

Tarascan Soup - *Sopa Tarasca*



Ingredients

- 3 ancho peppers
 - 8 corn tortillas; cold
 - 4 tbsp oil
 - ½ onion
 - 1 clove garlic
 - 1 cup cooked bayo or pinto beans (canned or homemade)
 - 4 cups water or broth, or more, if needed
 - 2 cups tomato sauce (the original recipe calls for canned)
 - ¼ cup tomato paste
 - 1 bay leaf
 - ½ tsp dry thyme
 - ½ tsp dry marjoram
 - 1 tsp salt, or to taste
 - ½ tsp pepper, or to taste
 - 1 cup cubed fresh cheese, such as panela, or feta
 - ¼ cup Mexican cream (or use a mix of equal parts of sour cream and whipping cream)
- Fresh epazote, to garnish, if available

Remove seeds and stem from ancho peppers, and cut into thin strips; reserve. Cut tortillas in half, then slice into narrow strips; reserve. Peel onion and garlic, and cut into pieces; in a large pot, warm up two tablespoons of oil over medium heat; add onions and garlic, removing garlic as soon as it starts to brown, and reserve. Continue cooking onions until translucent; remove from the pan and reserve. In the same pot, fry pepper strips just until crisp, careful not to burn them; remove and reserve. Add one tablespoon of oil to the pot, and fry tortillas until crisp; remove and reserve. Remove pot from heat, and reserve. In the blender, process onion, garlic, about 1/3 of the peppers, and 1 cup of water (or broth); add about ½ cup of tortilla strips, the beans, and another cup of liquid, then blend until smooth; reserve. Place reserved pot over medium heat again; add the remaining one tablespoon of oil; pour tomato sauce, and cook, stirring, for a couple of minutes. Add the remaining two cups of liquid to the pan, scrapping any burnt bits from the bottom. Add bean mix from the blender, the herbs, salt, and pepper, stirring to incorporate everything together. Add tomato paste; stir to incorporate and add more water, if needed. Bring to boil, then lower heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for fifteen minutes. Adjust seasoning with more salt and pepper, to taste. To serve, place some cheese in bowls, then ladle the hot soup onto bowls; drizzle with cream. Top with pepper and tortilla strips; sprinkle with chopped epazote (if using).

By using water or vegetable broth, this is a great option for vegetarian menus. This soup remains popular at home and on restaurant menus, and has become truly representative of Mexican cuisine.