

cachitos de chocolate con espelette

- 2 sticks butter
- 7oz good-quality dark chocolate
- 1 ¼ cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- up to 1 ½ tsp ground *piment d'espelette* -- adjust to your taste

Here's an easy recipe for espelette chocolate mini bites. (Yields 72 mini bites, and can be prepared a day ahead)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Melt the butter with the chocolate in a small saucepan, or in a bowl in the microwave. (If melting in the microwave, be sure to do it slowly, blending with a spoon between each pass). Transfer into a mixing bowl, add in the sugar, mix with a wooden spoon and let cool a little. Add the eggs one by one, mixing well with the spoon after each addition. Add a rounded tablespoon of flour and the espelette chili powder and mix well.

Pour the dough into petit four molds, and put into the oven to bake for ten to twelve minutes. The top should look set, but the inside should still be on the soft side. Let the mini bites cool down enough to unmold them, then turn them out on a rack to cool completely while you cook the other batches. Store in a plastic container, refrigerate, and take out about an hour prior to serving.

espelette - chocolate mousse

- 7 ozs of semi sweet chocolate
- 2 ozs of butter at room temperature
- 2 eggs, separated
- ½ cup of cold whipping cream
- 1 tsp of piment d'espelette, ground into a powder
- 2 tbsp of icing sugar

Whisk the cream until thick and peaks forms and reserve in refrigerator. Place the chocolate and butter in the top of a double boiler on low heat. Slowly melt the chocolate, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and let it cool down a little bit. Whisk the butter in the chocolate and the "Piment d'Espelette" powder. Mix in the egg yolks. Next, whisk the egg white with a pinch of salt and the sugar until firm and peaks form. Mix it delicately with the cooled down chocolate. Fold in the whipped cream, and pour in ramekins. Level the surface and put it in the fridge for 2 hours. Sprinkle with the icing sugar before serving. Serve with a cigarette russe or your favorite cookies. Serves 6

chicken basquaise with espelette piperade

½ cup olive oil
4 medium onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic
4 green bell peppers, seeds and stems removed, chopped
2 red bell peppers, seeds and stems removed, chopped
4 large tomatoes, peeled and chopped
3 tablespoons Espelette powder, or more to taste
Pinch of thyme
1 chicken, cut up
Salt and pepper to taste

Piperade is a colorful pepper sauce that is only spicy when made in the Basque region. This simple but delicious dish is often served at the Celebration of the Peppers. Serve it boiled potatoes and green beans.

Heat 1/4 cup olive oil in a large sauté pan and sauté the onions and garlic for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the bell peppers and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes and Espelette powder and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the thyme, salt, and pepper and transfer to a bowl.

Wipe out the pan and heat the remaining 1/4 cup of oil. Brown the chicken in the oil until golden, turning often. Pour the Piperade over the chicken, reduce the heat, cover and simmer until tender, about 30-40 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serves 4 to 6

axoa lamb with espelette pepper

1/4 cup olive oil
2 onions, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 green bell peppers, finely chopped
2 red bell peppers, finely chopped
1 ½ pounds lamb, cut into ½ inch cubes
2 tablespoons Espelette pepper powder
1 ½ cups beef bouillon
2 bay leaves
Salt and pepper to taste

Lamb axoa is a recipe typical of the Basque region, prepared in the same fashion as a stew. Serve with a crusty French bread and red wine. If you wish to make this more of a stew, add two potatoes, finely chopped, and double the bouillon.

In a large pot, heat the olive oil. Sauté the onions and garlic for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the bell peppers and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the lamb and sauté another 5 minutes. Add the Espelette powder, the bouillon, and bay leaves, reduce the heat, and simmer, covered, for 25 minutes. If using potatoes, simmer until the potatoes are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serves: 4 to 6