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**BETTER  
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SALADS!**  
PAGE 60



**Cinco de Mayo is here. But you don't need that as an excuse to fire up this Mexican BBQ from chef Roberto Santibañez.**

In the food stalls of Mexico City, cooks make magic with meat, fire and hot metal. The food coming off their grills is electrified by the heat of chiles and the acidity of lime juice.

Chef Roberto Santibañez grew up eating this food and shopping the markets of Mexico City. Today he lives in New York City, home of his Fonda restaurants. At work he spends days preparing pots full of pitch-black mole negro, the laborious sauce from Oaxaca, but when he entertains, he takes cues from the simple grilled street foods of Mexico City.

For steak, Santibañez makes a marinade with mild, flavorful guajillo chiles, garlic and cumin. He douses freshly grilled shrimp in a mixture of vinegar, spices, herbs and fresh chiles. The grill is also his tool for preparing anything-but-ordinary salsas. One starts with tangy tomatillos grilled until they are mellow with a hint of smokiness, while the other pairs the tropical sweetness of pineapple (caramelized over the fire) with the intoxicating perfumed heat of habanero chiles.

Grab a beer, start a fire, warm up some tortillas and get ready to party.

**JJ GOODE** is the co-author with Roberto Santibañez of *Tacos, Tortas and Tamales* and, with April Bloomfield, *A Girl and Her Pig*.



Roberto Santibañez (right) grills for friends on the patio of his restaurant Fonda in Brooklyn, New York.

By  
**Roberto Santibañez  
& JJ Goode**

Photography by  
**Penny  
De Los Santos**

**PREP AHEAD  
PARTY**

Since nearly everything on this menu can be made ahead, it leaves you free to, you know, actually enjoy the party. See our tips inside!

**GET YOUR FIESTA ON**





## PREP AHEAD SALSAS

The flavors of these two salsas have a chance to fully develop when you make them the day before. On fiesta day, let them stand at room temp for about an hour to get the chill out before serving.

### Grilled Tomatillo-Chipotle Salsa

*Salsa de Tomatillo Asado con Chile Chipotle*

**ACTIVE:** 50 MIN **TOTAL:** 50 MIN  
**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Hold at room temperature for up to 2 hours or refrigerate for up to 3 days.

Chinese-lantern-like tomatillos are unassuming little fruits. Taste one raw and it's slightly tart and kind of bland. But when roasted or grilled, its acidity becomes complex and tangy, almost like cooked plums. To vary the heat in this salsa, use 1 teaspoon of chipotle powder for mild and up to 3 for a little kick in the pants.

- 2 pounds tomatillos (about 20), husks removed, rinsed
- 4 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1-3 teaspoons chipotle chile powder (see Tip, page 93)

1. Preheat grill to medium.
2. Oil the grill rack (see Tip, page 57). Grill tomatillos, starting with the stem end down and turning once, until blackened on both sides and slightly deflated, 15 to 25 minutes total, depending on size. Let cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, mash garlic and salt on a cutting board with a fork to form a paste.
4. Transfer the tomatillos to a food processor or blender. Pulse to a very coarse puree. Add the garlic paste and chile powder to taste; pulse once or twice to combine.

**MAKES:** 2 CUPS (½-CUP SERVING)

Calories 39, Fat 1g (sat 0g), Cholesterol 0mg, Carbs 7g, Total sugars 5g (added 0g), Protein 1g, Fiber 2g, Sodium 182mg, Potassium 317mg.

### Bueno Cervezas

While we won't begrudge you an icy-cold Corona (with lime, of course), Mexican lagers aren't the only beers to enjoy with your south-of-the-border bash. Here are a few less-traditional choices to put on ice.

Beers with a touch of sweetness balance the heat and acidity common in Mexican cuisine. Hefeweizens, wits and wheat beers, such as Franziskaner Weissbier (\$4, 500-ml bottle), are light yet full-flavored. Their characteristic banana and clove flavors dovetail well with Garlic-Oregano Grilled Shrimp (page 59).

If dark beers are more your style, look for a dark or black lager, like New Belgium Brewing's 1554 (\$8/6-pack). They're lighter than they look, with roasty, malty notes that tame the heat of the Chile-Marinated Skirt Steak (page 57).

Want something in between? Opt for a malty amber beer, like Abita Amber (\$8/6-pack), an easy drinker that goes well with just about anything on the menu.

Prefer something on the fruity side? Head to [eatingwell.com/webextra](http://eatingwell.com/webextra) for a collection of fiesta-worthy drinks.



### Grilled Pineapple Salsa with Cucumber

*Salsa de Piña Asada con Pepino y Habanero*

**ACTIVE:** 35 MIN **TOTAL:** 45 MIN  
**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Hold at room temperature for up to 2 hours or refrigerate for up to 1 day. Habanero chile gives this caramelized pineapple salsa a fiery, perfumed flavor. If you're looking to tame it a little, try fresh jalapeños instead. A good substitute for habanero is a Scotch bonnet pepper, which is similarly fragrant and spicy.

- ½ large fresh pineapple, peeled, or 1 prepeeled pineapple, cut into ½-inch-thick rounds
- 1 cup peeled, seeded and diced cucumber (½-inch)
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro, loosely packed
- ½ cup fresh lime juice, or more to taste
- ½ habanero chile (including seeds), minced, or more to taste
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

1. Preheat grill to medium.
  2. Oil the grill rack (see Tip, page 57). Grill pineapple slices, turning once, until slightly charred on both sides, 12 to 15 minutes total. Let cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes.
  3. Cut the pineapple into ½-inch dice, discarding the core if necessary. Combine in a large bowl with cucumber, onion, cilantro, lime juice, chile and salt. Serve at room temperature.
- MAKES:** 3 CUPS (½-CUP SERVING)  
Calories 16, Fat 0g (sat 0g), Cholesterol 0mg, Carbs 4g, Total sugars 2g (added 0g), Protein 0g, Fiber 1g, Sodium 48mg, Potassium 60mg.

### Honeydew Melon Agua Fresca

*Agua de Melon Verde*

**ACTIVE:** 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 1 HR 20 MIN

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

In Mexico City, where Santibañez is from, people like their agua frescas shockingly sweet. We've knocked back the sugar quite a bit. This refreshing drink is often a way that Mexicans use up their leftover fruit. Feel free to use this technique with whatever you have in your fridge, especially other melons and tropical fruits like pineapple and mango.

- 3 cups 1-inch honeydew chunks (from 1 large ripe melon, peeled)
- 4 cups water, divided
- ½ cup fresh lime juice, or more to taste
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- Ice for serving
- Lime slices for garnish

Working in batches if necessary, puree melon, 2 cups water, lime juice and sugar in a blender until smooth and the sugar has fully dissolved, about 45 seconds. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a pitcher. Add the remaining 2 cups water, stir well, and adjust the taste with more lime juice, if desired. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 1 day. To serve, stir well and pour into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with lime slices, if desired.

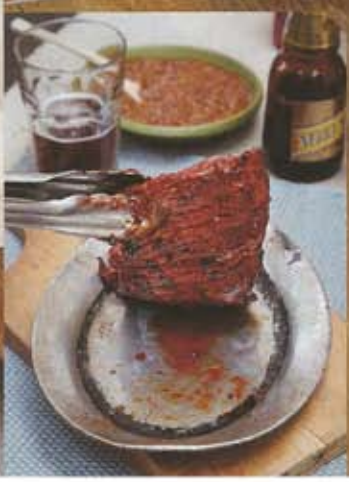
**SERVES 8;** ABOUT ½ CUP EACH  
Calories 50, Fat 0g (sat 0g), Cholesterol 0mg, Carbs 15g, Total sugars 12g (added 6g), Protein 0g, Fiber 1g, Sodium 15mg, Potassium 158mg.





**PREP AHEAD STEAK**

Skirt steak is best when it has time to soak up the flavors of any seasonings. Make this roasted chile marinade up to 5 days ahead and rub it on the steak the day before the party. All that's left to do: grill and slice.



**Chile-Marinated Skirt Steak**

*Carne Asada en Adobo de Guajillo*  
**ACTIVE:** 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 8 HRS (INCLUDING 2 HRS MARINATING TIME)

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate the marinade (Step 1) for up to 5 days; marinate the steak (Step 2) for up to 3 days. Dried chiles like guajillos, the kind that give this steak its character, are available in the produce section of many markets. The key to unlocking their flavor (not just their heat) is simple: toast them in a heavy, dry skillet before soaking them and using in all sorts of seasonings and sauces.

- 4 large dried guajillo, Hatch or ancho chiles
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 medium clove garlic, peeled
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 pounds skirt steak or flank steak, halved crosswise

**1.** Remove stems, seeds and membranes from chiles. Heat a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add chiles and toast, using tongs to turn and press down on them frequently, until very fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and add enough cold water to cover. Place a plate on top to keep them submerged and soak until very soft, about 30 minutes. Drain. Transfer the chiles to a blender and add 1/2 cup fresh water, garlic, 1/2 teaspoon salt, vinegar, sugar and cumin. Blend until very smooth, gradually adding a little more water, if necessary, to make a smooth sauce.

**2.** Place steak in a large shallow glass dish and season with the remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Add the marinade and turn to coat well. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours and up to 3 days.

**3.** To grill: Preheat grill to medium-high.  
**4.** Lightly oil the grill rack (see Tip, below). Grill the steak, turning once, 6 to 7 minutes total for medium-rare skirt steak or 9 to 12 minutes for medium-rare flank steak. Transfer to a clean cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes before thinly slicing.

**SERVES 4 (3 OZ. STEAK EACH)**  
 Calories 211, Fat 10g (sat 4g), Cholesterol 34mg, Carbs 5g, Total sugars 0g (added 0g), Protein 25g, Fiber 2g, Sodium 290mg, Potassium 625mg

**Oiling a grill rack** before you grill helps ensure that the food won't stick. Oil a folded paper towel, hold it with tongs and rub it over the preheated rack. (Do not use cooking spray on a hot grill.)



**PREP AHEAD PEPPERS**

Do a little pre-party multi-tasking: while the black beans are simmering (page 58), grill and peel the poblanos for this taco topping.

**Roasted Poblano Chiles with Onion**

*Rajas*  
**ACTIVE:** 50 MIN **TOTAL:** 50 MIN

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days; bring to room temperature or reheat before serving.

In Roberto Santibañez's native Mexico, poblano chiles tend to be a little hotter than in the States, where the heat can vary. When making this dish, if the spice doesn't rise to his standards he adds a little minced jalapeño or even a blast of ground black pepper when cooking the onions. Serve as a side or a taco topper.

- 12 medium fresh poblano chiles (about 2 pounds)
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1 large white onion, thinly sliced
- 3 medium garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- Juice of 1 lime

**1.** Preheat grill to high.  
**2.** Grill poblanos, turning occasionally, until blistered all over and slightly charred in spots, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl, cover with plastic wrap and set aside for about 20 minutes to loosen the skins.  
**3.** Peel the peppers with your fingers. (It's OK if a little skin is left behind. For the best flavor, don't rinse the peppers.) Cut them open lengthwise, remove the seeds, stem and white membrane, then thinly slice.  
**4.** Heat oil in a large skillet over high heat until it shimmers. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted and beginning to brown at the edges, 8 to 12 minutes. Reduce heat to medium, add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the poblano strips and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until hot, about 5 minutes more. Stir in Worcestershire and remove from heat. Drizzle lime juice over the top. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**MAKES:** ABOUT 3 CUPS (1/2-CUP SERVING)  
 Calories 81, Fat 5g (sat 0g), Cholesterol 0mg, Carbs 9g, Total sugars 5g (added 0g), Protein 2g, Fiber 1g, Sodium 80mg, Potassium 305mg



## PREP AHEAD BEANS

A pot of black beans takes 1 to 2 hours to become tender, depending on how fresh your beans are. Make them up to 3 days ahead and then slowly reheat on the stovetop (thinning with a little broth or water as needed) about an hour before serving.

### Mexican Black Beans

*Frijoles Negros con Hoja de Aguacate*

ACTIVE: 40 MIN TOTAL: 2½ HRS

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days; reheat just before serving.

*Santibañez says the avocado leaves in these black beans add a flavor, reminiscent of anise, that is truly authentic Mexican. If you don't have a Latin market in your area you'll likely have to go online to get avocado leaves—but they're worth it. But even if you leave them out, you'll still have an awesome pot of black beans.*

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|--|---|
| 1 pound dried black beans, picked over and rinsed            | 2 teaspoons kosher salt                 |
| 2 large cloves garlic, peeled                                | ½ cup canola oil                        |
| 11 cups water or enough to cover the beans by about 2 inches | 1 small white onion, thinly sliced      |
|  | 2 large dried avocado leaves (optional) |

**1.** Combine beans, garlic and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally and adding more hot water if necessary to keep the beans just covered, until the beans are tender and creamy, 1 to 2 hours, depending on how fresh the beans are. Stir in salt. Remove from heat and let stand while you cook the onion.

**2.** Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until deep golden, 10 to 12 minutes more. Coarsely crumble avocado leaves (if using) into the pan and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

**3.** Puree 1 cup of the beans, ½ cup of the cooking liquid and the onion mixture (oil and all) in a blender. (Use caution when pureeing hot liquids.) Stir the blended mixture back into the beans. Swish a little more water around in the blender and add it to the beans too. Return to a simmer over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until reheated, about 5 minutes.

**SERVES 12:** ABOUT ½ CUP EACH

Calories 204, Fat 10g (sat 1g), Cholesterol 0mg, Carbs 22g, Total sugars 0g (added 0g), Protein 8g, Fiber 8g, Sodium 194mg, Potassium 332mg.

PHOTO: ALANNE BROWN/ISTOCK; (RIGHT) PHOTOFEST/ISTOCK



## PREP AHEAD SHRIMP

You can make the marinade for these zesty shrimp a day or two ahead. Then about an hour before your guests arrive, pop the shrimp on the grill, then let them marinate as the party heats up.

### Garlic-Oregano Grilled Shrimp

*Camarones Asada en Escabeche*

ACTIVE: 30 MIN TOTAL: 50 MIN

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate the marinade (Step 1) for up to 2 days; marinate grilled shrimp (Step 5) for up to 1 hour.

**EQUIPMENT:** Eight 12-inch skewers

*Escabeche is a common preparation in Mexico, though it's probably of Spanish origin. Basically it's a way of quick pickling already-cooked food, not to preserve it but rather give it tons of bright flavor—and in this dish a bit of heat from the chiles as well.*

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| ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil plus 1 tablespoon, divided  |
| 1 medium white onion, thinly sliced  |
| 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican   |
| 6 whole black peppercorns  |
| 2 dried bay leaves   |
| 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided  |
| 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh serrano or jalapeño peppers (including seeds)                         |
| 3 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced  |
| ½ cup cider vinegar  |
| 32 raw shrimp (16-20 count; see "Count on Them," page 43); peeled and deveined, tails left on if desired |
| ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro  |

**1.** Heat ¼ cup oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add onion, oregano, peppercorns, bay leaves and ½ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion starts to wilt, 4 to 5 minutes. Add chiles and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until the garlic is fragrant but not colored, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in vinegar. Transfer to a shallow glass baking dish and let cool while you grill the shrimp.

**2.** Preheat grill to medium-high.

**3.** Pat shrimp dry. Toss in a bowl with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and ½ teaspoon salt. Thread the shrimp onto eight 12-inch skewers, leaving a little space between each one.

**4.** Grill the shrimp, turning once, until just cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes total.

**5.** Remove the shrimp from the skewers and add to the onion marinade, gently stirring to combine. Let marinate, stirring occasionally, for at least 20 minutes or up to 1 hour. Sprinkle with cilantro just before serving.

**SERVES 8:** 4 SHRIMP & 2 TBSP. SAUCE EACH  
Calories 184, Fat 9g (sat 1g), Cholesterol 179mg, Carbs 2g, Total sugars 1g (added 0g), Protein 25g, Fiber 0g, Sodium 274mg, Potassium 338mg.