

Mi Cocina, by Rick Martinez



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Arroz Rojo [*Toasted rice with tomato, carrots, and serrano*]

Arroz Rojo

Toasted rice with tomato, carrots, and serrano

Compared to all the arroz that I have eaten across México, I still firmly believe that my tía Lorena made the best arroz rojo. When I was little I watched her make it, and she told me the secret was her pot. She had been using that same cast-aluminum Dutch oven to make arroz for fifty years. No one in our family made rice like she did. Whenever there was a family gathering, she always brought the rice.

I think her secret was that she toasted her rice in that pot, dry and unrinsed, until it was really browned. She told me that when you make rice, you are going to want to stop toasting because the pan will be smoking and you will think the rice is burning. “It’s not,” she would say. “Keep going.” And so that is what I do and that is what you should do to coax a deep toasted and nutty flavor out of ordinary grocery store long-grain rice.

SERVES 4

2 cups long-grain white rice (7 oz/200 g)

¼ cup rendered lard, bacon fat, or vegetable oil

½ medium white onion (5.4 oz/154 g), chopped

2 medium carrots (6.2 oz/175 g), finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, finely grated

2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.56 oz/16 g)

¼ cup tomato paste

3 cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth

⅓ cup frozen green peas (1.97 oz/56 g), thawed

1 chile serrano (0.85 oz/24.3 g), halved lengthwise

- 1.** Heat a large skillet over high heat. Cook the dry, unwashed rice, stirring constantly, until toasted and very brown and nutty smelling, for about 8 minutes. Transfer the rice to a heatproof bowl and set aside.
- 2.** Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over medium heat, heat the lard. Add the onion, carrots, garlic, and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and just beginning to brown, for 6 to 8 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring and scraping, until fragrant and it deepens to a brick red color, for about 1 minute. Add the stock and bring to a boil.
- 3.** Stir in the rice and add the peas and chile serrano. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook, undisturbed, for 20 minutes. Quickly peek to see if all of the liquid has been absorbed; if not, replace the lid, continue to cook, and check again in 10 minutes. Once the liquid is absorbed, remove the pot from the heat and let sit, covered, for 20 minutes before fluffing with a fork to separate the grains. Serve warm.

Arroz Blanco con Mantequilla [*Buttery rice with poblano, carrots, and corn*]

Arroz Blanco con Mantequilla

Buttery rice with poblano, carrots, and corn

There are a few recipes in this book that have become my “go-to” and this is definitely one of them. It was very unexpected, too, because I love Arroz Rojo ([this page](#)) and eat it exclusively with all Mexican food. Or, rather, I used to. But this rice—slightly sweet from the carrots and onions and almost creamy thanks to the starchiness of the rice combined with the richness and incredible flavor of the butter—hit me hard and has stayed with me. I was in Durango and found an amazing restaurant that served regional dishes from around the state. One of the many things that I ate on my multiple visits were the enchiladas dulces, an iconic dish from Durango made with chile guajillo chocolate and piloncillo (dark brown sugar). Now, the enchiladas were good—a bit too sweet, even for me—but the star of that plate was the rice that accompanied them. I was blown away, and it was the butter that did it. Butter is not a commonly used ingredient in most of the country, but it is used in the dairy-rich regions of the northern states. Arroz blanco has since become my favorite Mexican rice.

SERVES 4

4 tablespoons unsalted butter (2 oz/57 g)
½ medium white onion (5.4 oz/154 g), chopped
2 medium carrots (6.1 oz/175 g), finely chopped
1 medium chile poblano (4 oz/125 g), stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
1 cup fresh corn kernels (5.7 oz/164 g)
1 garlic clove, finely grated
2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.56 oz/16 g)
2 cups long-grain white rice (7 oz/200 g)
3 cups homemade chicken stock or low-sodium chicken broth

- 1.** In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onion, carrots, chile poblano, corn, garlic, and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and just beginning to brown, for 8 to 10 minutes.
- 2.** Add the rice, stir to coat in the butter, and cook until the rice is opaque, for 4 minutes. Add the stock, stir to combine, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook undisturbed for 20 minutes. Quickly check to see if all of the liquid has been absorbed; if not, continue to cook and check again in 10 minutes. If the liquid has been absorbed, remove the pot from the heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes before fluffing with a fork to separate the grains and serving.

Arroz Verde

Herbed rice with scallion and cilantro

This rice is so beautiful and flavorful and, best of all, really easy. You are basically making a green blender broth to cook the rice and infuse it with flavor and color. You can substitute another leafy green herb in the same amount if you are not into cilantro.

SERVES 4

- 1 medium chile poblano (4.4 oz/127 g), stemmed, seeded, and coarsely chopped**
- 1 large scallion (0.84 oz/24 g), root end trimmed, and coarsely chopped**
- 1 garlic clove, peeled**
- 2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.56 oz/16 g)**
- 1 cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems (4.3 oz/120 g), divided**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 2 cups long-grain white rice (7 oz/200 g)**

1. In a blender, purée the chile poblano, scallion, garlic, salt, half of the cilantro, and 2½ cups water until smooth. Set aside until ready to use.

2. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, heat the oil. Add the rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until opaque but not browning, for about 5 minutes. Stir in the cilantro mixture and bring to a boil. Cover the pot and reduce the heat to low. Cook until all of the water has been absorbed, for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, finely chop the remaining cilantro. Fluff the rice with two forks. Toss the chopped cilantro into the rice before serving.



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Salsa Blanca [*Serrano cream with lime and cilantro*]

Chiles Habaneros Encurtidos [*Charred pickled habaneros*]

Salsa Blanca

Serrano cream with lime and cilantro

MAKES 1½ CUPS

- 1 oil-packed anchovy fillet
- ¼ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.07 oz/2 g), plus more to taste
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup crema, crème fraîche, or sour cream
- ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro (0.7 oz/20 g)
- 2 chiles serranos (0.74 oz/21 g), stemmed and finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lime zest
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1. Place the anchovy on a cutting board and sprinkle with the salt. Using the flat side of a knife, smash it until a paste forms. Scrape the mixture into a medium bowl.

2. Add the mayonnaise, crema, cilantro, chiles serranos, garlic, lime zest, and lime juice and whisk to combine. Season with salt to taste. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made up to 1 day ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Chiles Habaneros Encurtidos

Charred pickled habaneros

MAKES 1½ CUPS

- 4 medium chiles habaneros (1.5 oz/43 g), stemmed, seeded, and halved
- ½ medium white onion (6.9 oz/196 g), thinly sliced
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice (about 2 lemons)
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lime zest
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

1. Line a large cast-iron skillet with foil and heat over high until the pan is very hot, for about 2 minutes. Add the halved chiles habaneros and cook, turning occasionally, until charred on both sides, for 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board to cool.

2. When cool enough to handle, slice the chiles into thin strips and transfer to a medium bowl. Add the onion, garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, lime zest, lime juice, oil, sugar, salt, and oregano and toss together. Let sit, uncovered, for 30 minutes for the flavors to develop.

DO AHEAD: The encurtido can be made up to 1 day ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Salsa Tatemada

Charred tomato, onion, and serrano

MAKES 3 CUPS

8 medium Roma tomatoes (2 lb/907 g), cored and left whole

½ medium white onion (6.31 oz/179 g), halved

2 chiles serranos (1.7 oz/48.6 g), stemmed

4 garlic cloves, unpeeled

¼ cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves with tender stems (1.41 oz/40 g)

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice, or more to taste

¾ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g), or more to taste

Salsa Tatemada [*Charred tomato, onion, and serrano*]

Cebolla Morada Encurtida [*Pickled red onions with habanero*]

1. Line a large cast-iron skillet with a sheet of foil and heat the skillet over high. Add the tomatoes, onion, chiles serranos, and garlic to the hot, foil-lined pan and cook, using tongs to turn occasionally, until everything is charred on all sides, for about 3 minutes for the garlic, 4 to 5 minutes for the chiles, 6 to 8 minutes for the onion, and 8 to 10 minutes for the tomatoes. Transfer to a plate to cool. Once cool enough to handle, peel the garlic.

2. Add the tomatoes, onion, chiles serranos, peeled garlic, cilantro, lime juice, and salt to a blender and puree on low speed, until the salsa is almost smooth but some small pieces remain. Taste and season with more salt and lime juice if desired.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made up to 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Cebolla Morada Encurtida

Pickled red onions with habanero

MAKES 1 QUART

Curtido [*Lightly fermented cabbage with carrots, onion, and jalapeños*]

- 1 large red onion (12 oz/342 g), thinly sliced into rings**
- 1¼ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.28 oz/8 g),
divided**
- 1 chile habanero (0.37 oz/10.7 g), stemmed, seeded,
and halved**
- 1 cup fresh orange juice (about 4 oranges)**
- ½ cup fresh lime juice (about 4 limes)**
- 6 allspice berries**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican**

1. In a medium bowl, toss the onion and half of the salt until coated. Cover with hot water and stir to dissolve the salt. Let sit for 15 minutes.

2. Line a small skillet with foil to cover the bottom of the pan; heat over medium-high. Cook the chile skin side down, pressing down with a wooden spoon, until charred in spots, for 4 to 5 minutes (no need to char the flesh side). Transfer to a 1-quart glass jar or nonreactive container. If you like it extra spicy, chop the chile before adding to the jar.

3. Drain the onion, rinse with water, and add it to the jar. Add the orange and lime juices, allspice, oregano, and remaining salt. Cover and shake to combine. Chill for at least 3 hours before serving.

DO AHEAD: The encurtida can be made up to 1 week ahead.

Curtido

**Lightly fermented cabbage with carrots,
onion, and jalapeños**

MAKES 2 QUARTS

- ½ large head green cabbage (23 oz/652 g), cored and
thinly sliced**
- 4 medium carrots (8.5 oz/244 g), cut into 3-inch-long
sticks**
- ½ medium white onion (6.9 oz/196 g), coarsely
chopped**
- 4 chiles jalapeños (4.4 oz/133 g), stemmed and
quartered lengthwise**
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated**
- ¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.7 oz/20 g)**
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 2 whole cloves**

1. In a large bowl, toss together the cabbage, carrots, onion, jalapeños, garlic, salt, oregano, bay leaves, and cloves. Let sit for 30 minutes to wilt the cabbage.

2. Transfer to an airtight container (like a 2-quart mason jar) and press down firmly on the cabbage to release the juices; the liquid should be at or above the level of the vegetables. Fasten

Chiles Chipotles en Escabeche [*Pickled chipotles with cinnamon and cloves*]

Salsa de Aguacate [*Avocado cream with serranos and jalapeños*]

the lid and let sit at room temperature for at least 24 hours. The curtido will get tangier and funkier the longer it sits. I like it best after 4 days of fermentation. Refrigerate after 4 days.

Chiles Chipotles en Escabeche

Pickled chipotles with cinnamon and cloves

MAKES 1 QUART

30 dried chiles chipotles (2.89 oz/82 g)
1½ cups apple cider vinegar
4 garlic cloves, lightly crushed
2 fresh thyme sprigs
2 large bay leaves
4 whole cloves
1 3-inch stick canela or cassia cinnamon
2 teaspoons sugar
2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.56 oz/16 g)
1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
½ teaspoon black peppercorns

1. In a medium saucepan, bring the chiles chipotles and 2 cups water to a boil over high heat. Remove from the heat, cover, and let sit for about 30 minutes to soften the chiles.

2. Strain and discard the liquid. Transfer the chiles chipotles to a jar and top with the vinegar, garlic, thyme, bay leaves, cloves, canela, sugar, salt, oregano, peppercorns, and 1½ cups water. Cover the jar and shake to combine and dissolve the sugar and salt. Set aside at room temperature for at least 24 hours and up to 4 days.

DO AHEAD: The escabeche can be made up to 1 week ahead. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate after 4 days.

Salsa de Aguacate

Avocado cream with serranos and jalapeños

MAKES 3 CUPS

2 medium avocados (12.6 oz/359 g), peeled and seeded

Salsa de
Papaya y
Tomatillo
Cruda
[Papaya
and
tomatillos
with
habanero,
orange
juice, and
mint]

- 4 medium tomatillos (10.3 oz/294 g), husked, rinsed, and quartered**
- 2 medium scallions (1.69 oz/48 g), coarsely chopped**
- 1 to 2 chiles serranos (.4 oz/12 g each), stemmed and coarsely chopped**
- 1 to 2 chiles jalapeños (1.1 oz/33.2 g each), stemmed and coarsely chopped**
- 1 garlic clove, peeled**
- 1¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.42 oz/12 g), plus more to taste**

1. In a blender on medium-low speed, puree the avocados, tomatillos, scallions, chiles serranos, jalapeños, garlic, salt, and 1 cup water until smooth. Do not be tempted to blend above medium speed or your salsa will get airy and will have the texture of a smoothie. Taste and season with more salt if desired.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Salsa de Papaya y Tomatillo

Cruda

Papaya and tomatillos with habanero, orange juice, and mint

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 3 medium tomatillos (8 oz/226 g), husked, rinsed, and cut into ¼-inch pieces**
- ¼ firm-ripe papaya (8 oz/226 g), peeled, seeded and cut into ¼-inch pieces**
- ¼ medium white onion (3.5 oz/98 g), coarsely chopped**
- 3 chiles serranos (2.5 oz/72 g), stemmed and finely chopped**
- 3 garlic cloves, finely grated**
- 6 tablespoons fresh lime juice (3 to 4 limes)**
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint**
- Morton kosher salt**

1. In a medium bowl, toss the tomatillos, papaya, onion, chiles serranos, garlic, lime juice, and mint to combine. Season with salt to taste. Cover the bowl with plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour to allow the flavors to come together. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

DO AHEAD: The salsa cruda can be made up to 1 day ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Salsa Macha

Oil-roasted cashews, garlic, and chiles anchos

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 1½ cups vegetable oil**
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled**
- ¾ cup raw cashews (4 oz/115 g)**
- 5 large chiles anchos (2.7 oz/78 g), stemmed and seeded**
- 7 large chiles cascabeles (0.95 oz/27 g), stemmed and seeded**
- 2 tablespoons raw sesame seeds**
- 2 dried bay leaves, crumbled**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- 1 teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.21 oz/6 g)**

1. Heat the oil, garlic, and cashews in a large saucepan over medium until the garlic is golden brown, for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the heat. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the garlic and nuts to a heatproof bowl to cool.

2. Add the chiles to the pan with the oil. Cook over medium heat until the oil is slightly reddish and the chiles are brick red colored, for about 30 seconds. Remove from the heat. Using a

slotted spoon, transfer the chiles to the cashew mixture; let cool for 5 minutes.

3. Add the seeds to the hot oil and set aside; they will toast as they sit.

4. Puree the chile mixture with the bay leaves, oregano, and salt in a food processor until coarsely ground. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in the seed/oil mixture until the chiles are finely ground.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made 5 days ahead. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

Salsa Macha
[*Oil-roasted cashews, garlic, and chiles anchos*]

Salsa de Chipotle y Chile de Árbol [*Smoky dried jalapeños and chile de árbol stewed with tomatoes*]

Salsa de Chipotle y Chile de Árbol

Smoky dried jalapeños and chile de árbol stewed with tomatoes

MAKES 1½ CUPS

- 4 medium Roma tomatoes (1 lb/453 g), cored and roughly chopped**
- 2 chiles chipotles for mild or 4 for hot, stemmed**

Salsa de Chile de Árbol [*Chiles de árbol simmered with tangy tomatillos*]

2 chiles de árbol for mild to 4 for hot, stemmed and seeded for a milder flavor
¼ medium white onion (3.5 oz/98 g), roughly chopped
1 garlic clove, peeled
1 teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.21 oz/6 g), plus more to taste
Fresh lime juice (optional)

1. In a medium saucepan, combine the tomatoes, chipotles, chiles de árbol, onion, garlic, salt, and ½ cup water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook until the chiles and vegetables are soft, for about 15 minutes.

2. Remove from the heat, cover, and set aside for 10 minutes to cool slightly. Transfer to the jar of a blender and purée on medium-low until almost smooth. Taste and season with more salt and lime juice if desired.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Salsa de Chile de Árbol

Chiles de árbol simmered with tangy tomatillos

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

8 medium tomatillos (13.2 oz/375 g), husked, rinsed, and quartered
¼ medium white onion (3.5 oz/98 g), coarsely chopped
3 to 5 chiles de árbol (0.12 oz/3.2 g), stemmed and seeded
1 garlic clove, peeled
¾ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g), plus more to taste

1. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the tomatillos, onion, chiles de árbol, garlic, salt, and ½ cup water to a boil. Cover and simmer until the tomatillos are soft and have turned olive green, for about 15 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let sit covered for 10 minutes.

2. Transfer to a blender and purée on medium-low speed until smooth. Do not be tempted to blend above medium speed or

Salsa de Tomatillo [*Tomatillo, avocado, and poblano*]

your salsa will get airy and will have the texture of a smoothie. Taste and season with more salt if desired.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made up to 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Salsa de Tomatillo

Tomatillo, avocado, and poblano

MAKES 2 CUPS

7 medium tomatillos (12 oz/340 g), husked, rinsed, and quartered

1 medium chile poblano (4 oz/125 g), stemmed, seeded, and coarsely chopped

1 to 2 chiles serranos (0.85 oz/24.3 g each), stemmed and coarsely chopped

¼ medium white onion (3.45 oz/98 g), coarsely chopped

¼ medium avocado (1.48 oz/42 g), peeled and seeded

1 garlic clove, peeled

¼ cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves with tender stems (1.41 oz/40 g)

¾ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g), plus more to taste

1. In a blender on medium-low speed, purée the tomatillos, chile poblano, chiles serranos, onion, avocado, garlic, cilantro, and salt until smooth. Do not be tempted to blend above medium speed or your salsa will get airy and will have the texture of a smoothie. Taste and season with more salt if desired.

DO AHEAD: The salsa can be made 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Guacamole [*Smashed avocado, jalapeño, and lime*]

Recado de Todo Clase [*Ground spice blend with allspice, cinnamon, clove, and chile de árbol*]

Guacamole

Smashed avocado, jalapeño, and lime

MAKES 3 CUPS

- 3 medium avocados (18.9 oz/538 g), peeled and seeded**
- ¼ medium white onion (3.45 oz/98 g), finely chopped**
- 2 chiles jalapeños (2.2 oz/66.4 g), stemmed (and seeded if desired), finely chopped**
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice, or more to taste**
- ¾ teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g)**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro (.7 oz/20 g), plus more for serving**

1. Use a potato masher or fork to smash the avocados in a medium bowl or with a molcajete (a Mexican mortar and pestle) until very coarsely mashed. Mix in the onion, chiles jalapeños, garlic, lime juice, salt, and cilantro. Taste and add more lime juice, if desired. Serve sprinkled with chopped cilantro.

DO AHEAD: The guacamole can be made up to 1 day ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Recado de Todo Clase

Ground spice blend with allspice, cinnamon, clove, and chile de árbol

MAKES ¼ CUP

- 3 tablespoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican (1.2 oz/3.5 g)**
- 2 tablespoons black peppercorns (0.77 oz/22 g)**
- 8 allspice berries**
- 5 whole cloves**
- 1 1-inch stick canela or cassia cinnamon**
- 1 dried bay leaf**
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds**

1. In a spice mill or blender, grind the oregano, peppercorns, allspice, cloves, canela, bay leaf, and cumin until finely ground. Transfer to an airtight container and store in a cool, dark, dry spot for up to 3 months.

Recado Rojo [*Annatto seed paste flavored with citrus, herbs, and spices*]

Recado Rojo

Annatto seed paste flavored with citrus, herbs, and spices

MAKES ½ CUP

- 2 chiles de árbol, stemmed
- 4 whole cloves
- 2 bay leaves
- ¼ cup annatto seeds
- 2 teaspoons coriander seeds
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.21 oz/6 g)
- 4 garlic cloves, finely grated
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest

1. In a blender, puree the chiles, cloves, bay leaves, annatto seeds, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, oregano, peppercorns, and salt until finely ground. Transfer to an airtight container and stir in the garlic, vinegar, lime zest, and orange zest until a thick paste forms.

DO AHEAD: The recado can be made up to 1 month ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.



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Pollo al Pastor

Spicy-sweet chipotle-roast chicken with onion and pineapple



I was walking the streets in the city of Guanajuato and saw a rostería that was selling rotisserie pollo al pastor. Al pastor is the meat filling of one of the most iconic tacos in the country. It's made by marinating thin cuts of pork steak in chiles, spices, and Recado Rojo ([this page](#)) and layering the steaks on a

pineapple]

Pollo al Pastor [*Spicy-sweet chipotle-roast chicken with onion and*

vertical spit called a trompo, which was actually brought to México by Lebanese immigrants in the late nineteenth century. The trompos are topped with onion and pineapple and spin around a propane fire; the pork chars and caramelizes as it spins.

At this rostería, the vendor was using chicken instead of pork and had marinated the chicken in his version of an al pastor marinade. It was an incredible sight, hundreds of spinning brick-red chickens roasting over a live wood fire. I stood there mesmerized by the sight and the smell.

I knew I had to re-create this rotisserie-style al pastor for the book, and it has since become my favorite recipe. It is so good and has a totally unexpected flavor, being at once familiar because of the pastor marinade, but surprising because it's married to a perfectly roasted and juicy chicken with chile-stained meat that just falls off the bone.

SERVES 6 TO 8

- 2 tablespoons Recado Rojo, [this page](#), or achiote paste**
- 3 garlic cloves, finely grated**
- 2 canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, finely chopped, plus 2 tablespoons adobo sauce**
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar**
- 2½ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.7 oz/20 g), divided**
- 1 tablespoon agave syrup or honey**
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 1 whole chicken (4 lb/1.8 kg)**

- 1 medium pineapple (2.2 lb/988 g), peeled, quartered, cored, and thinly sliced crosswise**
- 1 large white onion (14.6 oz/416 g), halved and thinly sliced**

FOR SERVING

- **Warm Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)**
- **Salsa de Aguacate, [this page](#)**
- **Salsa de Chile de Árbol, [this page](#)**
- **Cilantro leaves**

- 1.** In a medium bowl and using a fork, break up the recado rojo so no large clumps remain. Add the garlic, chiles, adobo sauce, vinegar, and 2 teaspoons of the salt and stir, using the fork to smash into a smooth paste. Vigorously whisk the agave syrup and ¼ cup of the olive oil into the achiote mixture until completely smooth.
- 2.** Pat the chicken dry with paper towels. Place breast-side up in the center of a 13 × 9-inch baking pan. Liberally brush the chicken with the achiote sauce, getting into every nook and cranny, as well as inside the cavity. The chicken should be completely coated, and there shouldn't be any sauce remaining. Tie the ends of the drumsticks together with kitchen twine; tuck the wings underneath the back.
- 3.** In a medium bowl, toss the pineapple, onion, and the remaining 2 tablespoons oil; season with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Arrange around the chicken. Let sit at room

Enchilada Mineras [*Salsa guajillo-dipped tortillas with roasted chicken and queso fresco*]

temperature for 1 hour; if you have more time, cover the pan (skip letting it sit at room temperature) and refrigerate for at least 3 hours and up to 12. Uncover and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour before roasting.

4. Arrange a rack in the center of the oven; preheat to 350°F. Roast the chicken, tossing the onion and pineapple with the juices in the pan halfway through, until the pineapple is lightly browned, the chicken is deep burgundy, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the breasts registers 155°F (the temperature will climb to 165°F as the chicken rests), for 60 to 70 minutes.

5. Remove the pan from the oven and let the chicken rest uncovered in the pan for at least 20 minutes and up to 2 hours. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and carve. Serve with roasted pineapple and onions, tortillas, salsas, and cilantro.

Enchiladas Mineras

Salsa guajillo-dipped tortillas with roasted chicken and queso fresco



Before driving northwest of Mexico City to Guanajuato, I asked all my friends and social followers to recommend their favorite places to eat. One hundred percent said, “You have to eat at Las Originales Enchiladas Mineras Doña Lupe.” Enchiladas in México do not have any resemblance to the ones in the US. Don’t get me wrong, I love a good Tex-Mex enchilada platter, but Mexican enchiladas are much lighter and easier to make.

Mexican enchiladas are almost never baked; occasionally they are put under the broiler to melt and brown cheese, but usually they are corn tortillas dipped in a chile sauce and then

stuffed with a light filling. The word enchilada means to be bathed or surrounded in a chile sauce or paste.

Doña Lupe's restaurant seats about eight people at a communal table. She makes everything to order—and by everything I mean the three-item menu consisting of enchiladas mineras, with or without chicken, and on Saturdays and Sundays, pozole rojo. The intoxicating smell that wafted down the street made it easy to find this tiny spot. Years of practice have made her incredibly skilled at frying and bathing the tortillas. Like everyone said it'd be, eating at Doña Lupe's was a life-changing experience.

SERVES 4

8 Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)

5 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

2¼ cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth

5 large chiles guajillos (1 oz/30 g), stemmed and seeded

2 medium chiles cascabeles (0.25 oz/5 g), stemmed and seeded

2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed

2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.5 oz/16 g)

½ teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

4 large chicken thighs (6 oz/170 g each)

2 medium Yukon Gold potatoes (12 oz/340 g), peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces

3 medium carrots (8 oz/226 g), cut into 2-inch pieces

½ large white onion (7 oz/200 g), sliced

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

12 ounces (340 g) queso fresco or Cotija, crumbled

FOR SERVING

→ **Shredded iceberg lettuce**

→ **Chopped onion**

→ **Crema**

→ **Chiles Jalapeños en Escabeche, [this page](#)**

1. Brush both sides of the tortillas with 2 tablespoons of the oil. Heat a large skillet over medium-high. Working in batches, sear the tortillas until they're lightly browned and starting to crisp, for about 1 minute per side. Set the tortillas aside until you're ready to assemble.

2. In a medium saucepan, bring the broth, chiles guajillos, chiles cascabeles, garlic, salt, oregano, and pepper to a boil. Remove from the heat, cover, and let sit until the chiles are soft, for 30 minutes. Transfer to a blender and puree until smooth.

3. In a large heavy pot over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil. Cook the chicken, skin-side down, until deep golden brown, for 5 to 6 minutes. Turn the pieces over and brown the other side, for 5 to 6 minutes more. Transfer the chicken to a plate. If there isn't at least 1 tablespoon of fat in the pot, add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil along with the potatoes, carrots,

and onion. Cook, tossing occasionally, until the vegetables are lightly browned, for 4 to 6 minutes.

4. Pour the chile puree into the pot with the vegetables; scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Nestle the chicken into the sauce and bring the mixture to a boil. Cover the pot, reduce the heat to low, and simmer until the chicken is completely tender and cooked through, for about 30 minutes.

5. Stir the vinegar into the pot and mound the chicken and vegetables on one side so there's room on the other side to dip the tortillas into the sauce.

6. Using tongs and working with one tortilla at a time, dip into the chile sauce, turning to coat, and cook in the sauce until softened (they will soften more as they sit), for about 3 seconds per side. Transfer the tortillas to a baking sheet as you go. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the queso fresco across the center of each tortilla and fold over like a taco.

7. Divide the enchiladas among four plates and spoon more chile sauce over top. Top with lettuce, more onion, crema, and any remaining queso. Serve with the chicken, vegetables, remaining sauce, and pickled jalapeños.

Gaspacho Moreliana [*Mango, pineapple, and jicama salad with an orange-lime dressing*]

5. Smash half of an avocado onto the top half of each toasted cemita so that it sticks to the bread. Set a pork cutlet on each bottom half. Top the pork with the chipotle, onion, pápalo, queso, ham, and a generous drizzle of chipotle brine. Top the cemita, cut in half, and serve.

Gaspacho Moreliano

Mango, pineapple, and jicama salad with an orange-lime dressing



When I started to write this headnote, my mouth began to water. West of Mexico City, in the city of Morelia, there is an area in el Centro, the historic district, near the cathedral where gaspacho (yes, it's spelled with an s) stands line the streets. Young men were working below each gaspacho sign, meticulously and quickly cutting not tomatoes and red bell peppers to make the famously chilled Spanish gazpacho soup, but instead mango, jicama, and pineapple into tiny and perfect cubes to make gaspacho, a sweet and salty fruit snack.

By midday, the streets are filled with people carrying large plastic cups mounded with tiny cut fruit and topped with chile

and queso Cotija.

Gaspacho showcases the incredibly sweet mangoes that grow in the state and Cotija, the salty-sharp cheese that is produced there as well. My version is more like a summery side dish than a grab-and-go midday snack. Since I really don't want to spend a lot of time cubing fruit, I use larger slices. I love gaspacho so much that I pair it with everything from grilled meat to fish.

SERVES 4 TO 6

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
1 garlic clove, finely grated
1 chile de árbol (0.03 oz/0.8g), stemmed and finely chopped, or ¼ teaspoon red chile flakes
1 teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.21 oz/6 g)
1 large Tommy Atkins mango (14.5 oz/416 g), or 2 Ataúlfo or champagne mangoes, peeled, seeded, and thinly sliced
¼ medium pineapple (10 oz/287 g), peeled, cored, and sliced into ½-inch pieces
½ large jícama (7.5 oz/214 g), peeled and thinly sliced
¼ medium white onion (3 oz/86 g), chopped
½ cup fresh mint leaves

FOR SERVING

→ **Crumbled queso Cotija**

→ **Tajín**

→ **Lime wedges**

- 1.** In a liquid measuring cup, whisk together the oil, lime juice, orange zest, orange juice, garlic, chile de árbol, and salt until the salt has dissolved.
- 2.** In a large bowl, gingerly toss the mango, pineapple, jícama, onion, mint, and half of the dressing. Let sit for 5 minutes to let flavors come together.
- 3.** Serve with any additional dressing drizzled over and top with

Tamales Oaxaqueños [*Steamed corn dumplings filled with shredded chicken and sauce*]

Tamales Oaxaqueños

Steamed corn dumplings filled with shredded chicken and sauce



In this recipe, since I am using chicken as the main ingredient in the filling, I decided to include a recipe for a cooked chicken

and homemade stock. Of course you can use your own homemade chicken stock or swap in a different filling for the chicken (roasted vegetables are also delicious in a tamal).

I am offering you three options for the salsa (sauce) for the filling. The most common Oaxacan tamales are made with mole, salsa tomatillo, or salsa guajillo.

For the 24 tamales in this recipe, you need a total of 6 cups of salsa. Each of the two salsa recipes makes about 6 cups, so choose only one salsa or cut each recipe in half and make half red and half green! Or, if you choose the mole (option 3), you can use 6 cups of that, too! Choose your own tamal adventure and make sure to invite friends and family to help you cook and eat them. Turn it into a tamalada (tamal party)—spread the masa and spread the love!

MAKES 24 TAMALES

FILLING OPTION 1: SALSA TOMATILLO

- 4 cups Chicken Stock (recipe follows) or other low-sodium chicken stock**
- 7 medium tomatillos (12 oz/340 g), husked, rinsed, and quartered**
- ¼ medium white onion (3.45 oz/98 g), coarsely chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed**
- 1 chile habanero, stemmed, seeded, and halved**
- ⅓ cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves with tender stems (1.76 oz/50 g)**
- 1½ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.31 oz/9 g)**

FILLING OPTION 2: SALSA GUAJILLO

- 5 cups Chicken Stock (recipe follows) or other low-sodium chicken stock**
- 6 large chiles guajillos (1.26 oz/36 g), stemmed and seeded**
- 2 large chiles anchos (1.2 oz/35 g), stemmed and seeded**
- ¼ medium white onion (3.45 oz/98 g), coarsely chopped**
- 4 garlic cloves, lightly crushed**
- 3 chiles de árbol, stemmed (seeded for less heat)**
- 1½ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.31 oz/9 g)**
- 1 dried bay leaf**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican**

FILLING OPTION 3: MOLE

- 6 cups Mole Coloradito, [this page](#), or Mole Amarillo, [this page](#)**

FOR THE MASA

- 1¾ cups Chicken Stock (recipe follows) or other low-sodium chicken stock, warmed**
- 1¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.42 oz/12 g)**
- 3 pounds (1.36 kg) fresh coarse-grind corn masa for tamales, “unprepared” (see Cook’s Note, [this page](#))**
- 1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons melted lard or vegetable oil**

FOR THE TAMALES

1 pound (453 g) fresh or thawed frozen banana leaves, washed and patted dry
3 cups shredded cooked chicken (recipe follows)

1. MAKE THE SALSA TOMATILLO: In a large saucepan over high heat, bring the stock, tomatillos, onion, garlic, habanero, cilantro, and salt to a boil, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook until the vegetables are very tender and almost falling apart, for 20 to 25 minutes.

2. Transfer the tomatillo mixture to a blender and puree on medium-low speed until completely smooth. Set the salsa aside until you're ready to assemble.

3. MAKE THE SALSA GUAJILLO: In a large saucepan, bring the stock, chiles guajillos, chiles anchos, onion, garlic, chiles de árbol, salt, bay leaf, and oregano to a boil. Cover the pot, remove from the heat, and let sit until chiles are tender, for about 30 minutes.

4. Transfer the chile mixture to the jar of a blender and puree on medium-low speed until completely smooth. Set the salsa aside until you're ready to assemble.

5. MAKE THE MASA: In a 2-cup liquid measure, whisk the stock and salt until the salt is dissolved. In a large bowl, mix the masa, stock mixture, and lard with your hands until the mixture looks shiny and smooth and is the consistency of thick cake frosting

and is easily spreadable, for about 5 minutes. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside.

6. MAKE THE TAMALES: Unfold a banana leaf (it should be 2 to 3 feet long). If you have gas burners, heat one gas burner on high. (If you don't have a gas burner, see the cook's note on [this page](#).) Hold the leaf at each end and very slowly move the leaf over the flame, leaving it in one place until you see light charring coming through the top. Continue moving the leaf slowly for 3 to 7 seconds to see char marks in one spot, or until the entire leaf is charred. Repeat with the remaining banana leaves.

7. Remove the center rib and cut the leaves into 12 × 14-inch pieces; reserve the ribs and scraps. If your leaves are narrow, double up and offset the leaves to get the right size.

8. Arrange the leaf so a long side is facing you. Measure out ½ cup of masa and place it onto the center of the leaf. Using a table knife, offset spatula, or rubber spatula, spread the masa into a thin, even layer, covering most of the leaf but leaving a 2-inch border on all sides; the edges don't have to be straight or neat. Visualize the tamal in the center of the leaf, about 6 inches long by 4 inches wide. Arrange 2 tablespoons of chicken in the center of that space. Top with ¼ cup salsa or mole.

9. Fold a long side of the leaf over the filling, then fold over the other long side to cover. Hold the tamal seam-side up and fold the two short ends over the tamal. Set the tamal on a sheet pan seam- and fold-side down. Repeat to assemble the remaining tamales.

10. Place a metal basket, steamer basket, or rack insert into a tamal pot, stockpot, or pasta pot. Fill with enough water so it comes up to just below the basket (you don't want the water to touch the tamales). Line the bottom of the basket with the reserved banana leaf scraps to cover any exposed metal. Arrange and stack the tamales, seam-side down, in the basket. Cover the tamales with a damp kitchen towel and tuck it inside the pot. Cover the pot and bring the water to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low to keep the water at a simmer and steam for 45 minutes, checking the water level occasionally and adding more water as needed to keep some liquid in the pot.

11. Carefully remove the kitchen towel and plastic. Remove a tamal and set aside to cool for 3 minutes. (If you don't let the tamal rest before checking, the masa will stick to the leaf and appear gummy.) Unfold the leaf—if the masa sticks, it's not ready. If it's not ready, carefully refold and return the tamal to the pot. Cook for 5 minutes more, then check again. If the leaf peels back easily and no masa sticks, your tamales are done. Remove from the heat, uncover the pot, and let sit for 10 minutes before serving.

COOK'S NOTE: If you are using fresh masa, look or ask for “unprepared” masa. This means that nothing has been added to the dough and the only thing in it is corn, water, and lime. “Prepared” masa has added lard and seasonings. I always use “unprepared” so that I can control the amount of lard, seasoning, and salt.

Shredded Chicken and Stock

MAKES ABOUT 3 QUARTS STOCK AND 4 CUPS SHREDDED CHICKEN

- 1 whole chicken (3½ lb/1.58 kg)**
- ½ large white onion (7 oz/200 g), halved**
- 4 garlic cloves, lightly crushed**
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns**
- 1 teaspoon allspice berries**
- 3 whole cloves**
- 3 fresh epazote, oregano, marjoram, or thyme sprigs**
- 2 hoja santa leaves (optional)**

1. In a large heavy pot over high heat, bring 4 quarts water, the chicken, onion, garlic, peppercorns, allspice, cloves, epazote, and hoja santa (if using) to a boil; reduce to a simmer and cook, skimming occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through (if the chicken isn't completely submerged, you can turn it once or twice) and the legs wiggle easily in their joints, for 40 to 50 minutes.

2. Let the chicken cool slightly and transfer to a cutting board. Set the stock aside. When the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones and shred into bite-size pieces. Discard the skin and bones. Transfer the meat to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and set aside until ready to use.

3. Strain the stock through a fine-mesh sieve and set aside until ready to use.

DO AHEAD: The stock can be made 3 days ahead. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate or freeze for up to 3 months. Chicken can be made 3 days ahead. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate.



1. Toast the banana leaves.



2. Spread with an even layer of masa.



3. Top with chicken and drizzle of salsa.



4. Fold the leaf over the filling.



5. Fold the ends over the tamal.



6. Arrange seam- and fold-side down.

Albóndigas en Chipotle [*Herb and cheese meatballs with a smoky tomato-chipotle sauce*]



Albóndigas en Chipotle

Herb and cheese meatballs with a smoky tomato-chipotle sauce

I am a huge fan of meatballs no matter what country they come from. The best ones I had in Mexico were at the Mercado Juan Sabines in Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the state of Chiapas. It was a cool afternoon just before Christmas, and I had driven into Chiapas from Oaxaca. I was planning to eat only the typical foods from the region. When I saw albóndigas, I couldn't resist; I had to have them. They were brothy, spicy, and smoky from chile chipotle. I was so incredibly happy. Because I love them so much, I am also super critical of bad balls. I have made thousands of meatballs in my life and one of the most important things that I have learned over the years is you need to add fat and moisture to the ground meat. I like using dairy because it adds both moisture and milkfat, which also tenderizes the meat. I also add bread crumbs to hold on to the moisture and fat as the meatballs cook and prevent them from getting tough and dry (and no one wants tough, dry balls).

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 10 large Roma tomatoes (2 lb/990 g), cored**
- 2 to 5 canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, plus 2 tablespoons adobo sauce**
- Morton kosher salt**
- 1 cup panko or fresh bread crumbs**
- ⅓ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro (1.7 oz/50 g), plus more for serving**
- ½ cup crumbled queso fresco (2.15 oz/61 g), plus more for serving**
- ½ large white onion (5.7 oz/162 g), grated on the large holes of a box grater, divided**
- 5 garlic cloves, finely grated, divided**
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ¾ teaspoon cumin seeds**
- 1 cup crema or sour cream**
- 1 pound (453 g) ground beef (20% fat)**
- 1 pound (453 g) ground pork (20% fat if possible)**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more for shaping**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- 1½ cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth**

FOR SERVING

- **Warm Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)**
- **Arroz Rojo, [this page](#)**
- **Frijoles de Olla, [this page](#)**

1. Line a large skillet with a sheet of foil and heat the pan over medium-high (the foil prevents the tomatoes from burning and sticking to the bottom of the skillet and will keep the skillet clean as you roast them). Add the tomatoes and cook, turning occasionally, until charred on all sides, for about 16 minutes.

2. Transfer the tomatoes to a blender. Add the chipotle peppers (start with two), adobo sauce, and 1½ teaspoons salt (0.31 oz/9 g) and puree on medium-low speed until almost smooth. Don't be tempted to increase the speed or you will get an airy, smoothie consistency; it's better to have a chunky salsa than a smoothie! Taste, and if you want the salsa hotter, add more chipotles and puree to combine. Set the salsa aside until ready to use.

3. In a small bowl, whisk together the panko, cilantro, queso, ¼ cup onion, half of the garlic, 1½ teaspoons salt (0.31 oz/9 g), black pepper, and cumin until combined. Stir in the crema and set aside.

4. Add the beef and pork to a large bowl. Using two forks, begin “pulling” the ground meat apart as if you were shredding pulled pork, breaking up the clumps and bringing the two meats together without compacting the meat into a dense mass. Continue to pull the meat apart until thoroughly mixed and no clumps of beef or pork remain. Pour the crema mixture into the “pulled” meat and, using the same technique, mix until all of the ingredients are completely and evenly incorporated.

5. Lightly oil your hands. Working with one at a time, scoop out portions of the meat mixture with a ¼-cup measuring cup or very large ice cream scoop. Roll the meat mixture gently between your hands into balls and arrange them on a sheet pan.

6. In a large nonstick skillet over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil. Add half of the meatballs and cook, using tongs or a fork to turn and roll them occasionally, until browned on all sides, for about 5 minutes. They will not be cooked through, just browned on the outside. Return the meatballs to the sheet pan and repeat with the remaining meatballs. Set aside until ready to add to the sauce.

7. In the same skillet, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and cook the remaining onion, garlic, and oregano, stirring frequently and scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan, until beginning to brown, for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the stock, reserved salsa, and meatballs with any accumulated juices. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until the meatballs are cooked through, for 30 to 40 minutes. Taste and season with more salt if desired.

8. Serve hot with warm corn tortillas, arroz rojo, and frijoles de olla and topped with crumbled queso fresco and chopped cilantro.

Chileatole Verde [Roasted vegetables in a rich corn broth made from fresh and dried corn and chiles]

Chileatole Verde

Roasted vegetables in a rich corn broth made from fresh and dried corn and green chiles



Chileatole is a pre-Hispanic dish whose origin is a broth of chile thickened with nixtamalized corn (corn treated with sodium hydroxide also called lime to soften it so it can be ground into masa). Today, every region has its own style of chileatole—some are served as soups, some as beverages, some are sweet instead of savory, some are made with meat. My version is green from fresh green chiles and similar to one I had in Oaxaca that was served as a sauce over roasted vegetables. I use both fresh corn and instant masa to thicken and flavor the dish. To turn it into a soup, increase the amount of water and reserve half of the corn kernels to add to the blended soup at the end, then stir in the roasted vegetables before serving.

SERVES 4

- 2¼ pounds (1 kg) summer or winter squash, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 medium head red cabbage (2 lb/907 g), cored and cut into 2-inch wedges
- 1 medium white onion (13.3 oz/392 g), cut into thin wedges
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Morton kosher salt
- 1 medium chile poblano (4 oz/125 g), stemmed, seeded, and chopped
- 1 chile jalapeño (1.1 oz/33.2 g), stemmed and chopped
- 1 medium tomatillo (1.73 oz/49 g), husked, rinsed, and quartered

3 medium scallions (2.68 oz/76 g), root ends trimmed, chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely grated
4 ears corn, kernels cut from the cobs, cobs reserved
3 fresh epazote sprigs or 1 fresh rosemary sprig
1 hoja santa leaf or 1 mint sprig
½ cup harina de maíz, such as Bob's Red Mill Masa Harina (1.76 oz/55 g)

1. Arrange a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 450°F. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

2. On the prepared pan, toss the squash, cabbage, and onion with ¼ cup of the oil. Season generously with salt. Roast, tossing occasionally, until tender and browned, for 40 to 50 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, in a large heavy pot over medium-high, heat the remaining ¼ cup oil. Add the chile poblano, chile jalapeño, tomatillo, scallions, garlic, and 1 tablespoon kosher salt (0.70 oz/20 g) and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and just beginning to brown, for 5 to 6 minutes.

4. Add the corn and cook, stirring, until the corn is tender, for about 7 minutes. Add 6 cups water, the reserved cobs (there is a lot of flavor in the cobs), epazote, and hoja santa; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the vegetables are tender and the flavors have come together, for about 30 minutes.

5. Remove the cobs (and compost them). Transfer the chile mixture to a blender and carefully blend until completely smooth. Return the blended mixture to the same pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Whisk in the masa harina, whisking constantly until incorporated and no lumps remain. Cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened to the consistency of a cream gravy, for about 5 minutes. If the chileatole is too thick, whisk in more water, ¼ cup at a time until that consistency is achieved. Season with salt.

6. Divide the chileatole verde among bowls. Top with the roasted vegetables.

Ha' Sikil P'ak

Roasted pumpkin seed and habanero spread
with orange and lime juice



with orange and lime juice]

Ha' Sikil P'ak [*Roasted pumpkin seed and habanero spread*

I debated on whether to include this recipe in the salsa section since it is often served as a starter and is becoming more and more common in Mexican restaurants in the US. But it is such an iconic Mayan dish and is featured so prominently throughout the Yucatán—everywhere from simple beach stalls to fine dining establishments—that I decided to keep it here. It is really delicious and can be served with totopos or as a condiment to fish or chicken.

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 1½ cups pepitas/raw pumpkin seeds (6.67 oz/189 g)**
- 3 large Roma tomatoes (11 oz/314 g), cored and left whole**
- ¼ large white onion (3.3 oz/94 g)**
- 1 chile habanero (0.37 oz/10.7 g), stemmed, seeded, and halved**
- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled**
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems (1 oz/30 g)**
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes), plus more to taste**
- ¼ teaspoon finely grated orange zest**
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice (about 1 orange), plus more to taste**
- 1 teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.21 oz/6 g), plus more to taste**

FOR SERVING

- **Totopos de maíz**
- **Plantain chips**

- 1.** Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Toast the pumpkin seeds, tossing frequently, until very fragrant and browned and beginning to pop, for 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a blender and blend on low speed until the seeds are finely chopped and beginning to turn into a paste.
- 2.** Line the skillet with a large sheet of foil to cover the bottom (this will prevent the tomatoes from burning and sticking). Set over high heat and add the tomatoes, onion, chile habanero, and garlic and cook, turning occasionally, until charred on all sides, for about 5 minutes for the garlic, 9 minutes for the onion, and 16 minutes for the tomatoes. Transfer to the blender with the pumpkin paste. Puree on medium-low speed until smooth.
- 3.** Add the cilantro, lime juice, orange zest, orange juice, and salt and puree until the cilantro is finely chopped and the mixture is the consistency of hummus. Taste and season with more orange and/or lime juice and salt if desired.
- 4.** Serve with the totopos and plantain chips.

DO AHEAD: The ha' sikil p'ak can be made 2 days ahead. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Sopa de Lima [*Rich chicken soup with chiles and lime topped with crumbled fried corn tortillas*]

Sopa de Lima

Rich chicken soup with chiles and lime topped with crumbled fried corn tortillas



It has been a constant struggle of mine to create recipes representative of a place, knowing that the ingredients used in the place of origin do not exist anywhere else. For some recipes, like mole negro from Oaxaca, I feel more comfortable saying that it's best to go to the place and experience it for yourself

firsthand the way it was meant to be served, rather than to make something that bears no resemblance to the original dish. This is not one of those dishes—and I'm so proud of how I was able to use grocery store limes and Recado de Todo Clase ([this page](#)) to replicate the allspice and clove, sour-lime flavor of the rich chicken soup. Traditionally limas are used, a variety of citrus that has a uniquely sour flavor while also tasting of cinnamon, allspice, and clove. They're hard to source outside of the Yucatán, but I have to say, this chicken and green chile soup is very close to what you would experience using limas.

SERVES 6

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1⅓ pounds (600 g) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 4 large)**
- ½ medium white onion (6.1 oz/175 g), chopped**
- 1 large Roma tomato (5.9 oz/170 g), cored and chopped**
- 1 large Anaheim, cubanelle, or green bell pepper (4.2 oz/120 g), stemmed, seeded, and chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated**
- 1¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.42 oz/12 g)**
- 1½ teaspoons Recado de Todo Clase, [this page](#)**
- 6 cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth**
- 2 limes, very thinly sliced**

FOR SERVING

- **Chopped cilantro**
- **Cebolla Morada Encurtida, [this page](#)**
- **Sliced chile habanero**
- **6 corn tortillas, fried, or tostadas, broken into small pieces**

1. In a large heavy pot over medium-high heat, heat the oil. Cook the chicken, skin-side down, until browned on both sides, for 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

2. To the same pot, add the onion, tomato, Anaheim pepper, garlic, salt, and recado de todo clase and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomato begins to break down and the vegetables begin to brown, for 8 to 10 minutes.

3. Return the chicken and any accumulated juices to the pot, add the stock, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the chicken is cooked through and the flavors have come together, for about 30 minutes.

4. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the chicken to a cutting board and let sit until cool enough to handle. Shred the meat (discard the skin and bones). Stir the shredded chicken into the soup.

5. Divide the soup among six bowls and top each with 3 lime slices, cilantro, cebolla morada encurtida, habanero, and tortillas.

COOK'S NOTE: The soup will become more acidic and take on more lime flavor as it sits, but after about 10 minutes, the pith will make soup go bitter, so it's best to discard the lime slices after the desired level of lime flavor is reached (kind of like steeping tea). Squeeze additional lime wedges into the soup for more tart lime flavor.

Carne Asada [*Marinated beef grilled with chorizo and jalapeños served with grilled quesadillas*]

Carne Asada

Marinated beef grilled with chorizo and jalapeños served with grilled quesadillas



Carne asada is a part of a larger ritual called la parrillada norteña (the northern barbecue) in the northern states of México, much in the same way that a backyard cookout or barbecue is a ritual in the southern United States. There is a fire, some meat, plentiful beer, a grillmaster, and always family

and friends. Even in my adopted hometown of Mazatlán, on Sundays families roll their grills right onto the street, seemingly to attract the neighbors. The meaty smoke wafting down my block, laughter, and later into the evening, singing, fills the neighborhood. For this reason, everyone knows to always grill more than you think you need, because friends and neighbors—even if not invited, will always show up.

If you haven't tried carne asada inside a quesadilla, get ready for a life-changing experience. Quesadillas are always served at parrilladas norteñas and at taquerías that serve carne asada. In this recipe, you and your guests have the option of making tacos with the carne asada or stuffing the meat inside a toasted quesadilla with all of that melted cheese goodness.

SERVES 8

- ⅓ cup fresh lime juice (about 3 limes), plus more for grilling**
- ⅓ cup fresh orange juice (about 2 oranges)**
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for grilling**
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- 1¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.42 oz/12 g), plus more for grilling**
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 medium white onion (12.6 oz/358 g), thinly sliced**
- 4 garlic cloves, finely grated**
- 3.3 pounds (1.5 kg) mixed cuts of beef, such as flanken-cut short ribs, rib-eye, New York strip,**

skirt, and/or flank (see Cook's Note)
1 pound (453 g) fresh chorizo links (about 4) or your favorite sausage
8 large chiles jalapeños (8.8 oz/266 g), left whole
8 large scallions
8 Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)
1 pound (453 g) queso, Chihuahua, or Monterey Jack, shredded

FOR SERVING

→ Grilled Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#) or Tortillas de Harina con Mantequilla, [this page](#)
→ Guacamole, [this page](#)
→ Salsa Tatemada, [this page](#)
→ Chopped cilantro
→ Frijoles Refritos, [this page](#)
→ Lime wedges

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the lime juice, orange juice, oil, oregano, salt, and pepper. Add the onion and garlic and toss with your hands to combine. Add the beef and toss to coat. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 12 hours.

2. Prepare a gas grill for two-zone heat: Set one burner at medium-high and one or two burners at high. (Alternatively, prepare a charcoal grill for high heat.)

3. Remove the steaks from the marinade, shaking off any excess and brushing off and reserving any onions that are stuck to the meat. Drain the onions in a fine-mesh sieve set over the sink—discard the marinade and save the onions.

4. Grill the beef over high heat, turning once, for 2 to 3 minutes per side for medium-rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes.

5. If the onions have fallen apart, they will be easier to sauté rather than grill, unless you have a vegetable grill basket—and if you do, I recommend using it (even if the onions didn't fall apart, a grill basket will help prevent them from slipping through the grill grates). Grill or sauté the onions until they are charred on all sides, for 4 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

6. Grill the chorizo, turning occasionally, until charred on all sides and cooked through, for 2 to 3 minutes per side.

7. Grill the whole jalapeños and scallions over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, until charred and tender, for 4 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and toss with a squeeze of lime juice, a drizzle of oil, and a pinch of salt.

8. To make the quesadillas, toast one side of the tortillas over the medium-high side of the grill until lightly charred, for about 1 minute. Flip and place a small mound of cheese on the charred side, then fold in half like a taco, and continue to grill until the cheese begins to melt and the tortilla is lightly charred,

for about 1 minute. Flip again to char the other side. Transfer to a platter.

9. Serve the quesadillas along with grilled tortillas and you can make tacos or stuff the quesadillas with carne asada, chorizo, chiles jalapeños, scallions, guacamole, salsa tatemada, and cilantro. Serve with the refried beans and lime wedges for squeezing.

COOK'S NOTE: Ask your butcher to slice the steaks lengthwise into $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch-thick steaks. These thin cuts are typical in México and take to the marinade quicker and also cook faster on the grill. If you're grilling flanken short ribs, strip, or rib eye, cut into 2-inch-wide pieces. If you're grilling flank or skirt, slice against the grain into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick strips.

Fideo Seco [Toasted pasta with poblano, serrano, and potatoes simmered in chicken stock]

Fideo Seco

Toasted pasta with poblano, serrano, and potatoes simmered in chicken stock



I adore fideo seco—toasted bits of pasta simmered with a rich chicken broth until the pasta absorbs every last drop of liquid. Growing up, it was always served as a side dish. When I got to Monterrey I saw it in a taco! I couldn't believe that I had eaten it for so many years of my life and never put it inside of a

tortilla. So of course I had to try it. And yes, it was amazing carb on delicious carb. While it was delicious, in all honesty, my favorite way to eat fideo seco is straight out of the pan. In fact, when I was in college, I would make huge batches for me and my roommate. It was cheap and easy and the perfect meal to make after a night out drinking. Between the two of us, we'd devour a whole skillet! Now I skip the bar and go straight to the skillet. Feel free to stuff it into a tortilla if you are needing a little carb pick-me-up!

SERVES 4

- 8 ounces (226 g) fideo, vermicelli, or angel hair pasta, broken into 2-inch pieces**
- 2 tablespoons rendered lard or extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 large tomatoes (8 oz/226 g), cored and chopped**
- ½ medium white onion (5.43 oz/154 g), chopped**
- 1 medium chile poblano (4 oz/125 g), stemmed, seeded, and chopped**
- 1 chile serrano (0.85 oz/24.3 g), stemmed and thinly sliced**
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced**
- 2½ cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth**
- 1 large Yukon Gold potato (8.25 oz/234 g), peeled and chopped**
- 2 teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.56 oz/16 g)**

FOR SERVING

- Warm Tortillas de Harina estilo Sinaloa, [this page](#)
- Sliced avocado
- Cilantro leaves and tender stems
- Salsa Tatemada, [this page](#)

1. Heat a large skillet over high heat for 2 minutes. Add the fideo and toast, tossing constantly, or until most of the fideo has browned, for 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl.

2. Reduce the heat to medium-high. In the same skillet, heat the lard. Add the tomatoes, onion, chile poblano, chile serrano, and garlic and cook, tossing occasionally, until the onions and chile poblano are tender and just beginning to brown, for 6 to 8 minutes.

3. Add the stock, potato, salt, and toasted fideo and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until all of the liquid has been absorbed, for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the heat and let sit, still covered, for 5 minutes.

4. Make tacos with the fideo and topped with the avocado slices, cilantro, and salsa. Or, eat the fideo straight from the pan.

Pipián Rojo estilo Jalisco

Pumpkin seed, peanut, and sesame seed sauce served over roasted chicken

Pipián Rojo estilo Jalisco [*Pumpkin seed, peanut, and sesame seed sauce served over roasted chicken*]



There is a pottery workshop I love in a town in Jalisco called Tlaquepaque. They make beautifully glazed plates, bowls, and platters in rich, vibrant colors. I went to visit, and Santi Padilla, the ceramicist, gave me some beautiful tableware to take back to Mazatlán with me. I told her that I wanted her to choose the first meal that I ate on her plates and she told me to make a pipián from her town. So that's what this is—a rich sauce thickened with toasted pumpkin seeds, peanuts, and sesame seeds, flavored with allspice and cloves, and spiced from the heat of chiles anchos and chiles de árbol.

SERVES 6

- 1¼ cups raw pepitas (5.5 oz/157 g)**
- ⅓ cup salted roasted peanuts (1.9 oz/54 g)**
- ¼ cup raw sesame seeds (1.4 oz/41 g)**
- 5 allspice berries**
- 3 whole cloves**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican**
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds**
- ¼ teaspoon black peppercorns**
- 4 large chiles anchos (2.4 oz/70 g), stemmed and seeded**
- 3 chiles de árbol (0.07 oz/2 g), stemmed and seeded**
- 3 large Roma tomatoes (11 oz/314 g), cored and left whole**
- ½ large white onion (6.6 oz/188 g)**
- 1 2-inch piece bolillo (1.2 oz/35 g) or baguette, halved**
- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled**
- 6 cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth**
- 2¾ teaspoons Morton kosher salt (0.74 oz/21 g), plus more to taste**
- ¼ cup lard or vegetable oil**
- 1 tablespoon dark or light agave syrup or honey**
- 1 roast chicken, carved**

1. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Toast the pumpkin seeds and peanuts, tossing frequently, until very

fragrant and browned in spots, for 3 to 4 minutes. Reserve about ¼ cup of toasted pepitas for serving (it's okay if there is a peanut or two mixed in). Transfer the remaining seeds and nuts to a large heavy pot.

2. In the same skillet over medium-high heat, toast the sesame seeds, tossing frequently, until fragrant and browned, for 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to the pot with the pumpkin seeds.

3. In the same skillet over medium-high heat, toast the allspice, cloves, oregano, cumin, and peppercorns, tossing frequently, until browned and fragrant, for 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to the pot with the pumpkin seeds.

4. Line the skillet with two large sheets of foil to prevent the chiles and tomatoes from burning and sticking to the bottom of the skillet. Cook the chiles, pressing down on them with a metal spatula to make contact with the pan, until lightly toasted on both sides, for about 30 seconds total. The chiles will burn easily, so press down and turn them quickly. Transfer the toasted chiles to the pot with the pumpkin seeds.

5. Add the tomatoes, onion, bolillo, and garlic and char on all sides, turning occasionally, for about 3 minutes for the bolillo (it will char quickly), about 5 minutes for the garlic, about 9 minutes for the onion, and about 16 minutes for the tomatoes. Transfer to the pot with the pepitas.

6. To the pot, add the stock and salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer until the seeds

and chiles have softened and the flavors have come together, for about 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and let sit covered for 20 minutes to cool slightly before blending.

7. Working in batches, carefully add the cooked pumpkin seed mixture and liquid to a blender and puree until smooth. Transfer each batch to a large bowl, stirring to combine the batches of pipián each time.

8. Rinse and wipe the pot clean and dry. Set the pot over medium-high and heat the lard until it's very hot. Carefully pour the blended pipián into the hot lard (it will spit and sputter, so wearing an apron and long sleeves are a good idea). Stir, scraping up any fried bits from the bottom of the pot, reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring frequently, until the top of the pipián is glossy and thick, for about 10 minutes. Stir in the agave. Taste and season with more salt if desired.

9. Serve over roasted chicken and sprinkled with the reserved toasted pepitas.

Carne en su Jugo [*Sirloin steak simmered in a roasted tomatillo salsa with bacon and served over beans*]

Carne en su Jugo

Sirloin steak simmered in a roasted tomatillo salsa with bacon and served over beans



I have always been fascinated by the name of this dish: meat served in its own juices. I saw it on signs and menus all across

Jalisco. And this dish actually surpassed my expectations. Tapatíos (people from Guadalajara) love a brothy dish. Tortas Ahogadas ([this page](#)), the iconic torta from Guadalajara, is drowned in tomato and chile de árbol salsas. Birria, braised goat, is served shredded and covered with the braising liquid or consommé it was cooked in. So it's not surprising that carne en su jugo is a dish of meat and beans and their broth covered in a charred salsa. There is something very comforting about a dish that is close to being a soup or stew. I think you tend to eat it more slowly, with a spoon and not just in a taco. I end up savoring each spoonful like I would chicken soup. Carne en su jugo has so many layers of flavor from the meat, the bacon, the charred salsa, and the beans that every bite is always a little different.

SERVES 8

- 7 medium tomatillos (12 oz/340 g), husked and rinsed**
- ½ medium white onion (7.01 oz/201 g), halved**
- 2 to 4 chiles serranos (0.85 oz/24.3 g each), stemmed**
- 6 garlic cloves, unpeeled**
- ¼ cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves with tender stems (1.41 oz/40 g)**
- 1.1 pounds (453 g) thick-cut smoked bacon, cut into 2-inch pieces**
- 2¼ pounds (1 kg) boneless sirloin steak**
- 12 large scallions (10.8 oz/306 g), ends trimmed, cut into ½-inch pieces**

3 cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth
1 tablespoon Morton kosher salt (0.7 oz/20 g)
4 cups Frijoles de Olla, [this page](#), and their cooking liquid, warm

FOR SERVING

- **Chopped onion**
- **Chopped cilantro**
- **Lime wedges**
- **Warm Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)**

1. Line a large skillet, preferably cast-iron, with foil. Heat over high heat for about 2 minutes, or until very hot. Cook the tomatillos, onion, chiles serranos, and garlic, turning occasionally, until all sides are charred, for about 3 minutes for the garlic, 4 to 5 minutes for the chiles serranos, and 6 to 8 minutes for the onion and tomatillos. Transfer to a plate and let cool. Peel the garlic.

2. In a blender on medium-low speed, puree the tomatillo, onion, chiles serranos, peeled garlic, and the cilantro until smooth. Set aside.

3. In a large heavy pot, arrange the bacon in an even layer. Cook over medium-high heat and let the bacon slowly render, stirring occasionally, until crispy, for 9 to 11 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate, leaving the fat in the pan.

4. Carefully place the steak in the bacon fat. Cook over medium-high heat until browned, for 5 to 6 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Cut into ¼-inch-thick strips.

5. In the same skillet, cook the scallions over medium-high heat, stirring, until browned and tender, for 6 to 8 minutes. Return the steak and half of the bacon to the pot. Stir in the salsa verde, stock, and salt; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium; simmer until the steak is very tender, for about 20 minutes.

6. Serve the steak and salsa over the hot frijoles de olla and garnish with the onion, cilantro, and remaining bacon. Serve lime wedges and tortillas alongside.

Arrachera y Tacos Norteños [*Chipotle- and beer-marinated steak in a toasted flour tortilla with cheese*]

Arrachera y Tacos Norteños

Chipotle- and beer-marinated steak in a
toasted flour tortilla with cheese



This dish reminds me of Texas-style fajitas and the memories I have of both eating and grilling fajitas back home. However, the recipe is very northern Mexican. It is a celebration of many of the best ingredients in northern Baja—beef, cheese, beer, plus Taiwanese and Chinese flavors like fish sauce and soy sauce, which are used in this marinade. If you have the time, I highly recommend marinating the meat for the arrachera overnight, as the flavors have more time to develop and penetrate the steak. Serve with tortillas, guacamole, and your favorite salsa (I can think of at least five that I would definitely put on these tacos!).

SERVES 4

FOR THE ARRACHERA

- 4** canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, smashed
- 4** garlic cloves, finely grated
- 1** cup Mexican-style pale lager beer
- ½** cup fresh lime juice
- ¼** cup fish sauce
- ¼** cup fresh orange juice
- ¼** cup soy sauce
- 2** teaspoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican
- 1** teaspoon crushed cumin seeds
- ¾** teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g)
- 1½** pounds (680 g) skirt or flank steak

FOR THE TACOS NORTEÑOS

- ¼** cup lard or extra-virgin olive oil
- ½** medium white onion (6.3 oz/179 g), thinly sliced
- 1** medium chile poblano (4 oz/125 g), stemmed and seeded, thinly sliced
- 3** chiles jalapeños (3.3 oz/99.6 g), stemmed and chopped
- 3** garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ¾** teaspoon Morton kosher salt (0.14 oz/4 g)
- 8** medium Roma tomatoes (1.5 lb/680 g), cored and chopped
- 12** ounces (340 g) queso asadero, queso Chihuahua, quesillo, or Monterey Jack, shredded
- Tortillas de Harina con Mantequilla** [this page](#)

5. TO SERVE: Top the tortillas with the steak, cheese, vegetables, salsa, and guacamole. Serve lime wedges on the side.

FOR SERVING

- **Your favorite salsa**
- **Guacamole, [this page](#)**
- **Lime wedges**

1. MARINATE THE ARRACHERA: In a medium bowl, whisk the chipotle peppers, garlic, beer, lime juice, fish sauce, orange juice, soy sauce, oregano, cumin, and salt. Add the steak, turn to coat, and wrap tightly with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 12 hours.

2. MAKE THE TACOS NORTEÑOS: In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat the lard. cook the onion, poblano, jalapeños, garlic, and salt until the onion and chiles are tender and beginning to brown, for 5 to 7 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook, stirring, until they release their juices and start to break down, for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the heat. Sprinkle with the queso. Cover to keep warm.

3. Meanwhile, prepare a gas grill for high heat. (Alternatively, prepare a charcoal grill for high heat.) Grill the steak, turning occasionally, until charred, for 2 to 3 minutes per side for medium-rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Slice against the grain into ½-inch-thick strips.

4. Grill the tortillas until lightly charred, for about 1 minute per side.

Tacos Capeados [*Corn-fried fish tacos with papaya, tomatillo, and a spicy cream sauce*]

Tacos Capeados

Corn-fried fish tacos with papaya, tomatillo, and a spicy cream sauce



For crispy fried fish, I use a mixture for the batter that has a 50/50 mix of wheat flour to corn flour or masa harina because

the corn adds extra flavor but also creates a crispier crust that actually will hold its crunch even when cooled to room temperature. Before I started eating tacos capeados here in Baja and in México generally, I was guilty of over-spicing my batter. I think I was trying to make the crust pull more than its fair share of the flavor lifting. However, the real artistry of taco-making is in the layering of flavor and texture. Each element contributes to a different sensation in your mouth—hot, cold, soft, crunchy, sweet, savory, and spicy. The crust in this recipe does two things: gives crunch to the taco and preserves the juicy and flaky texture of the fish.

SERVES 4 TO 6

1½ pounds (680 g) skinless halibut, cod, or other white fish fillets, cut crosswise into 16 strips
Morton kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup (4.4 oz/125 g) all-purpose flour
1 cup (3.5 oz/100 g) masa harina or fine- or medium-grind cornmeal
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
12 ounces Mexican-style pale lager beer
½ cup sparkling mineral water, club soda, or water
3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
Vegetable oil, for deep-frying (about 3 quarts)

FOR SERVING

→ **Warm Tortillas de Maíz, [this page](#)**

- Salsa de Papaya y Tomatillo Cruda, [this page](#)
- Salsa Blanca, [this page](#)
- Lime wedges
- Shredded red cabbage

- 1.** Lightly season the fish with salt and pepper. Transfer to a wire rack set inside a sheet pan. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 1 hour or up to overnight (this air-dries the surface so the batter will adhere better to the fish).
- 2.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, masa harina, baking powder, baking soda, and 1¼ teaspoons salt (0.28 oz/8 g). Add the beer, sparkling water, and vinegar and whisk just until combined and no lumps remain.
- 3.** Pour 3 inches of oil into a large heavy pot and clip on a deep-fry thermometer. Heat over medium-high heat until the thermometer registers 375°F. Line a sheet pan with paper towels.
- 4.** Working in batches, dip the fish into the batter, allowing any excess batter to drip back into the bowl. Lower the fish carefully into the oil and fry, using tongs to turn the fish occasionally, until light golden brown and just cooked through, for 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the fish to the paper towels to drain.
- 5.** Serve the pescado capeado with tortillas, both salsas, lime wedges, and cabbage.