

International Cooking

Mexican Food Made Authentic

(NAPS)—From Sinaloa's rugged, majestic mountains and pine forests to Veracruz's green coasts and tropical jungles, Mexico's food varies widely—reflecting Caribbean, Spanish and Mayan influences.

Americans are far more educated about authentic Mexican food than they used to be. They're learning from educated chefs, going to innovative restaurants, buying authentic cookbooks and watching more Mexican cooking shows on television.

Below are two easy, authentic tomato sauce recipes that show the diversity of Mexican cuisine. Both can be made ahead and refrigerated for up to three days.

Grown since the ancient days of the Aztecs, tomatoes have a long history in Mexico. The Mexican tomato industry today provides tomatoes for both domestic use and a well-established export trade. Many high-quality, vine-ripened tomatoes Americans eat in winter and spring are flown carefully, quickly and safely from Mexico.

So, for a true flavor of tropical sunshine during these less-than-tropical months here in the States, use Mexican tomatoes in the recipes. They're at their height from February to April.

Buen provechó, that is, enjoy your meal!

Veracruz-Style Tomato Sauce

This piquant sauce has Mediterranean influences. Serve it warm, on baked or broiled fish.

- 1 cup olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1½ cups minced white onion
- 2¼ pounds Mexican beefsteak tomatoes, chopped
- 2 canned mild green chilis, drained
- 6 pimento-stuffed green olives, chopped
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 1½ teaspoons dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon each dried thyme and marjoram
- Salt and pepper to taste



Photo courtesy of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas.

Heat oil in a medium saucepan. Add garlic and onion; sauté on medium heat until onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients. Simmer 30 minutes on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until sauce is thicker. Serves 4-6.

Fresh Enchilada Sauce

Enchiladas are popular in several Mexican regions. For an easy yet authentic version, roll up corn tortillas with grated Mexican-style cheese. Top with this fresh sauce and bake covered at 350°F. for 30 minutes. Garnish with chopped onions, and serve them as *antojitos*—little snacks.

- 6 dried, dark red chilis
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped white onion
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 medium-sized Mexican beefsteak tomatoes, quartered
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ¾ cup to 1 cup water or broth
- Salt to taste

Soak chilis in hot water about 25 minutes, until soft. Drain and remove seeds. Combine all ingredients including chilis in a blender, and puree until smooth. Serves up to 10.