

# CHEF AT LARGE: Ole! Mole!

By Chef Justin Mevs, Executive Chef - Cutter's Bayhouse

Most people associate mole with either Puebla or Oaxaca, but the origin of mole poblano, made so famous in the colonial mountain city of Puebla, Mexico, is still disputed, and generally involves one of these two versions of the legend:

The first says that 16th century nuns from the convent of Santa Rosa in Puebla de los angeles, upon learning that the Archbishop was coming for a visit, went into a panic because they had nothing to serve him. They started praying desperately and an angel came to inspire them. They began chopping, grinding, and roasting, mixing different types of chiles and spices together, day-old bread, nuts, and a little chocolate. They boiled this concoction for hours until it was reduced down to the rich and fragrant sauce we know today. To serve it they roasted the only meat they had which was an old turkey, and the strange sauce was poured over it. The archbishop was more than pleased with the banquets and the nuns had saved face. Little known to the nuns they had created the national dish for all holidays and feasts, and that today millions of people would have at least heard of Mole Poblano. The other legend states that mole came from pre-hispanic times and that Aztec king, Moctezuma, thinking the conquistadors were gods, served mole to Cortez at a banquet to greet them. This story probably gained credibility because the word mole comes from the word "milli", which means sauce or concoction.

Today, Oaxaca has the reputation as Mexico's best state for mole, followed by Puebla and Vera Cruz. The famous "seven moles of Oaxaca" compose of a rainbow of colors such as black, brown, brick red, yellow, and green.

Mole poblano is prepared with dried chile peppers, ground nuts and seeds, blends of spices and chocolates, and a variety of other ingredients including bread crumbs and charred avocado leaves. Some sources say that some moles can contain up to 100 ingredients, but that's an exaggeration. But 30 ingredients is not unheard of, and some mole recipes contain 10 different chiles alone. All moles however are very time consuming and labor intensive. In contemporary Mexico, the term Mole is used for a number of sauces, some quite dissimilar to each other and can be a variety of colors and flavor.

Mole sauce can be served with almost anything. Most commonly it is served with turkey but can also go well with chicken, pork, game, and seafood. Here is a simplified mole recipe that we serve Cutters. It is delicate and works great with seafood.

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Canola Oil 1 oz.	Black Sesame Seeds 1 tsp.
Onions, diced ¼" 1 each	Orange Juice 2 cups.
Jalapeno Pepper, seeds removed 2 each	Dried Cherries 2 oz. wt.
Chili Pods 3 each	Chicken Stock 2 cups
Apples, peeled and diced 1 each	Bay Leaf 1 each
Garlic, minced 3 cloves	Cinnamon 1/4 tsp.
Cashews 2 oz. wt.	Chili Powder 1 tsp.
Pistachios 1 oz. wt.	Ground pepper 1 tsp.
Almonds 1 oz. wt.	Kosher Salt 1 TBsp.
Pumpkin Seeds 1/2 oz. wt.	Chocolate 1 ½ oz. wt.

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## DIRECTIONS:

- 1) IN A HEAVY GAGE SAUCE POT, HEAT THE CANOLA OIL AND ADD IN THE ONION AND JALAPENO. 2)
- 2) SWEAT OVER MEDIUM-LOW HEAT UNTIL THEY ARE TRANSLUCENT. ADD IN THE GARLIC, NUTS, APPLES AND SESAME SEEDS, AND SWEAT FOR AN ADDITIONAL 5 MNIUTES.
- 3) NEXT, ADD IN THE REMAINING INGREDIENTS AND BRING TO A SLOW SIMMER. SIMMER FOR 1 HOUR. IN A BLENDER OR FOOD PROCESSOR MIX ALL OF THE INGREDIENTS UNTIL THE MIXTURE HAS A VERY SMOOTH CONSISTENCY.