

## RECIPES

### New Mexico Style Red Chile Enchilada Sauce

This recipe provides two versions of this authentic enchilada sauce: one that is made rich with just a little pork, as well as a terrific vegetarian version that puts the entire spotlight on New Mexico's incomparable dried red chiles. Burn some piñon incense while you are cooking and eating [enchiladas made with this recipe](#), and you will be transported to New Mexico!

#### Ingredient and preparation instructions

The two keys to this recipe are the quality of the chile powder and the way the roux is prepared. (Roux is the combination of oil or butter and flour that is used to thicken sauces). For the chile powder, I strongly suggest that you order yours from the Santa Fe School of Cooking (800-982-4688 or [www.santafeschoolofcooking.com](http://www.santafeschoolofcooking.com)). My favorite is their Authentic New Mexico Chile Powder with medium heat, formerly called Chimayo-style Chile Powder. (The Authentic New Mexico powder is more pure than much of the powder made from chiles actually grown in Chimayo, because it does not include ground chile seeds. Including the seeds does not materially affect the heat, but they can impart a bitter taste. The authentic Chimayo powder is also very expensive)!

New Mexico cooks often add the roux to thicken their sauces toward the end of the cooking process. All too often they also cook the roux only briefly. (I know because I used to make the same mistake). I learned from Cajun cooks that proper treatment of the roux can be the difference between an ordinary and superb result, and I applied that knowledge to this recipe. Instead of simmering the roux for just a minute or so, you cook it until it turns to about the color of a brown paper grocery bag (if you can still find one). This usually takes about 4 - 5 minutes, but if the pan is especially hot it can be done in only 1 minute. Watch the color and do not let it get much darker than the brown paper bag description.

You can substitute 3 tablespoons olive oil, or another oil, for the butter. I do that in the diet version of the recipe. While the taste is not as rich, it does fit well with the minimalist nature of New Mexico cooking.

#### Ingredients

- 4 large cloves garlic or 6 small ones, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup high quality chile powder from New Mexico chiles (see above)
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf oregano
- 5 cups water
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 pound boneless pork loin with just a little fat, cut into 1/4 - 1/3 inch pieces
- 4 tablespoons butter, or 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 3/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste

#### Directions

**1. Make the chile broth.** Place the garlic, chile powder, and oregano in a blender, add 1 cup of the water and blend for 2 minutes. Add the remaining water and blend for 15 seconds. (If your blender does not have a 5 cup plus capacity, just add however much it will comfortably hold then add the rest of the water to the dish, separately.)

**2. Sear the pork, if using it.** If you are not using the pork, proceed to the next step. If you are using pork in the recipe heat a ten to twelve cup capacity heavy pot (an iron Dutch-oven is perfect) over medium-high to high heat, add the olive oil, and then the pork. Allow the pork to sear for about 20 - 30 seconds, then stir-fry it until it is browned all over, another 15 - 30 seconds. Remove the pork to a dish and allow the pot to cool for a few minutes.

**3. Make the roux.** If you seared the pork, place the partially cooled pot over just below medium heat. If you are not using the pork, heat your pot over just below medium heat. In either case, add the butter, and when it has just melted add and stir in the flour with a metal whisk. Continue whisking the roux until it turns a medium brown (the color of a brown paper bag), about 5 minutes, and remove the pot from the heat.

**4. Add the liquid ingredients.** Pulse the ingredients in the blender to make sure they are well mixed, then whisk about ½ cup of the chile liquid into the roux. As soon as it is incorporated with no lumps, add another ½ cup. Repeat the process once or twice more, or until the liquid you add combines with very little whisking, then replace the pot on the burner and whisk in the remainder of the chile liquid (and any water that did not fit into the blender).

**5. Cook the sauce.** Bring the ingredients to a boil then turn the heat down to a medium low simmer. Add the pork, if using it, then add the bay leaves and vinegar, and simmer the sauce until it reaches the consistency of a thin to medium milkshake. It should coat the back of the spoon, but not be obviously thick. (You do not want it too thick because it will thicken further in the oven when heated with the enchiladas).The thickening process should take about 40 minutes. If it thickens too quickly and you are using pork, simply add a little more water and continue cooking for the full 40 minutes. The reason for this is that you want the pork to be very tender. As the liquid evaporates and the sauce thickens, you may need to turn down the heat to keep it from finishing too soon. If you are not using pork, you may speed up the cooking so that the sauce can be ready after as few as 20 minutes. Add salt to taste, and cook another minute.

Makes about 2 cups or enough sauce for 4 enchilada plates.