

SALSA VERDE CRUDA

FRESH TOMATILLO SALSA

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 10 MIN

This all-raw salsa can be thrown together in just ten minutes. And because it's made with tomatillos rather than tomatoes, it's less sweet and more refreshing than the more familiar red salsa. (We also think it's more interesting for topping Mexican dishes such as huevos rancheros or for eating with tortilla chips.)

- ½ lb small fresh tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 1 large garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh serrano chile with seeds, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons water

► Coarsely chop tomatillos, then purée with remaining salsa ingredients and ½ teaspoon salt in a blender until smooth.

COOKS' NOTE: *Salsa can be made 4 hours ahead and chilled, covered. Bring to room temperature, about 1 hour, before using. Leftover salsa keeps 2 days.*

SOPA DE CALABACITAS

ZUCCHINI SOUP

Adapted from Estela Salas Silva

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Food editor Shelley Wiseman learned of this soup from Estela Salas Silva, a Pueblan native who runs the Mexican Home Cooking School in the neighboring state of Tlaxcala. Though Mexican cooking often produces fireworks in the mouth, this soup showcases a gentler style you may not be familiar with but that we're sure you will love. Underlining the homey comfort of the broth with corn and zucchini is that signature Mexican layering of flavor: smoky, fruity poblano chile, pungent epazote, and chopped zucchini blossoms for a wonderful suggestion of the summer garden.

- ½ lb fresh poblano chiles (2 to 3)
- 1½ lb calabacitas or zucchini, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 1 cup chopped white onion
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups fresh corn kernels (from 3 to 4 ears)
- 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh epazote leaves or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh serrano chile with seeds, or to taste
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup coarsely chopped squash blossoms (2 oz; optional; discard stems and tough green parts before chopping)

ROAST POBLANOS: Roast poblanos on their sides on racks of gas burners, 1 or 2 chiles per burner, on medium-high (or on rack of a broiler pan 2 inches from broiler), turning frequently with tongs, until skins are blistered and lightly charred all over, 4 to 6 minutes (6 to 8 minutes if broiling). Transfer to a large bowl, then cover with a plate and let stand 20 minutes. Peel or rub off skin. Slit poblanos lengthwise, then stem, seed, and devein. Cut poblanos into ½-inch squares.

MAKE SOUP: Cook zucchini, onion, garlic, and 1½ teaspoons salt in butter in a wide 4-to 5-quart heavy pot over medium heat, stirring, until vegetables are softened. Add broth, water, poblanos, and corn and simmer, partially covered, until corn is tender, about 5 minutes. Purée 2 cups soup in a blender with cilantro, epazote, and serrano until smooth (use caution when blending hot liquids). Return to pot. Stir in cream, ¼ cup squash blossoms (if using; reserve remainder for garnish), ½ teaspoon pepper, and salt to taste. Return to a simmer, then serve garnished with blossoms.

COOKS' NOTE: *Soup can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, uncovered, until cool, then covered.*

MIXIOTE DE CARNE

BEEF WITH GUAJILLO SAUCE BAKED IN BANANA LEAVES

Adapted from Estela Salas Silva

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 1 HR START TO FINISH: 12½ HR

No matter how many times we unwrapped these fragrant parcels to reveal the most gorgeous brick-red sauce and succulent meat, we were stunned all over again that we were standing in our test kitchen in New York City and not right in the middle of Mexico. Guajillo chiles, mild and sweet, lend their hue and characteristic flavor to the meat—typically lamb, though our short ribs translate beautifully—penetrating all the way through during slow cooking. Since the beef sits right on top of bone during the braising, it releases a meatiness into the sauce as well. You'll be similarly (meaning happily) shocked that something this richly authentic can come out of your own oven.

- 3 oz dried guajillo or New Mexico chiles (12 to 18), wiped clean
- 3 tablespoons annatto seeds
- 1½ tablespoons cumin seeds
- 5 large garlic cloves, chopped
- ½ cup distilled white vinegar
- 6 lb beef short ribs or lamb shoulder with bone, cut into 16 (2- to 3-inch) pieces
- 3 banana leaves (from a 1-lb package), thawed if frozen, or 8 (11-inch-square) pieces of parchment paper
- 8 Turkish or 4 California bay leaves

EQUIPMENT: an electric coffee/spice grinder

ACCOMPANIMENTS: Mexican white rice and tomatillo guacamole (recipes on page 192)

► Fill a 2-quart saucepan halfway with water and bring to a boil. ► Meanwhile, slit chiles lengthwise, then stem, seed, and devein (see Kitchen Notebook at gourmet.com). Add chiles to boiling water and remove from heat. Let stand, uncovered, until chiles are softened and have turned a brighter red, about 10 minutes. ► Meanwhile, toast annatto and cumin seeds in a dry small heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring, until fragrant and a shade darker. Transfer to a bowl to cool, then grind seeds to a powder in grinder. ► Transfer chiles to a blender with a slotted spoon, then add 1½ cups soaking liquid, ground seeds, garlic, vinegar, and 1 tablespoon salt. Blend until smooth, at least 2 minutes. Pour sauce into a large (3- to 4-quart) shallow container and cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes.

► Sprinkle meat with 2 teaspoons salt, then add to sauce and turn meat to coat using tongs or your hands (wear protective gloves to prevent staining). Marinate meat, covered and chilled, at least 8 hours.

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WINE ADVICE is on page 52.

For information about the LATINO INGREDIENTS, see KITCHEN NOTEBOOK, page 189, and SHOPPING LIST, page 202.