

August Spice Club:

Guajillo

Chili



Part of the famous "holy trinity" of chilies used in Mexican moles, along with Ancho and Pasilla chilies, Guajillo is the second-most common dried chili in Mexican cuisine. Native to central and northern Mexico, Guajillo chilies are also used in enchiladas, salsas, sauces, soups, stews, tamales, and in spice rubs to flavor meat and oil.

Unlike some Mexican dried chilies that are bred for their heat, Guajillos are bred for flavor. They are slightly fruity with a sweet heat, tannic with a hint of pine and tart berries, and have light smoky undertones.

With a rating of 2,500 to 5,000 on the Scoville scale, the heat of a Guajillo is usually considered mild to medium, though heat levels are fluid in peppers, even among individual varieties. This is partly because a rainy growing season is known to produce milder peppers, while a dry season makes them hotter.

Many recipes that utilize Guajillos call for more of them than we can give away for Spice Club. We have selected two recipes that can give you a sample of the flavor of these revered peppers. We hope it will inspire you to try using more dried chilies in your regular rotation of spices at home! ¡*Feliz cocinando!* (Happy cooking!)

Homemade Chipotle Sofritas

Michael Hultquist, ChiliPepperMadness.com
Prep: 20 mins. | Cook time: 30 mins. | Serves: 4

“This homemade sofritas recipe is better than the original Chipotle sofritas with tofu simmered in spicy chipotle sauce, huge on flavor and easy to make! Perfect for taco bowls, burritos and more.”

Chipotle Sauce

2 ancho peppers
2 guajillo peppers
1 Tbsp. olive oil + more as needed
1 small onion, chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, chopped
3 cloves garlic, chopped

sauce cont. →

1 tsp. ground cumin
Salt and pepper, to taste
3 oz. chipotles in adobo sauce *use 3-4
chipotles and some of the sauce, 1/2 a can*
Hot sauce to taste

Sofritas

14 oz. package extra firm tofu

For the sauce: Heat a large skillet to medium heat. Remove the stems and seeds from the ancho and guajillo peppers, then dry toast them a couple minutes per side until the skins darken and puff up a bit. This helps loosen the oils and build flavor.

Set the dried peppers into a large bowl and cover them with very hot water. Let them steep for 20 minutes to soften. Drain and add to a food processor.

Heat 1 Tbsp. olive oil in a pan and add the onion and jalapeño. Cook them down for 5 minutes to soften. Add the garlic and cook another minute, until the fragrance blooms.

Add the cooked vegetables to the food processor along with chipotles in adobo sauce, cumin, salt and pepper, and hot sauce to taste. Process until smooth. Add in a bit of fresh water (1/2 to 1 cup) and process until you achieve the consistency you desire. Strain, if desired, for a smoother sauce. Taste and adjust for salt and pepper.

For the sofritas: Slice the tofu into 8 large pieces. Wrap them in paper towels or a large towel and set a heavy weight on them, like a cast iron pan, to press out the moisture. (I usually do this while soaking the dried peppers.)

Heat the pan back to medium-high heat and add more olive oil, if needed. Add the tofu and lightly fry the pieces 2-3 minutes per side to lightly brown them.

Break up the tofu with a wooden spoon, then pour in the chipotle sauce. Stir and simmer for 20 minutes to let the tofu soak up the saucy flavor. Serve!

Carne Adobada (Chile-Marinated Steak)

Yewande Komolafe, NYT Cooking

Prep: 30 mins., plus marinating | Yield: 4 servings

“Mexican adobada, a tangy marinade with guajillo chilis, is often reserved for large cuts of pork, but it’s also well-suited to any sturdy cut of steak, such as flank. Here, the steak is paired with a nice piquant roasted red pepper relish, which complements the deep flavors of the marinated meat.”

2 dried guajillo chilis	2 tsp. dried oregano
1 chipotle chili in adobo	½ cup drained and chopped roasted red peppers
½ small yellow onion, peeled and chopped	2 small shallots, minced
3 garlic cloves, peeled	2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. cumin seeds	½ cup chopped cilantro
4 Tbsp. lime juice (2 limes)	Steamed rice or warm tortillas, for serving
1 1 ½ lb. flank steak	
Kosher salt	

Place the dried guajillo chilis in a small bowl and add enough hot water to cover; soak until softened, about 10 minutes. Drain, stem and seed the chilis. Using a blender or a food processor, puree the guajilloes, chipotle, onion, garlic, cumin, 2 tablespoons lime juice and 2 tablespoons water until smooth. If needed, add another tablespoon of water to help the mixture blend.

Pat the steak dry with paper towels. Season generously on both sides with salt, then sprinkle and pat on the dried oregano to both sides as well. Place in a large bowl, dish or resealable plastic bag; pour the chili marinade over the top; and turn to coat both sides. Marinate for at least 30 minutes at room temperature, or refrigerate (covered, if needed) for up to 12 hours.

In a small bowl, combine the roasted red peppers and shallots with the remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Season to taste with salt, add the cilantro, and stir to combine. Set aside.

In a large heavy skillet, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Scrape any excess marinade off the steak and discard the marinade. Place the steak in the hot oil and cook until seared and deep golden brown on the contact side, 4-5 minutes. Flip and continue to cook until seared and golden brown on the other side, 4-5 minutes for medium-rare. Cook for 1 additional minute on each side for thicker or larger cuts of steak or for medium doneness. You also can grill the steak on a hot charcoal or gas grill, turning once, until seared, about 6 minutes per side for medium-rare.

Transfer the steak to a cutting board and allow to rest for 5 minutes. Slice the steak against the grain. Serve topped with the roasted pepper-shallot relish, alongside steamed rice or warm tortillas.



Adiós, Spice Club!

It's the end of a spicy era. For three years, FCL's Spice Club has distributed over 1,250 plastic-free take-and-make kits to encourage folks to step outside their comfort zone and learn something new, gastronomically as well as culturally. Library staff have presented on this successful program at the Maine Library Association's annual conference and helped other Maine libraries jumpstart their own sister programs. It is our hope that this program has added a little extra zest to your life.

Alas, all good things must end to make space for the new. Keep an eye out for upcoming programs and email Meghan at mfogg@freeportmaine.com to share feedback or suggestions for future programs.