

## Epazote, *Dysphania ambrosioides*

### Tips:

- Use the leaves fresh or dried.
- The younger leaves have a milder and richer flavor than the older leaves which have a stronger flavor.
- Add to soups, stews, sauces, salsas, and moles.
- Add 1 or 2 epazote leaves to quesadillas before cooking for a distinctive flavor.
- The seeds are used for marinating meat.
- Store cut stems in the refrigerator in either a glass of water closely covered with a plastic bag or rolled in a lightly dampened paper towel in a plastic bag.

### Salsa De Epazote

This is basically a Mexican salsa verde, only with a heavier hit of epazote. It's loosely based on a similar salsa by the great Mexican chef Enrique Olvera; I roast my vegetables, where Olvera simmers his. This salsa is rather thick, but feel free to thin it with water if you'd like.

1-pound tomatillos, husked and sliced in half  
½ white onion, cut in thick slices  
3 garlic cloves, unpeeled  
2 green onions, chopped  
2 serrano chiles, roasted, peeled, and deseeded  
½ cup chopped cilantro  
¼ cup chopped fresh epazote  
Salt

Turn your broiler on high. Arrange the tomatillos, onion and garlic on a baking sheet and set under the broiler until about halfway charred. Keep an eye on it as this can take anywhere from 5 minutes for dryish tomatillos to 15 for wet ones.

Meanwhile, char the serranos over a gas burner, holding them with tongs. This is a better method for charring your serranos because they don't cook fully this way, but if it bothers you, put the serranos under the broiler with everything else.

Remove the garlic and peel it when it's cool enough to touch. Remove the skins and seeds from the serranos. Move everything into a blender, along with all the other ingredients. Puree. Add

salt to taste. Serves 10 people. Prep time - 15 minutes, Cook time 20 minutes

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## Vegetarian Tortilla Soup

*"Tortilla soup has a place, I feel, in practically every collection of Mexican recipes," says Rick Bayless. This is a vegetarian version of the classic soup, usually made with chicken. Earthy dark pasilla chile flavors the soul-satisfying broth. (Recipe adapted from Rick Bayless.)*

- 3 large dried pasilla (negro), ancho or New Mexico chiles (see Note)
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes, preferably fire-roasted
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons neutral oil, such as canola *or* avocado, divided
- 1 medium white onion, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 4 cups vegetable broth or "no-chicken" broth
- 4 cups water
- 1 large sprig epazote (optional; see Note)
- 1 14-ounce package extra-firm tofu
- 4 cups chopped chard, spinach or kale leaves
- 1/4-1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 ripe large avocado, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
- 2 cups roughly broken tortilla chips
- 3/4 cup shredded Mexican melting cheese, such as Chihuahua or asadero, or Monterey Jack or mild Cheddar (optional)
- 1 large lime, cut into 6 wedges

Holding the chiles one at a time with metal tongs, quickly toast them by turning them an inch or two above an open flame for a few seconds until the aroma fills the kitchen. (Alternatively, toast chiles in a dry pan over medium heat, pressing them flat for a few seconds then flipping them over and pressing again.)

When cool enough to handle, stem and seed the chiles, break them into pieces and put them in a blender along with tomatoes and their juice. (A food processor will work, though it won't completely puree the chiles.)

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until golden, 6 to 9 minutes. Scoop up the onion and garlic with a slotted spoon and transfer to the blender with the tomato mixture. Process until smooth.

Return the pot to medium heat. When quite hot, add the puree and stir nearly constantly until thickened to the consistency of tomato paste, about 6 minutes. Add broth, water and epazote (if using). Bring to a boil, then adjust heat to maintain a simmer.

Drain tofu, rinse and pat dry; cut into 1/2- to 3/4-inch cubes. Heat the remaining 2 teaspoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the tofu and cook in a single layer, stirring every 2 to 3 minutes, until beginning to brown, 6 to 8 minutes total. Add the tofu to the soup and simmer for 30 minutes.

Add chard (or spinach or kale) to the soup and season with salt to taste, depending on the saltiness of the broth. Cook, stirring, until the greens are wilted, about 2 minutes, depending on the type of greens.

Ladle the soup into 8 soup bowls. Divide avocado, tortilla chips and cheese (if using) among the bowls. Serve warm, with lime wedges.

Ingredient Notes: Pasilla chiles, sometimes called negro chiles, are medium-hot dried peppers with a flavor that defines tortilla soup in central Mexico. Find them and other dried chiles in the produce section of large supermarkets or online at [melissas.com](http://melissas.com).

Look for epazote at fresh at farmers' markets, some supermarkets or find it dried at Latin markets or online from [melissas.com](http://melissas.com). Chicken and chicken broth may be substituted.

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Inspired by Rick Bayless

## Instant Pot Mexican Black Beans with Epazote

*This healthy, delicious recipe for Instant Pot Mexican Black Beans with Epazote is based on the rich food cultures of the Americas. Simply prepared and hearty, you can top black beans with your favorite toppings and serve with corn tortillas.*

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

1 medium onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground chipotle powder

1 tablespoon ground epazote (or 2 tablespoons fresh, chopped)

1-pound black beans, dried

3 cups vegetable broth

1 cup canned tomato sauce

½ lemon, juiced (1 tablespoon)

**Toppings: (optional, as desired)**

½ cup sliced radishes

1 avocado, sliced

½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved

½ cup cilantro, chopped  
1 jalapeno, sliced  
¼ red onion, sliced  
¼ cup pumpkin seeds, shelled  
6 corn tortillas or 1 cup tortilla chips  
1 lemon or lime, sliced into wedges

Pour olive oil in the container of the Instant Pot. Heat the Instant Pot on the sauté setting (according to manufacturer's directions).

Add onion and garlic, and sauté for about 5 minutes, until vegetables are softened, stirring frequently.

Add cumin, chipotle powder, and epazote, and sauté for 1 minute, stirring frequently.

Add beans and vegetable broth. Stir well, cover and lock the Instant Pot lid in place. Cook on manual setting on high for 35 minutes. Allow the pressure release to vent naturally instead of the quick release setting.

When the pressure is released, open the lid, and stir in tomato sauce and lemon juice, mixing well.

Serve with toppings, as desired.

Makes 6 servings (about 1 cup each). Prep Time: 10 minutes, Cook Time 15 minutes

Note: for other cooking methods, see recipe on author's website.

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