

SPICY HOLIDAY



PHOTOS BY S. DERRICKSON MOORE — SUN-NEWS

Native New Mexican Erlinda Garcia, here with her son, Isaac, in Mesilla, says red and green chiles are always served at Thanksgiving at family gatherings. Isaac likes chile con queso dips with his feast.

SOUTHWESTERN CUSTOMS

New Mexicans make chile a part of Thanksgiving

By **S.Derrickson Moore** » dmoore@lcsun-news.com, @
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LAS CRUCES » Turkey in New Mexico is smoked, fried, grilled and basted, rubbed, stuffed with our favorite peppers. Pumpkin empanadas and pies showcase pecans from our backyard trees. We also have Feasts of the Seven Fishes, pig roasts, "hotlucks," and lots and lots of chile enhancements.

Here in the Mesilla Valley, we do Thanksgiving as we live our lives with artistic style, creativity and unique flare.

The originality extends to entertaining and the names of our celebrations.

"We traditionally have our annual hotluck and have international students come over and bring something that's typical of their culture. That way, we have dishes with lots of different kinds of chiles," said Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute at New Mexico University, and an NMSU regents professor of horticulture.

Bosland said he usually does two turkeys: one smoked and one with chile-enhanced stuffing.

"We have green chile cornbread dressing and jalapeños are involved, along with our traditional Thanksgiving dinner,"

says Buddy Ritter, owner of the Double Eagle in Mesilla.

He said the pepper-enhanced holiday buffet is always a sell-out.

Michael Mason said he looks forward to Thanksgiving as "the start of our buffet season. We have buffets from Thanksgiving to Christmas. My wife, Jeanette comes up with all sorts of themes for buffets during the holidays. The biggest is the Feast of the Seven Fishes, with seven different seafood times that usually include things like salmon, calamari, cod, scallops, shrimp, oysters and something else. Usually on Thanksgiving Day, it's just the two of us and we have duck or turkey. I deep-fry the turkey. It's tender and juicy and quick. It only takes about 20 minutes."

It's a busy season for Tortugas Pueblo as they prepare for their



Lauren Bishop of Radium Springs says she and her husband take advantage of sunny Southwestern weather and grill their turkey every year.

Some recipes to add spice to your Thanksgiving

Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute at New Mexico University, and a regents professor of horticulture at New Mexico State University, shares some favorite Thanksgiving-appropriate recipes.

Look for more in "The Complete Chile Pepper Book," co-written with Dave DeWitt.

Find seeds for the peppers he mentions, along with mixes and other hot and spicy treats, at the Chile Pepper Institute, Gerald Thomas Hall, Room 265, 945 College Ave., on the NMSU campus. Hours are 8 a.m. - noon and 1 - 5 p.m. weekdays. Visit

and place orders online at chilepepperinstitute.org or call 575-646-3028.

Bosland offers his own ideal Thanksgiving menu.

"I start with an appetizer (jalapeño poppers), then a cornbread recipe, next the turkey and finally my brownie recipe," he said. "The brownie mix can be bought at the Chile Pepper Institute. It is called 'Dr. B's Bhut Kickin' Brownie Mix.' The chile peppers I use in the other recipes are available as seed from the CPI."

On the next page are some recipes to spice up your Thanksgiving.

Recipes

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NuMex Jalmundo Western-styled Stuffed Jalapeño

INGREDIENTS

12 NuMex Jalmundo jalapeños (jumbo size), halved and de-seeded

1 (8 ounce) package smooth cream cheese, softened

1 (8 ounce) package shredded jalapeño-flavored cheddar cheese

6 bacon strips

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Split one side of the jalapeño lengthwise and remove seeds. In a bowl, mix together cream cheese and cheddar cheese. Stuff jalapeño with cheese mixture. Wrap each stuffed pod tightly with a half strip of bacon. Use a toothpick to hold in place. Arrange in a single layer on a lightly greased medium baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes. Cooking time may vary. When the bacon is cooked, the jalapeños are done.

Dr. B's Bhut Kickin' Brownies

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup cocoa

1/2 cup (one stick) unsalted butter

3 eggs

1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1 cup flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 cup chopped pecans

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 tablespoon Bhut Jolokia chile powder

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter and flour an 8-inch square baking pan. In a small saucepan, melt butter with cocoa. Beat eggs until foamy, then gradually beat in sugar. Add cocoa-butter mixture to egg mixture. Sift flour and baking powder then sift half of it into batter. Mix pecans into the remaining flour, add to cake batter, stir to blend well. Add vanilla and Bhut Jolokia chile powder. Pour batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until

toothpick comes out clean.

NuMex Bailey Piquin Smoked Turkey

INGREDIENTS

Young hen turkey (a turkey breast can be substituted for a whole turkey)

Cooking oil

2 tablespoons apple jelly

6-12 ground NuMex Bailey Piquin fruits

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

1/4 teaspoon pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix apple jelly and NuMex Bailey Piquin powder together. Loosen turkey skin, slip fingers under skin of turkey, pulling it away, but leaving skin attached at edge. Spread jelly mixture over the meat under the skin. Replace skin over jelly mixture. Place turkey in the smoker (I always use local pecan wood). Brush skin with oil. Grill until meat registers 170 degrees.

Confetti Jalapeño Cornbread

NuMex Piñata jalapeño is a cultivar that produces multi-colored jalapeños on the same plant. The fruits can be lime green, yellow, orange and red at the same time. The different colors give the cornbread its "confetti" look.

INGREDIENTS

1 and 1/4 cups flour

1 and 1/2 cups cornmeal

3 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

2 1/4 cups buttermilk

2 eggs

1/2 stick of melted butter

4 chopped NuMex Piñata

jalapeños and 2-4 sliced

NuMex Piñata jalapeños

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the first six ingredients. Whisk buttermilk, eggs and melted butter together. Add chopped NuMex Piñata jalapeños. Stir into the flour mixture. Pour into a buttered, cornmeal-dusted 9-inch cast-iron skillet. Top with sliced NuMex Piñata jalapeños. Bake at 450 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.

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annual Our Lady of Guadalupe Festival on Dec. 10-12 and the Dec. 11 pilgrimage, but there's always time for family traditions, said festival spokesman David Fierro.

"We always have out-of-town visitors. We have pumpkin empanadas and we've been trying to get the recipe for my mom's stuffing for years and years," Fierro said.

His mother, Marcila Fierro, is still guarding the secret recipe, he said.

"I know one of the ingredients is gizzards, plus celery and corn. And we always have red chile on top of the stuffing," he said.

Native New Mexican Erlinda Garcia has fond memories of wild game on her Thanksgiving table when she was growing up.

"My father had the hunt in the north valley, right up

"We've been trying to get the recipe for my mom's stuffing for years and years."

— David Fierro

there where they're building the Spaceport. There was lots of deer and rabbit," she said.

Then and now, "red and green chile are always on the table," Erlinda said.

"And chile dip, chile con queso," added her son, Isaac Garcia.

Thanksgiving is still prime time for grilling for Lauren and Tim Bishop of Radium Springs.

"Tim butterflies the turkey and cuts it open and we cook it on the grill. It takes about two hours. It's shorter than doing it in the oven," Lauren Bishop said.

It wasn't a traditional Southwestern mantanza,

but a Caribbean adventure stands out when Maria Simpson thinks of exotic Thanksgiving adventures.

"It was 1966 and my husband Tony and I had just gotten married," Simpson said. "We were in the Bahamas and we decided we wanted to do something that was part of the culture and got a little suckling pig, which was supposed to be already dressed, with spicy stuffing inside. We put it in the oven, expecting the delicious smell of roasting pork. It smelled terrible. And we felt awful when it came out of the oven, the poor little thing with an apple in its mouth. None of us could eat a thing."

She's grateful for more traditional Thanksgivings since, though she does mix it up with local favorites.

"I love to cook and I made posole along with the turkey one year. It was very good," she said.

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Maria Simpson enjoys exploring cultural traditions at holiday celebrations. A roast suckling pig in the Bahamas was not a success, she reports, but her Thanksgiving posole was a hit.