

TRADER JOEY'S TRIBUNE

YOUR ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR NEWS FROM OUR NORTH BEACH STORE

CREATED BY: SHAYNE JONES

JANUARY 16, 2023

Plants are in, so it's time to veg out



It's the new year, we've got plants on our minds and we want to know: can you admire your greens and eat them too? The short answer is yes, though you'll need a healthy helping of originality and a bit of seasoning.

But first, flowers. Trader Joe's North Beach rounded out December 2022's season of giving by donating about \$7,250 worth of unsold bouquets to local American Asian Elderly Humanitarian Society and various other organizations. One employee of the Clay Street nonprofit said the center helps 340 people over 70 years old and she was extremely grateful to receive the flowers, which members of the society would bring home to their families for the holidays.

Store 19's flower leader Karla says she loves curating her section because it's beautiful and brings her peace. She also likes to see each plant's potential as it leaves Trader Joe's.

"Like a pet, I want all the flowers to have their person," Karla said.

And like their petaled cousins, vegetables are vying for their moment in the sun, too. The new year sparks resolutions to eat more color, so several of our customers and crew shared some veggie tales for culinary inspiration.

Crew member Rustle recommends drinking (or slurping) your greens. She said sprinkling spinach, cucumber or celery into smoothies or blending squash, onions, carrots or peppers into pasta sauce can add a burst of hydration and at least one serving of veggies to your daily menu.

"You'll never know they're there," Rustle said.

Frozen section leader Tommy says soy sauce is a good complement to most vegetables and can make less desirable kinds more palatable—a little bit goes a long way. If you're trying to save some money, it's a good idea to buy frozen produce, he says, because it doesn't spoil and has the same nutritional value as its fresh counterpart.

For convenience, crew member Jeromy steams his vegetables simultaneously with rice. One customer packs celery with peanut butter or cream cheese for an on-the-go snack, and another says she loads broccoli with turmeric, cinnamon and honey-mustard sauce before roasting. If you're trying to expand your plant-based arsenal, no one way is the best.

"Don't be hard on yourself. Just do what works," she said.

IN THIS ISSUE

2	3	4
Crew member feature: Chiapas chef serves the tastes of tradition	Feature continued, plus customer recipe ideas!	Comic and Trade(r) Secrets

All about food: Chiapas chef serves the tastes of tradition

This issue's crew member feature introduces:
Osbeli de los Reyes



Shrouded by a fog of steam in his downtown San Francisco studio, Osbeli de los Reyes flitted from stovetop to cutting board, stirring a deep-brown mole and slicing pome fruits for homemade tamales and ponche, a traditional Mexican cider.

For the 33-year-old Mexican native, food is ancestral. Each bite is enveloped in the tastes and traditions of his Mayan heritage.

De los Reyes grew up in Chiapas, Mexico. The country's southernmost state was once linked to Guatemala and still shares one of its borders, fueling a unique cultural fusion which he says lends a singular quality to his local food that distinguishes it from other Mexican cuisines. He learned to cook watching his mom and helping his grandmother harvest cacao from her small but abundant ranch.

"(In Chiapas) everything is fresh, local and from scratch. The connection with food and the ground is my favorite part," De los Reyes said. "Through my food I want to show how beautiful Mexican gastronomy is. It's not only tacos or quesadillas, we have more than that."

He says Mexican cuisine is all about technique—what spices you use to flavor oil or enhance the colors of a dish are what give your meals flair. De los Reyes says there are more than 20 types of moles throughout Mexico, each one spiced by the domestic chiles of its region.

De los Reyes's mole comprises guajillo, ancho and puya chiles, cacao, pepitas (pumpkin seeds), sesame seeds, garlic and onions, simmered for multiple hours and stirred intermittently. Though some spices are only available at specialty Mexican groceries, he says he can always find the ingredients he needs at Trader Joe's.

As the mole's flavors intertwined over the flame, he boiled chicken and got to preparing masa, kneading the corn-based dough with his hands until it thickened into a paste. In a second pot, De los Reyes dissolved piloncillo (raw, pure cane sugar) into boiling water with apples, pears, hibiscus flowers and sliced oranges. In about an hour, there would be ponche.

—Continued on page 3

Make your own ponche: 5-6 servings

What you'll need:

- 1-2 sliced Pink Lady or Honeycrisp apples
- 1-2 sliced Bartlett pears
- 1-2 sliced oranges
- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- 3 packets Hibiscus tea
- 1 sliced guava
- 1/4 cup (or to taste) brown sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 8 cups water
- 1 shot (per serving) Rum, whisky, or tequila (optional)

What you'll do:

- 1) Combine sugar and water in a large pot and add cinnamon sticks; bring to a boil.
- 2) After about 15 minutes, add fruit. Continue boiling mixture for about an hour. (Add tea packets during final five minutes of cooking time)
- 3) Remove tea packets and ladle ponche into cups; add a shot of choice liquor. Serve immediately with a spoon so guests can enjoy the fruit!



Tamales and ponche are popular holiday dishes in Mexico, De los Reyes says, because when family arrives, everyone cooks together. Community is also central to entertaining; he said here in America most people tend to hire external caterers to satiate their guests. But in Chiapas, a squad of older ladies in town—De los Reyes’s late great-grandmother included—are the sought-after resident chefs for quinceañeras and weddings.

“Food is the perfect way to open your heart to other people,” De los Reyes said. His great-grandmother eventually went blind after years of standing for hours over smoking chiles—a true labor of love.

Masa composed, De los Reyes unfurled plantain leaves, laddling out the dough and topping it with mole-coated chicken. He added an olive and red pepper slice for garnish, then folded each tamale, tucking in the sides to encase the filling. He stacked the packets in a pot where they’d steam-cook for the next hour. De los Reyes says Mexicans like to use plantain leaves to form tamales because their natural oils add flavor. They also indicate when the tamale is ready; if the leaf peels away easily from the masa, it’s meal time.

In every bite of tamale, your taste buds take a tour. The subtle saltiness of the creamy masa introduces coarse and rich yet slightly bitter mole, punctuated by light heat from the chiles. Cooked olive, red pepper and jalapeño offer a smoky, buttery finish. The ponche is aromatic and floral, cut by the warm burn of an added shot of Mexican whisky and the fruit’s tartness. De los Reyes said Mexicans usually drink their Ponche with a spoon so they can enjoy the softened produce as the liquid wanes.

He says the goal with his food is to teach people that Mexican cuisine is more robust than they’ve come to know. As an eight-year Trader Joe’s crew member, De los Reyes has made an impression on the customers who come visit his North Beach store. He says they’ll consistently approach him for meal ideas and recommendations, and he gets joy

from helping people think creatively and be excited to cook.

His flexible schedule at the store has also allowed him to open his own Mexican deli counter at Roadside Rosy’s Liquor Grocery and Deli next to the International Sports Bar on Columbus Ave. Open Fridays and Saturdays 5 p.m.–12 a.m., De los Reyes serves authentic Mexican street tacos, quesadillas, ceviche, tamales and Mexican coffee spiced with cinnamon and citrus. He says his ultimate dream is to open a restaurant, but for now he’s content in the niche he’s found for his business.

As the young chef broadens his menu, he’s called on his mother to write down the recipes she knows, because he won’t be able to find them anywhere else. Ancestral recipes like his mother’s mole are in danger of disappearing as each generation passes, and De los Reyes says it’s his mission to keep that from happening.

“Years from now, I think we’re going to be one continent, and people are going to forget where they come from,” De los Reyes said. “It’s important to keep your traditions. It makes you strong.”



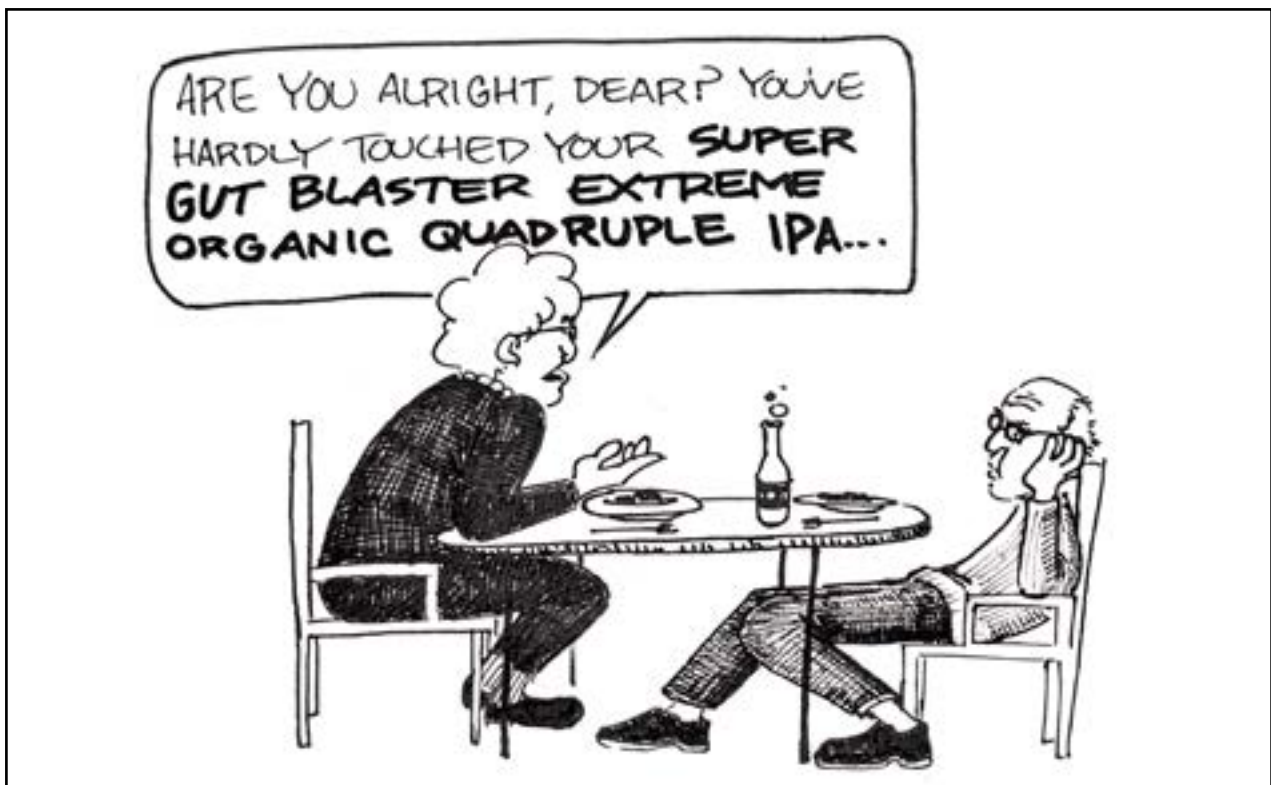
Recipe Roundup

Beef Birria Ramen: Crew member Jeromy tried out this viral recipe with Trader Joe’s frozen Beef Birria. He added ramen noodles, red onion, cilantro and beef stock. His family loved it – yours will too!

Tilapia Fish Tacos: Crew member Tommy says his mouth starts watering just thinking about the fish tacos he makes with Trader Joe’s frozen tilapia and Trader Joe’s Corn and Wheat Tortillas. He also whips up a quick pico de gallo with chopped cilantro, a squeeze of lime juice, diced white or red onion and roma tomatoes.

Endive Taco Bites: Crew member Carlos says he uses endives from our refrigerated produce section and loads them up with whatever toppings he feels like. “They’re bite-sized and kind of like healthy street tacos,” he said.

Do you have feedback on our newsletter? Fill out this google form and get a free Trader Joe’s 99-cent reusable bag!
<https://forms.gle/5ybMkB5ApnzjEAL86>



Illustrated by: Matthew Ramsey

TRADE(R) SECRETS

"Cheese is exquisite. Maybe it's because I'm weird, but I love that it's basically controlled spoilage." -David

"(Celery juice) is super palatable. It's like water on steroids. Adding a little salt makes it even better." - Anonymous

"Spices. You can eat chicken breast seven ways if you season it differently each time. Pungent flavors go a long way." -Rustle

Plant-based picks of the month:

Trader Joe's frozen Vegan Pasta Bolognese: This one-serving meatless meal is savory, tart and won't punish you for bailing on beef, with a satisfyingly textured shroom-y sauce that smoothly coats red lentil pasta. Add a salty kick with a packet of manzanilla olives from our grocery aisle!

Vanilla Coconut and Almond creamer: A pair of customers said they drain two cartons per week of this decadent non-dairy drink. Enough said.