

If you thought Mexican food was all tacos and nachos think again, says **Katrina Ryan**.

If you have ever been to Mexico or read the wonderful book *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, you will know there is so much more to Mexican food than tacos and nachos. The title of the book relates to a long and ongoing unfulfilled passion between the two main characters, hence their blood is boiling like water for (hot) chocolate. It is a light-hearted and amusing story, interspersed with recipes and richly evocative of aromas and passionate emotions. The recipes are marvellous and include such exotic dishes as quails in rose petal sauce, home-made chorizo sausage, fried cream fritters and a wedding cake made with 17 eggs.



XC

Essential Mole ingredients include the ancho chilli – a dried Mexican chilli with a medium heat and distinct coffee/raisin aroma.

Mexican cuisine is based on an abundance of native ingredients. Tomatoes, chillies, capsicums, corn, peanuts, avocado, chocolate, pumpkin and passionfruit all originated in South America. One of the most famous dishes to come out of Mexico is 'Mole', pronounced 'moh lay'. It comes from the Aztec word 'mulli' meaning concoction or stew and is part of the word for avocado dip, guacamole. There are many different varieties of mole with the most famous being Mole Poblano from the Mexican state of Puebla which contains turkey. It is a rich and elaborate sauce requiring frying and grinding of many different ingredients including dried chillies, nuts and seeds, fragrant spices, tomatoes, onions and dark bitter chocolate. If you want to taste authentic turkey mole as well as quails in rose petal sauce or other scrumptious Mexican food from the book, *Like Water for Chocolate* then head along to the screening of the movie next Monday, June 18, at 6pm at the J in Noosa Junction. Matt Golinski is heading up a team that will be serving dishes from the book to accompany the very entertaining movie. Tickets are \$70 and can be booked on 5455 4455.

■ **RECIPE:** This is my somewhat simplified version of Mole to serve with barbecued or roasted chicken, avocado, chopped tomato and soft tortillas.

■ **INGREDIENTS:** 30g ancho chillies (these are a particular dried Mexican chilli with a medium heat and distinct coffee/raisin aroma. They are available from Herbie's Spices at the Cooking Company)

1 cup well packed raisins; 30g blanched almonds; 20g pepitas; 1 tblspn sesame seeds; 3 tblspns peanut oil; 1.5cm slice crusty bread; 1 small onion; 1 tsp salt; 3 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced; star anise, ground; 2 cloves, ground; tsp ground cinnamon; tsp each ground cumin and coriander; 1-2 cups chicken stock or water, and 10g (1 square) 85% or 70% cocoa dark chocolate

■ **METHOD:** Break the chillies open, discard the seeds and soak in boiling water until soft, about an hour. Soak the raisins in a separate cup of boiling water until soft, about 15 mins. Toast the almonds, pepitas and sesame seeds in the oven on individual trays until golden brown. Heat 1 tblspn peanut oil in a pan and fry the fry the bread both sides until crisp and golden. Grind the almonds, pepitas, sesame seeds and fried bread in a food processor. Remove and set aside. Heat the remaining 2 tblspns peanut oil in a pot and gently fry the onion and salt until soft. Add the ground spices, fry for another minute then add the tomatoes. Fry briefly and remove from the heat. Drain the chillies and raisins (reserve raisin water) and puree in a food processor. Add the onion and tomato mixture and blend to make a reddish brown puree. Combine the puree with a cup chicken stock, reserved raisin water and stir in the ground nuts and bread and grate in the chocolate. Simmer very gently for 45 minutes. The consistency of the sauce should be like thick cream. Thin if necessary with more stock. Fold in shredded cooked chicken or serve separately.



Katrina Ryan