



Step-by-step instruction to make your favorite Mexican dishes at home

Mexican cuisine is defined by the ingredients that are native to Mexico; staples such as corn, beans, and chile peppers. This course will teach you how to make basic, authentic Mexican meals at home.

Join Yvette Marquez-Sharpnack, author of *Muy Bueno Cookbook*, to learn some of the essentials of Mexican cooking, including what ingredients you'll need for a Mexican pantry, how to make pinto beans from scratch, how to roast chiles, and how to make homemade salsa, enchiladas, and sopes.

Essential & Makeshift Tools

- **Chinois.** A conical sieve with an extremely fine mesh. This is a great tool to strain red chile sauce. You can also use a fine mesh strainer but that can be a bit messy.
- **Comal.** My cast iron skillet has a permanent home on my stovetop. I use it to warm up tortillas, make quesadillas & grilled cheese sandwiches, and to roast chiles and veggies. You can use a heavy bottomed sauté pan, but there is no real substitute for the quality that a cast iron skillet brings; it's a great, inexpensive investment for any kitchen.
- **Tortilla Press.** Used to make corn tortillas and sopes. If you don't have a tortilla press you can use a heavy iron skillet instead.
- **Stockpot.** You need a large, quality stockpot to make frijoles de la olla (pinto beans), and for boiling your chile pods to make red chile sauce.
- **Blender.** Did you know the blender is the number one used appliance in any home kitchen? I use mine all the time to make salsas and sauces, the bases of Mexican cooking, so it's important to invest in a good one.



About Chile Peppers

Chile peppers are technically the fruit of the Capsicum plant, and they come in a wide variety of colors, flavors, and levels of spice. They originated in the Americas, and Mexico was the first place to domesticate them agriculturally.

The heat derived from chiles comes from a chemical in the pepper known as Capsaicin, which interacts with pain receptors in your mouth or body that are instrumental in the detection of heat. Scientists have identified a reliable measurement for determining the heat in a chile pepper: Scoville Heat Units (SHU) measure the level of capsaicin in every variety of chile pepper.

Below are the chile peppers that I usually have on hand and are readily available at your local grocery store. These chiles range from mild to spicy:

- **Poblano.** These are great chile peppers for stuffing, such as for chile rellenos. They are generally pretty mild, but once in a while you might get a spicy one. Stuff these with shrimp or picadillo (ground beef mixture). Be sure to check out the Muy Bueno blog and/or cookbook for some recipes.
- **California Dried Red Chile.** The California dried red chile, or even the New Mexico variety, varies in its level of heat. The package usually tells you if it's hot or mild, so depending on your preference you can pick the heat level. I usually make a large batch of red chile sauce and freeze it to use in recipes like the red enchiladas we will be making today, in addition to a variety of other recipes such as pozole, chilaquiles, and chile Colorado con carne, which is cubed beef and red chile sauce. Basically, red chile sauce is a great compliment to any meal, and I always make sure to have these dried chiles in my pantry.
- **Anaheim.** Anaheim chile peppers are readily available in most supermarkets, but depending where you live you can substitute Anaheim with regional chile peppers, such as Hatch from New Mexico. These are great roasting chiles -- I usually roast a large quantity in the summer during chile season, and then I freeze them for future use. You can use these chiles to make egg battered and fried chile rellenos filled with cheese, or green enchilada sauce, chile verde con carne, or a delicious salsa casera (homemade salsa), which we will be making in this class.
- **Jalapeño.** For fresh salsas and guacamole I usually add jalapeños and never devein. The heat is in those seeds and since I like spicy food I keep them in. It's hard to determine how to pick a spicy pepper. I've heard that pointy peppers are spicy. I've also heard that if you are looking for heat; find one with plenty of white "stretch marks".
- **Serrano.** If I want a spicier chile I use Serrano. This chile originated in a mountainous region of Mexico. These are bright, very hot chiles, and are commonly used in Mexican cooking.



Other Key Ingredients

Chiles are the foundation of all Mexican cooking, but there are some other key ingredients that I always have in my kitchen:

- **Dried Pinto Beans.** My mom always used to say “if you have beans you have a meal.” Beans are very healthy - pinto beans are virtually fat-free, are high in fiber and are loaded with protein. In my house, we usually have beans as a side dish with our meals. In this class we’ll be learning to make frijoles de la olla (beans from the pot) so that you can have homemade beans any time.



- **Masa Harina.** A finely ground corn flour that has been dried, cooked, ground up, and dried again. When mixed with water, it’s called masa (dough) to make the dough for tamales, corn tortillas or sopes, which I’ll show you how to make in this course. This ingredient can be found in the Latin aisle of your grocery store.
- **Oaxaca Cheese.** This is one of my favorite Mexican cheeses. It’s a great melty cheese for quesadillas or enchiladas. If you can’t find it, Muenster is a good substitute and is more commonly available. We’ll definitely be using this cheese in this course to melt over our sopes.

Pinto Beans FRIJOLES DE LA OLLA

Serves 6



Step-by-Step

1. Spread the beans over your counter so you can look for any pebbles or beans that are broken, discolored, or shriveled and remove them.
2. Place beans in a colander. Rinse thoroughly with cool water for about 3 minutes.
3. Soak the beans in cold water in a covered bowl for 4 to 6 hours before cooking. This step is not necessary, but your beans will be lighter in color, and “mas bonitos” as my Mom says.
4. Drain the beans and pour them into a large stockpot. Add enough water to come 3 inches over the beans. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover and simmer until the beans are tender, about 3-4 hours, adding more hot water as the beans absorb liquid. (Every pot is different so check your beans after 2 hours. Most take 3 to 4 hours but I have a pot I love to cook my beans in because it only takes 2 hours.) Add salt and onions, if using, about 1 hour before cooking is complete.
5. Refrigerate beans in any liquid left when cooled. Beans can be refrigerated for up to 5 days. The beans can also be frozen in small bowls for later use.

Ingredients for FRIJOLES DE LA OLLA

- 2 cups dried pinto beans
- ¼ onion, sliced (optional)
- Salt to taste

How to Roast Chiles SALSA CASERA



Step-by-Step

1. Preheat broiler.
2. Select firm, meaty peppers without wrinkles. Rinse thoroughly to remove dust particles.
3. Place peppers evenly in a single layer on a foil-lined cookie sheet. Pierce each chile with a knife.
4. Place the chiles under the broiler. Watch them closely as the skin will blister and turn black within minutes. Turn the peppers after 3 to 5 minutes to blister all sides evenly. When done, the pepper skins should be evenly blistered and mostly black.
5. Place roasted peppers in a plastic bag, cover with a wet kitchen towel.
6. When cool, peel off blackened skin. Tear open and pull out the seedpod and stem. If you are making chile rellenos you can more carefully remove the stem with its attached seeds leaving the chile intact for stuffing.



Salsa Casera

In a blender, pulse the roasted and peeled chiles, jalapeño peppers (if using), salt, garlic, and canned tomatoes, for a few seconds. You do not want to puree the salsa—chunky is best with this flavorful salsa. That's it! No bare hands are necessary.

Ingredients for SALSA CASERA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 to 7 Anaheim chiles, roasted and peeled• 1 or 2 jalapeño peppers, roasted (optional)• ½ teaspoon salt | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 cloves garlic, finely diced• 1 can (14.5-ounce) whole tomatoes• ¼ cup tomato sauce (if you want a less-spicy salsa) |
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Enchiladas

RED CHILE SAUCE



Step-by-Step

1. Remove stems, seeds, and veins from the chile pods. Place in a colander and rinse well with cool water.
2. Add the chiles to a large pot and add enough water so they are just covered. Bring water to a boil. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer for about 20 minutes. After 10 minutes turn the chiles over with tongs to make sure the chiles soften evenly. Drain cooked pods and allow time to cool down before blending. Discard water.
3. Fill a blender with 3 cups of water, half of the cooled chile pods, 3 tablespoons flour, 2 cloves garlic, and half of the salt. Blend until smooth. Strain sauce through a fine sieve to remove skins and seeds; discard skins and seeds. Repeat blending and straining process with remaining water, pods, flour, garlic, and salt. If necessary, season with more salt.
4. This sauce can be made in advance and kept in airtight containers in the refrigerator or freezer. Red chile sauce can be stored in the refrigerator for up to one week or frozen for up to six months. I generally freeze the sauce in 16-ounce plastic containers.

Ingredients for RED CHILE SAUCE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 ounces California or New Mexico red chile pods• 6 cups water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour• 4 cloves garlic• 1 tablespoon salt |
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Enchiladas

STACKED RED ENCHILADAS

Serves 8

Step-by-Step



1. Heat olive oil in large skillet. Pour chile sauce into skillet and stir. Taste and season with salt if needed. If the sauce is too spicy, add a small can of tomato sauce and stir. If the sauce is too thick, add water until desired consistency is reached, making sure to add more salt if necessary.
2. In a non-stick frying pan or cast iron skillet, heat canola oil. Drop 1 tortilla at a time into the hot oil and fry until softened, turning once during frying. Drain on paper towels.

Assemble Enchiladas:

1. Place lightly fried tortillas into the skillet of warm red sauce, one at a time. Coat the tortillas with the red enchilada sauce and place coated tortillas on a plate with a large slotted spoon.
2. Layer a chile-coated tortilla with some shredded cheese and chopped onion. Put another coated tortilla on top and repeat the layers until you have a stack of 3 to 4 tortillas. Continue to make stacks of tortillas until all ingredients are used.
3. Heat a small nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Fry the eggs over-easy and place one on each stack of enchiladas—optional, but oh so worth the try.

Ingredients for RED CHILE SAUCE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 tablespoon olive oil• 4 cups Red Chile Sauce• Salt to taste• 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce (optional)• 1/2 cup canola oil for frying tortillas | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 to 32 corn tortillas, preferably white corn• 1 1/2 cups shredded Colby cheese• 1 medium white onion, finely chopped• 8 eggs (optional) |
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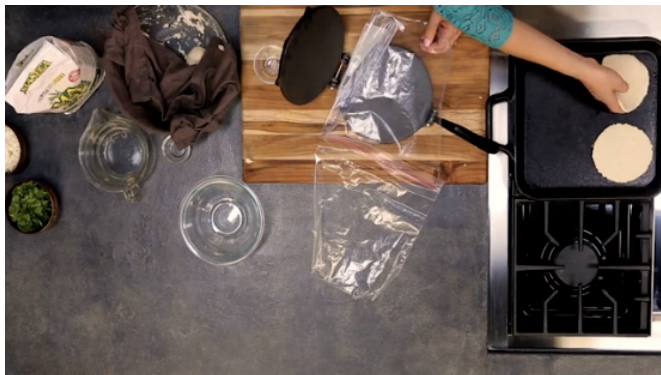
Sopes

Makes 8 sopes

Step-by-Step

For the Sopes

1. In a mixing bowl combine the masa harina and salt. Add the shortening and crumble in with your fingers so that it is evenly distributed. Add warm water and knead until mixture is smooth and slightly sticky. If the dough is dry add more water, 1 tablespoon at a time. Dough should be soft and moist like play-doh and not dry. Divide dough into 8 portions. Cover with a damp cloth to keep the dough soft and moist.
2. Line a tortilla press with plastic wrap (or a ziplock bag cut in half). Place a ball of dough on the press and cover with another piece of plastic wrap and press down to form a little 1/4-inch-thick patty. Peel off the plastic wrap. (If you don't have a tortilla press you can use a heavy skillet or pot to make the dough patties or use your hands to form a patty.) Repeat with remaining balls of dough.
3. Preheat an ungreased Comal (griddle) on medium-high heat. Cook a patty on the Comal for about 2 to 4 minutes on each side until dry. While the cooked patty is still warm and as soon as you are able to handle it, pull the dough of the patty up and outward towards the edge, creating a little ridge of dough all the way around the circle to create a little "boat" or sope. Repeat with the remaining patties.



Filling the Sopes

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Place sopes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Fill each sope with some warm red chile sauce and some frijoles, and sprinkle with cheese. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes. Garnish with avocado slices (optional).

To Make Ahead

1. Cook sopes as directed. Place cooled sopes in a single layer in an airtight container, cover, and tightly seal. Sopes can be stored for one week in the fridge or in the freezer for one month. If frozen, allow to defrost before filling. Fill and bake as directed above.

SOPES	FILLING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 cups masa harina (corn flour) • ¼ teaspoon salt • 1 tablespoon shortening • 1¼ cups warm water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 cups red chile sauce • 4 cups Frijoles de la olla • 1 cup shredded asadero cheese • Avocado slices (optional)



Three Generations of Recipes & Stories

Yvette draws culinary inspiration from her grandmother's old-world northern Mexican recipes and her mother's comforting south of the border home-style dishes. Though she writes primarily about her culinary adventures on her blog, MuyBuenoCookbook.com, she also is a professional recipe developer and food writer, and is the co-author of *Muy Bueno: Three Generations of Authentic Mexican Flavor* (Hippocrene Books: October 2012) and co-author of *Latin Twist: Traditional and Modern Cocktails* (Hippocrene Books: Spring 2015)

Yvette now works as a brand ambassador for California Strawberries and Old El Paso and is a recipe developer for Betty Crocker and KitchenAid.

Besides her blog, Yvette has also been featured in *Latina Magazine*, *People En Español*, *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* and on *NBC Latino*, *SAVEUR*, *Siempre Mujer*, and *Gourmet*, among others. She lives in Colorado with her husband and two children.

Additional information about Yvette and her culinary activities can be found at MuyBuenoCookbook.com or follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest and YouTube.

