

Aloo Channa Mexicana

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I've always been fascinated at the parallels between classic Indian cuisine and regional Mexican. Onion, garlic, cumin, chile, cilantro, cinnamon, cloves, tomatoes... they all speak Spanish and Hindi. The similarities also involve preparation techniques: the roasting of spices, the layering of ingredients in a sauce. Aloo Channa cooked with onions and tomatoes is typical Northern Indian. The guajillos, corn, and chocolate are purely Mexican. Most of the labor goes into the guajillo sauce, which is cooked in a way very similar to curry pastes. I'd also guess that this would work with chunks of cooked birdie substituting for the potatoes.

2 tbs olive oil

1 medium yellow onion

2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded, cubed

1 small sweet onion (Maui, Vidalia, Walla-Walla)

1-1/2 cup Guajillo sauce (see below)

1-2 tbs sweet Mexican chocolate, crumbled (Abuelita is a common brand)

salt

1-2/3 c cooked garbanzo beans

2 potatoes (preferably Yukon Gold or red waxy), boiled

1 c corn kernels

salt

2-3 tbs chopped cilantro

To a hot saute pan, add the olive oil and onions. Cook, stirring frequently, until onions are medium-light brown. Then add the tomato and continue stirring and cooking until they wilt and brown slightly. Stir in the guajillo sauce, bring to a simmer. Then add the chocolate, and stir until it is well-dispersed. Add the vegetables, then simmer, covered, for about 5 minutes. Adjust salt, remove from heat, and stir in cilantro.

Garnish with strips of roasted green chile and cilantro leaves. Serve with rice and home-made tortillas.

Guajillo Sauce Below

Guajillo Sauce - Taken from "Rick Bayless's Mexican Kitchen", a great cookbook.

6 garlic cloves, unpeeled

4 oz dried guajillos

1 tsp dried oregano

1/4 tsp black pepper

1/4 tsp cumin

3-1/2 c stock

1-1/2 tbs olive oil

On a griddle, roast the garlic cloves on all sides until they are soft and there are black spots on the skin. Put aside.

Flay open the guajillos, discard the seeds and stem, then roast them briefly (3-4 seconds) on both sides on the griddle. Use a spatula to press them against the hot surface; they should bubble and discolor a bit. Place the roasted guajillos in a bowl, pour hot water on them to cover, then let them soak for 30 minutes.

Grind the spices and herbs finely. Peel and chop the roasted garlic. Drain the guajillos, discarding the water, then combine them with the spices, the garlic, and 2/3 c of the stock. Puree in a food processor (or with an immersion blender), then strain through medium mesh, using a rubber spatula to squeeze and scrape the strainer.

Heat a 4 qt. saucepan to frying temperature, then add the olive oil. Dump in the paste (careful of splattering!), leaving behind a small trace (1/4 tsp or less). Fry the paste, stirring continuously, for several minutes, until it turns a rich red-brown- use the left-behind paste as a color gauge to see how well-cooked the fried paste is. Then pour in the remaining stock and bring to a low boil. Simmer, partly covered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thickened and coats the back of a spoon.

Leftover sauce is great for plate decoration (I always have a squeeze bottle in the fridge) and as an enchilada sauce base.

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