



THE “SEVEN MOLES” OF OAXACA

News brief from Hela Spice Canada

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Oaxaca is a city and a Free and Sovereign state in the Southwestern section of Mexico. Both the City and the State are located in rugged and mountainous geography, which has protected it and left it one of the most untouched regions in all of Mexico. As a result, indigenous peoples have been allowed to thrive and their traditional cuisine has survived more completely than in almost any other area in Mexico. The most well-known culinary creation from the region must be Mole Sauce (pronounced “moe-lay”). While most people may know Mole as the “Mexican sauce that has chocolate in it”, Moles are far much more than that. They are a class of sauces that can fit almost any occasion, protein, or vegetable. Broadly looking at Mole Sauces, there are seven different Moles found in Oaxaca. These sauces range from spicy, to sweet, and sweet and spicy. Some Mole Sauces use as many as 40 different ingredients, while others have more simple ingredient lists. Typical ingredients found in Mole Sauces can include dried chiles, sesame seeds, tomatillos, spices, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, and traditional dark and unsweetened chocolate. While there are seven definitive Oaxacan Moles, every Mexican family has their own version, leading to an endless number of unique moles!

Mole Rojo or Mole Pablano

Possibly the most well-known Mole Sauce, originating from the Puebla region. This Mole’s ingredient list includes dry chiles like mulato, ancho, and pasilla, raisins, almonds, and sesame seeds. This combination of dry chiles, dry fruit and nuts leads to a complex sauce that has an amazing and complex balance of sweet, fruity, slightly smoky and spicy flavours from the chiles all backed up by the smooth nutty flavour of almonds and sesame seeds.

Mole Verde or Green Mole

This fresh and bright Mole get its rich colour from a combination of fresh cilantro, tomatillos, jalapenos and pumpkin seeds. The rich colour is backed up by an equally robust flavor created with the inclusion of garlic, onion and chicken broth. The resulting sauce is far greater than the sum of its parts and makes it an idea sauce to top chicken, fish or pork or as a sauce for enchiladas.

Mole Negro or Black Mole

Arguably the most complex of the Moles. This sweet and spicy concoction, is a combination of dry chiles, Oaxacan chocolate, dried fruit, seeds, and warm spices like clove, cinnamon and allspices. The combination of chiles, dried fruit, seeds and spices makes this the perfect sweet, savoury and spicy compliment to the dark bitter chocolate. While this Mole is served on meat, fish or chicken, the Mole is the star of the show and is, by itself, the dish.

Mole Chichilo

This is the “gravy” of Moles! Like other Moles, this is a blend of dry chiles that help form the backbone of the sauce. The dry chiles are rehydrated using a rich roasted beef stock that add richness and umami. The sauce is thickened with either masa harina or tortillas to make a thick and luscious sauce that is perfect for braising meat or beans.

Mole Coloradito

Dubbed the “little red” or “naughty” Mole, this Mole falls somewhere between the Mole Rojo and Mole Negro, but with a deep brown colour. It shares many of the same ingredients as the Rojo and Negro but falls on the sweeter side using mashed ripe plantains as the main thickener. It is primarily served with poultry.

Mole Amarillo

This makes a great all-purpose cooking sauce or smother sauce. Similar to the other Moles Coloradito, Rojo and Negro, but without any of the chocolate or sweetness. The deep flavour brought by the chiles is paired perfectly with onion, garlic and chicken stock. A great base sauce for any application!

Mole Manchamantel

Also known as the “tablecloth staining” Mole. This is one you want to make sure you wear a bib for. Made using a rich base of Mexican chorizo, ancho chiles, and tomatoes, this sauce gets a hit of brightness from pineapples and sweetness from ripe plantains. Manchamantel is a sweet and complex sauce that makes a wonderful cooking sauce or braising liquid for any protein.

While Moles are traditionally used as a sauce to smother, cook in or finish proteins, there’s no reason you can’t draw flavour inspiration from them to make your next regionally authentic Mexican product. Your creativity can be exercised from Mole Negro Pork Sausages, and Mole Verde Snack Sticks to Mole Chichilo Cook-In-Bag Pulled Beef, perfect for tacos. It’s time to take a deep dive into the wonderful and aromatic world of regional Mexican cuisine!

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