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MEXICAN FIESTA *with*
Peter Kuruvita
Mole chichilo with chicken
Chichilo con pollo

"Pilar Cabrera owns a cooking school in Oaxaca, Mexico, and during our filming I was lucky enough to learn this exciting recipe from her," says Peter Kuruvita. "It's unique and shows that mole, meaning "concoction", does not always have to contain chocolate and chilli; in fact, the most famous mole in the world is guacamole."

Prep time 1 hr, cook 1 hr 15 mins Serves 4-6

- 1 small skinless chicken (about 1kg), jointed
- 1 white onion, halved
- 8 cloves garlic (4 unpeeled)
- 8 baby red potatoes (400gm), halved
- 1 choko (350gm), peeled, halved, seeded, cut into 1cm slices
- 100 gm green beans, trimmed
- 6 dried pasilla chillies (see note)
- 6 dried chilhuacle chillies (see note)
- 4 corn tortillas
- 5 canned tomatillos, peeled
- 3 avocado leaves (see note)
- ½ tsp mixed dried aromatic herbs (marjoram, thyme, oregano)
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 each allspice and clove
- 250 gm (1 cup) fresh corn masa, crumbled (see note)
- 40 gm pork lard, or vegetable oil
- lime cheeks, to serve

1 Place the chicken, an onion half, unpeeled garlic, 1 tsp of salt and 4 cups water in a medium saucepan over high heat, bring to the boil, then lower heat and simmer until chicken is cooked through (20-25 minutes). Strain and set aside the chicken and the broth separately.

2 Boil potatoes (10-12 minutes), choko (6-8 minutes) and beans (3-4 minutes) in a saucepan

over medium heat until tender; use a slotted spoon to remove vegetables as each is cooked. Set aside.

3 Wipe pasilla and chilhuacle chillies with a damp cloth to remove any dust. Pull the stems off and cut a slit down the length of each chilli. Open the chillies, scrape out the seeds and reserve. Pull out the veins and discard. Heat a heavy skillet over medium heat until hot. Add the chillies and toast lightly for 30 seconds on each side or until they change colour slightly. Transfer chillies to a bowl and cover with hot water (about 3 cups), and soak until they become soft and flexible (about 5 minutes), then drain. Transfer chillies to a blender with 250ml of the chicken broth, blend until smooth, then set aside.

4 Meanwhile, in the same pan, toast the chilli seeds until black (3-4 minutes). Set aside in a bowl. Next toast the tortillas in batches until blackened, pressing with the back of a metal spatula and turning occasionally (7-10 minutes). Break them into pieces and set aside in the bowl. Next place the tomatillos, remaining garlic and remaining onion in the pan and roast until almost completely charred (7-9 minutes). As each is done, set aside in the bowl.

5 Turn off the heat under the pan and place the avocado

leaves, dried herbs, cumin seeds, allspice and clove in the pan until fragrant (1 minute). Set the avocado leaves aside separately. Put all the remaining spices in the bowl with the tomatillos. Transfer the tomatillo mixture to a blender with 250ml chicken broth and blend until smooth. Set aside.

6 Process the corn masa in the blender with 250ml chicken broth until puréed. Set aside.

7 Heat lard in a heavy-based 4-litre saucepan over medium heat until starting to smoke. Pour in the chilli purée and tomatillo purée. Bring to a high heat. Add the masa purée by pouring it through a sieve into the hot purée (discard lumps). Whisk until incorporated. Add the avocado leaves. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture has the consistency of a cream sauce (10 minutes). Adjust the consistency with extra chicken broth or water (about 1 cup) if necessary. Season to taste with salt and add the chicken and vegetables. Heat until the oil rises to the top and serve hot with lime cheeks to the side.

NOTES

Pasilla chillies are available dried from Herbie's Spices (herbies.com.au), The Essential Ingredient (essentialingredient.com.au) and Monterey Mexican Foods (montereyfoods.com.au). Chilhuacle chillies are a speciality of Oaxaca and not available in Australia, so substitute guajillo chillies. If fresh masa is unavailable, use prepared masa from dried masa harina, available from Mexican food stores and selected delicatessens.