

RECIPES

Simple Mole

Is there really such a thing as a simple mole? Several years ago, on a culinary tour of Puebla and Tlaxcala, Alicia and Jorge de' Angeli, two of Mexico's premier food authorities and owners of the famed El Tajín restaurant in Mexico City convinced me there was. Here is the recipe with some adaptations.



About the recipe

Anyone who has attempted to make one of Mexico's famous traditional *moles*, for example *Mole poblano* or Oaxaca's *Mole negro*, knows they are anything but simple. It is not just the 25 to 35 ingredients that make them complicated, but also the fact that most of the ingredients are cooked separately before they are brought together.

When I met Jorge and Alicia De' Angeli, two of Mexico's foremost food authorities, their book, *Cocina Mexicana Para el Mundo (Mexican cooking for the world)*, had just been released. One of the first recipes that caught my attention was for *Mole sencillo*, or Simple *mole*. They assured me that, while it did not have quite the complex layers of flavor of the more involved recipes, it provided a valid *mole* experience, and with a fraction of the time and effort! I tried it and found that was indeed the case, especially after some minor changes.

Ingredients

3 ounces ancho chiles (about 5 - 6 medium to medium-large) weighed with seeds and stems.
½ tablespoon sesame seeds
3 tablespoons blanched, slivered almonds
2 tablespoons raisins
1 cup chopped white onion
½ teaspoon cinnamon, preferably *canela* the "true" or Ceylon cinnamon used in Mexico
½ teaspoon dried, leaf oregano
2 - 3 cups chicken broth
1 teaspoon sugar
2 ½ tablespoons lard or olive oil, or a combination
½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
2 tablespoons Mexican chocolate, finely chopped

Cooked chicken, turkey, or pork

Directions

1. Toast and soak the chiles. Heat a skillet over medium heat and toast the chiles for 20 - 30 seconds on both sides until they soften and become fragrant, but do not allow them to scorch. Remove and discard the stems and seeds, tear the chiles into small pieces, place them in a bowl, and cover them with very hot water for 30 minutes. Drain them and place them in a food processor.

2. Toast the sesame seeds and blend the sauce ingredients. While the chiles are soaking, toast the sesame seeds in a skillet over medium heat until they just turn golden brown. Add them to the food

processor then add the almonds, raisins, onion, cinnamon, oregano, and 1/2 cup of the broth. Process the ingredients for 2 minutes then transfer them to a blender and blend for 2 minutes, adding a little more broth, if necessary, for the blender to operate. If the mixture is not totally smooth, put it through the fine blade of a food mill or a strainer to remove any bits of remaining chile skin.

3. Cook the sauce and finish the dish. Heat the lard or oil in a medium-sized pot over just above medium heat, add the *mole* paste and cook, stirring constantly, until most of the liquid has evaporated and it becomes shiny as it releases its fat. Then, little by little, stir in the rest of the broth and add the sugar. At this point the mixture should be thinner than you want the finished product to be. If necessary add some more broth. Simmer the *mole* for about 15 minutes, until it is the consistency of a milk shake, add the salt and Mexican chocolate and serve over cooked chicken, turkey or pork.