

Glossary of Spanish and Mexican Cooking Terms

This reference to Spanish and Mexican cooking terms is definitely a work in progress. Like Mexico itself, Mexican cooking is a subject so vast that it defies efforts to capture it with any degree of comprehensiveness. Nevertheless, it will be added to on a continuing basis. If you are interested in a particular item or term that you do not find, please submit an e-mail query, and I will attempt to find it and add it to the list, if appropriate.

A

Abulón Abalone

Aceite Oil

Aceite de olivo Olive oil

Aceituna Olive

Acelga Swiss chard

Acitrón Candied fruit made from shoots of the biznaga cactus used as a candy or ingredient in stuffings.

Acocil Small, fresh water crustaceon

Acuyo Piper sanctum. Plant with large leaves which has an anis-like flavor and is used to flavor stews and to wrap tamales. More often called hoja santa in Mexico and "root beer plant" in this country.

Achiote The seed of the annato tree which is used to make a seasoning paste of the same name in the Yucatan. The paste is made by grinding the seeds with garlic, spices and lime juice or vinegar.

Adobo A seasoning paste, usually containing ground chiles, vinegar, garlic and spices that is used to coat meats, poultry and seafood prior to cooking or drying to preserve. Similar to the Yucatan recado or recaudo, and achiote.

Agua Water

Aguacate Avocado. In Nahuatl the avocado was called ahuacatl, which means "testicle," referring to the shape of the fruit.

Aguamiel The sweet juice of the maguey plant, that when fermented produces pulque.

Agua fresca A genre of soft drinks made by infusing water with various flavorings including tamarind, chía, and flor de jamaica

Aguayón Sirloin

Aguja Literally "needle." A cut of chuck steak that is one of the favorite al carbón (char-broiled) specialties of northern Mexico

Ahumar To smoke foods. For example, pescado ahumado means smoked fish.

Ajo Garlic

Ajonjoli Sesame

Albaricoque Apricot. See also chabacano.

Albóndiga Meatball. Meat, poultry or fish that is ground and rolled into balls with other ingredients before cooking.

Al carbón Cooked over charcoal or wood coals

Alambre Literally "wire." Refers to shishkabobs. Also see brocheta.

Albahaca Basil

Alegría A traditional sweet dating from pre-Hispanic times made of toasted amaranth seeds and honey or syrup.

Almeja Clam

Almendra Almond

Almíbar Syrup

Almuerzo Traditionally a midmorning meal that is often used as a translation for "lunch."

Al vapor Food cooked al vapor is steamed

Añejo Refers to something that has been aged, such as liquor or cheese.

Anís Aniseed

Antojito The word antojito comes from the Spanish word antojo which means whim. An extensive list of the foods referred to by "antojitos" may be found in the blog entry entitled "Antojitos Mexicanos"

Aperitivo Appetizer or aperitif.

Apio Celery

Arracheras Skirt steak or fajitas

Arriero Mule driver. Several dishes were named after these colorful characters.

Arroz Rice

Asado Broiled

Asadero A barbecue or grill. Also a type of cheese the texture of mozzarella that is made with half fresh and half day-old milk.

Asar To broil

Ate Jam

Atole A thick drink, dating from pre-Hispanic times, made with ground, dried corn and water or milk, and occasionally with other ingredients and seasonings, that can be taken hot or cold.

Atún Tuna

Ayocote A large type of bean, also spelled ayecote.

Azafrán Saffron

Azafrancillo *Ditaxis heterantha*. A plant whose bulbs are used to color foods, and often used as a substitute for saffron.

Azucar Sugar

Azucarera Sugar bowl

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B

Bacalao Dried fish, usually cod, a traditional Christmas dish in Spain and parts of Mexico.

Balché A Mayan alcoholic beverage made from bark of the balché tree and honey.

Bañar Literally "to bathe." Often used in instructions to cover a food with sauce.

Barbacoa Meat cooked in a sealed, underground pit, usually wrapped in maguey or sometimes banana leaves. Often the meat is placed on a grill over a cauldron filled with water, vegetables, beans, chickpeas, herbs and spices to create a soup, flavored with the drippings.

Báscula Scale

Batidora electrica Electric mixer

Batir To whisk or beat as in to beat eggs.?

Betabel Beet

Birria A barbacoa specialty of Jalisco made with lamb or goat.

Bistec Beefsteak

Bizcocho Cupcake or cookie, often flavored with anis.

Biznaga A type of cactus, resembling a barrel cactus, from whose young stalks acitrón, (candied cactus) which is used as a flavoring in stuffings such as for chiles en nogada, is made.

Blanco de Patzcuaro A mild flavored fish from Lake Patzcuaro in Michoacán, for which the town of the same name is justly famous. It is usually fried in an egg batter and is often served al mojo de ajo: with garlic sauce.

Blanquear To blanch

Blanquillo Egg. A term not used much in Mexico, but which avoids the possible double entendre of the more common huevo, which is also a slang term referring to testicles.

Bocadillo Snack or finger food

Bolillo French style, crusty bread rolls made in the shape of a bobbin that is served with entrees and used for sandwiches.

Borracho Literally "drunk" and refers, in the culinary sense, to sauces made with pulque, beer or tequila, and to beans cooked with pulque or beer.

Borrego Sheep

Botana Snacks or appetizers, often taken with drinks in a bar or before a meal.

Brasear To braise

Brocheta Shishkabob or skewer. Also called alambre which literally means "wire."

Budín Pudding

Buñuelo A fritter made of fried wheat flour dough and flavored with a syrup or honey, and often anis and cinnamon as well.

Burritos See antojito.

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C

Cabrito Kid

Cabucho Flower of the biznaga cactus

Cacahuacentli Also spelled cacahuacintle and cacahuazintle. A type of corn with large ears and round grains (resembling cacao beans) often used to make tamales cernidos (strained tamales, meaning that the dough is strained to make it extra fine and spongy) and pozole.

Cacahuete Peanut

Cacerola Casserole dish.

Café Coffee or a cafe.

Café de Olla Mexican style coffee made in a clay pot

Caguama A large, now endangered, turtle. Also used to refer to an extra large bottle of beer or any large item.

Cajeta A confection made by simmering goat's milk and sugar to a thick paste. A specialty of Celaya now found throughout Mexico. Sell also leche quemada.

Calabacita Squash

Calabaza Pumpkin or very large squash

Calamar Squid

Caldo Soup or broth

Camarón Shrimp

Camote Sweet potato. Also refers to the famous cigar-shaped sweets of Puebla which are made with sweet potatoes and fruit.

Campechano A term applied to various seafood cocktails

Campechana Cocktail. Sometimes used in general and sometimes to refer to specific drinks from Campeche where the word cocktail is said to have originated.

Canela Cinnamon

Capear To cover food with batter and fry it.

Capirotada A pudding of bread fruit and syrup flavored with spices such as cinnamon and allspice, commonly prepared during Lent.

Capulín A type of fruit resembling a wild cherry, used for medicinal and ornamental purposes.

Caramelo Caramel

Carne Meat

Carne asada Broiled meat. Also, in parts of northern Mexico, this term refers to a cookout or picnic where meat is cooked over coals.

Carne de puerco Pork

Carne de res Beef

Carne molida Ground meat or hamburger

Carnero Mutton

Carta Menu

Cazón Shark. See also tiburón.

Cazuela Large, clay cooking vessel that is wider at the top than at the bottom.

Cazuelitas See antojitos.

Cebollitas de cambray Green onions or scallions

Carnitas Pork, usually simmered in enough lard to cover it, often with the addition of garlic and sometimes fruit juices, until tender and crisp, then used as a filling for tacos. A specialty of Michoacán.

Cebolla Onion

Cebiche Often spelled ceviche. Fish that is "cooked" by the chemical action of lime juice in which it is soaked, and is then mixed with other ingredients and served, usually as an appetizer.

Cecina Paper thin pieces of dried or partially dried beef or pork that are sometimes infused with powdered or ground chiles and other seasonings. Sometimes called tasajo, especially in Oaxaca.

Cedazo Strainer or sieve

Cena Supper

Cerdo Pig

Cernidor Sifter

Cernir To sift

Cerveza Beer

Ceviche See cebiche

Cilantro Coriander

Ciruela Plum

Ciruela pasa Prune

Clavetear To decorate or adorn

Clavo de olor Clove

Clemole Another word for mole, sometimes used in the diminutive, clemolito.

Cocada A sticky sweet made with coconut.

Cocer To cook, boil or simmer.

Cocinar To cook.

Coco Coconut

Coctel Cocktail

Codillo Elbow or knuckle.

Codorniz Quail

Col Cabbage. See also repollo.

Coladera Colander, sieve or strainer

Colonche An alcoholic beverage found in northern Mexico, made by fermenting tunas from the nopal cactus.

Colorín Edible, red flowers from the tree of the same name.

Comal A griddle made originally from clay, but now more usually from iron, steel, tin or aluminum.

Comida A meal, often referring to the principal one taken in the mid or late afternoon.

Comino Cumin

Conejo Rabbit

Confitar To crystallize. To sweeten. To cook fruit in syrup.

Congelador Freezer

Conserva Preserves. Food preserved in sealed, sterilized jars.

Cordero Lamb

Cortar To cut

Corunda A triangle shaped tamal which is a speciality of Michoacán.

Costillas Ribs

Costillas chuletas Rib steaks.

Crema Cream

Cremera Creamer

Crepas Crepes

Cuchara Spoon

Cucharada Tablespoon

Cucharadita Teaspoon

Cuchillo Knife

Cuitlacoche Often spelled Huitlacoche The intensely black, mushroomlike corn smut used as a filling for antojitos or an ingredient in soups.

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Ch

Chabacano Apricot (See also albaricoque)

Chalupas See Antojitos.

Chambarete Shank of beef

Chamberete de carnero Lamb or mutton shank

Champiñon Mushroom. See also hongo.

Champurrado An atole flavored with chocolate

Charal Minnow-sized fish, often from Lake Patzcuaro in Michocán, that are dried.

Charola Baking dish.

Chaya *Jatropha aconitifolia*. Large-leafed vegetable used to flavor soups, stews and to wrap tamales.

Chayote A type of squash called Mirliton in the southern U.S.

Chía, *Salvia hispanica*. A plant whose seeds have been used since pre-Hispanic times as in ingredient in drinks, cereals and tamales. Oil extracted from the seed was one of the few pre-Hispanic sources of fat.

Chicozapote *Manilkara zapota*. A small brown fruit from the chicle tree from which latex is made. The fruit is quite sweet and excellent in taste.

Chícharo Pea

Chicharrónes Pork skins which are fried in lard and eaten as a snack or used as a filling for tacos and as an ingredient in soups.

Chicozapote Smallish brown-skinned fruit with a mild flavor somewhat like that of a pear.

Chilacayote Cucurbita Ficofolia Bouché. Gourd with edible flesh and seeds.

Chilaquiles See antojitos.

Chilatole An atole flavored with ground broiled tomatoes and chiles.

Chilmole A flavoring paste from the Yucatan made with dried chiles that are dry roasted on a comal until blackened, often with grain alcohol to enhance the charring effect, and other spices. Also spelled chimole or chirmole

Chilocuil Red maguey worms. second in popularity to the meocuil or white maguey worm.

Chilorio A meat filling, popular in northern Mexico. Usually made with pork but sometimes with beef, that is boiled, shredded, then fried with ground chiles and other spices.

Chilpachol A soup made with crab meat and tomato.

Chimichanga Often spelled chivichanga. See Antojitos.

Chiquihuite A large, often shallow basket.

Chirmole See chilmole.

Chirimoya *Annona cherimola* Mill. A scaly greenish-brown fruit that is white inside with large seeds. Very sweet with a custard-like flavor and grainy texture.

Chivo Goat

Chocolate Chocolate

Chorizo Mexican or Spanish style sausage. The Spanish version is usually dried and flavored with paprika, while Mexican style chorizo is usually sold fresh either in links or in bulk and is flavored with chiles such as the ancho and pasilla.

Chorote An atole served in the state of Tabasco, flavored with sugar and chocolate.

Chuleta Chop (as in chuleta de puerco, or pork chop).

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D

Damiana *Turnera diffusa*; *Turnera aphrodisiaca*. *Planta turnerácea*. An herbal plant found in Baja California that is said to have aphrodisiacal qualities. It is used as an ingredient in a sweet liquor of the same name that makes an excellent addition to the Margarita cocktail. It is also used to make tea..

Dasayuno Breakfast. Literally: Break Fast (Des Ayuno).

Datíl Date

Derretir To melt.

Desgrasar To remove grease.

Deshuesar To remove bones

Destapador Bottle opener

Desvenar Remove veins, as from chiles.

Diezmillo Chuck steak

Diluir To dilute

Dorado Dolphin. Also means browned.

Dorar To brown

Dulce Sweet or candy.

Dulcería Candy shop

Durazno Peach

Dzotobichay A tamal from the Yucatan that is wrapped with chaya leaves.

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E

Ejotes Green beans

Elote Fresh corn, (as opposed to maíz or dried corn).

Embutido Cold meat, sausage and the making of sausage.

Empanada A pastry turnover filled with either meats or fruits and other sweets.

Empanizar To bread or to fry items such as meat that have been coated with bread crumbs.

Enchilada See antojitos.

Enchilado Meat, cheese or other foods that are coated with chile paste or powder. For example: queso enchilado, is a cheese that has been coated with chile.

Enfrijolada See antojitos

Enharinar To flour

Ensalada Salad

Ensaladera Salad bowl.

En su jugo Meat or poultry cooked in its own juice.

Entomatadas See Antojitos.

Entrada Entree

Envueltos See antojitos.

Epazote *Chenopodium ambrosioides*. An herb found wild throughout North America that is used extensively to flavor beans, soups, stews and quesadillas.

Escabeche A mixture of vinegar, oil, herbs and seasonings used to preserve or "pickle" foods such as poultry, fish, chiles and other vegetables.

Escaldar Blanch, scald.

Escamoles Ant eggs, considered a delicacy in pre-Hispanic times.

Ecurrir To strain.

Espagheti Spaghetti

Espelón A small, black bean from the Yucatan.

Espinazo Spine

Estofado A stew. Stewed or braised.

Estragón Tarragon

Estufa Stove

Exprimador Juicer

Exprimir To squeeze.

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F

Falda Literally "skirt," but usually refers to the flank steak rather than the skirt steak, which is usually called arracheras.

Fécula Starch

Fiambre A mixture of various foods such as fruits, vegetables, meats and cheeses that is usually marinated in a dressing and served cold.

Fideos Noodles or pasta, usually fideo refers to a coil of dried, angel hair sized pasta

Filete Filet

Flamear To flame as in a flaming dessert.

Flan Custard or dessert made with milk or cream and eggs.

Flautas See Antojitos.

Flor Flower

Flor de calabaza Squash blossom

Flor de jamaica The deep red portion of the flowers which cover the seeds from a plant often referred to in English as hibiscus, used to make soft drinks and "tea."

Fondo Broth or consume made from soup bones or, a reduced stock

Fogon Hearth

Frasco Jar

Freir To fry.

Fresadilla Another word for tomatillo, sometimes used in northern Mexico.

Fresas Strawberries

Frijoles Beans

Frijoles borrachos Beans cooked with beer or pulque.

Frijoles colados Beans that are cooked, then strained before frying.

Frijoles maneados Beans fried with cheese, a specialty of Sonora.

Frijoles refritos Refried beans.

Fritada Northern Mexican dish made by cooking kid in its blood.

Frito Fried

Fruta Fruit

Fundir To melt. See also derretir

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G

Garnachas See antojitos.

Golosina Candy or sweet

Gordita See antojitos.

Granada Pomegranate

Grasa Grease or fat.

Guacamole Avocado ground to a paste, sometimes mixed with onions, chiles, tomato, lime juice and cilantro.

Guajolote Turkey (see also pavo).

Guarnición Accompaniment to the main entree such as vegetables.

Guanábana *Annona muricata* L. A medium large, sour fruit often used in ice cream.

Guayaba *Psidium guajava* L. A medium to small yellow fruit with a fresh, almost sour, pungent taste that is delicious to some and awful to others. The trees leaves were used by the Aztecs in the treatment of diarrhea.

Guisado Stewed

Guisar To stew or cook.

Guiso A stew or casserole.

Gusanos de Maguey Worms found on the Maguey (agave) plant that, when fried are considered a delicacy. The worm often found in bottles of mescal.

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H

Haba Boradbeans, Large, yellowish, broad beans of the lima bean family, originally from Europe and popular in Mediterranean cooking.

Harina Flour

Harina de Maíz Flour made from nixtamalized corn for making masa for tortillas and tamales

Harina de trigo Wheat flour

Helado Ice cream

Hervir To boil

Hielo Ice

Hierbabuena Mint. Also spelled yerbabuena

Hierbas Herbs

Higado Liver

Higo Fig

Hojaldre Puff paste

Hoja Santa Piper sanctum. A plant whose large, soft leaves with the flavor of anis are used as an ingredient in stews and tamales. Often referred to as the rootbeer plant. Especially popular in Oaxaca. See also acuyo

Hongo Mushroom. Also referred to as champiñon

Horchata Soft drink prepared by blending water or juice with melon seeds or rice, and with additional ingredients including fruits, coconut, almonds and sugar.

Hornear To bake in an oven.

Horno Oven

Huachinango Red Snapper

Huauhtli Nahuatl word for Amaranth

Huauzontle *Chenopodium nuttalias*. Sometimes spelled Guasoncle. . A plant related to epazote whose leaves are coated with batter and fried.

Huesos Bones

Huevo Egg. Careful, this is also a slang word for testicle. A safer word to use is Blanquillo, although it is little used in Mexico. .

Huitlacoche See Cuitlacoche

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J

Jalea Jelly or marmalade

Jamoncillo Confection or candy made from sugar and milk or from fruits and pumpkin seeds.

Jarabe Syrup

Jarra Pitcher

Jengibre Ginger

Jícama *Pachyrrhizus erosus*. An edible root with much the texture and taste of a cross between an apple and water chestnut.

Jitomate Tomato. Also called "tomate."

Jugo Juice

Jumil An insect that is eaten both alive and dried. A specialty of Taxco.

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L

Langosta Lobster

Lata Can

Leche Milk

Leche quemada Literally "burned milk, another term for cajeta.

Lechuga Lettuce

Lenguado Flounder

Legumbre Vegetable

Lenteja Lentil

Licor Liquor

Licuada Blender

Liebre Hare

Lima agria The sour lime found in Yucatan and used in the area's cuisine.

Limón Lime

Limonada Limeade

Lomo Loin

Longaniza A sausage flavored with chiles and other spices.

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M

Machacar To grind or crush.

Maguey Agave

Mantequilla Butter

Maíz Corn in its dried state (as opposed to elote which refers to fresh corn).

Mamey *Pouteria sapota*. Tree and the edible fruit it bears which is peach colored and almost too sweet to some tastes. A favorite ingredient in ice cream.

Mango Mango

Manitas Pigs feet

Manteca Lard

Manjar A delicious dish or delicacy

Manzana Apple

Mariscos Seafood

Marquesote A sweet bread or tort usually made with wheat, rice or corn flour and eggs.

Masa Dough of ground nixtamal from which tortillas are made.

Mejorana Marjoram

Melaza Molasses

Melon Melon

Membrillo Quince

Menudo Soup or stew made with tripe and flavored with chiles. A specialty of northern Mexico, that is considered a cure for hangovers.

Menudencias Giblets

Meocuil White and most popular (from a culinary standpoint) maguey worm.

Merienda A light meal or snack taken either between the comida and the cena. Similar to an English high tea.

Mermelada Marmalade

Mero Grouper

Metate The three-legged, flat, stone implement used for grinding corn, chiles and spices.

Mezcal Distilled liquor made from the juice of various agaves, often roasted over open fires giving it a smokey taste.

Mezclar To mix.

Miel Honey

Milanesa A breaded, fried cutlet of veal, beef or pork.

Milpa Cornfield. Often beans, squash, tomatillos, tomatoes and chiles, the most important elements in Mexican cooking, grow amongst the corn.

Miltomate tomate de milpa, or fresadilla Tomatillo

Mixiote Thin parchment-like membrane of the maguey, or the dish made by wrapping meats and vegetables in it much the way we use parchment paper, and cooking them in a steamer of barbacoa pit.

Mojo de ajo Garlic sauce

Molcajete Stone mortar used principally to prepare sauces

Molde Mold

Molde para pastel Cake pan

Mole From the Nahuatl word molli, or sauce. Now refers to traditional stews which are thickened by their own ingredients including chiles, nuts, fruit and seeds.

Moler To grind

Molotes See antojitos.

Molletes Bolillo or small French rolls cut in half and buttered and toasted, or covered with refried beans and cheese and heated. A popular breakfast item.

Molido Ground

Molusca bivalvo Scallops

Morcilla Meat, often entrails, cooked in blood or stuffed into intestines and grilled or broiled.

Mostaza Mustard

Muslo Thigh

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N

Naranja Orange

Nata Skin or cream. The top skimmed off milk or cream.

Natillas Custard

Nixtamal Dried corn which has been heated and soaked in an alkaline solution to loosen the skin, and to facilitate the release of vital nutrients.

Nogada A sauce made from peeled, ground nuts, as in chiles en nogada.

Nopal The typical Mexican edible cactus, either the whole plant or the leaf. Called nopalitos when the leaves are chopped into small pieces. Considered an aid to lowering cholesterol.

Nuez Literally nut. In the north it usually refers to pecans

Nuez moscada Nutmeg

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O

Olla Pot

Olla Exprés Pressure cooker

Olla podrida A stew of meats and vegetables

Orégano Oregano

Ostión Oyster

Ostionería Small cafe specializing in seafood

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P

Palomitas Popcorn

Pambazo See antojitos.

Pámpano Pompano

Pan Bread

Pan dulce Sweet bread.

Panela Unrefined sugar, usually sold molded into small, hard cones. See also panocha and piloncillo.

Panocha Unrefined sugar, sugar, usually sold in small, very hard cones.(Be careful as panocha is also a slang word meaning vagina) See also panela and piloncillo.

Panuchos See antojitos

Papa Potato. Papá means father, so be careful of the pronunciation.

Papas fritas French fries (Also called papas francesas)

Papadzules See antojitos.

Papaya Papaya

Papel de aluminio Aluminum foil

Papel encerado Wax paper

Parrilla A grill, such as a barbecue grill.

Pastel Cake

Pato Duck

Pavera Roasting pan.

Pavo Turkey (see also guajolote).

Pay Pie

Pechuga Breast as in chicken breast: pechuga de pollo.

Pejelagarto *Lepidoseus viridis*. A type of alligator gar eaten in Tabasco.

Pelar To peel.

Pelador Vegetable peeler.

Pellizcada See antojitos

Peneques See antojitos

Pepino Cucumber

Pepita Pumpkin or squash seed.

Perejil Parsley

Pescado Fish

Pibil Word for the barbacoa pit used in the Yucatan.

Picada See Antojitos.

Picadillo Filling made of ground meat.

Picante Hot as in chile hot.

Pierna Leg

Piloncillo Unrefined cane sugar, usually found in small hard cones. See also panela and panocha.

Pimienta de jamaica or dulce Allspice

Pimienta negra Black pepper

Pimentón dulce Paprika

Piña Pineapple

Piñon Pine nut

Pinole Flour made from roasted, dried corn. Used to make a drink flavored with sugar, cinnamon and anis, and sometimes sugar.

Pipián A stew that is similar to the moles, usually containing ground squash seeds and nuts.

Pitahaya *Hylocereus undatus*. A tropical plant with beautiful flowers and tasty fruit.

Pitaya *Stenocereus stellatus*. Fruit from a type of prickly pear cactus, from which the juice is made into an alcoholic beverage.

Pierna Leg, as in leg of lamb

Pizca A "pinch" of an herb or seasoning

Plancha Griddle

Plátano Plantain or banana. (In some places Platáno macho refers to the plantain and platáno tabasco to the banana).

Platillo Literally, small plate, but also refers to the main dish or entree plate.

Plato Plate

Platón Platter

Pollo Chicken

Ponche Punch, made with liquor such as brandy or rum and fruit, and usually served hot. Especially popular at Christmas time.

Postre Dessert

Pozole Soup made with meat (usually pork) and nixtamalized corn kernels called cacahuazintle, and flavored with chile. A speciality of Jalisco. There is also a wheat pozole common to the state of Sonora.

Puchero A large dish, or stew.

Puerro Leek

Pulpo Octopus

Pulque Mildly alcoholic drink made by fermenting aguamiel (the juice of the maguey plant).

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Q

Quelite Generic name for edible, wild plants, used much the way we use the term "greens."

Quemador Stove burner.

Quesadillas See antojitos.

Queso Cheese

Queso añejo A hard, aged cheese that when coated with chile is called queso enchilado. Also called queso cotija.

Queso asadero Stringy cheese with the texture of low fat mozzarella that is made from part fresh milk and part milk that has been allowed to ripen over night.

Queso cotija See queso añejo

Queso fresco Literally fresh cheese. A fresh soft cheese, often homemade.

Queso panela A fresh cheese resembling feta.

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R

Rábano Raddish

Rajas Slices of skinned poblano chiles that are fried, sometimes with onions, and served with broiled meats.

Rallar To grate.

Raspada Shaved ice flavored with syrup.

Recado or recaudo Yucatan style seasoning pastes that are usually smeared on meats, poultry and fish prior to cooking. They are made by grinding together ingredients like annato seeds, garlic, and chiles. Similar to achiote.

Refresco Soft drink.

Refrigerador Refrigerator

Rejilla Grate, or grill.

Relleno Filling

Remojar To soak

Repollo Cabbage. See also col.

Reposteria Confectionary. The art of making desserts and pastries.

Requeson Curd Cheese, similar to

Res Beef (as in carne de res)

Recipiente hondo Bowl

Riñon Kidney

Robalo Snook

Romeritos Suaeda torreyana. A wild vegetable that looks much like rosemary, that is often mixed with mole sauce and shrimp and served during Lent.

Romero Rosemary

Rompopo Mexican style eggnog.

Ropa Vieja Literally "old clothes." Refers to a stew made with shredded meat.

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S

Sábana Literally "sheet." Tenderloin steak pounded paper thin and briefly seared on a comal or parilla before being served, often with a sauce and melted cheese.

Salbutes See antojitos.

Salchicha Sausage

Salmón Salmon

Salpicón Mixture of finely chopped or shredded ingredients.

Salpimentar or Salpimeinta To season with salt and pepper.

Salsa Sauce

Salsa Mexicana Literally "rooster's beak." Uncooked relish made with diced tomato, onion and fresh chile. Usually called pico de gallo, in northern Mexico.

Salsera Sauceboat

Salvia Sage

Sandía Watermelon

Sangria Drink of Spanish origin made with fruit juice, fruit and wine, rum or brandy.

Sangrita A combination of orange juice, grenadine, chile and sometimes tomato juice that is the favorite accompaniment to tequila in Mexico.

Sartén Skillet

Sazonar To season

Seco Dry

Servilleta Napkin

Sesos Brains

Sierra Mackerel

Sopa Soup. The word caldo, (broth) is often used.

Sopa seca Literally "dry soup." Includes rice and pasta dishes

Sopera Soup bowl

Sopes See antojitos.

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T

Taco (and types of tacos) See antojitos.

Tamales See Antojitos.

Tamarindo Tamarind

Tapa Lid or top.

Tapar To cover.

Tasajo Thinly sliced, dried or partially dried beef or pork that is often flavored with chile. Also called cecina.

Taza Cup

Te or thé Tea

Tejocote A tree which produces a fruit resembling a crab apple. Used in syrups and punches.

Tejolote The pestle used with a molcajete

Telera A type of wheat-flour roll usually used to make tortas (Mexican style sandwiches). It is oval in shape and has two ridges lengthwise along the top, giving it the appearance of a trilobite.

Tenedor Fork

Tepache An alcoholic beverage made from pineapple and sugar, or cane juice and other juices.

Tepescuinte Sometimes called tepescuintle The paca, a small, plump rodent found more often in South America than Mexico.

Tequesquite Rock salt

Tequila Liquor distilled from the juice of the blue tequila agave.

Tesgüino Beer made from corn, principally by the Tarahumara Indians who live in the high mountains of Chihuahua.

Tiburón Shark (see also cazón)

Tocino Bacon

Tomate de milpa Tomatillo. Sometimes refers to the wild tomatillo.

Tomatillo Tomatillo. Also called tomate de milpa, tomate verde and fresadilla.

Tomillo Thyme

Toronja Grapefruit

Torta Literally a pie or tort but also refers to a Mexican style sandwich (torta mexicana) usually made by removing most of the crumbs from both sides of a split telera or bolillo, then filling it with everything from various meats and cheeses to a tamal. See antojitos.

Tortilla Flat, thin bread made from nixtamalized corn. The most important aspect of Mexican cooking.

Tortuga Turtle

Tostada See antojitos

Tostar To toast

Totoaba A now endangered fish with delicately flavored flesh found in the Sea of Cortés.

Totopos In most of Mexico totopos is the word used to describe the fried tortilla chips served as appetizers and snacks. However, in the state of Oaxaca totopos refer to very large corn tortillas that are often cooked until quite hard.

Trigo Wheat

Tripas Tripe

Trucha Trout

Tuba Alcoholic beverage made from fermented palm juice.

Tuna The fruit of the nopal cactus.

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U

Uchepos A tamal that is a specialty of Michocán, made from fresh rather than dried corn.

Uva Grape

Uva pasa Raisin

Vainas de vainilla Vanilla beans

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V

Vainilla Vanilla

Vasija Vessel or container

Vaso A drinking glass

Venado Deer

Verdolaga Purslane

Verdura Vegetable

Vinagre Vinegar

Vino Wine

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X

Xnipec A chile sauce or relish common in the Yucatan whose name means literally, "dog's nose."

Xoconostle A type of cactus tuna.

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Y

Yerbabuena See hierbabuena.

Yuca Yucca

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Z

Zacahuil A gigantic tamal, often filled with a suckling pig or whole turkeys, and cooked in a pit. Found mostly along the Gulf Coast in Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí and Veracruz.

Zapote Trees which produce tropical fruits including the zapote prieto and zapote blanco. The former is quite good and the latter somewhat sour.

Zanahoria Carrot

Zumo Juice. The word jugo is more common in Mexico. In Mexico zumo often refers to the oil of an orange peel.