

## Experimenting With PEPPERS

By DANIEL NEMAN  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

They look so innocent. There is little about a chile that hints at the danger lurking inside. They dangle colorfully, seemingly harmlessly, from a plant's bright foliage, or they are piled welcomingly at a grocery store or farmers market.

And yet, a single bite can cause intense pain, an "if-I-get-out-of-this-I'll-never-sin-again" kind of pain.

Some chiles are mild. Easygoing. Friendly. And you can't always tell, just by looking at it, which way it is going to be.

More than 150 types of chiles are grown and eaten in the world, and they range in heat from the utterly mild bell pepper to the ludicrously inedible hot Carolina Reaper.

For the purposes of this article, and my digestive tract, I decided to see what I could make from some of the most readily available fresh peppers, the kind found in any grocery store.

I also decided to make a chocolate ice cream with dried pasilla negro chiles, which you have to find at international stores, because I saw the recipe and I thought it sounded really good.

It was. It was really, really good. But you'll have to wait until the end of this article to read about it because I want to save dessert for last.

Instead, I'll begin with hot pepper jelly, which I've never particularly cared for all that much. I didn't hate it, but I wouldn't cross the street to have some.

But that was before I made homemade hot pepper jelly. And let me tell you, it was spectacular. I'd cross half the streets in town to have some more. Served as a glaze for grilled fish or chicken, or on a cracker with a bit of cream cheese, it's a little bit hot and a little bit sweet.

Actually, it is very sweet (you don't want to know how much sugar is used to make six cups of the jam). But the sugar is just what you need to even out the bite of the apple cider vinegar and make a lovely backdrop for a combination of chopped jalapeño and red, yellow and green bell peppers.

All of that chopping, along with the process of canning, takes some time. So for kicks — I get my kicks in unusual ways — I also made an easier version of hot pepper jelly.

It's basically a cooking hack. You just melt together apple jelly and orange marmalade, and stir in a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar, a tablespoon of chopped jalapeño and a tablespoon of chopped green onion for a mild edge that counters the jellies.

And it works. It successfully mimics hot pepper jelly, and you can whip it up in five minutes — though it still has to chill for several hours. It's good enough, but I'd only cross a few streets for it.

For an entrée, I made Spiced Grilled Chicken With Cilantro Lime Butter, which was easier than it sounds — and just as good.

This is a two-part recipe, a paste to spread on the chicken before grilling, and then a melted butter-based sauce to drizzle over the top after it is done.

The paste is supposed to recall the taste of mole poblano, which it only does in the most general of ways. But still, its bright notes of cinnamon and balsamic vinegar, muffled by cocoa and brown sugar

and spiced up with chili powder, make a coating for chicken that is simply delicious.

The pepper part of the recipe comes in the sauce. A chopped serrano pepper is mixed with cilantro, red onion and lime juice, plus the melted butter, for a traditional Mexican taste.

The next dish I made, eggs poached in a chile-tomato broth, is even more traditional. Huevos en rabo de mestiza — "mestiza" does not mean "chile-tomato broth" — is basically the Mexican version of shakshuka, a Middle Eastern staple of eggs poached in a spicy tomato sauce.

It's a satisfying, spicy dish for a brunch, and the broth of poblano chiles, tomatoes and onions can even be made the day before.

I'll admit that to do it right will take some work. The poblanos have to be charred, and their skins then scraped away. And the tomatoes have to be broiled, or at least browned on all sides in a hot, dry pan.

But don't worry about it. Do the work. You'll be glad you did.

Next up was a refreshing sauce that can be used either as a salad dressing or as a dip for crudités, jalapeño-cilantro yogurt sauce. It is a gorgeous concoction of mint leaves and cilantro in yogurt, with lime juice and a hint of cumin. The heat comes from a chopped jalapeño.

It all comes together in a couple of minutes, and it tastes just as fresh as it looks.

And then, for dessert, came the ice cream, a dark chocolate-chile ice cream.

The pasilla negro pepper that is used in this dish is quite mild and provides only what recipe author Rick Bayless calls a "gentle glow." But it also has a distinct flavor of raisins, which emphasizes and enhances the deeper notes of the bittersweet chocolate.

Even so, the chocolate and the pepper need to be tempered by a rich base, which this ice cream absolutely has. It's a custard, with four egg yolks and equal amounts of heavy cream and half-and-half. Vanilla and Kahlua each make their own contributions to the flavor.

It's an indulgence, but one of the better indulgences in which you can indulge. Give it a try. It may be the best pepper you ever eat.

### SPICED GRILLED CHICKEN WITH CILANTRO LIME BUTTER

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper



Hillary Levin-St. Louis Post-Dispatch/TNS  
Eggs Poached in a Chile-Tomato Broth.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 6 (8-ounce) chicken breasts or leg quarters
- 1/8 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 cup minced fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 serrano pepper, finely chopped
- 1/3 teaspoon pepper

1. In a small bowl, combine chili powder, brown sugar, cinnamon, cocoa, salt, pepper, olive oil and vinegar. Brush over chicken.

2. Arrange grill for indirect heat. When grill is hot, place chicken on grate, cover and cook until done, about 30 minutes for white meat or 45 minutes for dark meat. Chicken is cooked when a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the largest piece reads 165 degrees.

3. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the melted butter, cilantro, red onion, lime juice, chopped serrano and pepper. Drizzle over chicken before serving.

Per serving: 438 calories; 23 g fat; 9 g saturated fat; 192 mg cholesterol; 52 g protein; 4 g carbohydrate; 2 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 338 mg sodium; 32 mg calcium

Adapted from a recipe from tasteof-home.com

### JALAPEÑO-CILANTRO YOGURT SAUCE

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed, chopped
- 1 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup cilantro leaves with tender stems
- 2 tablespoons mint leaves
- 1 tablespoon (or more) fresh lime juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- Kosher salt

Purée jalapeño, yogurt, cilantro, mint, lime juice, cumin and a generous pinch of salt in a blender until very smooth. Taste and season with salt and more lime juice, if desired.

Per serving: 36 calories; 2 g fat; 1 g saturated fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 3 g protein; 2 g carbohydrate; 2 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 91 mg sodium; 38 mg calcium

Recipe by Cerulean Restaurant, Indianapolis, via Bon Appétit

### EGGS POACHED IN A CHILE-TOMATO BROTH

Yield: 6 servings

- 7 poblano chiles
- 2 pounds tomatoes
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cups thinly sliced white onion
- 3 cups water
- Salt
- 12 eggs
- 6 slices queso fresco

**Note: The sauce can be made well ahead of time and can even be frozen.**

1. Leave the stems, if any, on the poblanos. Place directly over the open flame of a gas stove or a wood or charcoal grill. If using electricity, smear the chiles with a light coating of oil and place them directly under the broiler. Turn the chiles from time to time to allow the skin to blister and char lightly all over. Do not allow the flesh to be burnt through.

2. Place charred poblanos immediately into a plastic bag and leave them to steam for about 10 minutes. This helps to loosen the skin. The skin can now be slipped off easily with your hands; this should be done over a strainer, because the little pieces are tough and can block a sink drain. Rinse the chiles briefly, but do not soak in water. Remove stems and seeds and slice chiles into narrow strips.

3. Rinse tomatoes and place on a hot, ungreased pan or griddle over medium heat. Cook, turning occasionally, until soft all the way through and the skin is lightly charred. Or, cook tomatoes about 3 inches under a broiler, turning once, until mushy and slightly charred.



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### Homemade Hot Pepper Jelly.

4. Heat the oil in a large skillet and cook the onion until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the chile strips to the pan and let them cook for about 3 minutes, stirring frequently to avoid sticking.

5. Process the broiled tomatoes in a blender for a few seconds — do not overblend — and add them to the onion-chile mixture. The sauce should have some texture. Let it cook over fairly high heat for about 10 minutes, or until the sauce is well seasoned and has somewhat reduced. Add the water and salt and continue cooking for a minute or so more.

6. Crack the eggs, one at a time, into the hot broth. Arrange the slices of cheese on top. Cover with a lid and let the eggs poach very gently until set, 3 or 3 1/2 minutes.

Per serving: 363 calories; 28 g fat; 16 g saturated fat; 347 mg cholesterol; 18 g protein; 12 g carbohydrate; 7 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 373 mg sodium; 236 mg calcium

Recipe from "The Essential Cuisines of Mexico" by Diana Kennedy

### DARK CHOCOLATE-CHILE ICE CREAM

Yield: 6 to 9 servings

- 1 large dried pasilla negro chile, stemmed, seeded and (if you wish) deveined
- 1 1/3 cups half-and-half
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate (preferably 70%), chopped into small pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 1/3 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons Kahlúa, or other coffee liqueur

**Note: The base can be made several days ahead and refrigerated, covered.**

**The finished ice cream is best served within a day or two of being frozen.**

1. Make the chile infusion: In a small skillet heated over medium, toast the chile by pressing it flat against the skillet with a metal spatula until it is very aromatic, around 10 seconds or longer per side. Place in a small saucepan, add the half-and-half, and heat over medium until steaming but not boiling.

2. Remove from heat, cover and let steep for 10 minutes, then pour into a blender jar and process until the chile is smooth. Press the mixture through a medium-mesh strainer back into the saucepan.

3. Set up a double boiler: Set up a 4-quart saucepan with 1 inch of water. Choose a 3-quart stainless steel bowl that you can nestle into the pan without touching the water. Bring the pot of water to a boil over high heat while you're preparing the custard base. Do not heat the water with the stainless steel bowl over it.

4. Cook the base: Reheat the half-and-half mixture just until it begins to steam. Spread the chocolate into a thin layer over the bottom of a bowl, and add the salt. Pour the warm chile-infused mixture over the chocolate and stir until the chocolate has begun to melt. In the stainless-steel bowl (for the double boiler) whisk together the sugar and egg yolks until thoroughly combined, then whisk in the chocolate mixture.

5. Reduce the temperature under the pot of boiling water to maintain a gentle simmer. Set the bowl of custard base over the simmering water and whisk frequently, scraping down the sides of the bowl regularly with a rubber spatula, until the mixture thickens noticeably, about 5 minutes. The custard is sufficiently cooked when it reach-

es 180 degrees — dip a wooden spoon into it and run your finger through the custard on the spoon, the line will hold clearly when done.

6. Cool the base: Fill a large bowl halfway with ice and water. Nestle the custard into the ice and whisk regularly until completely cool. Refrigerate if not using immediately.

7. Finish the base, freeze the ice cream: Stir the heavy cream, vanilla and Kahlúa into the base. Freeze in an ice-cream maker according to the manufacturer's directions. Scrape into a freezer container and freeze for several hours to firm.

Per serving (based on 6): 357 calories; 21 g fat; 12 g saturated fat; 157 mg cholesterol; 6 g protein; 36 g carbohydrate; 30 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 164 mg sodium; 95 mg calcium

Adapted from "Fiesta at Rick's" by Rick Bayless and Deann Groen Bayless

### HOMEMADE HOT PEPPER JELLY

Yield: 48 servings (6 cups)

- 6 (8-ounce) canning jars
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped and seeded red bell pepper
- 1 cup finely chopped and seeded yellow bell pepper
- 1 1/4 cups finely chopped and seeded green bell pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped and seeded jalapeño
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 (1.75-ounce) package powdered pectin
- 5 cups granulated sugar

1. Sterilize canning jars and lids in boiling water.

2. Place red, yellow and green bell peppers and jalapeño in a large saucepan over high heat. Add apple cider vinegar and pectin. Stirring constantly, bring to a rolling boil.

3. Stir in sugar and return to a rolling boil for 1 minute.

4. Remove from heat. Skim off any foam from top.

5. Ladle jelly evenly into sterile jars, filling to 1/4 inch from top of jar. Cover with flat lids and screw on screw bands tight.

6. Place jars into canner with hot water that is not boiling. Water should completely cover jar. Cook on high heat to reach a boil. Process for 5 minutes.

7. Remove from heat.

8. When jars are completely cooled, check seals by pressing centers of lids with finger. If lid springs back, lid is not sealed and refrigeration is necessary.

Per serving: 88 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 23 g carbohydrate; 21 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 3 mg sodium; 2 mg calcium

Recipe from aforkstale.com

### EASIEST PEPPER JELLY

Yield: 8 servings (1 cup)

- 1/2 cup apple jelly
- 1/2 cup orange marmalade
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon seeded and chopped jalapeño pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onion

Stir together all ingredients in a small pan over medium heat until jelly and marmalade are melted and mixture is blended. Cool. Cover and refrigerate 8 hours.

Per serving: 56 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 15 g carbohydrate; 13 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 12 mg sodium; 12 mg calcium

Recipe from myrecipes.com



Fred Hill Collection

The N.K. West Clothing Store's long history at 1204-1208 Adams Ave. in La Grande ended with a fire that destroyed the building in 1994.

## Rich history of the N.K. West Clothing Store

By GINNY MAMMEN

Moving east along Adams Avenue in downtown La Grande we come to the two vacant lots at 1204-1208 Adams, owned by Jay Brooks next to his clothing store. In the fall of 1898 Mr. Brooks was approached by a businessman who had just moved to La Grande from Portland and was planning to open a business. By May of the following year Brooks had sold his business to this

newcomer by the name of N.K. West, who had been in the clothing business with his father in Portland. N.K. had convinced Brooks to construct a building on the two empty lots and by spring of 1899 West had moved his clothing business into the new building. The older building next to the bank was then occupied by a secondhand store for a short time and later by E. Andross. By 1905 N.K. West had expanded into the

entire building.

In 1907, Herman Siegrist, West's son-in-law, became a principal owner in the business. Then in 1923, Herman's brother, William, who had Siegrist Jewellery Store, also became a principal owner. It was now N.K. West & Company.

In an Observer interview with Mr. West in July 1929, he gave an overview of the city of La Grande as he remembered it in 1899. The population was around

3,000. There were four stores larger than his. The town had "mud streets and wood sidewalks," he said. "It was almost impossible to cross streets at certain seasons of the year."

To make it easier for customers he told of a delivery service for all four stores. Each store "had a red flag that they displayed in front of the store when they had made a