Sauces / Mexico

Salsa Macha

Oaxaca's oil-based chile-nut condiment — dried árbol and mulato chiles bloomed in hot oil with toasted pumpkin seeds, peanuts, and garlic until the oil itself becomes an aromatic, rust-red medium carrying smoky, nutty, slow-building heat. More oil than sauce, more condiment than salsa, entirely irreplaceable.

Time 25 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 30 g Dried chiles de árbol (stemmed, seeded or not)
- ☐ 20 g Dried mulato or ancho chile (stemmed, seeded, torn)
- ☐ 40 g Pumpkin seeds (pepitas, raw)
- ☐ 40 g Raw peanuts (skin-on or blanched)
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ☐ 200 g Neutral oil (vegetable or avocado oil)
- ☐ 15 g Apple cider vinegar
- ☐ 5 g Fine salt
- ☐ 3 g Granulated sugar (optional)

Let's make it.

01 In a dry skillet over medium heat, toast the pepitas and peanuts separately, each stirring constantly. Pepitas first: 3 to 4 minutes until they inflate, turn golden-green, and begin to pop. Remove. Peanuts: 4 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly, until they smell of roasted peanuts and turn a uniform golden-brown. Remove. Do not mix them during toasting — they finish at different times. Cool both completely. The dry-toasting before the oil fry builds a layer of nutty flavor that the oil alone cannot achieve.

02 In a small saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. When a piece of garlic dropped in sizzles immediately, add all the garlic slices and fry 60 to 90 seconds until golden — do not let them darken further. Remove garlic with a slotted spoon to a blender. Reduce the oil to medium-low and add both types of dried chiles. They should sizzle gently, not violently. Stir and press them into the oil for 30 to 60 seconds until they turn a darker shade and the oil takes on a deep red color and smells of bloomed dried chile. Watch carefully — dried chiles burn in seconds. Remove chiles immediately with a spider to the blender with the garlic. Reserve the now red-tinged oil.

03 To the blender with the fried garlic and chiles, add the toasted pepitas and peanuts, vinegar, salt, and sugar (if using). Pour in the reserved red chile oil. Pulse 8 to 12 times — the goal is a very coarse texture, not a smooth puree. Each pulse should break down the nuts and chiles further without turning the whole thing into a paste. The finished salsa macha should have visible nut and chile fragments in a red oil — it is an oil-based condiment, not a thick paste. Taste and adjust salt, vinegar, and sugar. Pour into a jar and seal. The oil and solids will separate on standing — stir or shake before each use.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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