Mexico. It is purity in the form of water and corn. There is something about sipping a steamy, thick beverage that hasn't changed for thousands of years that makes you reflect

on the beauty in simplicity. It soothes you in the early morning when it's still a little cold out, or late at night before going to bed. It warms you up from the inside out in a way that no jacket or blanket can. You can build on the atole base with strawberries, chocolate (*champurrado*), piloncillo, guava, coconut, or anything else you want to get creative with. I've recently been changing up my morning routine and making atole with a shot of espresso to include this beautiful beverage in my everyday life in Los Angeles.

## NOTE

**Pan de yema and atole are a classic pairing for breakfast or for a comforting late-night snack.**

## Champurrado

Hot Chocolate Masa Drink

**8¾ ounces (250 g) dried corn kernels**

**4½ ounces (130 g) Mexican chocolate**

**½ cup (100 g) sugar**

In a large pan of any kind over medium heat, toast the dried corn until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove and set aside.

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, add the toasted corn and enough water to completely submerge it by 2 inches (5 cm). Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then cook, covered, for 30 minutes or until the corn kernels are al dente.

Remove the pot from the heat and allow the corn to continue to soak and cool for a couple of hours, or overnight. Once the liquid is back to room temperature, pour the corn into a colander and discard the water.

Put the corn kernels and 3 cups (720 ml) of water in a blender and blend until smooth. Pass the corn puree through a double-mesh strainer and into a bowl. Return the corn grits to the blender through a strainer with 2 cups (480 ml) of water. Blend again until smooth.

Pour the masa water into a large pot through a strainer once more over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, so the champurrado does not stick to the bottom of the pan. The stirring is very important because if the champurrado sticks to the bottom, it will be burnt.

Once the champurrado has thickened to the texture of heavy cream, add 5 cups (1.2 L) of water, the brick of chocolate, and the sugar. Continue to stir and simmer the atole for another 10 minutes or until the chocolate has dissolved. Serve hot. Makes 8 cups (2 L).

## **Atole de Fresa**

Hot Strawberry Masa Drink

**3 cups (450 g) ripe strawberries, hulled and cut in half**

**2 cups (400 g) sugar**

**1 cinnamon stick**

**8¾ ounces (250 g) dried corn kernels**

**1 (24-ounce) can evaporated milk**

In a 2-quart (2-L) saucepan over medium heat, simmer the strawberries, sugar, and cinnamon stick until the strawberries have cooked down, about 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and set aside.

In a large pan of any kind over medium heat, toast the dried corn until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

Put the toasted corn in a large heavy-bottomed pot with enough water to completely submerge the corn by 2 inches (5 cm). Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then cook, covered, for 30 minutes or until the corn kernels are al dente.

Remove the pot from the heat and allow the corn to continue to soak and cool for a couple of hours, or overnight. Once the liquid is back to room temperature, pour the corn into a colander and discard the water.

Put the corn kernels and 3 cups (720 ml) of water in a blender and blend until smooth. Pass the mixture through a double-mesh strainer into a bowl. Return the corn grits to the blender through a strainer with 2 cups (480 ml) of water. Blend again until smooth.

Pour the masa water from the blender into a large pot through a strainer over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, so the atole does not stick to the bottom of the pan. The stirring is very important because if the atole sticks to the bottom, it will be burnt.

Once the atole has thickened to the texture of heavy cream, add 5 cups (1.2 L) of water, the evaporated milk, and cooked strawberries. Continue to stir and simmer the atole for another 10 minutes. Serve hot. Makes 8 cups (2 L).





## Café de Olla

A fair warning: once you start adding cinnamon and piloncillo to your coffee, it's hard to go back to your regular pot without cinnamon ever again. *De olla* means "clay pot," referring to the original vessel used to brew this coffee, and that's the

inspiration for the warm flavors of this coffee. It warms you right up at first sip, and the deep sweetness complements *chilaquiles* and *pan dulce* equally. If you don't have a sweet tooth, reduce the amount of sugar by half.

## SERVES 8

**1 (4-inch) cinnamon stick**

**½ cup (110 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined brown sugar)**

**4 tablespoons (35 g) dark-roast ground coffee**

In large saucepan, combine 8 cups (2 L) of water, the cinnamon stick, and piloncillo. Cover and bring to a boil.

Once the piloncillo has dissolved and the water is boiling, add the ground coffee and remove from the heat. Allow to steep for 10 minutes. Pass through a double-mesh strainer and serve. With milk, if you'd like.

## Atole de Arroz

Hot Rice Drink

Despite how busy life got for my family growing up, my mom always found time to cook all of us a full meal composed of a main course, a salad, an agua fresca, and a dessert—even if that dessert was sometimes a simple atole like this one. Think of this atole de arroz as a hot rice pudding. Because the rice is blended, it has a really fun, thick, and smooth texture. The cinnamon in it makes it even more delicious on a cold day.

## SERVES 8

**½ cup (100 g) white rice**

**¾ cup (150 g) sugar**

**2 (5-ounce/140-ml) cans evaporated milk**

**¼ teaspoon vanilla extract**

#### **¼ cinnamon stick**

In a large mixing bowl, combine the rice and 2 cups (480 ml) of water. Let soak for 2 hours. Drain the soaked riced, discarding the water.

In a blender, combine the soaked rice and 1 cup (240 ml) of water. Blend well until the rice is completely ground, about 3 minutes. Pass the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve to remove the solids. Reserve this rice mixture.

In a 4-quart (3.8 L) saucepan, bring 6 cups (1.4 L) of water to a boil. Add the rice mixture, sugar, evaporated milk, vanilla, and cinnamon stick. Lower the heat to a simmer and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Make sure to continually stir so the mixture does not form clumps or stick to the sides. Serve hot.

### **Atole Blanco**

Unsweetened Masa Drink

**1 pound (455 grams) white field corn**

**Sugar, to serve**

In a large pan of any kind over medium heat, toast the dried corn until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

Put the toasted corn in a large heavy-bottomed pot with enough water to completely submerge the corn by 2 inches (5 cm). Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then cook, covered, for 30 minutes or until the corn kernels are al dente. Remove the corn from the heat and allow to cool for a couple of hours, or overnight.

Once the liquid is back to room temperature, pour the corn into a colander and discard the water. Put the corn kernels and 3 cups (720 ml) of water in a blender and blend until smooth, at least a few minutes. Pass the mixture through a double-mesh strainer into a bowl.

Return the corn grits to the blender through the strainer with 2 cups (480 ml) of water. Blend again until smooth.

Pour this masa water through a strainer one more time into a large pot over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, so the atole does

not stick to the bottom of the pan. The stirring is very important, because if the atole sticks to the bottom, it will be burnt.

Once the atole has thickened to the texture of heavy cream, add 8 cups (1.2 L) of water. Continue to stir until the atole simmers for 10 minutes.

Serve hot and with sugar on the side, so guests can sweeten to their liking.

## **SERVES 8**

### **Atole de Coco**

#### **Hot Coconut Masa Drink**

Oaxaca transforms into a festive oasis during the holidays. The streets are decked with bright, multicolored lights. The *zocalo*, an open public space in the center of town, becomes the place to be and people-watch. During this season, you'll also find many street vendors offering freshly piped churros, sizzling hotcakes, tamales, and, of course, atole. Nothing beats slowly sipping on a warm cup of this silky corn drink while strolling down the *zocalo* with your loved ones. On cold nights in Oaxaca when I would walk around the *zocalo* with my mother, I remember how much I looked forward to walking up to the atole stand. The women always had a huge tub of plain white atole and a flavored surprise atole that rotated every night. If I was lucky, it would be atole de coco. Since then, the nutty, sweet aromas of both the coconut and the corn will forever have a special place in my heart. As with every other recipe in this book, make sure you opt for quality field corn and coconut flakes you trust.

#### **MAKES 8 CUPS (2 L)**

**8¾ ounces (250 g) dried corn kernels**

**2 cups (170 g) sweetened coconut flakes**

**½ cup (100 g) sugar**

**1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk**

In a large pan of any kind over medium heat, toast the dried corn until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

Put the toasted corn in a large heavy-bottomed pot with enough water to completely submerge the corn by 2 inches (5 cm). Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then cook, covered, for 30 minutes or until the corn kernels are al dente.

Remove the corn from the heat and allow the corn to continue to soak and cool for a couple of hours, or overnight. Once the liquid is back to room temperature, pour the corn into a colander and discard the water.

Put the corn kernels and 3 cups (720 ml) of water in a blender and blend until smooth. Pass the mixture through a double-mesh strainer into a bowl. Return the corn grits in the strainer to the blender with 2 cups (480 ml) of water. Blend again until smooth.

Pour this masa water one more time into a large pot over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, so the atole does not stick to the bottom of the pan. The stirring is very important because if the atole sticks to the bottom, it will be burnt.

Once the atole has thickened to the texture of heavy cream, add 5 cups (1.2 L) of water, the coconut flakes, sugar, and evaporated milk. Continue to stir and simmer the atole for another 10 minutes. Serve hot.



## Ponche Navideño

Hot Christmas Punch

This hot fruit punch, traditionally enjoyed over the holiday season throughout Mexico, is a testament to the power of food and memory. Every time I smell or sip *ponche*, I can't help but think of the time my cousin lit up a loud firecracker inside our tiny old house in Oaxaca! That Christmas was one of the last times we had a genuine Christmas in Oaxaca with the entire family. When we got to the United States, our holidays went by really quickly because everyone was always working at the restaurant and all of our family lived back in Oaxaca. This version is packed with lots of fruit and sugar cane because chewing on it is my favorite part. This punch resonates with love, family, and memories.

## SERVES 8

**½ cup (110 g) piloncillo (Mexican-style unrefined brown sugar)**

**¼ cinnamon stick**

**⅓ cup (10 g) dried hibiscus flowers**

**1 ounce (30 g) tamarind, seeds and skin removed**

**1 cup (170 g) cubed apple**

**½ cup (100 g) cubed fresh quince**

**1 cup (100 g) peeled and cored tejocotes**

**¼ cup (30 g) raisins**

**½ cup (65 g) pitted prunes**

**6 ounces (175 g) fresh sugar cane, cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces**

**⅔ cup (100 g) cubed fresh guava**

**½ cup (100 g) granulated sugar**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, combine the piloncillo, cinnamon stick, and 3 quarts (2.8 L) of water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer and add the hibiscus, tamarind, apple, quince, tejocotes, raisins, prunes, and sugar cane. Simmer, covered, for another 20 minutes.

Stir in the guava and granulated sugar and turn off the heat. Serve very hot.

## ***MEET THE FAMILY***

### **FERNANDO MARCOS LOPEZ**

I consider myself lucky to have been born in Oaxaca, the second poorest state in Mexico, and to live in an amazing city like Los Angeles. Growing up, I always thought my family business was a burden. I knew it only as the place where I had to go after school to help my sisters clean tables and fold napkins. But as I grew, I learned to see it as an outlet for my creativity, a community hub where we can bring people together and create something greater than ourselves. It is the place where I can take an idea like a Mexican beer cocktail mix and turn it into a business where I can create cultural impact. I lead our “I Love Micheladas” brand, where I strive to create a new blend of Mexican and L.A. culture through our products, events, and community-building efforts. This is what Oaxacan culture is all about: creating something meaningful from what we’ve been given by those before us.

### **ELIZABETH LOPEZ**

“We’re better together because if one of us wins, the entire family wins.” My father instilled that belief in me as I was becoming an adult and it has stayed with me. Because I’m the youngest, I feel like I never have worked at the same capacity as my siblings. Now, I’m the sole proprietor of our catering business and I’m happy to pay my dues. It’s all about continuing my family’s legacy and building that generational wealth in the United States for the next generation of Latinos.

### **PAULINA LOPEZ**

Being Oaxacan and sharing my culture is the only thing I know how to do. I’m so proud of who I am and the family that I come from that I don’t know any other way of being. I also think about my children and how I can help them hang on to their roots as much as possible. As the oldest of my siblings, the well-being of them and my parents mean so much to me. Ever

since I was a little girl, I always looked out for my brother and sisters, and this motherly instinct has only grown as my parents have moved back to Oaxaca. I feel like I'm the mother to my siblings and I'm the one who keeps it real with my parents. At the restaurant, as the CFO, I'm the same way with our team. I make sure they have everything they need and have opportunities to grow within the company. Guelaguetza has become one big family. We look out for each other and there is no better feeling than to change people's lives in that way.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

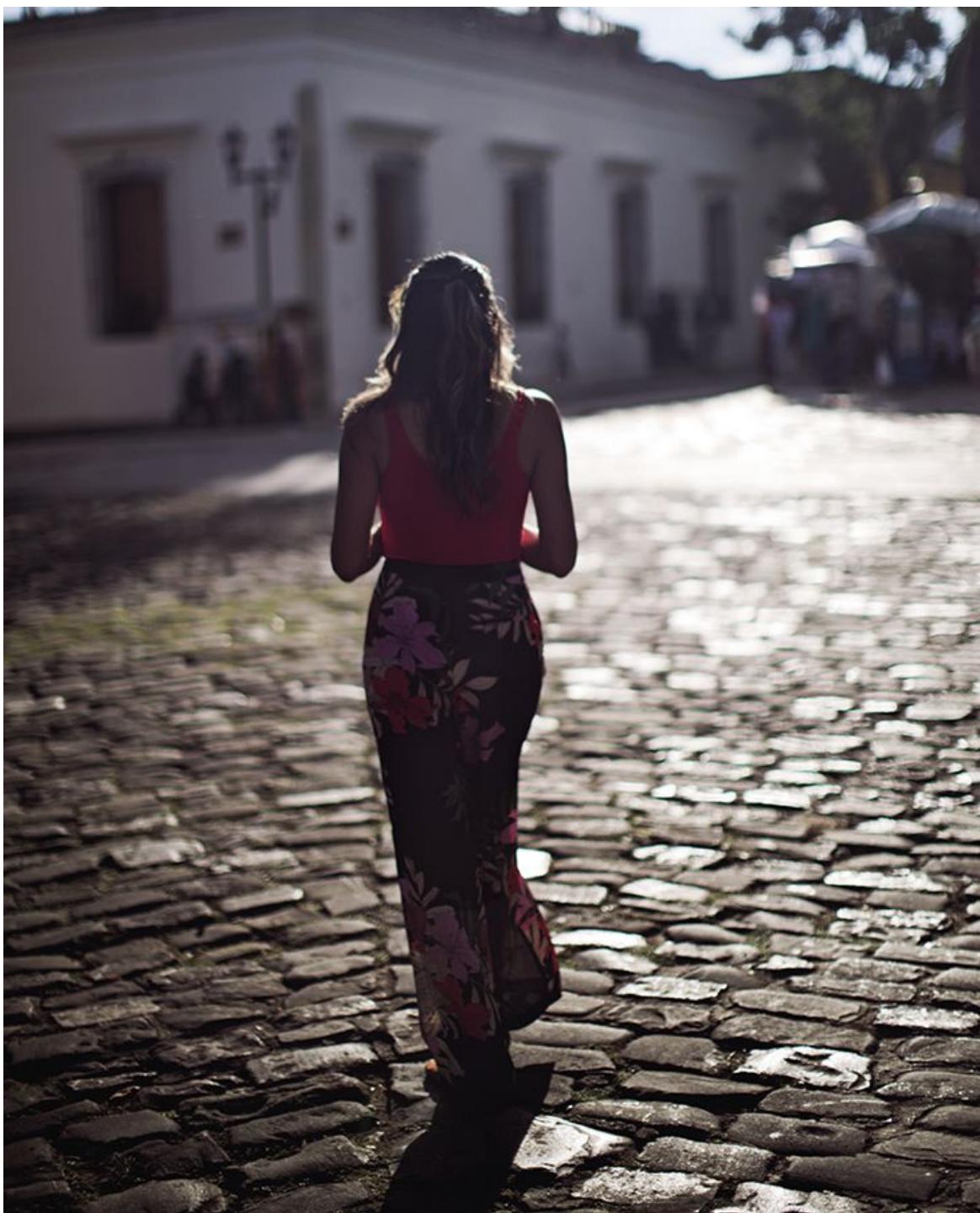
### **BRICIA LOPEZ**

has been dubbed “L.A.’s Oaxacan Princess” by Jonathan Gold. She is the co-proprietor of Guelaguetza along with the rest of her siblings. In 2015, her restaurant received a James Beard Award in the “America’s Classics” category. She is a proud mother, a loving wife, and a home cook outside of her daily duties as a girl boss at Guelaguetza. She is the co-founder of Super Mamas, an online podcast and platform for Latina mothers. In 2016, she received the Cul tural Ambassador award from the *Los Angeles Times*. Born and raised in Mitla, Oaxaca, Bricia’s upbringing was rich in culinary traditions and indigenous food culture. She grew up in Oaxaca alongside her mother, brother, and two sisters. She learned the ins and outs of mole and artisanal cooking as a child. Her father founded Guelaguetza in 1994, and it has become a temple to Oaxacan food and culture in the city of Los Angeles.

### **JAVIER CABRAL**

is a writer from the streets of East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley who became completely obsessed as a teenager with the things we eat and drink. He published his first article on Mexican American holiday food traditions at the age of sixteen, and his first cover story about the cuisine of Zacatecas, Mexico, for *Saveur* magazine at twenty-one. He was a trusted restaurant scout for Jonathan Gold and was the former West Coast staff writer for *Vice Munchies*. He has been published in *Lucky Peach*, *Food & Wine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and more than a dozen other publications. At twenty-nine years old, he published his first starred restaurant review for *LA Weekly*. He is the associate producer for *Las Crónicas del Taco* on Netflix. He currently lives in Los Angeles with his *pata salada* wife and Old English Sheepdog, Fig.

- ~~8-17-61. Cuando se servio su  
palabria de Poficio~~
- ~~8-17-61. Cuando se sirvió su Palabria  
al Sr José Aragón. Hijo Guadalupe en  
efecto. 50.00 dueño de la fiesta  
un comidón para 2 personas~~
- ~~8-17-61. Trajo Rafaél Méndez y con  
impuesto 10.00 y 5% de pago de  
Pan cada uno~~
- ~~8-18-61. Se Juan Matizco trajo.  
Trajo 1 medida de mezcal  
una taza 3.00 Pan cada~~
- ~~20- Trajo 1 Raya cocido Jr.~~
- ~~21- 11 1 botella de 3/4 libo me-  
zcal~~
- ~~8-18-61. Recibió 1 pañuelo~~
- ~~8-19-61. Trajo 1 pañuelo~~
- ~~8-20-61. Trajo 1 pañuelo XX.~~
- ~~8-21-61. Trajo 1 pañuelo más caro~~
- 8-18-61. ~~Guardo su libro en  
Palabria de Poficio~~
- 61  
~~asa Pabla Díaz Lindley  
el efecto de misas de pan  
de la mezcal asistencia  
pan cada uno  
misas entra a 2 personas  
en Cason de Elorza  
7.5 pesos de pan asistencia  
pan cada uno~~













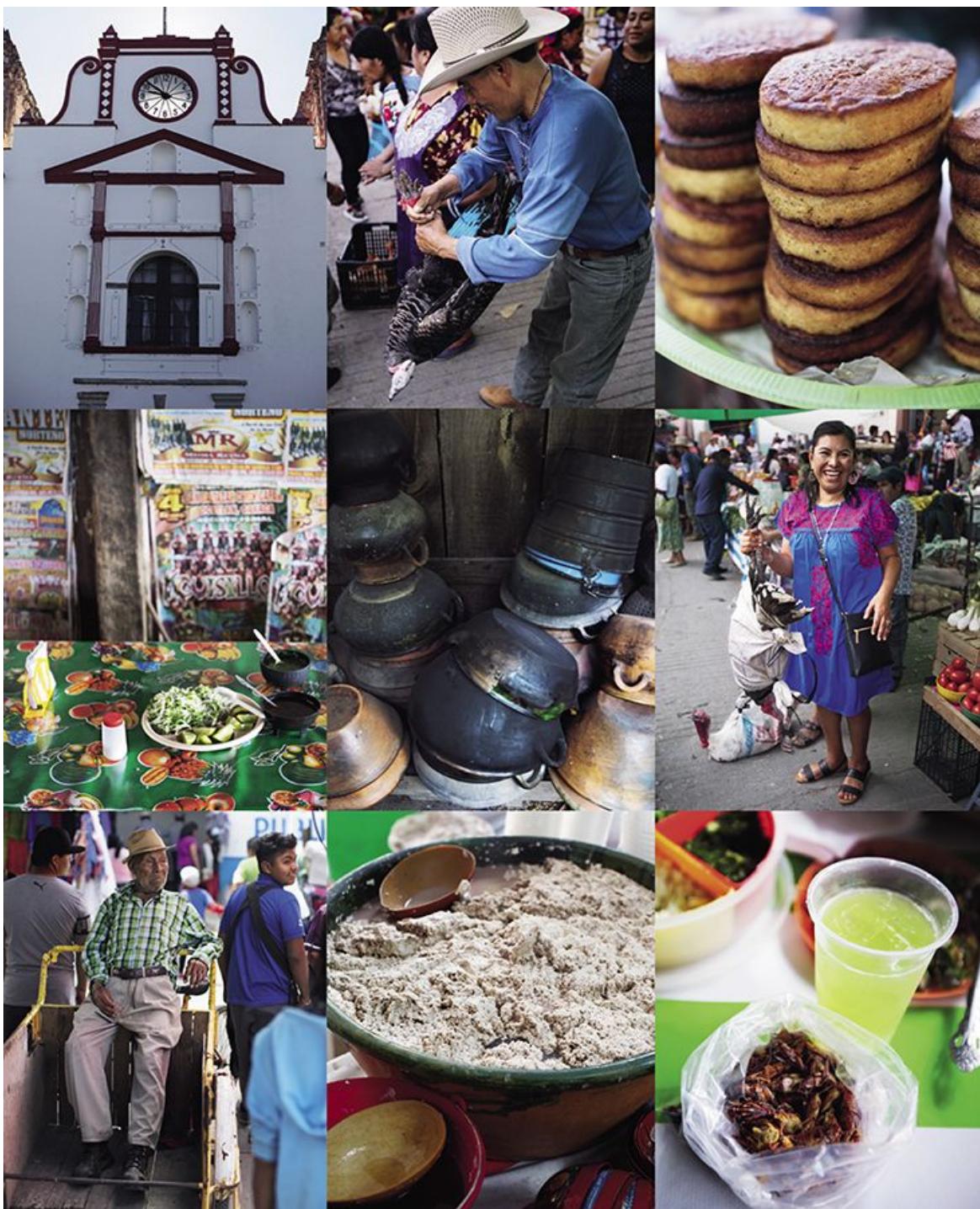
































## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

If this book has taught me anything, it is that you can never achieve greatness alone. So many wonderful humans were involved in the process of bringing this dream into existence. Of course, my incredible parents, who fearlessly crossed a border into the unknown to provide their family with a life full of opportunities. Mom and Dad, I promise to keep our family's name and traditions alive for as long as I live. A special mention to my mother, Maria de Jesus Monterrubio, who worked tirelessly day and night to bring her recipes alive. Mom, you are my superhero. To my incredible husband, Eduardo Maytorena, for always loving me through his patience, kindness, and endless belief in me. Without your support at home, this book journey would have been almost impossible. Thank you to Javier Cabral for embarking on this journey with me. You brought my family's story to life in a way that no one else could; your energy and love for my family and our culture live in every word. Thank you to my partners in life and coauthors Paulina Lopez, Fernando Lopez, and Elizabeth Lopez. I thank God every single day for blessing me with you as family. I love you three above and beyond. Thank you for trusting me and always believing in me, even when I myself don't. After so many years, we finally have our book! I cannot wait for our children to re-create our recipes. Thank you to my family-in-law, Cristian Ramiro Velasquez and Paola Garcia, for supporting our family in the days we had to work overtime to make this book happen. I am so blessed to have gained a brother and sister in you two. Thank you to my Super Mamas sisters for being my biggest cheerleaders throughout this process. Thank you to my Guelaguetza family for making sure our restaurant was more than taken care of on the days I was having fun in Oaxaca, editing and testing recipes at home. A special thank-you to my Guelaguetza chef, Edgar Santiago: I am so blessed to have you as part of our Guelaguetza family. Your dedication, story, and work ethic are inspiring to me and so many Oaxaqueños who dream of cooking for a living one day.

Thank you to Holly Dolce for not only believing in me, but also seeing the value in publishing authors who look and talk like me. You are helping open doors for so many to come. Working with you has been a dream. Thank you to Quentin Bacon for your time and dedication; your artistry

shines through every image in this book. You will forever be part of the Lopez family and an honorary Oaxaqueño. Thank you for all your help with recipe testing and development. Thank you to Jonah Strauss, who saw this book from inception and pushed me for years to make it come alive. Thank you for believing this could one day be real. Thank you to my all-girl team at Abrams—Lisa Silverman, Rebecca Westall, Jennifer Bastien, Danielle Youngsmith, Jennifer Wagner, and Deb Wood—for loving this book as much as you do and being the most incredible partners in this journey. Last but never least, thank you to our own LA angel Jonathan Gold, who changed my life and who continues to change lives through the words he left behind.

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## A

- *Aciento*
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- agua fresca
  - about
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  - Agua de Hierba de Limón con Piña
  - Agua de Jamaica
  - Agua de Limón con Chia
  - Agua de Melón
  - Agua de Pepino
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  - Pozole Mixteco
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- Anaheim chiles
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  - Mole Rojo
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  - Mole Negro
- anise seed

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  - Atole de Coco
  - Atole de Fresa
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  - Chocolate de Agua
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  - Guacamole
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- avocado leaves
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  - Enfrijoladas
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  - Pollo en Barbacoa
  - Tamales de Frijol

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- banana leaves
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  - Garnachas Istmeñas
  - tasajo
- Bénédictine liqueur
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  - Chicharrón en Frijol
  - Enfrijoladas
  - Frijoles de la Olla
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  - Huevo en Frijol
  - Memelas
  - Molletes
  - Molotes de Plátano
  - Pasta de Frijol Negro
  - Patitas de Puerco en Frijol Negro
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  - Tortitas de Papa en Caldillo
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- breakfast, about
- brown sugar, unrefined. *See* piloncillo

## C

- cabbage
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  - Garnachas Istmeñas
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- cactus. *See* nopales

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- Caldo de Pata
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  - Horchata de Oaxaca
- carmine powder
  - Nicuatole
  - Tamales de Dulce
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  - Caldo de Res con Guajillo Chile
  - Chileajo
  - Chiles en Escabeche
  - Papa Istmeña
  - Tacos de Barbacoa de Chivo
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- celebrations
- Champurrado
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  - strawberries as substitute for
- chia seeds
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  - preparing
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  - Chiles Rellenos de Queso Fresco con Epazote
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- chilhuacle rojo chile
  - Mole Rojo
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- chipotles
- chochoyotes
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- chocolate, Oaxacan
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  - Chocolate de Agua
  - Coloradito
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  - Mole Rojo
- chorizo

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  - Molotes de Masa con Papas y Chorizo
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  - Atole de Coco
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  - Nixtamal
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- Dijon mustard
- Donaji
- Dulce de Calabaza

## **E**

- eggs. *See* huevos
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  - Enmoladas
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- epazote
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## **F**

- family-style, about
- finger foods, about
- fish
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- flor de calabaza (squash blossoms)
  - Empanadas de Flor de Calabaza
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## **G**

- garbanzo beans

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- Garnachas Istmeñas
- Garra de Tigre
- gelatin
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- Sal de Chile
- Salsa Roja de Morita
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- Tomatillo Salsa
- guava
- *guelaguetza* (reciprocity)
- Guelaguetza restaurant
  - beginnings
  - second generation of
  - success and growth of
- guias (squash vines)
  - Guias en Mole Verde y Chochoyotes

## H

- hibiscus flowers
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  - Ponche Navideño
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- hoja santa
  - Huevos al Comal
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - La Santa
- hominy (pozole)
  - Pozole Mixteco
- Horchata de Oaxaca
- huevos (eggs)
  - Chilaquiles
  - Frijol Blanco con Bacalao Capeado
  - Higaditos
  - Huevo en Frijol
  - Huevos al Comal
  - Huevos con Ejotes y Chorizo
  - Huevos con Nopalitos

- Huevos Rancheros
- Salsa de Huevo
- huitlacoche

## I

- immigrant life
- ingredient guide

## J

- jalapeños
  - Chiles en Escabeche
  - Chiles Toreados
  - Salsa de Molcajete
  - Tamales de Rajas
- jalapeños, pickled
  - Estofado de Pollo

## K

- kabocha squash
- key limes, Mexican
  - Agua de Chilacayota

## L

- lamb
  - Barbacoa de Borrego
- Licor
- lime, pickling
- lime juice
  - Agua de Limón con Chia
  - Agua de Pepino
  - Garra de Tigre
  - Margarita Guelaguetza
  - La Santa
  - Sparkling Limonada
- lime leaves
  - Agua de Hierba de Limón con Piña
- Limoncello
- liqueurs
  - Bénédictine
  - Licor
  - melon
  - Triple Sec
- liquor. *See* mezcal; tequila
- Lopez family

## M

- mango puree
- manzano
- Margarita Guelaguetza
- masa. *See also* empanadas
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Chichilo
  - Garnachas Istmeñas
  - Guias en Mole Verde y Chochoyotes
  - Memelas
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos

- Mole Verde con Puerco
- Molotes de Masa con Papas y Chorizo
- Quesadillas Fritas con Epazote
- masa quebrajada. *See also* tamales
  - Chochoyotes
  - Nixtamal
- mayonnaise
- meat broths, skimming
- Memelas
- Mexican peso crisis (1993)
- mezcal
  - about
  - Donaji
  - Flor de Piña
  - Garra de Tigre
  - Margarita Guelaguetza
  - Pasión de Oaxaca
  - Salsa Borracha
  - La Santa
- Michelada de Pasilla
- milk. *See also* condensed/evaporated milk
  - Barquillos Rellenos de Lechecilla
  - Nicuatole
- mint
- molcajete, tips for
- moles
  - about
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Chichilo
  - Chilaquiles en Mole Negro
  - Coloradito
  - Empanadas de San Antonino
  - Enmoladas
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Mole (for Pozole Mixteco)
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos
  - Mole Negro

- Mole Rojo
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
  - Segueza
  - Tamales de Mole Negro
- molinillos, tips for
- Molletes
- Molotes de Masa con Papas y Chorizo
- Molotes de Plátano
- morita chiles
  - Chintextle
  - Costillas con Verdolaga
  - Salsa Borracha
  - Salsa de Carne Frita
  - Salsa de Chapulines
  - Salsa Macha
  - Salsa Roja de Morita
- mustard

## N

- navy beans
  - Frijol Blanco con Bacalao Capeado
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
- Nicuatole
- nopales (cactus)
  - Ensalada de Nopalitos con Chile Guajillo
  - Huevos con Nopalitos
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos
  - Pollo en Salsa Verde con Papas y Nopales
- nuts. *See also* almonds; peanuts
  - pecans
  - walnuts

## O

- Oaxacan Adobo

- Oaxacan culture
  - breakfast in
  - celebrations in
  - family-style eating in
  - immigrant life and
  - mezcal in
  - moles in
  - salsas in
  - sweets in
- olives
  - black
  - green
- orange juice
  - Donaji
  - Michelada de Pasilla
- oregano
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Mole Negro
  - Mole Rojo
  - Pollo al Oregano

## P

- pan de yema
- Papa Istmeña
- pasilla chile
  - Chilaquiles en Salsa de Pasilla
  - Garnachas Istmeñas
  - Michelada de Pasilla
  - Mole (for Pozole Mixteco)
  - Mole Negro
- Pasión de Oaxaca
- passionfruit juice
- pasta
- Pasta de Frijol Negro
- pastry roll molds
- Patitas de Puerco en Escabeche

- Patitas de Puerco en Frijol Negro
- peanuts
  - Cacahuates Botaneros
  - Mole Rojo
  - Salsa Macha
  - Vegan Aciento
- peas
  - Chileajo
  - Papa Istmeña
- pecans
- Picadillo de Pollo
- pig skin, fried. *See* chicharrón
- piloncillo
  - Arroz con Leche con Dulce de Garbanzos
  - Café de Olla
  - Dulce de Calabaza
  - Ponche Navideño
  - syrup
- pineapple, canned
- pineapple, fresh
  - Agua de Hierba de Limón con Piña
  - Plátanos al Horno
- pineapple juice
  - Flor de Piña
  - La Santa
- plantains (plátanos)
  - Mole Negro
  - Mole Rojo
  - Molotes de Plátano
  - Plátanos al Horno
  - Pozole Mixteco
- poblano chiles
  - Spaghetti in Poblano Salsa
- poleo
- pollo (chicken)
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Caldo de Fandango del Valle

- Chilaquiles
  - Chiles Rellenos de Picadillo
  - Empanadas de San Antonino
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Higaditos
  - Picadillo de Pollo
  - Pollo al Oregano
  - Pollo en Barbacoa
  - Pollo Enchipotlado
  - Pollo en Salsa Verde con Papas y Nopales
  - Tamales de Mole Negro
  - Tamales de Rajas
  - Taquitos de Picadillo de Pollo
- Ponche Navideño
- pork. *See also* chicharrón; chorizo
  - Chilaquiles
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - types of
- pork feet
  - Patitas de Puerco en Escabeche
  - Patitas de Puerco en Frijol Negro
- pork ribs
  - Costillas con Verdolaga
  - Salsa de Carne Frita
- pork spine
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - Segueza
- potatoes
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Chileajo
  - Molotes de Masa con Papas y Chorizo
  - Papa Istmeña
  - Pollo al Oregano
  - Pollo en Salsa Verde con Papas y Nopales
  - Tortitas de Papa en Caldillo
- Pozole Mixteco

- prickly pear. *See* chayote
- prunes
- pumpkin seeds
- purslane leaves
- puya chile
  - Sal de Chile

## Q

- Quesadillas Fritas con Epazote
- quesillo/queso Oaxaca
  - Empanadas de Flor de Calabaza
  - Molletes
  - Quesadillas Fritas con Epazote
- queso fresco
  - Chilaquiles
  - Chiles Rellenos de Queso Fresco con Epazote
  - Memelas
  - Salsa de Queso
  - Tortitas de Papa en Caldillo
- quince

## R

- raisins
  - Coloradito
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Mole Negro
  - Mole Rojo
  - Picadillo de Pollo
  - Ponche Navideño
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - Tamales de Dulce
- reciprocity (*guelaguetza*)
- rice
  - Arroz Blanco con Plátano
  - Arroz con Leche con Dulce de Garbanzos

- Atole de Arroz
- Horchata de Oaxaca
- Rustic Oaxacan Tomato Sauce. *See* Tomato Sauce, Rustic Oaxacan

## S

- Sal de Chile
- Salsa de Carne Frita
- Salsa de Chicharrón
- Salsa de Chorizo
- Salsa de Huevo
- Salsa de Queso
- Salsa Roja Básica. *See* Tomato Sauce, Rustic Oaxacan
- salsas
  - about
  - Chiles Toreados
  - Chintextle
  - Guacachile
  - molcajete for
  - Salsa Borracha
  - Salsa de Canela Botanera
  - Salsa de Chapulines
  - Salsa de Molcajete
  - Salsa de Tomatillo
  - Salsa Macha
  - Salsa Roja de Morita
  - Salsa Verde Cruda
- salt
  - Sal de Chile
- La Santa
- *sazón*
- seeds. *See also* sesame seeds
  - chia
  - pumpkin
  - sunflower
- Segueza
- serrano chiles

- Caldo de Fandango del Valle
  - Chilaquiles Verdes
  - Guacachile
  - Guacamole
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
  - Salsa Roja Básica
- sesame seeds
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Mole Negro
  - Mole Rojo
  - Salsa Macha
- sherry wine
- shrimp, dried
  - Chintextle
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos
- soups and stews, about
- sour cream. *See* crema, Mexican
- Spaghetti in Poblano Salsa
- Sparkling Limonada
- spices, grinding
- squash. *See also* flor de calabaza
  - Agua de Chilacayota
  - Dulce de Calabaza
  - Guias en Mole Verde y Chochoyotes
- strainers, tips for
- strawberries
  - Atole de Fresa
  - as prickly pear substitute
- sugar. *See* piloncillo
- sunflower seeds
- sweets, about

## T

- tacos
  - Tacos de Barbacoa de Chivo
  - Tacos de Chapulin and Chicharrón

- tamales
  - Tamales de Dulce
  - Tamales de Frijol
  - Tamales de Mole Negro
  - Tamales de Rajas
- tamarind
  - Agua de Tamarindo
  - Ponche Navideño
- Taquitos de Picadillo de Pollo
- tasajo
- taviche chile
- techniques, cooking
- tejocotes
- tequila. *See also* mezcal
- tomatillos
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Arroz Blanco con Plátano
  - Caldo de Pata
  - Caldo de Res con Guajillo Chile
  - Chilaquiles Verdes
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Higaditos
  - Mole Rojo
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
  - Picadillo de Pollo
  - Pollo en Barbacoa
  - Pollo en Salsa Verde con Papas y Nopales
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - Salsa Borracha
  - Salsa de Carne Frita
  - Salsa de Chapulines
  - Salsa de Tomatillo
  - Salsa Verde Cruda
  - Tacos de Barbacoa de Chivo
- tomatoes
  - Amarillo de Pollo
  - Caldillo

- Caldo de Fandango del Valle
  - Chilaquiles en Salsa de Guajillo
  - Coloradito
  - Costillas con Verdolaga
  - Estofado de Pollo
  - Frijol Blanco con Bacalao Capeado
  - Garnachas Istmeñas
  - Huevos con Ejotes y Chorizo
  - Huevos con Nopalitos
  - Mole Amarillo de Frijol Blanco con Nopal y Camarones Secos
  - Mole Negro
  - Mole Rojo
  - Picadillo de Pollo
  - Pollo en Barbacoa
  - Pollo Enchipotlado
  - Pozole Mixteco
  - Salsa de Canela Botanera
  - Salsa de Molcajete
  - Salsa Roja Básica
  - Segueza
  - Tamales de Rajas
- tomatoes, green
  - Guias en Mole Verde y Chochoyotes
  - Mole Verde con Puerco
- tomato juice
- Tomato Sauce, Rustic Oaxacan (Salsa Roja Básica)
  - Chilaquiles Rojos
  - Entomatadas
  - Huevos Rancheros
  - Salsa de Chicharrón
  - Salsa de Chorizo
  - Salsa de Huevo
  - Salsa de Queso
- tools
- tortilla chips. *See* totopos
- tortillas
  - Enfrijoladas

- Enmoladas
- Entomatadas
- Huevos Rancheros
- making
- Tacos de Barbacoa de Chivo
- Tacos de Chapulin and Chicharrón
- Taquitos de Picadillo de Pollo
- Tortitas de Papa en Caldillo
- totopos (tortilla chips)
  - Chilaquiles
  - making
- Triple Sec
- tunas (prickly pears)
  - Horchata de Oaxaca
  - strawberries as substitute for

## V

- Vegan Aciento

## W

- walnuts
- watermelon
  - Agua de Melón
  - Agua de Sandia
- weddings
- Worcestershire sauce

## Z

- Zapoteco

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**"Bricia and her family are true culinary ambassadors, sharing the ingredients, the stories, and the flavors of her native Oaxaca. To me, they have achieved the true American dream—they have brought with them all of the very best from their home, providing an amazing space for community, for family, for the people of Los Angeles . . . and now we all get the chance to hear the stories and taste the food that makes Oaxaca one of the best places to eat on earth."**

—JOSÉ ANDRÉS, chef and owner of ThinkFoodGroup & minibar by José Andrés

**"From its powerful and important dedication to its enticing introduction, alluring photographs, and recipes, the thrilling new cookbook *Oaxaca* accomplishes that rare feat of capturing a place so vividly it not only makes you want to go there, but brings you there, simply by your picking up this wonderful tribute to a land and its people. Let's lift a glass of mezcal to Bricia Lopez and the family behind LA's Guelaguetza."**

—NANCY SILVERTON, chef and co-owner of Mozza Restaurant Group

**"Bricia and her family built an amazing space to share the flavors and the stories of their native Oaxaca . . . Now we can all experience them."**

—ENRIQUE OLVERA, chef and owner of Pujol and author of *Tu Casa Mi Casa*

**BRICIA LOPEZ** and her family are the proprietors of Los Angeles's James Beard Award-winning Guelaguetza, which Jonathan Gold called "the best Oaxacan restaurant in the country." **JAVIER CABRAL** has written for numerous publications, including *Food & Wine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Lucky Peach*. They live in Los Angeles.



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