

THE FEAST OF THREE PRINCES

A THIRD MEAL,

FROM PRE-COLUMBIAN MESOAMERICA

OF HISTORICALLY PLAUSIBLE RECIPES



BY BARONESS VATAVIA OF CALONTIR (ZOE MIKRE)

WITH PEREZ BEN GERSHON

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INTRODUCTION

Though the three princes may have celebrated the occasion with Tacos, I have to point out that the word “taco” seems to be very recent, but the concept, corn tortilla with things in the middle, is ancient. Though the historical and archaeological record provide us with evidence of what the indigenous cultures of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica ate, there are no known surviving recipes. What follows is an interpretation, a series of plausible recipes that might have been eaten in Mesoamerica before Columbus’ arrival.

My guiding principles for these recipes include:

- Only use foods of types available in Mesoamerica pre-1492 (ie, modern onions are not the same as Mesoamerican ones but they did have access to various alliums)
- Use no added oils or fats as there is no evidence of this
- Use as accurate cooking techniques as possible/safe/feasible in a modern kitchen in the United States.

Everything is gluten free and dairy free, because the New World was gluten free and cow free! However, these are not good options for people allergic to chilis or corn, and those with peanut allergies should avoid the red pipian mole.

May you enjoy this historically plausible cuisine.

ROAST TURKEY¹

For roasting turkey

- 2 bone-in pieces (breast, drumstick, or thigh) turkey, according to preference
- 1 red onion, sliced
- 2 ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 4 tomatillos
- (Optional 2 to 3 banana leaves or corn husks, enough to cover roasting pan)



For rub

- 2 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 1 tablespoon Annatto
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
- 1 Ancho, stem and seeds removed
- Pinch of ground allspice
- Kosher or coarse sea salt to taste

Preparation time: 20-30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 - 75 minutes

1. In a small pan, roast garlic on the stove over medium heat, turning occasionally, until the papery skin of the garlic is burned and the cloves soften.
2. In a blender, food processor or mortar, combine roasted garlic with other rub ingredients and puree until smooth.
3. Massage rub onto turkey pieces.
4. When ready to cook: preheat oven to 400°F
5. Peel and slice the red onion
6. Coarsely chop the tomatoes
7. Line roasting pan with foil, dull side facing up. Spread onions, tomatoes, and tomatillos in a roasting pan. Set turkey pieces on top. Cover pan with

¹ This recipe was adapted from a recipe by Sara Kate Gillingham (Gillingham, 2019).

banana leaves/corn husks, if using. Otherwise, cover with foil, dull side facing down, so that the meat is surrounded on all sides by dull foil.²

8. Roast turkey for 1 hour, or until done. (Cooking time may vary depending on the turkey pieces selected).

² The Maya used pit ovens dug into the earth. Food was cooked in a ceramic dish, which was covered with corn husks, and a fire built on top. To retain heat better, clay balls were packed around the dish. The method above is our attempt to replicate the effect of the Mayan method in a modern American kitchen.

BEANS

2 chopped onions
4 peeled & minced garlic cloves
4 cups dried pinto or other spotted beans, or 2 20oz can whole pintos
2 tsp Mexican oregano
2 ancho chiles, stem and seeds removed
6 sprigs fresh epazote, if available
Salt to taste



Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 2-5 hours

1. (Optional): Before chopping, roast onions and garlic in a broiler for about 5 minutes.
2. Peel and chop onion. Peel and mince garlic. Toss into a slow cooker or pot.
3. Pick over and clean your beans (rinse if using canned beans).
4. Put everything but the salt in the slow cooker or a pot with a lid. Cook on low heat for 3-4 hours (at least).
5. When beans are cooked, add salt to taste.
6. Serve either as-is, ladeled from the pot, or mash them.

RED PIPIAN MOLE³

- 2 Ancho peppers, stem and seeds removed
- 2 Guajillo peppers, stem and seeds removed
- 1/4 cup peanuts
- 1/3 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1 pinch of ground allspice
- 1 small tomato
- 1/3 medium white onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- Salt to taste



Preparation & Cooking time: 1 hour

1. Peel and chop the onion.
2. Peel and chop the garlic into large pieces.
3. Prepare a medium-size saucepan with 2 cups of water.
4. Toast the peppers over medium-high heat for about 30 seconds per side. Place in the saucepan.
5. Lightly toast the seeds in a skillet or frying pan, starting with the largest: first the peanuts, then the pumpkin seeds. Toast peanuts about 1-1/2 minutes, then remove and place in a bowl. Toast pumpkin seeds, taking care not to burn them. Once they start to get a golden color, they will begin to jump; use a wooden spatula to stir. Place roasted seeds in the saucepan with the water.
6. Add allspice.
7. In the skillet, roast the tomatoes, onion, and garlic, turning occasionally to obtain an even roasting. Place in the bowl with the water.
8. Place the bowl's contents in the saucepan over a medium-high heat and cook for about 8 minutes; set aside to let the ingredients soften.

³ This recipe was adapted from a recipe by Mely Martinez (Martinez, 2016).

9. Place all ingredients into a blender or food processor and run until you have a smooth and robust sauce. Do not process it for a long period of time, just enough to blend the ingredients.
10. Pour the sauce into a large skillet and turn up the heat to medium-high and slowly cook the sauce. Reduce heat and let simmer for approximately 20 minutes. If the sauce seems too thick, add a little water. Season with salt and additional chiles to taste.

GREEN PIPIAN MOLE⁴

- 1 large ancho chile, stem and seeds removed
- 2 pasilla chiles, stems and seeds removed
- 1 cup pumpkin seeds (pre-shelled)
- 1 cup chopped onions (1-3 onions depending on size)
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large tomato, peeled and seeded
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon annatto



Preparation time: 30-45 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

1. Soak the chiles in a cup of water to soften (usually 10-15 minutes).
2. Peel and chop the onions.
3. Peel and chop the garlic cloves.
4. Toast the pumpkin seeds on a hot skillet, stirring constantly until browned, being careful that they do not burn. Grind the seeds to a fine powder.
5. Roast onions and garlic until softened.
6. Combine the chiles along with the water they were soaking in, pumpkin seeds, tomato, allspice, onion mixture, and annatto in a blender and puree until smooth. Add water to thin as necessary.
7. Simmer the sauce for 20 minutes.

⁴ This recipe was adapted from a recipe by Dave Dewitt (Dewitt, 2009)

GUACAMOLE

1 large avocado per person

Salt to taste

Ancho chiles (to taste, according to spice preference), stem and seeds removed

Culantro (if available, see note in shopping list)

Preparation time: 40 minutes

1. Soak anchos in water (enough to cover) and allow to soften. Remove from water and retain the liquid.
2. Combine the chiles with the other ingredients in a food processor or mortar, adding just enough of the liquid to ensure everything blends. Blend until the desired consistency, adding carefully (no more than 1 tablespoon at a time) liquid as necessary.

ROASTED NEW WORLD VEGETABLES

Butternut squash, pumpkin, or other squash*
Sweet potato*
Poblano pepper, stem and seeds removed*
Red onion*
Tomatillos*
Oregano (Mexican if available)
Salt to taste
Honey



*Mix and match vegetables listed according to availability and preference. You will want about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 pound of vegetables to serve 4 people.

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 35-45 minutes

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Chop vegetables and spread on an appropriately-sized baking sheet. Season with salt and oregano.
3. Roast for about 40 minutes or until the squash and or sweet potato is tender.
4. Drizzle with honey.

ALEGRÍA

Approx. 3 cups popped amaranth* (1/2-1 cup amaranth seeds) -- op
Approx 1 cup (total) toasted pumpkin and/or sunflower seeds, or both if
you are fancy.

4 tablespoons honey

3/4 teaspoon of allspice

Pinch of salt

(Optional) 1/4 teaspoon of ground chiles

*To pop amaranth, use the instructions below.

Preparation & Cooking time: 30-45 minutes

Cooling time: 2 hours

1. Toast the pumpkin and/or sunflower seeds on a hot skillet, stirring constantly until browned, being careful that they do not burn.
2. Pop the amaranth using the following method:
 - a. Heat a sturdy stock pot or wok over high heat.
 - b. Add one tablespoon of amaranth seeds to the hot pot and shake the pot. The amaranth should begin popping almost instantly as soon as it hits the pot. Be sure to shake the pot to prevent sticking or burning.
 - c. Once the popping has mostly stopped, remove the popped amaranth to a heat resistant bowl. Unpopped amaranth is edible.
 - d. Repeat this process until you have 3 cups of popped amaranth.
3. Mix the popped amaranth and seeds together.
4. Combine the honey, chiles, and allspice in a small pot or sauce pan.
5. On the stove over low heat, simmer the honey/pepper/spice mixture until the honey is nice and liquid.
6. Remove the mixture from the stove and stir it into the amaranth mixture.

7. Line a baking pan with parchment paper and pour in the amaranth mixture. Let set until cool and firm(ish). If it's humid out you may want to refrigerate.

FRUIT SUGGESTIONS

The Spaniards were blown away by the variety of fruits available in the New World. Here are some suggestions:

Pineapple

Jicama Mamey

Papaya

Prickly pear fruits

Guava (guayaba)

Prepare these as you prefer your fresh fruit. Peeling and removing seeds is suggested.

XOCOLATL (AZTEC CHOCOLATE)⁵

2²/₃ cup water

6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder

4 teaspoons vanilla extract OR 2 whole vanilla pods

2 ancho chiles, stem and seeds removed

4-6 teaspoons honey

Preparation & Cooking time: 30-45 minutes

1. In a small saucepan, boil water with the ancho (and vanilla pod if using).
2. In a heat resistant/sealable container, combine cocoa, vanilla extract (if not using a whole pod), and honey.
3. Remove chile (and pod) from the water and discard. Pour water into the container with other ingredients. The container should be less than half full.
4. Seal the container and shake vigorously, until the liquid is nice and frothy. Pour into drinking cups and serve.

ON CORN TORTILLAS

Corn tortillas was the ‘bread’ of pre-Columbian Meso-America. It is simplest to purchase these premade from your local grocery. On the day of the event, these may be reheated one of two ways:

- Cover the tortillas with a moistened paper towel and heat them in the microwave for 30 seconds. Serve in a lidded dish or covered with a clean cloth to keep warm.
- Wrap the tortillas in foil and place in a warm oven for five to ten minutes.

⁵ This recipe is adapted from a recipe by Gaynelle on cdkitchen.com.

SHOPPING LIST

We are fortunate that many American supermarkets are stocking a greater variety of ingredients, which will make sourcing ingredients for this feast reasonably easy. It would still be best to begin sourcing the dry goods for this meal several weeks in advance, to allow time should you need to order specific spices through the internet.

Vegetables

4 avocados, culantro⁶, epazote, 2-3 garlic bulbs (11 cloves), 1-2 red onion, 3 white onions, 4-6 tomatoes (ripe), 4-8 tomatillos, (Optional) 2 to 3 banana leaves or corn husks, vegetables for roasting (butternut squash, pumpkin, other squash, sweet Potatoes, poblano peppers), fruits of choice (pineapple jicama mamey, papaya, prickly pear fruits, guava/guayaba).

Meat

Turkey Meat (2 bone-in pieces)

Herbs and Spices

ground allspice, annato, dried oregano (preferably Mexican), chiles⁷ (8 ancho chiles, 2 guajillo chiles, 2 pasilla chiles), kosher or coarse sea salt.

Baked Goods

corn tortillas (6-8)

Dry Goods

amaranth, 1/4 cup shelled peanuts, pinto beans (4 cups dried or 2 twenty ounce cans), 2¹/₃ cup pre-shelled pumpkin seeds, unsweetened cocoa powder

⁶ Culantro is a perennial herb native to Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America. It is of the same family as cilantro, and has a similar, albeit stronger, scent and flavor, and is used in smaller amounts. It has long, serrated leaves and grows around a central rosette like a lettuce. While not authentic to pre-Hispanic America, cilantro can be substituted if culantro is not available.

⁷ Note: The dried chiles are typically sold packaged in the hispanic food section of the grocery store and should not be confused with the fresh peppers that may be available in the produce section, which have different names when not dried

Oils & Liquids

Honey, vanilla extract (or 2 whole vanilla pods)

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION

These recipes are designed to serve four people. They are, in general, easily modified to suit your tastes.

Below is a suggested timeline for preparing the meal.

In Advance

1. Prepare the rub for the turkey (steps 1 and 2), the pipian moles up through the blending of each (steps 1-7 for the red, 1-4 for the green) and store in the fridge.
2. Prepare the guacamole. To store, put it in Tupperware, smooth the top, and add just enough water to cover.
3. Make the alegría. When set, cut into serving sized pieces and store in the fridge.

Day Of the Feast

1. Follow instructions for cooking the beans. They benefit from slow cooking over low heat, so a slow cooker that you can “set and forget” is recommended.
2. Approximately 1 hour before cooking, take turkey out of the fridge and let come to room temperature.
3. Chop vegetables for both the turkey and roasted vegetables. Preheat oven to 400°F.
4. Follow remaining instructions for both the turkey and vegetable recipes.
5. Remove guacamole from the refrigerator and set aside to come to room temperature.
6. Remove moles from the fridge and pour each into a saucepan. Slowly bring them up to temperature, and allow to simmer at least 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

7. Prepare ancho for the chocolate and set aside. Combine other ingredients as per step 2 of that recipe.
8. Chop whatever fruit is desired.
9. Just before serving, warm corn tortillas: cover with moistened paper towel and heat in the microwave for 30 secs. Serve in a lidded dish or covered with a clean cloth to keep warm.
10. Remove alegría from the refrigerator and set aside to come to room temperature.
11. When you are ready to serve, pour off the water from guacamole and stir.
12. Serve turkey, beans, tortillas, moles, guacamole, and vegetables. Combine as desired. Serve fruit either with the main portion of the course and/or with dessert.
13. When ready for dessert, finish preparing the chocolate and serve hot and frothy along with alegría and any remaining fruit.

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