

Did you know... Cinco de Mayo actually commemorates the Mexican victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla, which took place on May 5, 1862. Almost 40% of Americans mistakenly believe that Cinco de Mayo marks Mexican Independence Day.

And interesting fact: Mole Poblano is the official dish of Cinco de Mayo! We included a recipe this week - give it a try.

Let us know if there is something you would like us to put in our column, or if you have a recipe to share, please submit to ads@thedrummer.com.

Mole Poblano

Prep time: 30 min

Cook time: 30 min

Total time: 1 hr

12 Servings

For the chicken:

1 Lg chicken cut up in pieces
About 8 c. of water
1 Small onion cut up in pieces
3 Garlic cloves
Salt to taste

For the Sauce:

6 Mulato peppers
4 Ancho peppers
6 Pasilla peppers
1 T. of reserved pepper seeds
6 Whole cloves
1/2 tsp. black peppercorn
1/4 tsp. coriander seeds
1/4 tsp anises seeds
3/4 c. sesame seeds
3/4 Inch of mexican cinnamon stick
1/2 c. of raisins
1/3 c. unskinned almonds
1/3 c. peanuts
1 Corn tortilla
3 Small slices of french bread
1/3 c. of raw pumpkin seeds
1/2 Small white onion sliced
2 Med roasted tomatoes
3 Garlic gloves roasted
1/2 Large ripe dark-skinned plantain peeled, thickly sliced
1 Tablet of Mexican drinking Chocolate* (About 3.1 oz).
The reserved broth from the cooked chicken.
1/2 c. of oil to fry the ingredients
Salt to taste

Cook the chicken: Combine all ingredients in large pot. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until chicken is just cooked through, skimming foam, about 35 minutes. Transfer chicken to bowl; cover and chill. Strain and reserve broth in pot.

Mole Sauce: Get all the ingredients ready according to the list. This step is very important.

Prepare the peppers. Make sure to clean the dry peppers with a wet cloth and cut the peppers using your kitchen scissors if possible to flatten them for an even toasting.

Have a large pot ready with simmering chicken broth or water to soak all the ingredients after toasting or frying. They will get softer and easier to grind this way.

In a skillet toast the dry peppers a few at a time, on both sides, pressing them down as you turn them, until the inside flesh turns tobacco brown. This takes a few seconds, take care not to let them burn. Place the peppers and the chocolate in the bowl with the broth to soak. Keep toasting the rest of the peppers and placing them in the broth.

Meanwhile, toast separately the reserved peppers seeds, the coriander seeds, the anise seeds and sesame seeds. Set them aside to cool.

Grind in an electric coffee/spice grinder as finely as possible. Cloves, peppercorns, cinnamon, and all the toasted ingredients except the sesame seeds. In case you do not have a grinder, but you have a professional blender skip this step and place the spices and seeds on the pot with the rest of the ingredients to be grinded in the blender.

Reserve 2 T. of the sesame seeds for serving the mole; grind the rest as finely as possible. After this step add this mixture of spices and seeds to the bowl with the peppers.

Now, add a small portion of the vegetable oil to a skillet and begin frying the following ingredients separately draining any excess fat after frying: the raisins until plump up, the almonds until well browned, the pumpkin seeds until they swell (take care, since they tend to explode and jump).

Every ingredient will be added to the pot with the chicken broth. You can roast the tomatoes and garlic cloves while frying the rest of the ingredients. Fry the onions until golden brown and place in the bowl.

Fry the tortilla and bread until crisp. Only add a little more oil at a time or it will be absorbed, specially by the tortilla and bread.

Add plantain and sauté until golden, about 3 minutes. Using slotted spoon, drain excess fat and transfer to bowl. Make sure to use a ripe plantain.

This is the bowl where all the fried and toasted ingredients were placed and now are ready to go into the blender. It is going to look a little bit messy. Crush the bread and tortilla roughly, chop the tomatoes roasted tomatoes. This will make the grinding process a little bit easier.

Put 1/2 c. of the chicken broth into the blender jar, don't forget to add peeled garlic. Gradually add the spice mixture and blend well; then add another 1/2 c. of broth and gradually blend the fried ingredients to a slightly fine paste. Try not to add more liquid (unless your blender motor is heating or smoking) but constantly release the blades with a rubber spatula. You will have to do this step in 2 or 3 batches until everything has been pureed. If the end results are still coarse, pass the whole mixture through a strainer.

In a large skillet over medium heat, reheat the sauce, scraping the bottom of the pan very often to avoid sticking. Season with salt.

Continue frying until the mixture is very thick, about 8 minutes, and stir. Add more broth as needed to desire thickness and continue cooking, the mixture should be bubbling and splattering—for about 25 minutes. By now pools of oil should be forming on the surface.

Add cooked chicken to hot mole; simmer until chicken is heated through, about 10 minutes. To serve, place a piece of chicken on a warm plate. Spoon on plenty of the mole sauce; sprinkle with sesame seeds. In Mexico it is usually serve with white rice with peas and a lot of warm tortillas.

This mole can be made well ahead and the leftover sauce can be kept very successfully in the freezer for about six months. When reheated it will probably have to be diluted with more broth and freshly cooked chicken, or better yet used for chicken-filled enchiladas.

NOTES: This Mole Sauce is not spicy if you want to add some heat to the sauce, add 2 dried chipotle peppers or morita peppers. If you want it a little sweeter, add more chocolate.

Elote Salad

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 15 min

8 to 12 servings

12 ears corn or 10 cup corn kernels*

2 green onion

6 T. cilantro, finely chopped

6 T. mayonnaise

4 T. lime juice

1 c. crumbled Cotija cheese, queso fresco, or feta cheese

1 tsp. chili powder

1/2 tsp. each garlic powder, cumin, and kosher salt (or more salt to taste)

Cook the corn:

Grilled: For grilled corn, heat a grill to medium high heat (375 to 450°F). Shuck the corn. Use your hands to rub oil on each corn cob evenly. Place the corn directly on the grill grates and cook until it begins to blacken, then turn. Cook about 12 to 15 minutes total, until blackened on all sides.

Sautéed: Use 5 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels and sauté for a minute or two in butter in a medium skillet.

Cut the corn off the cob: Find a bundt pan, or large rimmed baking sheet or pan. Place the corn into the hole in the bundt pan or hold the corn vertically inside the baking sheet, then use a chef's knife to slice down and remove the corn from the cob. The sides of the pan catch the kernels that fly when cutting.

Prep the vegetables: Thinly slice the green onion. Finely chop the cilantro.

Make the dressing: In a medium bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, lime juice, chili powder, garlic powder, cumin, and kosher salt.

Mix together the grilled corn, vegetables, and dressing. If desired, top with a sprinkle more cheese crumbles.

Cajeta Gelatin

Level: Easy

Total: 8 hr 15 min

Prep: 10 min

Inactive: 8 hr

Cook: 5 min

4 servings

1 envelope unflavored gelatin, or one-quarter of a 1-ounce package

One (12 oz) can evaporated milk

1-3/4 cup cajeta or caramel

8 oz cream cheese, room temperature

Fresh raspberries, for garnish

Sprinkle the gelatin in 1/2 c. water. Let stand about 2 minutes to soften. Microwave on high for 45 seconds. Stir for 15 seconds, until the gelatin is dissolved.

In a 2-qt saucepan, heat the evaporated milk until hot, making sure not to boil. Whisk in the cajeta/caramel until smooth and evenly incorporated. Stir in the gelatin mixture to the cajeta mixture and turn the heat off to cool slightly.

In a large mixing bowl, using a hand mixer, or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, add the cream cheese and beat on medium speed while slowly adding 1/3 c. of the cajeta cream to temper the cream cheese and avoid curdling or separation. Gradually add the remaining cajeta cream and continue beating until smooth. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl and beat again until fully incorporated and frothy. Strain the cream into a glass pitcher or into a 4-cup liquid measure, maintaining as much froth as possible. Pour 1 c. of the cream into each of the 4 wine glasses.

Garnish with 3 to 5 fresh raspberries (the raspberries will remain afloat in the froth). Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

Cinnamon-Sugar Crisps (“Bunuelos”)

Level: Easy

Total: 30 min

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 20 min

4 to 6 servings

1/2 cup sugar

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

6 (8-inch) flour tortillas, whole or cut into shapes

On a plate, mix the sugar and cinnamon. In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan, add enough oil to come halfway up the sides of the pan. Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-frying thermometer, inserted in the oil, reaches 350°F. (If you do not have a thermometer, test the oil with a piece of tortilla, which should sizzle when it touches the oil and should brown in about 2 to 3 minutes.) One by one, fry tortillas until golden brown. With a slotted spoon, transfer the crisps to paper towels to drain. While still warm, transfer to cinnamon-sugar mixture, turn to coat and serve.

Jalapeno Margaritas

Level: Easy
Total: 2 hr 10 min
(includes chilling time)
Active: 10 min
8 cocktails

6 oz fresh lime juice plus 1 lime wedge, for the rims
1 T. confectioners' sugar
Handful celery leaves
1 jalapeno, thinly sliced
16 oz tequila
8 oz orange liqueur
Kosher salt, for the rims

Pulse the lime juice, confectioners' sugar, celery leaves and jalapeno in a blender. Mix with the tequila and orange liqueur in a pitcher and refrigerate until chilled, at least 2 hours.

To serve, put some kosher salt on a small plate. Rub the rims of 8 cocktail glasses with the lime wedge and dip the rims in the salt. Add ice to the glasses and pour in the margarita.

Mexican Cheese Simplified

Cotija: is a crumbly white cow's milk cheese that is aged and has a sharp, salty, tangy flavor. (It is often called the parmesan of Mexico. However, it has a much stonger flavor than Italian parmesan cheese).

Queso fresco: refers to a variety of soft and semi-soft white cheeses, traditionally made from raw cow's milk that are minimally aged and have a mild taste.

Feta: traditionally made from cooked sheep or goat milk and is salty in taste.

Cotija, feta and queso fresco are great finishing cheeses for savory dishes. But it is important to keep in mind how much saltier cotija is than queso fresco when making substitutions. If you can't find queso fresco in the store, cotija is a good substitute, so long as you decrease the amount you use or as long as you adjust the saltiness of the overall dish.

Quote of the Week:

"Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed... Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders."

~ Henry David Thoreau