

RECIPES

Mexican Hot Chocolate

Chocolate came originally from Mexico, and hot chocolate is the drink of choice at Mexican religious and cultural celebrations, including Day of the Dead, Christmas, Easter, and a host of others. In other places, hot chocolate is often made with cocoa powder, which, to me, gives it a chalky taste. In Mexico it is traditionally made with chopped Mexican-style chocolate.

Following are two recipes: one for traditional Mexican chocolate and the other a deliriously rich concoction!

Ingredient information

If you cannot find Mexican chocolate, use semi-sweet chocolate and add 1 teaspoon sugar and 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. In Mexico, hot chocolate is often made with water, rather than milk, and you can certainly use it. However, I prefer the extra richness of milk. For a truly luxurious, although not traditional version, see the recipe following this one.

Traditional Mexican chocolate ingredients

1- 3.3 ounce round or piece of Mexican Chocolate (Nestle's Abuelita is a good choice)
2 1/2 cups milk or water

Traditional Mexican chocolate directions

Break or chop the Mexican chocolate into small pieces. Place it in a saucepan, add the milk, and bring it to a simmer. Stir the mixture until the chocolate is melted and completely combined. Beat the chocolate to a froth as suggested above.

Makes 2 cups chocolate.

Super premium hot chocolate

There are a many hot chocolate mixes on the market, some of them in elegant packages with high prices. Most of them are a combination of cocoa powder and dried milk, with the latter making up much of the bulk. The following hot chocolate involves making a base using grated or chopped chocolate and cream, and it is rich and delicious.

Ingredients for super premium hot chocolate

1/2 pound Mexican chocolate, (Nestle's Abuelita is a good choice) cut into tiny pieces
8 ounces whipping cream
2 teaspoon ancho chile powder
1/8 teaspoon powdered allspice
1/8 teaspoon powdered cloves
Milk

Directions for super premium hot chocolate

1. Make the base. Chop the chocolate into very small pieces. (If you wish, after doing this you can then pulverize it in a food processor, which will make melting it easier). Bring the cream to a boil in a small saucepan. Quickly stir in the chocolate, chile powder, allspice, and cloves, remove from the heat and cover the saucepan for 1 minute. After 1 minute, whisk or stir the chocolate until it is completely melted. If not using it immediately, allow the base to cool and refrigerate it.

2. Make the chocolate. Combine the base with an equal amount of milk and bring to a simmer. You may also add some Kalhua, creme de cassis, or one of the many other chocolate liqueurs.

3. Serving the chocolate. Mexicans like their chocolate beaten to a froth. This is traditionally done with a wooden implement called a molinillo. To imitate its action an immersion blender works well. You can also use a regular blender, but be careful to blend only a small amount at a time, using a brief pulse then releasing steam by raising the lid, as hot ingredients have a tendency to explode out of the blender bowl. For one cup, a small milk frother also works very well.

Makes 1 1/2 cups base, or 3 cups hot chocolate. (It is quite rich and 3/4 cup is a reasonable amount per serving).