

Spice Club

Spice of Month

Ancho Chile

The ancho chile pepper is the dried version of the poblano pepper (from Puebla, Mexico), or specifically, it's the dried version of the almost-ripe state of the poblano pepper. In other words, the chile we know as a poblano pepper is a fresh chile harvested before ripening, which is why it's green. But when allowed to ripen, a poblano turns red and develops additional sweetness, which balances out its already mild heat. Thus, an ancho chile is red while a poblano is green. There is only one type of ancho pepper, but it's important to know that the ripe poblano pepper produces two varieties of dry chile: the ancho chile and the mulato chile. The difference is that the mulato is the fully ripe dried poblano pepper, brown before dried, and the ancho is the almost-ripe dried poblano pepper, red before dried. Used in Mexican cuisine as much as ancho chile, the mulato has a chocolatey flavor and is sold whole or in its ground form.





Ancho Chile-Mexican Chocolate Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 3/4 cups all purpose flour
- 1/3 cup good quality unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons of your favorite ground chile powder, such as ancho chile powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temp
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup dark chocolate chunks
- 1/2 cup unsalted pepitas (shelled pumpkin seeds), lightly toasted

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, chile powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter on medium-high speed until light and creamy, about 1 minute. Add the brown and granulated sugar and beat until slightly fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed. Add the egg and vanilla and beat until well combined.

Reduce the mixer speed to medium-low, add half the flour mixture, and beat until just combined, then add the remaining flour mixture and beat until the mixture just comes together, 1 to 2 minutes, being careful not to overmix. Add the chocolate chunks and pepitas and beat on low until just combined.

Use a 2-ounce ice cream scoop or a 1/4 cup measuring cup to scoop the cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, making about 14 cookies total and leaving at least 2 inches between each cookie.

Bake until the edges of the cookies are crisp but the centers are still tender, about 15 minutes, rotating the baking sheets top to bottom and front to back halfway through the baking time. Remove from the oven, set the baking sheets on wire racks, and let the cookies cool completely on the pans. They should keep up to 5 days in an airtight container.