

Mexican Vegetables: ¡Fiesta in the Olbrich Herb Garden!

Flowers Native to Mexico

Dahlia 'Orange Nugget' * *Zinnia* 'Zahara Double Mix' * *Cosmos sulphureus* 'Cosmic Mix'

Lantana 'Luscious Marmalade' * *Tithonia* 'Goldfinger' * *Tagetes* 'Kees Orange'

Zea mays var. japonica * *Capsicum annuum* 'Sangria'

***Capsicum annuum* 'Serrano Tampequino' 'Poblano' 'Craig's Grande Jalapeno'** chiles/chile peppers

Frequently roasted/ peeled/seeded:

1. Toast over an open flame (stovetop or grill) or on a very hot, dry cooking surface (griddle or under the broiler in the oven). Turn frequently. Allow skins to become blackened and start to scorch/bubble on all sides. Should take no more than 5 or 6 minutes.
2. Sweat to soften skins – place in paper bag or bowl covered with a dishcloth 10 minutes.
3. Probably a good time to put on some latex gloves if you have sensitive skin. Otherwise, wash with soap and water after you are done handling the peppers.
4. Use a blunt knife to slide underneath and remove all the black skin.
5. Slit down one side and remove the core with seeds and membrane to reduce spiciness.

Poblano often roasted and skinned, rajas= roasted strips stewed with sour cream, called ancho when dried and reconstituted for stews and salsas

Jalapeno chopped for salsa, quesadillas, tacos; pickled; smoked and dried=chipotle; packed in tomato sauce = in adobo

Serrano used green, very spicy, pickled or dried; grilled as accompaniment to meal, pickled with carrots and onions

Dysphania ambrosioides

epazote

Piney, resinous scent; good with strong/earthy flavors: mushrooms, black beans, poblanos

Start from seed in spring, grows to 3 or 4'

Harvest leaves and shoots for seasoning, freeze or dry the leaves – retains flavor

Substitute: combination of cilantro and lemon grass

➤ Zacatecas Enchiladas

For the Sauce: 4 lg anchos (dried poblanos)

2c. whole milk

2 garlic cloves, rough chopped

1 heaping Tbsp rough chopped epazote

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil for frying the sauce

1 Tbsp sugar, salt to taste

For the Enchiladas:

12 5" tortillas

8 oz. crumbled queso fresco

¾ c. fine chopped white onion

Salt to taste

Cover chiles with hot water and soak til soft and reconstituted, approx 15 minutes. Drain, remove veins and seeds, tear into pieces and put in blender. Add milk, garlic, epazote and blend til smooth. Heat 2 Tbsp oil in small skillet, add blended ingredients, and fry the sauce – add sugar and salt to taste. Heat til slightly thickened. Set aside and keep warm. Have a warmed serving dish ready in which enchiladas will fit in one layer.

Add thin layer of oil to skillet, add tortillas one by one and heat through for a few seconds on each side. Blot with paper towel to remove excess oil and drain on additional paper towel.

When all fried, dip tortillas into the sauce to cover both sides and put a heaping Tbsp of cheese and onion mixture across the middle. Roll up loosely and set side by side in warmed dish. Pour remaining sauce on top, sprinkle with excess filling, and serve.

➤ Chiles Rellenos de Queso y Envueltes en Pasta Hojaldre

1 lb Muenster or Monterey Jack, shredded

Stuffed Poblanos in Puff Pastry

8 chiles poblanos – roasted and prepped for stuffing

A little flour

1# box of puff pastry, thawed

1 egg, beaten

Heat oven to 375 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Divide cheese into 8 portions. Press each portion into an elongated shape to fit in the chile. Stuff the cheese into the chiles & press slit edges together to close. On a lightly floured surface, roll out one pastry sheet to 1/16" thick and cut into quarters. Put a chile, slit side down, on the middle of one quarter and wrap the pastry around the chile, overlapping edges. Seal the edges by dampening with water and press together; trim excess from the ends if necessary.

Place the chiles seam down on the cookie sheet. Lightly brush with the beaten egg. Bake til deep gold, 50-60 minutes.

➤ **Verduras en Escabeche**

Pickled Vegetables

3 T. vegetable oil

12 cloves garlic

1 c sliced carrots

1 c small cauliflower sections

8 jalapenos and 4 serranos, slit vertically down one side

1 lg onion, sliced vertically

1c mild vinegar: cider, white wine, or herb-flavored

1 c water

Spices: 2 bay leaves, 2 cloves, 3 T dried Mexican oregano, 6 peppercorns, 2 tsp kosher salt

Heat oil and add garlic. Saute til garlic turns golden and remove from oil. Add carrots to hot oil; cook two minutes then add cauliflower, chiles and onion. Continue to cook & stir for about two more minutes - keep veggies crisp.

Add cooked garlic back in along with vinegar, water, and spices. Bring to boil then remove from heat. Transfer veggies and liquid to a clean, hot jar. Let cool and cover. Let develop overnight in the fridge. The oil will cloud up, so let sit for 10 minutes at room temp before serving.

***Cucurbita pepo* ‘Tatume’**

calabacita/baby pumpkin

➤ **Calabacitas Rellenas de Flor**

Baby Pumpkins Stuffed with Squash Flowers

Filling (2 c.)

1 # squash flowers (5c tight packed)

3 Tbsp veg oil or butter

½ medium white onion, fine chopped

2 garlic cloves, fine chopped

8 oz tomatoes, fine chopped (about 1 c.)

Salt to taste

1 and ¼ lb zucchini or calabacitas

½ c sour cream

1/3 finely graduate Chihuahua or Muenster

Remove stalks and stringy sepals from flowers; rinse briefly, shake dry and chop roughly. Heat oil in a skillet, fry the onion and garlic til translucent. Add tomatoes and salt, cook over medium til almost dry (4 minutes). Add chopped flowers, cover pan, and continue cooking til mix is almost moist but not juicy. Set aside.

Cut squash in ½ lengthwise and set in one layer, cut side down, in wide pan on the stovetop. Cover with boiling salted water and cook on low heat 10 min. Turn over and continue cooking til just tender. Drain and cool. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Scrape out flesh and seeds and again set cut side down to drain 10 minutes.

Stuff squash with plenty of the flowers and place in one layer in ovenproof dish. Loosely cover and cook 15 min until heated through. Pour cream around squash, sprinkle tops with cheese and return to oven until the cheese is melted, 10 minutes. Spoon sour cream over top when serving.

***Coriandrum sativum* ‘Slo-Bolt’**

Eaten fresh, sow frequently

‘Slo-Bolt’ cilantro

Porophyllum ruderale

Strong cilantro flavor on a tall, non-bolting plant; retains flavor when dried

papalo

➤ **Arroz Verde Green Rice**

4 poblanos; roasted, peeled, seeds and membrane removed, roughly chopped

½ c. cilantro or ¼ c papalo, minced

¼ c. chopped white onion

2 Tbsp minced parsley

2 t. garlic, chopped

¼ c. canola or safflower oil

2 ½ c. medium or long grain white rice

2 ¼ c. chicken broth or water

1 t. sea salt

Process til smooth in a blender – chiles, cilantro, onion, parsley, garlic, and ½ c. of water. Heat the oil in a heavy pot on medium high. Add rice and stir til grains turn ivory and have a nutty fragrance, 8 minutes. Stir in the pureed mixture and fry one minute longer. Add broth and salt, lower heat to medium low, cover and cook for 15 minutes without peeking. Uncover and stir quickly. Re-cover and cook just a few more minutes til all the liquid is absorbed.

Tagetes lucida

anisillo/Mexican mint marigold

Anise flavored tea to accompany pastries

Good with cooked corn, squash and poultry

Pachyrhizus erosus

jicama

Crunchy texture; eaten fresh with chile powder, lime, and salt

Salvia hispanica

chia

➤ **Agua con chia**

Chia lime-ade

Put 1 Tbsp chia seed in 1 qt water and let sit one hour til seeds swell. Add limes and sugar to taste, stir and pour over ice.

***Portulaca oleracea* ‘Golden’**

verdolagas/golden purslane

Prepared like spinach, sautéed or steamed; okra-like texture good with eggs or soups

***Allium cepa* ‘Southport White Globe’**

cebolla/onion

Usually white, sometimes red for garnish/pickling; raw onions tamed by rinsing after chopping or marinated in lime juice

Toasted onions in salsas and stews; Grilled small fresh white onions in tacos

***Phaseolus vulgaris* ‘Black Turtle’**

frijoles negros/black beans

+Saving Beans for Eating and Planting Next Year+

Can be occasionally pollinated by bees: plant different color varieties so you can identify and discard off-types

Harvest whole plants when beans are mature. Drape over frame under cover.

Beans are ready when they have no give when bitten. Put in a jar in the freezer for 24 hours to kill weevil eggs. Store in airtight container at room temp.

Zea mays var. japonica

elote and maiz/Japanese striped corn

➤ **Atole de Grano**

Fresh Corn and Wild Fennel Top Soup

3 c tightly packed fennel tops- feathery part only

1 t cornstarch

6 ears fresh corn

2 t kosher salt

3 limes, cut into wedges

2 Tbsp chile powder

Add the fennel tops to 2 qts water in a large pot. Cover and boil 20 min; turn off and steep for 1 hour. Remove cooked fennel, pressing to remove all the juice. Discard.

Make a paste with cornstarch and a few Tbsp hot fennel liquid. Pour into fennel broth. Taste; if fennel is not assertive, add a little anise flavoring.

Reheat liquid. Shuck corn and remove all silk. Cut 3 of the ears into pieces and put into boiling liquid. Scrape kernels off the other 3 ears and add to the water. Add salt and boil until the corn is well cooked (20 minutes).

Remove any scum that forms on the surface. To serve, add a few pieces of corn plus kernels and liquid to each bowl. Serve with lime wedges and a tiny dish chile powder.

➤ Tacos de Rajas de Chiles Poblanos con Elote Tacos with Poblano Strips and Corn

2 Tbsp olive oil

1/3c fine chopped white onion

1 clove garlic, minced

4 poblanos – roasted, peeled, remove seeds and membranes and cut into narrow strips

½ c cooked/frozen corn kernels

¼ c crema or sour cream thinned with a little milk

½ t sea salt

6 small tortillas

Heat the oil in a heavy skillet on medium. Add onion and cook, stirring often, until pale yellow (2 minutes). Lower heat to low, add garlic and stir a few seconds, then stir in poblano strips, cover and cook 4 minutes. Stir in corn, crema, and salt and cook 2 minutes to heat through. Remove from heat and taste, add more salt if necessary. Serve a spoonful in a warm tortilla.

Physalis ixocarpa ‘Toma Verde’

tomatillo

Lycopersicon esculentum

jitomate/tomato

Bury deep; provide support

Prune suckers and provide good air circulation

Don't fertilize too early

Water regularly; supplement calcium

➤ Salsa de Jitomate Basic Cooked Tomato Sauce

1.5# (3 large) tomatoes

4 serranos

2 cloves garlic, peeled and rough chopped

3 Tbsp. safflower oil

Sea salt to taste

Put tomatoes in saucepan with chiles, cover with water, and bring to simmer. Continue to cook at a fast simmer til fairly soft but not falling apart, 5 minutes. Set aside. Put garlic and 1/3 c of cooking water into blender and blend briefly, 5 seconds. Add tomatoes and blend a few more seconds.

Heat oil in a frying pan, add sauce and cook on high until slightly reduced, stirring and scraping occasionally for 6-8 minutes. Salt to taste.

➤ Peanut-tomato uncooked salsa

¼ dry roasted, unsalted peanuts

6 unpeeled garlic cloves, toasted

4 de arbol chiles, stemmed and seeded, toasted

5 plum tomatoes, toasted

½ t salt, 3 grinds black pepper, 1 tsp Mexican oregano

Place peanuts, garlic, crumbled chile in blender and blend. Turn machine off and on and scrape down sides. Add a few Tbsp water to make blending possible. Add tomatoes (with black skins) and seasonings and puree. Let flavors mingle 30 min and serve at room temp.

Want to learn more?

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