



Tastes *of* New Mexico

a cookbook
by Cathleen Armstrong



Dear Ones,

I wish I could take you with me to New Mexico during the chile harvest. The afternoons are still warm, the cottonwoods along the Rio Grande are beginning to show yellow, and everywhere, everywhere the air is redolent with the spicy aroma of roasting green chile.

Baskets of freshly picked green chiles are poured into small hand cranked drums at roadside stands or large power driven drums in supermarket parking lots and turned over flames until the skins are blackened and peeling and the luscious chile underneath is soft. Then, packed in bags, they are sent home to the freezer to provide a winter's worth of delicious green chile dishes.

But if I can't take you to New Mexico, perhaps I can bring a bit of New Mexico to you. We start with the basics- preparing our own chile, and move through breads, brunch, main dishes, and desserts. You should be able to find most ingredients- fresh green chile, ground red chile, dried red chile pods- at your supermarket, but if you're looking for authentic New Mexico flavor, I've included a list of local online sources. Well worth the extra effort, in my opinion.

I hope you enjoy this taste of New Mexico. All the recipes are favorites of mine and my family's. I'll bet they'll become favorites of yours as well.

¡Buen Provecho!

*Blessings,
Cathleen*

Table of Contents

The Basics

Roasting Green Chile	1
Green Chile Sauce	2
Red Chile Sauce I	3
Red Chile Sauce II	4

Breads

Flour Tortillas	5
Sopaipillas	6

Brunch

Huevos Rancheros	7
Green Chile Quiche	8

Main Dishes

Carne Adovada	9
Cheese Enchiladas (Red)	10
Chicken Enchiladas (Green)	11
Green Chile Stew	13
Enchilada Casserole	14

Side Dishes

Frijoles	16
Papas Fritas	17

Desserts

Flan de Leche	18
Capirotada (Bread Pudding)	20

Resources	22
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Roasting Green Chile

When my mother lived in the Mesilla Valley, heart of New Mexico's chile belt, she'd send me a bushel of green chile every fall. I'd have a chile roasting party with a few friends, and after we had roasted, peeled, and bagged all our chile, our families would share a communal meal featuring—what else?—green chile. Good times!

Wear latex gloves when you work with chile! It can burn your hands.

Wash and dry the green chiles. Make a steam vent in each with the tip of a sharp knife.

Place chiles on a foil-covered cookie sheet and set it four to six inches below the broiler unit. Roast chiles, turning them frequently until they are universally blistered.

Remove chiles from oven, place them in a bowl, cover with a cold, damp towel and steam for ten minutes.

Starting at the stem end, peel the outer skin downward. Remove the stem and the seeds if desired. The seeds add heat, so keep that in mind as you remove or leave in the seeds. If you are using the chiles for Chile Rellenos, you'll want to leave the stems on.

The chile is now ready for freezing or to use in any recipe. If you're roasting a quantity of chile, a food scale is handy for freezing packages of a uniform size.



Green Chile Sauce

Makes about 5 cups

4 cups vegetable broth, or water
2 cups chopped, roasted green chile
1 15-oz can chopped tomatoes, (optional)
¼ cup finely chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons water
Salt to taste

Drain tomatoes in a strainer, pressing to remove all excess juice. Combine with all the other ingredients (except the cornstarch) in a large saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce mixture for 10 to 15 minutes. Add the cornstarch. Reduce to a simmer and cook another fifteen to twenty minutes. The sauce should be thickened, but easy to pour.

This sauce keeps for up to five days in the refrigerator and freezes well.

Red Chile Sauce I

It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway. Unless a chile ristra, or decorative braid, is purchased (and labeled) specifically for cooking purposes, it has been treated with a bug-discourager and is inedible. Admire, but do not eat!

However, there are dried red chiles that are packaged for culinary purposes. When you find some, make this delicious sauce.

Makes about five cups

8 ounces (about 25) whole, dried, red chile pods

4 cups water

½ teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon ground cumin

salt

Wash, stem and seed red chile pods and place in a large bowl. Bring water to a boil and pour over the pods. Let soak about a half hour. In batches, puree chile pods and soaking water. Pour liquid into a large saucepan. Season with the oregano and cumin. Salt to taste. Bring to boil over medium-high heat. Lower heat and simmer twenty to thirty minutes, or until thickened. Sauce should be the consistency of heavy cream.

Use it now or freeze for later.

Note: You really do need a blender for this. A food processor will not be able to make the puree completely smooth.

Red Chile Sauce 2

This is another great red chile sauce.

Makes about 5 cups

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried, ground red chile (not the chili powder in the spice jar)

2 tablespoons finely minced onion

2 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried oregano

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

4 cups vegetable broth or water

2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons water.

Put chile, onion, garlic and salt in a large saucepan. Slowly add the broth or water, stirring to break up any lumps of chile.

Heat the mixture until warmed through, then stir in the cornstarch mixture. Bring the sauce to a slow boil and cook five minutes. Add the oregano and cumin and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook at least twenty minutes, stirring occasionally, adding a little water if it thickens too much. The sauce should be the consistency of heavy cream.

This sauce will keep up to five days in the refrigerator and freezes well.

Flour Tortillas

These are not soft taco or burrito tortillas. These are thicker, and meant to be served buttered with the meal. All the better to sop up every last drop of that delicious chile sauce!

Makes six tortillas

2 cups flour

1 teaspoon salt

1 ½ teaspoon baking powder

1 tablespoon shortening

¾ cup warm water

Sift dry ingredients into a mixing bowl. Add the shortening and mix with fingertips to combine. Add the warm water and mix into the dough until a sticky ball forms.

Pour dough onto a floured board and knead for a minute. The dough should no longer be sticky. Let dough rest, covered with a damp cloth, for 15 minutes. Form into 6 balls and let them rest, also covered, for another 20 minutes or so.

Dust board with a little more flour and roll each ball into a circle about ¼ inch thick.

Heat a dry griddle or heavy skillet over high heat for 5 minutes, and cook tortillas for at least 30 seconds on each side or until a few brown spots appear on each side. Wrap in a towel to soften and keep warm as you cook the rest of the tortillas.



Sopaipillas

A basket of sopaipillas and a pitcher of honey on the table complete the meal and are a perfect compliment to the spicy chile. Just be oh-so-careful with all that hot oil!

Makes 12 sopaipillas

2 cups flour

1 ½ teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

1 ½ teaspoon sugar

1 ½ tablespoon shortening

¾ cup milk (room temperature)

Cooking oil for frying

Honey as an accompaniment

Sift dry ingredients into a large bowl. Cut in shortening. Add milk to form sticky dough. Turn out onto floured board and knead for a minute, The dough should be soft, but no longer sticky. Cover with a damp cloth and let rest fifteen minutes. Form into three balls . Cover those with a damp cloth and let them rest for another fifteen to thirty minutes. On a floured board, roll each ball into a circle ¼ inch thick, and cut into four wedges each.

Pour oil to a depth of 2" in a wok or deep, heavy skillet and heat to 400°, watching carefully that oil does not begin to smoke. Drop one or two wedges at a time in the hot oil, being careful not to overcrowd. The sopaipillas should sink to the bottom, and then puff up and rise to the surface. Spoon a little oil over the sopaipillas after they have begun to float, and in just a few seconds they will have completely puffed and be ready to turn with tongs, When they are light golden, remove with tongs and drain on paper towels. Serve with honey.

Huevos Rancheros

This is, hands down, my husband's favorite brunch dish. In fact, he'd be happy to have them for lunch or dinner as well. The secret, as always, is the quality of the green chile you use for the sauce.

Makes 6 servings

Cooking oil

6-12 corn tortillas

12 eggs

2-3 cups Green Chile Sauce (page 2), heated.

Mild cheddar cheese, grated (optional)

Heat enough cooking oil to cover the bottom of a skillet to a depth of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Dip the tortillas one at a time in the hot oil for a few seconds and then turn to cook other side. Remove to paper towel while they are still pliable. Do not allow to crisp. Repeat for all tortillas.

Arrange one or two tortillas on each plate

On low heat, fry the eggs until whites are set and yolks are thickened but still fluid. Top the tortillas on each plate with the eggs, and spoon $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup green chile sauce over the eggs and tortillas. If desired, top with a little grated cheese.

Hot, buttered flour tortillas make a great accompaniment.

Green Chile Quiche

Okay, I'm the first to admit that quiche is not a traditionally southwestern dish. But with eggs, cheese, and green chile, what's not to love?

- 1 9-inch unbaked pie shell
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup whole milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon flour
- 4-6 fresh green chiles, roasted, peeled, seeded and chopped. (See page 1)

Preheat oven to 425°

Bake crust until light golden, brown, about fifteen minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 325°

Whisk eggs, half-and-half, milk, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Toss cheese with flour and spread over the bottom of the pie shell. Top with roasted green chile, and carefully pour in egg mixture. Don't overfill; there may be some left over.

Bake quiche until puffed, golden brown, and just set in center, about 45 minutes. Cool 30 minutes. Cut into wedges.

Carne Adovada

I love this versatile dish! You can use it as a filling for tacos, or burritos, or top it with a fried egg and serve it with a side of Papas Fritas for brunch. Just be sure to have plenty of buttered tortillas available, because it's spicy!

Serves 6-8

One recipe of Red Chile Sauce I (Page 3)

Three pounds of pork, trimmed of fat and cut into 1 to 2 inch cubes.

Preheat oven to 300°

Mix the chile sauce and pork cubes in a large oiled baking dish and cook covered for about 3 ½ hours, or until the pork is fork tender and the sauce has cooked down. (Check after three hours.) The cover can be removed for the last few minutes if the sauce seems a little thin.

Easily made the day before and reheated. Add a little water if needed.

Cheese Enchiladas (Red)

The first thing you'll notice about enchiladas in New Mexico is that they are most often flat, not rolled. And they often have a fried egg on top. Red and green chile are interchangeable when making enchiladas, which is why the official question of New Mexico—and yes, the state does have an official question—is Red or Green? This is what you get when you say Red.

For one enchilada

3 5-inch corn tortillas

Cooking oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Red Chile Sauce (Pages 3 and 4)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped onion (optional)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup mild cheddar cheese, grated.

1 egg

Heat oil in skillet at least 6" in diameter. Quickly cook tortilla on both sides and remove from pan while still pliable. Do not allow to become crisp. Drain on paper towels. Repeat with the rest of the tortillas.

Heat the red chile sauce just to a simmer.

On a heatproof plate, layer the first tortilla with half the onion and one-third of the chile sauce and cheese. Repeat for second layer. Top with the third tortilla and cover with the remaining chile sauce and cheese. Run the enchilada under the broiler just until the cheese melts. Serve with a fried egg on top.

Chicken Enchiladas (Green)

And this is what turns up if you say, "I'll have mine Green, please."

Serves 6

Cooking oil

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs

½ cup chopped onion

2 garlic cloves, minced

½ teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ cup water, more or less

12 corn tortillas

Green Chile Sauce (Page 2)

8-ounces mild cheddar cheese, grated.

Chop chicken thighs into ½" pieces and sear in a skillet coated with 2 teaspoons cooking oil. Add the onion and garlic and lower heat to cook until onion is soft and translucent. Do not allow garlic to burn. Add water, oregano and cumin and simmer twenty minutes. Add a little more water if needed as chicken cooks. Finished chicken should be moist, but the broth should have evaporated.

Heat cooking oil to a depth of ½ inch in another skillet. Dip the tortillas one at a time in the hot oil for a few seconds, turning to cook other side. Remove and drain on paper towels while tortillas are still pliable. Do not allow them to crisp or brown.

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Chicken Enchiladas (Green)

Add additional oil if more is needed before all twelve tortillas are prepared.

Warm the Green Chile Sauce.

To assemble each enchilada: Place a tortilla on a heat-proof plate. Top with a spoonful of chicken (dividing evenly among the six plates). Ladle just enough green chile sauce over the chicken and tortilla to cover. Sprinkle with grated cheese.

Repeat with tortilla, green chile sauce, and cheese.

Run the plate under the broiler just until cheese melts. Top with a fried egg if desired.

Green Chile Stew

Simple and hearty and just right for a cold winter's night.

Serves 8

2 pounds boneless pork, cut in 1-inch cubes.

2-3 tablespoons cooking oil

One medium onion, chopped.

2-3 garlic cloves, minced

6-8 green chiles, roasted, peeled, and chopped, at least 2 cups*

(See page 1)

1 can chopped tomatoes, well drained (optional)

4 cups chicken or vegetable broth

1 ½ pounds white potatoes, unpeeled, scrubbed and cut in 1-inch cubes

Salt and pepper to taste

Brown pork in the oil, adding chopped onion and garlic part way through browning process. Add remaining ingredients except potatoes and bring to boil, Reduce heat and simmer 1 ½ hours. Add potatoes, 1 cup more liquid, and raise heat to a slow boil. Cook another ½ hour or until potatoes are tender, but not mushy.

*If you have some outstanding frozen chopped green chile, such as BUENO®, you can use a carton instead of roasting your own chile. But don't use canned chile. You'll be so disappointed.

Enchilada Casserole

This is not the most traditional way to serve enchiladas, but when you have a family to feed, it certainly is convenient. And all those delicious flavors are still there.

Serves 6

1 pound lean ground beef—coarsely ground or “chile grind” if you can find it.

1 cup chopped onion

3 minced garlic cloves

1/3 cup ground red chile

1/2 cup flour

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon salt

5 cups water

12 5-inch corn tortillas

Cooking oil

8-ounces medium cheddar cheese, grated

Fried eggs, if desired

Sauté ground beef over medium heat in a large, heavy saucepan with the onions and the garlic until meat is cooked through. Stir in the ground red chile and cook, stirring, until chile smells warm and toasty. Add the flour and mix thoroughly. Mixture will be dry and crumbly. Don't be too concerned if mixture sticks to the bottom of the pan a bit, but do not allow to scorch. When the flour is completely integrated into the meat and chile mixture, add the water and mix thoroughly, stirring up any bits sticking to the bottoms. Bring to boil over medium high heat and boil for five minutes. Turn heat to low and

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Enchilada Casserole

add oregano, cumin, and salt. Simmer over low heat for 1 ½ hours, adding a little water if necessary as chile cooks down. Consistency should be thickened, but still very pourable.

Pour cooking oil into a skillet to depth of about ½ inch. Heat until shimmering. Immerse tortillas one at a time in the hot oil for a very few seconds, turn to cook other side. Drain on paper towels. Tortillas should still be pliable; do not crisp.

Preheat oven to 375°

Put 6 of the tortillas in a single layer on the bottom of a 9" by 14" baking pan. Top with half the chile and half the cheese. Repeat for the second layer. Heat in oven until cheese is melted and casserole is bubbly. Remove from oven and let sit five minutes. Cut in six pieces, and serve each topped with a fried egg if desired.

Frijoles

Frijoles are the mainstay, not only of New Mexican cuisine, but cooking throughout the southwest. I like to serve them as they come from the pot with just a little of their broth as a side to almost any New Mexican dish. But they can be- and often are- a hearty main dish on their own. I've also included recipes for refried beans- both the traditional and a healthier version.

2 cups dried pinto beans, picked over for shriveled beans or tiny stones
2 teaspoons cooking oil
Salt to taste (1-2 teaspoons)
8-12 cups water

Place picked-over beans in a large bowl, and cover with water to a depth of at least three inches. Soak overnight.

Drain beans and place in heavy, deep saucepan. Add enough water to cover by two inches. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer. Stir gently from time to time to ensure beans are not sticking to the bottom. After an hour or so, and the beans are beginning to soften, add the oil and salt. Add boiling water, if necessary, to keep beans covered by at least one inch of water. Continue cooking just until beans are tender and soft. Do not allow the beans to get mushy or to lose their shape. Total cooking time should be about 2-2 ½ hours.

Refried beans (traditional): Melt 2-3 tablespoons lard or shortening in a large heavy skillet. Add beans with their liquid and mash with a potato masher until smooth and moist. Season with salt and, if desired, a little ground red chile and cumin. Rewarm and serve.

Healthier version: Omit the fat and mash the beans until smooth only in their broth. Season as above and serve warm.

Papas Fritas

This dish turns Huevos Rancheros or Carne Adovada into a brunch dish fit for company, but it can also make any ordinary weeknight dinner special, too.

4 large or 5 medium baking potatoes

¼ cup cooking oil

½ cup finely chopped onion

Salt to taste

½ cup Red Chile Sauce

Bake potatoes until just tender and set aside to cool. Cut unpeeled potatoes into 1-inch chunks. Heat oil in a heavy skillet and add onion. Cook until onion is tender, but not browned, and add potatoes and sauté until brown and a little crispy, adding more oil if needed to keep potatoes from sticking. Add salt to taste. Remove potatoes to dish and toss gently with warm red chile sauce. Serve immediately.

Flan de Leche

Sweet and smooth, Flan is a delightful way to end a spicy New Mexican dinner.

Serves 8

For the custard:

3 cups milk

1 ½ cups sugar

6 eggs

½ cup vanilla

For the caramel:

1 cup sugar

¼ cup water

Before beginning, preheat oven to 325°, bring a kettle of water to a simmer, and place eight custard cups in a large baking pan deep enough to hold 2 inches of water.

For the custard: Heat the milk just to a simmer and stir in sugar until dissolved. Beat the eggs with the vanilla. Stir a little of the warm milk mixture into the eggs first, before adding the rest. Mix well and set aside while you make the caramel.

For the caramel: Put the sugar into a small heavy saucepan and add the water. Stir well and bring to a boil. Turn heat to medium-low and simmer without stirring until syrup is a dark amber

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Flan de Leche

color. Remove from heat and immediately divide among custard cups, tilting to distribute over bottom and sides. (Protect your hands!)

Divide the custard mixture among the cups and return them to the baking pan. Add simmering water to $\frac{1}{3}$ the depth of the cups and set in oven. Cover lightly with foil and cook until custard is set, about 45 minutes. (A knife inserted in the custard will come out clean.) Remove from oven and allow to cool in water bath. Transfer to refrigerator and chill for several hours or overnight.

To unmold, run knife around the edge of the flans and invert on a rimmed serving dish.

Capirotada (Sopa)

Whether you call it Capirotada or Sopa, this is bread pudding. But the only thing it has in common with other bread puddings you may have tasted is the bread—and maybe the raisins. This one soaks up a bubbling brown sugar syrup as it bakes and is layered with mild cheddar cheese and pine nuts (or piñones). It is delicious!

Serves 6

For the syrup:

3 cups water

1 ½ cups brown sugar

4 cloves

1 cinnamon stick

For the pudding:

10 slices white bread

Butter

1 ½ cup mild cheddar cheese, grated

½ cup golden raisins

½ cup pine nuts

For the syrup: Combine all the ingredients in a saucepan and simmer over medium-low heat until cooked down by about one quarter, about fifteen minutes. Set aside to cool. Remove cinnamon and cloves.

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Capirotada (Sopa)

For the pudding: Preheat oven to 350°. Butter a 9" by 13" baking pan and set aside.

Tear bread in bite sized pieces and spread on a baking sheet. Toast for 10-15 minutes, tossing occasionally, until toasty. Layer ½ the bread, cheese, raisins, and pine nuts in baking pan. Repeat for second layer. Slowly ladle syrup over the bread mixture, thoroughly soaking all the pieces. Gently press toast into syrup. Bake covered for 30-40 minutes, removing cover for last ten minutes, until syrup is absorbed and capirotda is creamy.

Serve warm.

Note: An apple, cored, chopped and sautéed in butter or well-drained crushed pineapple can be layered with the other ingredients if desired.

Resources

These are some sources where you can find the authentic New Mexican chile, both red and green, that make these recipes so delicious. Some are my go-to sources, others I'm listing because of their excellent reputation.

The Chile Addict
325 Eubank Blvd.
Albuquerque, NM 87123
505 237-9070
Chileaddictstore.com

A marvelous source for dried chile, both pods and powdered. Try the Chimayo.

BUENO® Chile
1-800-95-CHILE
Buenofoods.com

The Baca family has been providing New Mexico—and points beyond—with simply the best green chile you can find for over half a century. They don't ship themselves, but their website can point you to someone who does. Try the Autumn Roast. Oh, my.

Warning: That shipping charge is going to throw you for a loop (Six pounds of frozen green chile overnighted). But if you do order it, you will not be sorry.

Hatch Chile Express
P.O. Box 350
Hatch, NM 87937
800 292-4454
Hatch-Chile.com

From freshly harvested green chile to edible ristras, you'll find what you're looking for here.

The Chile Shop
109 East Water Street
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505 983-6080
Thechileshop.com

The products are mostly packaged for the walk-in tourist, but it is a fun store if you get to Santa Fe.



¡Buen Provecho!
Enjoy your meal!

