



Tasty Treasures

Volume II

A COLLECTION OF FUN
AND FLAVORFUL RECIPES

LOPEZ
NEGRETE

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o share what is dear to us, to share our memories and our customs, is to share of ourselves in the most pure and unselfish of ways. This, our second edition of Tasty Treasures, is the way our staff would like to wish you the happiest of holidays. We invite you to enjoy some of the special moments, people and tastes which make each person different and so very special. Enjoy every sip, taste and bite as you have one of the most wonderful holidays ever.

Merry Christmas!

PS.: If you would like a copy of Tasty Treasures, Vol. I, just give us a ring and we'll send you one!



It is very common in Mexico during Christmas season to have a lot of "Posadas" (pre-Christmas parties), one after the other. Some of them can get pretty wild sometimes. After a few of these "Posadas" it starts hitting your physically. Much worse: it's even hard to wake up in the morning!

That's why I want to share with you a dish that can give you a good morning start. At least it will speed up your heartbeat, increase your blood flow and put your sweat glands to work.

¡Buen Provecho!

JAIME BELDEN (Mexico)

Huevos Verdes

A spicy way to start the day...

Ingredients:

- 8 eggs
- 24 serrano peppers (can vary according to your braveness)
- 3 green tomatoes
- 1/2 onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- Cilantro (to taste)
- Salt and pepper
- Cooking oil

Procedure:

Burn or toast the serrano peppers and the green tomatoes, either straight to the flame or in a pan. Put the peppers and tomatoes in the blender together with the cilantro. Blend until you get a thick paste. Chop the onion and garlic cloves into small squares. Break eggs in a bowl and stir until white and yolk are well mixed. You can add a sip of milk to this mixture to make the final texture softer. Fry onion and garlic until golden brown.

Add the eggs. You can add salt and pepper as desired. Right before the eggs are cooked pour the paste from the blender and mix with the eggs. Serves four good portions. Serve them with flour or corn tortillas on the side.

(Be sure to have a drink handy just in case you are not brave enough.)





I like to eat...

So I hope you enjoy some of the stuff I like.

ABEL GUERRA (United States)

Jalapeño-Spiked Chicken Tamales

Traditionally, lard is used as the fat in making tamales, but vegetable shortening can be substituted. The taste will not be as authentic, but the cholesterol will be a lot lower! This tamale filling can also be used to make enchiladas or even as a filling for tacos.

Ingredients for filling:

- 1 2 1/2-to 3-pound chicken, cut into pieces
- 3 to 4 jalapeño chiles, stems removed, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 12-ounce can tomatillos, drained
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 cup sour cream

Ingredients for Tamales:

- 2 dozen corn husks
- 4 cups dried masa
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening

Procedure:

In a large pot, cover the chicken with water, bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer until the chicken is tender. Allow the chicken to cool, and when it can be handled, take the chicken out of the broth. Remove the bones and, using two forks, shred the chicken. Saute the chiles and onions in the oil until they are softened.

Add the tomatillos and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the chicken and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Save the cilantro and sour cream for later in the process. Soak the corn husks in water to soften. Mix together the masa and salt. Slowly add the chicken broth until the mixture holds together.

Whip or beat the shortening until fluffy. Add the masa and continue to beat until fluffy. Drop a teaspoonful of the dough into a glass of cold water and if it floats, it is ready. If it sinks, continue to beat and test until it floats.

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To assemble: Select corn husks that measure about 5-by-8 inches. If you don't have husks that wide, overlap two of them and use a little of the masa to "glue" them together. Place 2 tablespoons of the masa in the center and spread the dough thinly and evenly into a 2-by-3 inch rectangle. Place some of the chicken and sauce down the center of the masa and top with a teaspoon of sour cream and a little of the cilantro. Fold the husk around the masa and filling, being careful not to squeeze.

Take two strips of the corn husks and firmly tie each end of the tamale. Place on a rack in the bottom of a steamer or large pot. Make sure that the rack is high enough to keep the tamales above the water, and also high enough to allow a good quantity of water. Place the tamales on the rack, folded side down, or if the pot is large enough, stand them up. Do not pack tightly. Cover the tamales with a towel to absorb the moisture. Bring the water to a boil, reduce to a gentle boil, and steam for 2 1/2 hours or until done. To test for doneness, open one end of the husk and if the masa pulls away from the wrapper, it is done. Yield: 24 Heat Scale: Mild

Salsa Sabrosa

Ingredients:

- 1 can chopped green chiles
- 2 Jalapeño or Serrano chiles, chopped
- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
- 2 Tbsp. oil
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin

Procedure:

Combine all ingredients. Allow salsa to sit for at least an hour before serving. ¡Delicioso!



Since my Dad was in the military, we traveled all over the world for years and years. I have two sisters born in Germany, a brother from Puerto Rico, a brother from Kansas, and I was born in Oklahoma. So much for being Puerto Rican! But I have very fond memories of Christmases spent in big-time snowstorms in Germany, Kansas, New Jersey, without snow in Virginia and Florida, and those spent in the warmth of Puerto Rico.

Christmas in Puerto Rico is truly special and the celebration begins with the first day of December and ends eight days "Las Octavias" after Three King's Day (January 6). It's party after party and everyone gets into the spirit, joined by all the Stateside executives that annually find that they must go to Puerto Rico to check "operations" there. Can't say I blame them.

Anyway, food is plentiful, and you are sure to put on a few pounds. I'm including some "quickie" things that can be served to munch on.

ADALIS ARROYO (Puerto Rico)

Surullitos de Maiz

Cornmeal Sticks

- 2 cups water
- 1 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup Edam cheese
- Vegetable oil (for deep frying)



Combine water and salt in a saucepan, heat to boiling. Remove from heat. Add cornmeal, mixing thoroughly. Cook over moderate heat until mixture separates from bottom and sides of pan. Remove from heat, add grated cheese and mix well.

Take mixture by teaspoonfuls and shape into balls. In the palm of your hands roll balls to 1/2 inch thickness, in the shape of small cigars. Deep fry until golden brown. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

Note: Serve as an appetizer or with a main dish.





ADALIS ARROYO (Puerto Rico)

Bolitas de Queso

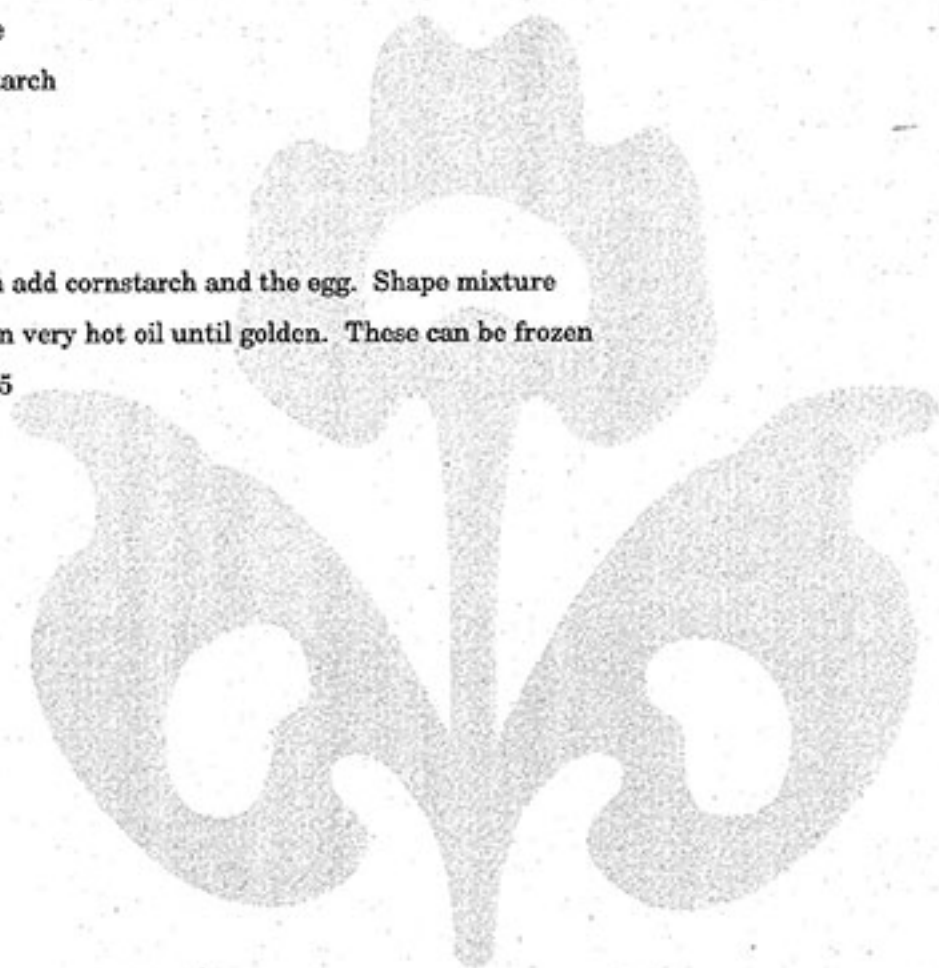
Little Cheese Ball

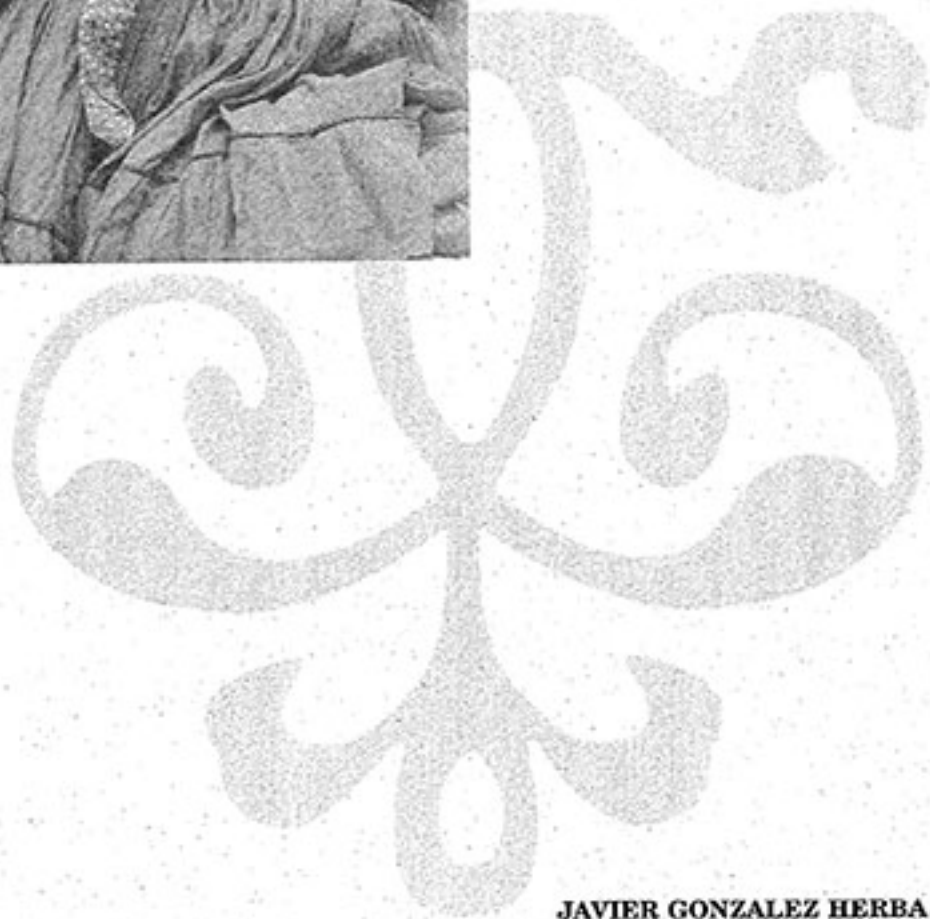
Ingredients:

- 12 oz. Gouda Cheese
- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 eggs

Procedure:

Grate the cheese, then add cornstarch and the egg. Shape mixture into small balls. Fry in very hot oil until golden. These can be frozen until needed. Makes 25





JAVIER GONZALEZ HERBA (Mexico)

Flautas de Pollo and Mexican Rice

Ingredients:

- 20 corn tortillas
- 1 whole chicken
- Vegetable oil (for deep frying)
- 2 avocados
- 1 piece of garlic
- 1/3 cup of milk
- 2 cups white rice
- 1 tomatoe
- 1 white onion
- 20 toothpicks
- Cumins and Sazón Goya con Achiote

Procedure:

Flautas

In a large pot bring the whole chicken to a boil and add salt. Set aside to cool. Save the water used to boil the chicken and start shredding the chicken. Heat tortillas in microwave, with the chicken and the tortillas, make *taquitos* very well rolled. Close tight with a toothpick. In a frying pan, deep fry the flautas until crisp. Remove and drain excess oil.

Rice

Fry 2 cups of rice. After golden brown, add onions, and tomatoes, wait 4 minutes then add water from chicken (3 cups). Add salt, cumin, garlic, and Sazón Goya con Achiote. Cover 'till it's dry.

Avocado Sauce

Blend two avocados, milk and minced garlic. and add salt.

You can serve flautas with avocado and rice on the side.





Morning...Life within the home begins. The family prepares to start the day with the traditional Mexican breakfast. The aroma of warm tortillas and hot spices will permeate the home. The breakfast table becomes a feast of colors, shapes and fragrant smells.

Grandparents, parents and children will take their places Christmas morning to share the first taste of the day.

There are a lot of Mexican sayings related to food in Mexico like: "Panza llena, corazón contento" and Mexicans give you this advice: "Don't make an impor-

tant decision without first having eaten."

Mexican everyday life always starts with breakfast. There is no Mexican market without a special area for food stands. From early in the morning 'till noon, breakfasts are being served!



Here I share with you a delicious Mexican favorite breakfast dish.

LILIANA FISCHER (Mexico)

Chilaquiles con Chorizo

Pronounced (Chee-la-kee-lez)

Ingredients for the Sauce:

- 4 cups of water
- 20 tomatillos, husked (green tomatoes)
- 1-1/2 medium white onions
- 6 large ripe tomatoes
- 4 chipotle peppers, roasted and soaked in hot water 5-10 min.
(you can use serrano peppers if you can not find chipotles)
- 6 garlic cloves, pureed
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Little bundle of fresh cilantro
- 1-1/2 medium onion to sauté in oil

Procedure for the Sauce:

Boil the tomatillos for 25 minutes, place in the blender onion, tomatillos, tomatoes, chiles, garlic and cilantro, puree everything.

Heat oil sauté 1-1/2 onion then add puree of tomatillo sauce, simmer for 35 minutes until it thickens. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Procedure for the Chilaquiles:

Heat oil in a medium or big frying pan. Fry tortilla wedges until crisp. Then remove oil and drain in paper. Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter a deep baking dish. Place layer of fried tortillas at the bottom, cover with half tomatillo sauce, cover with layer of chorizo, cheese and cream. Repeat with second layer the same way. Bake dish for 30-40 minutes. Serve with refried beans. Serves 8.

And... again "panza llena, corazón contento!" Enjoy!

Ingredients for the Chilaquiles:

- 3 cups of vegetable oil
- 40 small tortillas cut into wedges
- 2 cups of chorizo sausage fried
- 3 cups of Oaxaca or mozzarella cheese
- 1-1/2 cups of Mexican cream (heavy cream)



One of my husband's favorite things to do during the holiday season was to dress as warmly

as possible, go out into the fields and find the best pears for the tort. After carefully choosing them, if there had been snow, he and his brother would have a snowball fight, go sleighing or they have a contest building the biggest and most unique snowman.

When the tort was ready, the traditional stew with English Yorkshire pudding was served.

The boys were called in to wash up and they would all sit down for a wonderful dinner in front of a roaring fire.

LINA ZANKER (Honduras)



Pear Tort

Ingredients:

- 2-3 pears
- Powdered sugar (for frosting)
- 2 1/2 oz. whipped cream (lightly beaten)

Ingredients for Pastry:

- 8 oz. flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 oz. shelled walnut kernels (finely chopped)
- 5 oz. butter
- 4 oz. powdered sugar
- 2-3 drops of vanilla essence
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- Deep 7-8 diameter flan ring

Procedure:

Make up the pastry working the cinnamon and walnuts in with the flour, and set aside in a cool place for about an hour.

Peel, core and quarter pears. Take 2/3 of the pastry, roll out and line the flan ring. Roll out the remaining pastry and form a round to cover the top; cut a round about 2 1/2 inches in diameter out of the center of this. Fill the tart with the pears, cover with the pastry ring, brush with water and dust with sugar. Bake it pre-set moderate to hot oven (350° F) for 30-40 minutes. Serve warm or cold. Just before serving, pour the whipped cream into the center of the tart.





Arroz de leche is a very well know desert in most Latin American countries. But all countries use different ingredients.

Arroz de leche is very popular around the holidays.

I remember granda making arroz de leche for us on Christmas Eve. Since it was about 30 of us, she would make all of us take turns stirring the rice. Even the little ones had to stand on a stool and stir if they wanted some arroz de leche.

DINORAH GARCIA (Mexico)

Arroz de Leche

(Rice Pudding)

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. of white rice
- 2 cups of water
- 3 cups of sugar
- 5 cups of homogenized milk
- 2 cans of evaporated milk
- 1 can condensed milk
- 1/2 lb. of chopped walnut
- 1 8 ounce box of raisins
- 1 small bag of cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp. of cloves
- 2 tsp. of nutmeg

Procedure:

In a large saucepan bring rice, water, and 2 cups of milk to boil for 15 minutes. Add evaporated milk. Stir frequently, add cinnamon stick, cloves, and the rest of the milk. Add the sugar, and condensed milk, keep stirring frequently, after 15 minutes. Add walnuts and raisins, and nutmeg. Stir for the next 20 minutes. Serve warm or place in small bowls for refrigeration. Stirring frequently prevents rice getting stuck to saucepan.





Arepas are a typical Colombian food that may be eaten as a snack or with a meal, kind of like bread or tortillas, only they're smaller and have cheese.

Arepas are very economical to make. My husband tells me that they use to spend countless hours by the chimney making arepas in



Colombia. Once his grandmother was making arepas in the comal on the chimney. She would not let anyone have any until she was done cooking them all, so she would place the basket of arepas in the chimney so no one would sneak behind her and eat them while she

was turned around. But the kids couldn't wait, so they would climb on the roof and with a sugar cane stick they would hook an arepa every time grandma would turn around. She never understood why the basket of arepas seemed less by the minute

DINORAH GARCIA (Mexico)

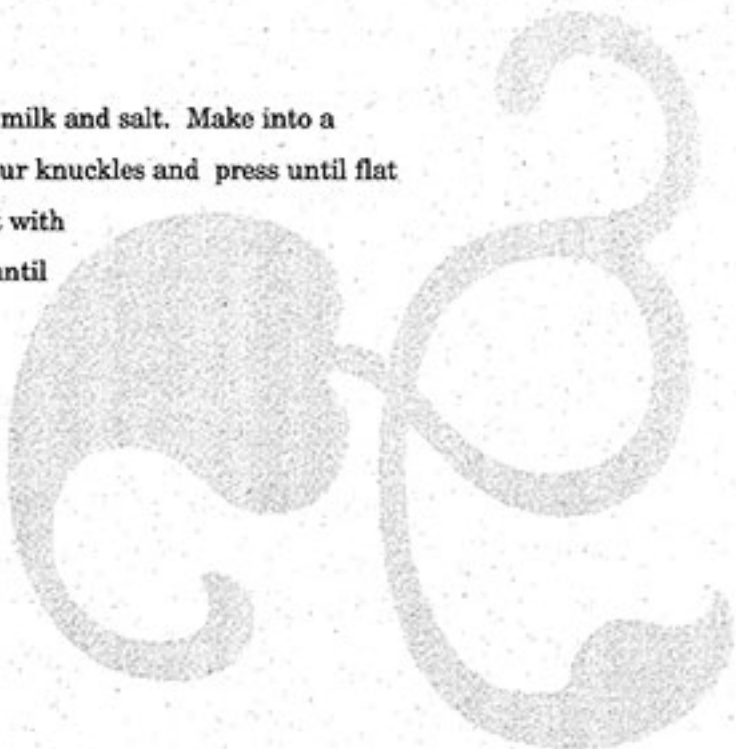
Arepas Colombianas

Ingredients:

- Masarepa (A white corn mix)
- 1 1/2 Lbs of Cotija block white cheese (goat cheese)
- 4 cups of milk
- 2 Tsp. of salt.

Procedure:

Mix Masarepa with grated Cotija cheese milk and salt. Make into a dough. Make 2 inch wide circles with your knuckles and press until flat and rounded. Cook in an iron cast skillet with butter. Turn and flatten with a spatula until golden brown.





One Christmas morning, when I was young, my aunt Mary Ann made Eggs Rancho for us. Wow, they were fantastic! I had to learn how to make them! So I began – a young girl, barely 9 – to cook Eggs Rancho for my family every Christmas morning.

I remember it well. The whole family smiled and sang as I dipped my ladle into this mouth-watering cheese dish. Everyone wondered, how can such a young girl do it? This is so incredibly delicious!

As the years passed, I started adding my own little touches (which consisted, mainly, of adding more butter and mushrooms). As I grew older, "Eggs Rancho" lost its appeal as a name for this Christmas treat. (Plus, my aunt told me it was called something else and the name was so bland for this delicacy that I cannot even recall it.) So, I named it after myself: "Sissy's (my nickname) Egg Rancho." There!

One day I met a man named Alex López Negrete. I took one look at him and thought, "Hmmm. He looks like a cheese eater." Much to my dismay, on our first date he ordered a "hamburger," not a "cheeseburger."

"Well," I thought, "I oughta give him some Sissy's Egg Rancho." As you can see, the rest is history!

CATHY LOPEZ NEGRETE (Wisconsin)

López Negrete Eggs Rancho

(Feel free to insert your own name when serving)

Ingredients :

- 1 stick of real butter
- 1 large onion-chopped
- 2 boxes of fresh mushrooms-sliced
- 1 package bacon, sliced into bite-size pieces
- 1 dozen eggs-hard boiled, peeled and sliced
- Flour (enough to form a paste)
- 1 quart of milk (approximately)
- 1 large box of Velveeta (cut into large chunks)

Procedure:

In a large skillet melt one stick of butter and saute the onions until clear. Add the mushrooms and cook until done. Set aside.

In the meantime, take another skillet and cook the bacon. Drain, and keep the grease. Set aside.

In a large stock pot add the bacon grease, and flour to form a paste. Add approximately 1 quart of milk slowly and stir until it starts to thicken. Add the Velveeta cheese and form a cheese sauce.

Now add the eggs, mushrooms, onions and bacon.

Serve over English muffins split, buttered, and toasted.



This entire recipe came about when I decided to invite 6 people over to sample one of my famous Mexican enchilada dishes. I realized after I had invited them that I didn't have all the ingredients to make my original recipe. So what did I do? I improvised and used a little Mexican ingenuity to come up with a recipe, that I hoped would not let me down. As I desperately searched for alternate ingredients, I stumbled across an Italian dish I had made the night before (as you can see, I like to cook) and realized that the olive taste I added really made a difference.

With that in mind, I ran to the store and bought a jar of crushed olives, some olive oil, mushrooms, and basil, and upon my return I whipped up a new dish before you could say, "chupacabras." It didn't taste at all like my original Mexican recipe, actually, it was better!

Finally, the time came to really put my cooking skills to the test and serve this new concoction to my friends. Quickly, I used my Mexican (and account executive) ingenuity to come up with a story as to why they weren't getting my traditional recipe. Well, to say the least, my dinner went as planned and everyone finished everything on their plate, they even got a little drunk too (I guess that's what happens when you eat great food!). Now, I've added this dish to my family book of recipes and shared it with a few friends, including you.

MICHAEL DIESTE (Mexico City)



Enchiladas al Olivo

A last minute improvisation on an all-time favorite

Ingredients:

- 5 breasts of chicken
- plenty of tortillas, flour or corn (your choice)
- 5 cups of red or green sauce (your favorite canned or jarred will do just fine or make your own)
- 1 chopped onion (small)
- 2 packs of chopped mushrooms
- 1 cup of whole cream
- 1 bag of white grated cheddar cheese
- 1 jar of olives (chopped)
- 1 bunch of cilantro (chopped)
- 1 bunch of fresh basil (chopped)



Procedure:

Cook chicken breasts in a large frying pan. Add olives and mushrooms to the chicken 5 minutes before it is done.

(Save a few olives and mushrooms for garnish). Shred the chicken and olives/mushroom mixture into thin strips. Oil one Pyrex rectangular pan and then roll tortillas with the chicken mixture inside. Place chicken tortillas inside the Pyrex pan and repeat the process until the entire pan is filled with rolled tortillas (also known as tacos). Then proceed to pour all the hot sauce on top of the tortillas until the sauce covers them. Sprinkle the chopped ingredients evenly on top. Cover the final top layer with a thin layer of cream. Then top off with grated cheese. Place it in the oven for one hour at 350° degrees. Then enjoy!



The typical Venezuelan dish is called the "pabellón criollo," or creole national colors. This tasty meal is not only colorful, consisting of carne mechada (shredded meat), white rice, fried yellow plantains, arepas, and caraotas negras (black beans); it's also highly seasoned (but not hot!), nutritional, and easy to make. Here is the recipe for one of my favorite mainstays of the Venezuelan diet, carne mechada.

SALLY FELSMANN (Venezuela)



Carne Mechada

Shredded Meat

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds skirt steak
- 1 small onion, quartered
- 1 tomato, quartered
- 1 carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled

To finish the dish:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, thinly sliced
- 1/2 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin, or to taste
- 1/3 cup tomato pureé
- 3 tablespoons dry white wine
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Sazón Goya with cilantro & achiote
- Adobo Goya with pepper and cilantro

Procedure:

Combine the beef, quartered onion, tomato, carrot, and garlic cloves, with 6 cups of water in a large pot. Bring to a boil over a high heat. Skim off the scum that rises to the surface. Reduce the heat and simmer the beef, uncovered, skimming often, until tender, 30 to 40 minutes.

Strain the meat, reserving the broth for soup. Let the meat cool. Tear it along the grain, into pencil-thick strips.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the minced garlic, sliced onion, and bell peppers and cook until soft but not brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the meat, cumin, tomato pureé, wine, and salt and pepper. Cook the meat, well coated with the sauce, until the sauce is reduced and flavorful, for about 5 minutes. Season adding salt, pepper, Adobo and Sazón Goya to taste.





Mac this. Jack that. What-A-the other. Nothing, but nothing compares to a well-designed, over-the-edges-with-goodies, torta. It is the sandwich taken to a higher plain. Tortas are to be considered the sub sandwich of central Mexico. Me? I just call it the sandwich from the gods. OK. So, you may think I am taking it to the extreme. But, trust me, a good torta is hard to beat.

ALEX LOPEZ NEGRETE (Mexico)

Tortas

Ingredients & Procedure

Flat, oval-shaped teleras (buns) are opened up and the inside crumb gouged out. The bottom half is filled with frijoles refritos (refried beans – use Goya's pre-prepared variety – they're good and, hey, you don't have to boil beans all night) and, on top of that, go as many strips as you want of canned chiles (serranos, jalapeños, or chipotles), some sliced cold pork, shredded chicken or turkey, ham, chorizo or anything you may have on hand – along with sliced tomatoes, shredded lettuce, sour cream, plenty of avocado, and of course, slices of good Chihuahua or Manchego cheese.

Get creative. Have no fear. In fact, one of my favorite tortas is of *milanesa empanizada* (breaded veal). They make great lunches or meriendas (light dinners). Oh, by the way, since the concept of a good torta is so personal and subjective, you just can't screw it up. And, even if you think you might have, don't admit it.



Growing up in Mexico City offered me many wonderful experiences and opportunities. Among these was the fortune of attending a "bachillerato" (a preparatory school) called "Colegio Vista Hermosa". Named after its location high in the hills on the way to Toluca, looking over the sprawling metropolis, and with a breathtaking view of the Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl volcanoes, this school was also a wonderful place where kids of all ages, backgrounds and ambitions gathered to get a great education and have a lot of good, clean fun. Really. Once sophomores, students are allowed to design their own schedules. Needless to say, we would all schedule blocks of "free" time between classes so that we could go to the library, play dominoes, study, spend time in the cafeteria indulging in "chisme" (gossip), or simply going "de pinta" (play hooky). While going "de pinta" was something we did rarely (honest), one of the things we would do would be to gather at Sanborns. "What is a Sanborns?" you might ask. Well, if you took an Eckerd's, a Barnes & Noble, the fanciest Hallmark store, and a Denny's, and shook them all together, you'd get a Sanborns (weird retail concept, isn't it?). And, "What would you do at

Sanborns?" you might also curiously inquire. First, we would hide from teachers (or an older sister or brother who would be doing exactly as we were), and then rush to the cafeteria to devour wonderful "molletes" and "chocolate caliente" (Mexico's version of hot chocolate). Emotionally charged "chisme" and feeble attempts to "sacar plan" (get a date) would ensue.

Now, while "molletes" are extremely easy to prepare (even for me), those served at Sanborns by waitresses with paper neckpieces that made them look like badly wardrobed alien nurses from "Lost In Space," were truly spectacular. Was it the wonderful melted cheese? Or maybe the fresh "salsa" that would clear your sinuses? Could it have been the soft bread made that morning? Or, was it the adventure tied to it all? Probably all the above, as "molletes" have never again tasted quite like they did back then.

Nonetheless, I share the recipe for "molletes" with you so that you may enjoy a quick, easy-to-fix snack, which I theorize, brings about the best "chisme" sessions around.

ALEX LOPEZ NEGRETE (Mexico)

Molletes

Ingredients:

- 6 *bolillos*, hard rolls, or 4-inch lengths of French bread
- 3 ounces, approximately, of unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups of Frijoles Refritos, heated (Goya makes great ones in a can – why do it from scratch?)
- 1/2 pound of Chihuahua cheese, mild Cheddar, or Jack (grated)
- 2 cups of Salsa Mexicana

Procedure:

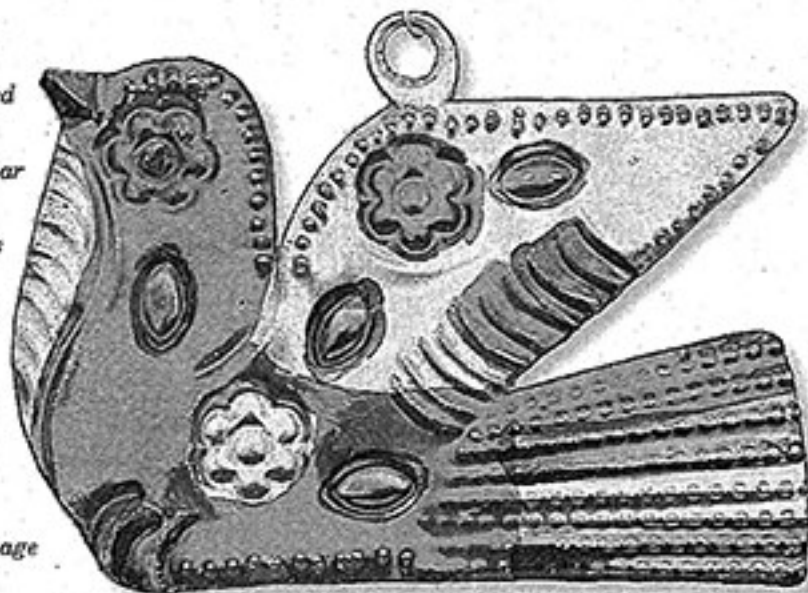
Preheat oven to 400.* Cut the rolls into halves horizontally and pull out the doughy crumb, leaving a shell just less than 1/2 inch thick around the outside. Place the rolls on a well-buttered baking sheet, about 1/4 inch apart. Brush the inside of the rolls with butter and bake until just beginning to crisp up around the outside (usually about 10 minutes).

Remove the rolls from the oven, fill with the refried beans and return to the oven for about 5 minutes, or until the beans heat through. Remove from the oven, sprinkle the top of the beans with the cheese, and just melt in the oven – don't brown them again! Serve as soon as you can, putting salsa on them to your liking (*al gusto*).



In our business, we have the duty, if not the obligation, to clarify and dispel misconceptions or misunderstandings about our culture, our people and our customs. I remember one time I was talking to a prospective client who asked me: "Do you think Hispanics would like my chocolate covered cookies? Do Hispanics even like chocolate?" I replied: "Like chocolate? We invented the stuff!" I then proceeded to explain to him that the name of chocolate actually came from the Náhuatl words "xocotl" (fruit) and "atl" (water) and that it was a beverage consumed by the Náhuatl rich and noble – but in moderation – as it was then thought to have mood altering qualities like the mushroom. I, of course, assured him that Hispanics would love his chocolate cookies. So, score one for Hispanic Cultural Enlightenment Team.

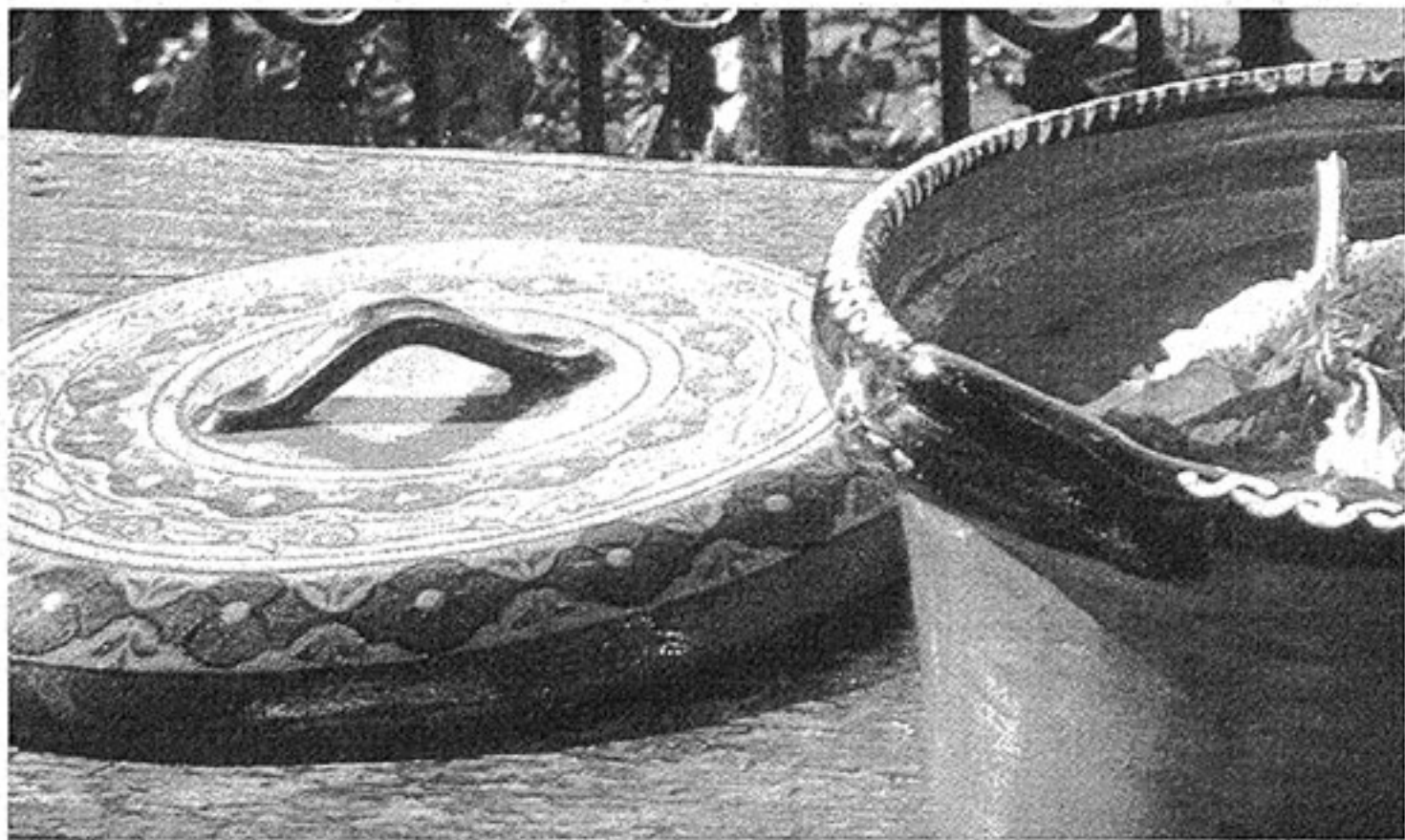
Aside from the chocolate candy product widely produced and consumed in Mexico, there is also the ever popular "chocolate caliente". "Chocolate caliente" is Mexico's equivalent to hot cocoa. Not only is it the ideal complement to "molletes", "tamalitos", or other typical Mexican brunch foods, but it is also the ultimate comfort food. For me, during my childhood and teenage



years, a well prepared "chocolate caliente" always seemed to make not-so-great report cards seem less apocalyptic, or lessened the humiliating sting from being ditched...again. Most importantly, it always made "meriendas" (light dinners) with my Mom, Dad and Sister moments that I will never forget.

Take the time to make it for your family. It's good stuff that makes you warm all over.

ALEX LOPEZ NEGRETE (Mexico)



Chocolate Caliente

Ingredients:

- An earthenware pot (nice, but not a must – a plain ol' pot will do)
- 1 cup of water or milk
- 1-to-1-1/2 ounce tablet of Mexican chocolate (Goya or La Abuelita brand, if possible)
- A *molinillo* or blender

Procedure:

Heat the water in the pot. As it comes to a boil, break the chocolate into it and stir until the chocolate has melted. Let it boil gently for about 5 minutes so that all the flavor comes out, then beat it until it is frothy. Serve and enjoy – slowly.

It's almost 6 am. And it's cold. Aside from the deep blue gash of light barely prying apart the curtains, the room is black. And I'm lying still as most everything in the hacienda, crushed under the weight of what seems like three hundred old and musty blankets. My nose is cold, too. It's the only exposed part of my body – a snorkel probing for air from the depths of my covers.

I'm in the heart of Mexico, at least seven hours' drive from any other sign of civilization. And, except for the fact that there's no central heat in Spanish colonial architecture, this photo assignment has gone well. Oh, yeah, I forgot. I did drop a Zeiss wide angle in the canyon yesterday morning. And Celso did get stung by a scorpion and had to be choppered out to Zacatecas. And my saddle sores are still, well, wet. And it's way, way too cold a morning for a light packer with no thermals!

But I know everything'll work out – at least today it will, for sure. I know it, because, through the frosty morning air my nose makes the confirmation. Down the hall, past all the cavernous rooms rented to all of us "capitalinos" fleeing the urban miasma, past the vault-like bathroom with it's incessant drips and flows, at the southeast corner of Hacienda Guajardo, lies the kitchen. And in it, a small, round, graying saint, her molcajete pummeling garden-grown vegetables into a miraculous salsa roja, her tortillas hissing and crackling madly in their oil, her hens' fresh eggs ripe and golden. Yes, today is definitely going to be a good day. Doña Lupita Trejo de Quintero – Lupe, yes, as in Guadalupe – is making huevos rancheros.

LUIS GONZALEZ (Mexico City)



Huevos Rancheros

Ranch-style eggs

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup oil
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped onion
- 1/2 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup finely chopped tomato
- 1 chile serrano, finely chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon each salt and freshly ground pepper
- Corn tortillas
- 2 eggs

Procedure:

Heat one tablespoon of the oil in a small saucepan, add the onion and garlic and sauté until transparent. Add the tomato and cook for two minutes. Add the chile, salt and pepper and cook another 3 minutes.

Heat the remaining oil in a skillet, add the tortilla, fry for 30 seconds and drain. Pour off most of the oil, add the eggs and fry until set.

Place the tortilla on a plate, top with the fried eggs and cover with the sauce. Serve hot.





ABEL GUERRA (United States)