

Salt and Serenity

Poblano Corn Chowder

Recipe adapted from Diana Kennedy's The Essential Cuisines of Mexico

Serves 4

Soup:

2 poblano peppers

3 plum tomatoes

½ medium white onion, coarsely chopped

6 cups corn kernels (about 7-8 small ears, you could also use frozen)

1 large potato, peeled and diced into ¼ inch pieces (about 2 cups diced)

4 cups milk (2% or homogenized)

3 Tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

Garnishes:

6 soft white corn tortillas, cut into ¼ inch wide strips

Vegetable oil (for shallow frying tortilla strips)

¼ cup 35% cream mixed with ¼ cup sour cream

1 lime, cut into wedges

¼ cup coarsely chopped cilantro leaves

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Rinse the poblanos and tomatoes and place on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast them for about 15 minutes, flip them over and roast for an additional 15 minutes.
2. Once the poblanos and tomatoes have cooled, peel the skin off them. Set peeled tomatoes aside. Remove stems and seeds of poblanos and dice flesh into ⅛ inch pieces.
3. In a large pot, sauté the chopped poblanos in butter over medium heat for a 2-3 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, add the 3 tomatoes and the diced onion to a blender and combine well. Add the tomato-onion mixture to the poblanos and let this reduce down for a few minutes. Don't bother washing blender yet, you will use it for the corn and milk.
5. Place 4 cups of corn (reserve 2 cups of corn) and all the milk in the blender and process until very smooth. Strain the corn mixture through a fine mesh strainer and discard the leftover pulp. Slowly add the strained corn sauce to the poblano mixture in the pot, stirring continuously.
6. Add the remaining 2 cups of whole corn kernels, diced potato, salt and pepper to the pot. Let simmer on low heat for 20-25, minutes but do not bring to a full boil. Check to make sure potatoes are tender.

7. While soup is simmering, pour about 2 inches of vegetable oil in a shallow heavy bottom pan (a cast iron pan is ideal for this). Heat oil to 350°F. Add half the tortilla strips and fry until golden brown. Remove to a paper towel lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt while hot. Repeat with remaining tortilla strips.
8. Taste soup and adjust seasoning. I like to put all the garnishes out in little bowls and let everyone garnish their own bowl.