



# Be brave. Take risks. Nothing can substitute experience.

PAULO COELHO

When I was 11, the family handyman came to the house with a bag full of habanero peppers. I was often his student in the nuances of Mexican cuisine, and on this particular occasion he said, "Daniel, today you become a man." He prepared the peppers in a variety of salsas. I can still feel the mouth-numbing burn that ensued as I resisted crying out for iced milk. While I have since learned that the true tests of manhood are far greater than simply handling the scorch of hot chiles, that first dance with the habanero opened my mind to the pleasures that heat can add to the culinary experience.

This box is a celebration of that scorch—a collection of items that harness the power of the pepper and deliver a rich experience in the process. Ancho Reyes is the secret tool of the most cultish of cocktail establishments. Whether sipped over ice or used to add spice to a cocktail, this is badass in a glass. The sauces, snacks, and treats that have been selected for you have been chosen after extensive trials to find the most brilliant applications of flavorful burn.

The cherry on top of the curation we present to you is a jar of the finest dried ghost peppers. These float atop of the list of the world's hottest peppers, clocking in ten times hotter than the already hot-ashell habanero on the Scoville scale. Should you decide to crack this jar, **ONLY DO SO WITH CARE AND AT YOUR OWN RISK.** Use gloves and don't let the pepper touch your eyes or skin. Use very small amounts.

With that said, ladies and gentlemen, we invite you to walk with us into the flames.

DANIEL CURTIS

Founder, Robb Vices



**THIS BOX IS EN FUEGO!** This collection showcases the power of the pepper. For fanatics who would have their ice cream with a garnish of sliced chiles – we've taken your love of intense heat into consideration. If you aren't carrying hot sauce in your bag quite yet, consider this your initiation.

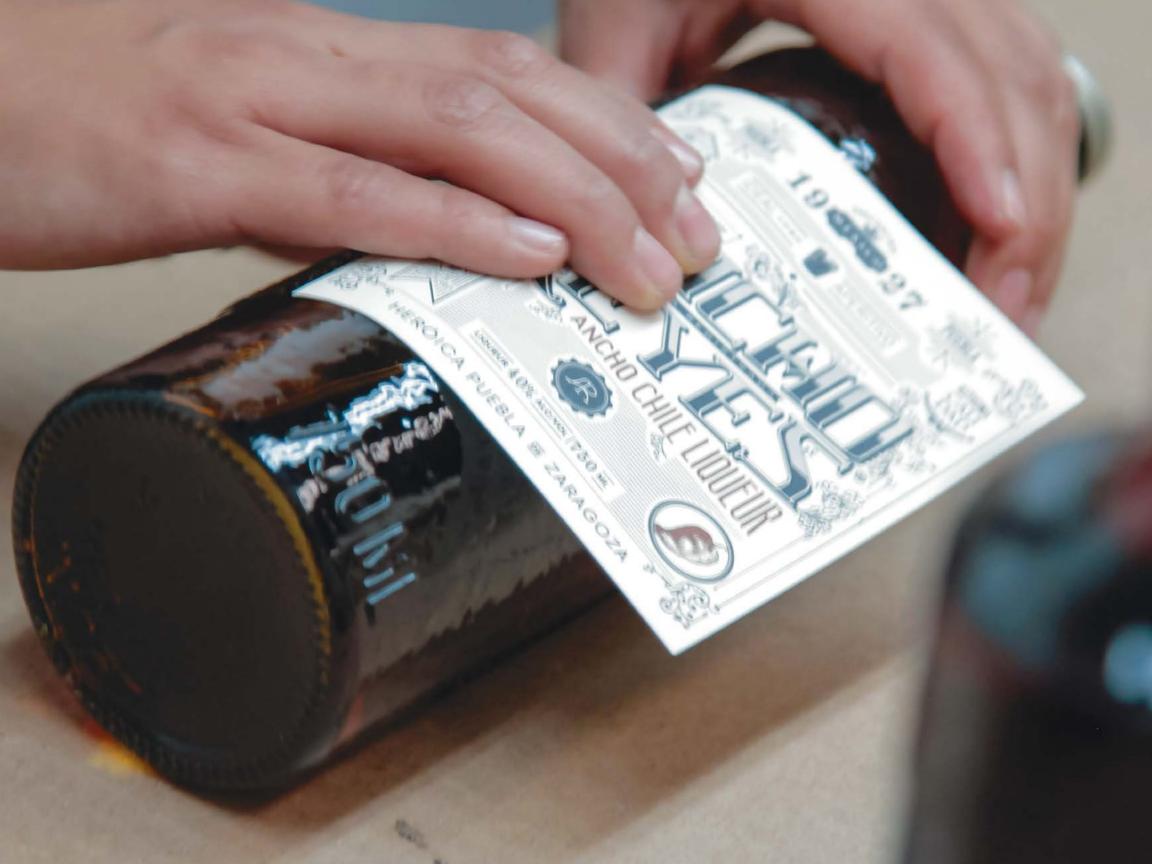
First, we give you two straight peppers housed in glass jars courtesy of Melissa's Produce. The Oaxacan variety is hand-harvested on hillsides where the sun scorches the earth. But beware: the ghost pepper is one of the hottest on the planet and must be handled with care. You'll need tongs or gloves (we're not joking).

We couldn't decide on just one bottle of heat, so we've brought you three. The Hott Jolokia hot sauce from NW Elixirs uses organic peppers from a farm in South Carolina, spices from the Caribbean, and the aforementioned Scoville-busting ghost pepper, to give your fish, pork and chicken a zesty burn. Hank Sauce's Cilanktro is on the mellower end. It derives its mild bite from cilantro and garlic, creating perfection in your guacamole or tartar sauce. Royal Rose's Three Chile Simple Syrup is made with dried ancho chiles, fresh poblanos, and jalapeños. If you like your cocktails with earthy smoke, you're going to wonder how you ever lived without this.

To tempt your tastebuds (or politely sear them), we set out to explore the love affair between chocolate and spice. The exceptional pairing sings when you bite into Little Bird Kitchen's Jalapeño Firebark. The base of Belgian dark chocolate contains ground candied jalapeños, finished with a sprinkle of sea salt. Righteous Felon's jerky has awesome hints of hickory, plus natural habanero seasoning on the pure, salty, proteingoodness of Black Angus beef. There's also a bag of Sriracha and Cheddar Cheesy Puffs from Fuller Foods in here, made from non-GMO, 100% real cheese and corn. Warning: once you open them, you'll eat the whole bag.

Lastly, some liquor curated to spark a creative flame for drink design. Reyka Vodka, Tullamore D.E.W. Irish Whiskey and Flor de Caña rum all love mingling with spicy ingredients – particularly Ancho Reyes. It's a relatively new liqueur, based on a 1927 recipe, with a viscous quality, mild heat, and tones of smoky ancho chiles, sweet almonds, and apples.

You've got a lot of unpacking to do, so we will let you get to it. Here's to keeping life *en fuego*!



# Ancho Reyes

From the packaging to the liquid within, Ancho Reyes caught our attention and has held it hard and fast. This stuff is something we aren't sure how we ever lived without on our home bars, and we never plan to again.

"The recipe for Ancho Reyes Chile Liqueur dates back to 1927," says Co-founder Moises Guindi, who started the company with his business partner Daniel Schneeweiss only a few years ago. The launch was explosive. Bartenders everywhere began using Ancho Reyes to kick up tropical classics like Palomas, daquiris and margaritas and enliven their signature drinks, as well.

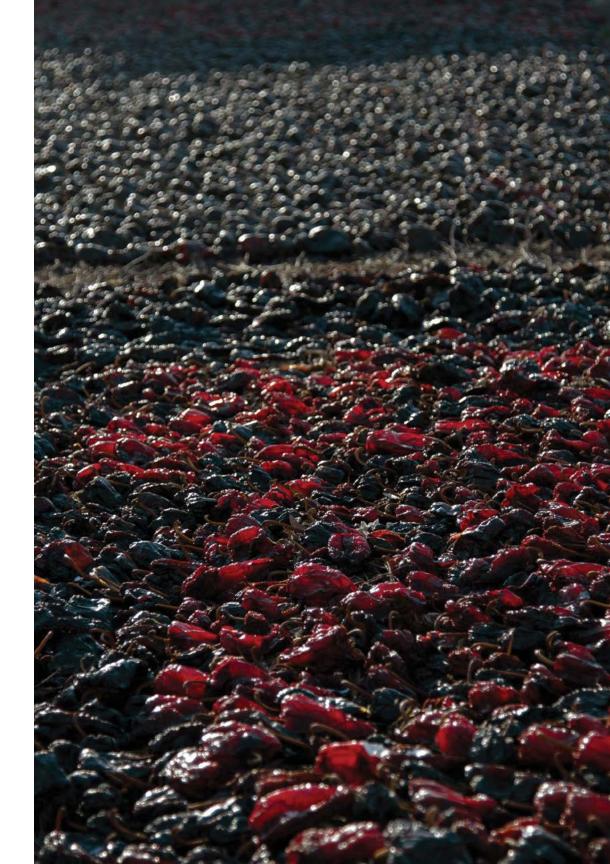
"Born from the sacred earth of Puebla in Mexico's roaring '20s, the soul of Ancho Reyes is reflection of a post-revolutionary era that celebrated the emergence of a new, personal independencia," Guindi says. "At the center of this *independencia* were unique *menjurjes* – homemade concoctions created with local ingredients and spirits. One particularly popular menjurje featured ripe sun-dried chiles, hand-sliced and macerated in natural sugar cane spirits. And the finest of these elixirs



was created by the Reyes family, using Puebla's signature crop: the beloved ancho chile. We recreated this amazing recipe and wanted to share that one-of-a-kind, handmade Mexican spirit with the modern generation of cocktail enthusiasts."

Make sure to give the brand a further look. They've got something brand new for 2017 – Ancho Reyes Verde, which utilizes the poblano chile. Fun fact: An ancho is a poblano chile once it's dried.

"After much excitement, we launched Ancho Reyes Verde. Like Original, Verde brings the imaginative spirit of Mexico to life, and to the glass, using the beloved poblano chile, while offering drastically different flavor experiences," Schneeweiss says. "While both are naturally spicy, Original is characterized as warm, rich and sweet, whereas Verde is fresh, bright and herbal." Initially available on a limited-basis in New York, Ancho Verde will be rolling out on a permanent basis in additional U.S. markets throughout the year.



"One particularly popular menjurje\* featured ripe sundried chiles, hand-sliced and macerated in natural sugar cane spirits. And the finest of these elixirs was created by the Reyes family, using Puebla's signature crop: the beloved ancho chile."

MOISES GUINDI CO-FOUNDER, ANCHO REYES \*Menjurjes were homemade concoctions created with ingredients and spirits born from the sacred earth of Puebla in Mexico's roaring '20s, reflecting the people's newfound independencia personal.

With immediately apparent and expected notes of smoke, char and deep earthy pepper from the ancho chile, you also get a sugary sweetness of light almonds, apples and a bit of herb on the finish. The remarkable versatility of this liqueur is that it works in a shaker with citrus but also in stirred, stiff drinks like Manhattans.

"Ancho Reyes is truly a delightful addition to an array of cocktails and partners well with a range of spirits," says Schneeweiss. "To highlight this, we have partnered with Reyka Vodka, Flor de Caña Rum and Tullamore D.E.W. Irish Whiskey to provide unique cocktail recipes that bring out the versatility of this original spicy liqueur."

The following recipes will help you make use of your Ancho Reyes and your three minis this month.



You can certainly sip Ancho Reyes Chile Liqueur neat or over ice, but at Robb Vices, we are all about playfulness and creativity. Thus, we sought out three fine spirits, destined to take you to some cool places in cocktail creation. We'd like to introduce you to your minis...





**REYKA VODKA** is a small-batch spirit that hails from Iceland, made with glacial water that runs through a lava field. The spirit is very clean, very crisp and makes an excellent building block to showcase spice. When making a cocktail with this vodka and Ancho Reyes, you'll definitely still pick up those subtle apple and almond notes in the liqueur that a darker spirit might mask.

FLOR DE CAÑA RUM interestingly enough also has volcanic origins. Distilled and aged at the base of the San Cristobal volcano, the most active in Nicaragua, this incredibly smooth, tropical, rich rum gets its complexity from both the hot, volcanic climate influencing the barrel aging process and the use of volcanic water. We don't need to tell you that rum and spice go hand-in-hand, but we love this rum for the way it plays specifically with the heat of Ancho Reyes.

TULLAMORE D.E.W. IRISH WHISKEY is the third mini bottle we've selected. Unlike vodka and rum, whiskey isn't something we always immediately think of when someone says "spicy cocktail." This Irish whiskey is triple blended, triple distilled, and triple aged in a combination of ex-bourbon and sherry casks. The resulting blend has light notes of vanilla and biscuits with great fruit on the palate. It's the citrus and beautiful baking spices that make it perfect as the base spirit or a modifier for a fiery libation.





# Melissa's Produce

"When we started Melissa's in 1984, we had a simple mission," say owners Sharon and Joe Hernandez. "It was give the customers what they want and keep them happy. Those customers included European chefs and savvy cooks who wanted to work with items that just weren't readily available, like baby vegetables, tropical fruits and most chiles. Since that beginning, we've not only kept pace with America's growing love of fruits and vegetables, we've helped build it. Our mission has remained remarkably steady. As consumers' demand for fresh, tasty fruits and vegetables has increased, so too has our team's passion to create more access to fresh produce."

One type of produce in particular appealed to the culinary masterminds behind Melissa's Produce. The world's chiles were an exotic point of pride for those masterminds and they've been seeking out the common and the unusual to present to chefs. We at Robb Vices knew that no box deemed *En Fuego* would be complete without a sampling of their dried chiles.

The Oaxaca pepper is rich and mellow, with beautiful depth in flavor and in history. They are grown in Mexico's Southernmost state, and along sunlit hillsides, farmers pass down



skills of planting and harvest to generation after generation. Very few peppers ever get exported, so they're a rare find in the U.S.

The second jar is the ghost pepper, which is one of the hottest peppers in the world. Dear members, please handle these with care.

"Ghost peppers are possibly the most famous of what we call the 'super hots,' which includes pretty much anything hotter than an orange habanero," says Melissa's Corporate Chef Ida Rodriguez. "Always wear gloves when handling hot chiles like the ghost pepper, and be sure to wash your hands thoroughly when you're done."







# WARNING: GHOST PEPPERS ARE EXTREMELY HOT. HANDLE WITH CARE.



"Dried chiles, like fresh, range in heat from mild to wild but perhaps are more practical because they can be stored longer than fresh. The simplest way to use a dried chile is to treat it like a bay leaf. Drop it in a pot of soup, beans, chile, etc., and allow it to flavor your dish without actually eating the pepper itself."

SHARON HERNANDEZ
CO-FOUNDER. MELISSA'S PRODUCE





# Ghostly Veggie Soup with Kale

#### **MAKES 6 SERVINGS**

## **INGREDIENTS**

2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil

2 tablespoons Unsalted Butter

1/4 Melissa's Dried Ghost pepper-no seeds or stems

**1** Sweet Onion - peeled; diced small

3 Carrots - peeled; ends trimmed; cut into rounds

3 stalks Celery - chopped

To taste Kosher Salt and Freshly Ground Pepper

1 (14 ½ oz.) can Diced Tomatoes

**1 tablespoon** Tomato Paste

1/4 cup Sherry

5 (14 ½ oz.) cans Chicken Broth or Stock

**1 bunch** Fresh Kale - stems removed; chopped

#### **METHOD**

In a large pot, heat the oil and melt the butter over high heat. Finely mince ¼ of the ghost pepper and sauté, while stirring, for 1 minute. Add the onion, carrots and celery and season with the salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the veggies begin to soften and the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Next, add the tomatoes, tomato paste and the sherry and cook for 3 minutes stirring often. Next add the chicken broth and kale, bring to a boil and then simmer for 20 minutes. Adjust seasonings if necessary and serve.



# Oaxaca Chile Rubbed Bone-In Rib Eye Steaks

## **MAKES 2 SERVINGS**

#### **INGREDIENTS**

2 tablespoons Melissa's Dried Oaxaca Chiles - stems and seeds

removed; finely ground

2 Melissa's Vanilla Beans

**1 tablespoon** Onion Powder

1 tablespoon Dried Italian Seasoning

**1 tablespoon** Kosher Salt

1 tablespoon1 tablespoonSmoked Paprika

**1 tablespoon** Brown Sugar

1 tablespoon Freshly Ground Pepper

4 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil - divided use

4 tablespoons Unsalted Butter - divided use

**2** Bone-In Rib Eye Steaks

1/4 cup Beef Broth or Stock

½ cup Red Wine

3 tablespoons Cold Water

1 tablespoon Corn Starch

#### **METHOD**

Split the vanilla beans in half lengthwise and scrape the seeds into a mixing bowl. Add remaining ingredients for rub to the bowl and mix well

to combine. Rub the steaks generously with the mixture and set aside for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a large cast iron frying pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and melt 2 tablespoons of the butter over high heat. Add the steaks and cook for 2 minutes. Flip the steaks and cook for 1 minute longer. Add the beef broth and place the steaks in the oven. Cook until you reach an internal temperature of 130°F for medium rare. Remove from the oven and place the steaks on a plate tented with foil.

Place the frying pan with the steak drippings on the stove over high heat. Bring to a simmer and add the red wine. Return to a simmer. Mix together the cold water and corn starch and whisk into the pan. Simmer for about 2 minutes or until thickened, stirring constantly. Serve warm with steak.

# How to Toast & Grind Dried Chile Peppers

#### TAKEN FROM MELISSA'S "THE GREAT PEPPER COOKBOOK"

#### **METHOD**

When handling chiles, wear disposable gloves and do not touch skin or eyes.

Carefully open package and wipe chiles with a damp paper towel. Discard paper towel.

With gloves on, remove stems and seeds by breaking open chiles with hands or knife.

Shake out seeds.

Tear roasted dried peppers into small pieces and place in a spice or coffee grinder.

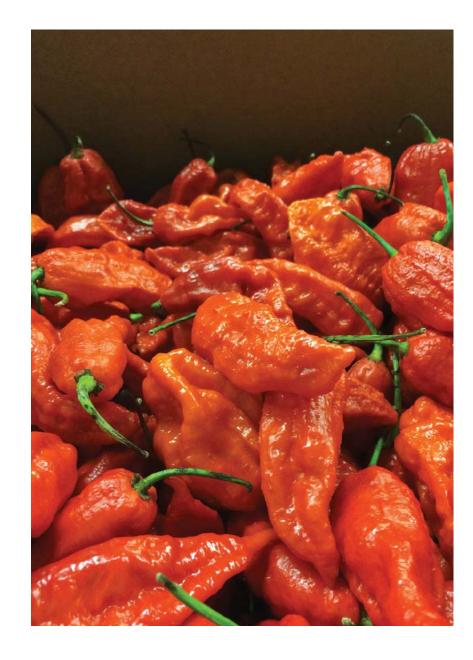
Grind until desired consistency.

Store any unused ground chile in a cool, dry place up to 4 months.

Remove gloves and thoroughly wash all surfaces and tools.







"I was raised on a small farm in Northern California where my father grew a variety of hot peppers. Since we cooked mostly with ingredients we foraged, hunted, or grew, we ate a lot of heat. While my career as a chef expanded I saw a need for a hot sauce that was more than just hot. It needed flavor too, just like my dad's cooking."

ANDREW H. GARRETT EXECUTIVE CHEF & OWNER. NW ELIXIRS



"I fell in love with spicy foods at a very early age," offers Andrew H. Garrett, executive chef and owner of NW Elixirs, a company making craft hot sauces focused around a passion not only for heat, but for the west coast's bountiful harvests.

One of the hotter items in your box this month is NW Elixirs No. 5 Hott Jolokia. It's made from ghost peppers grown down in South Carolina at the Puckerbutt Pepper Company (yeah, we love that name too), and it's crafted with a nod to the jerk-style of sauces found commonly in the Caribbean.

"The idea was born after tasting Bull Run Distillery's Pacific Rum," continues Garrett. "We saw the perfect opportunity to get back to the roots of hot sauce by fermenting the peppers in the finished rum barrels for 45 days. Since both rum and ghost peppers have origins in the Caribbean, we began the process of creating a perfectly balanced hot sauce that complements any dish."

Chef Garrett uses pineapple, agave, rum, smoked ghost peppers, fermented ghost peppers, red wine vinegar, and a blend of clove, allspice, and coriander. Splash it on chicken, fish, pork or chile and when you've got a minute, head to their web site. They make four other flavors that are equally fantastic.





# Hank Sauce

Once upon a time, there were three best friends named Hank, Matt, and Josh. Like a lot of guys in their college days, this crew got up to more than one night of shenanigans, yet they also held a passion for both business and hot sauce. Hank in particular, who began blending fiery creations in his own kitchen.

They started selling Hank Sauce at a local taco shop in Florida. Bottles began disappearing and the rest is history. Now in New Jersey, the guys are still hand-making all their sauces, shaking up a market that's saturated and tough to own a spotlight in. They are staying ahead of the tide with delicious creations like their Cilanktro Sauce. It's a mild hot sauce, made with fresh garlic and cilantro, and it has a powerful, full body with an easy-going style of heat. "The Cilanktro blend is my personal favorite," says Creative Director of the trio, Matt Pittaluga.

The company has four core flavors but Hank is always busy inventing, and we would not be surprised to see a sixth or seventh to emerge in the next few years.

"Hank got the idea one day and immediately went to his garden, grabbed a bunch of cilantro and got to work. At the end of the day, we were blown away by the unique flavor profile, and I was pouring it on everything. I've come to find that it really shines on seafood and Mexican/Southwest dishes. It's honestly tough to eat shrimp or fish tacos without it."

MATT PITTALUGA
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, HANK SAUCE







"Our 5th flavor is a Honey Habanero, which will most most likely be the next on the line," he says. "It's a bit hotter than the others with a nice sweetness from the locally sourced honey we use. We also work with some local farmers to create seasonal sauces in the fall with their extra harvest. We're taking it slow and focusing on one thing at a time, but rest assured there is always something new on the horizon at Hank Sauce."







# Royal Rose

As we roll out of winter and into spring, it isn't only our food we want to kick up a notch but our cocktails, too. This month, we are giving you ample options to spice-kiss your spirits.

First up, you've got Royal Rose Three Chiles Syrup. It was a Good Food Award Winner in 2015, thanks to a proprietary recipe of fresh poblanos and jalapeños combined with the heat and smoke of dried ancho chiles. The flavor is layered and subtle with beautiful, lightly sweet heat.

Every syrup that Royal Rose makes utilizes organic cane sugar, organic, fair-trade spices and a small-batch, hand-made process. They've been crafting elite cocktail syrups since 2010.



"Not only is it great for cocktails, it can be used in a variety of culinary ways. Mix it with a little apple cider vinegar and you have an amazing, eye-opening vinaigrette for salads and vegetables."

## **FORREST BUTLER**

CO-FOUNDER, ROYAL ROSE

(Forrest highly recommends drizzling it over roasted brussel sprouts, or using it as a glaze for pork, salmon or beef)





# Little Bird Kitchen

Sugar and spice make everything nice — especially in a single bite. Little Bird Kitchen is the home-grown company by husband-and-wife team Corey and Sara Meyer out of Long Island, New York. What started as a few quirky experiments with confections and spice has turned into a full-fledged, thriving business for the duo. They've taken home five Chile Pepper Awards from Chile Pepper Magazine, five Scovie Awards, and a silver Fiery Food Award from the National Fiery Foods & Barbecue Show.

Fire Bark is a base of rich and bitter Belgian dark chocolate blended with pulverized, candied jalapeños and dusted in a topping of sea salt crystals. The effect is a great lingering burn against the gorgeous, slow melt of intense flavor. Sara and Corey have a whole line-up of other fun options to try, like White Chocolate Fire Bites. If you really fall for Fire Bark, might we also suggest you buy their straight Fire Powder. It's the raw super-fine, super-spicy candied jalapeño dust they use in their chocolates. It's an endless amount of fun to play with when baking or cooking.







# Righteous Felon

Rip the top open, yank the ziplock apart and select a strip of Habanero Escobar jerky. Place it on a plate and wait five seconds. The scent of dried beef, coarse salt and crushed habanero will waft past your face within seconds.

To pack maximum flavor into each piece, Righteous Felon dry ages their beef, sourced from Roseda Black Angus Farm, for a full 21-days before seasoning. It's tough, but soft. It pulls apart into fibrous strands after just a moment of resistance, and as you chew, flavors deepen and build, meld and morph. Like all jerky, this one is loaded with protein and easy to pack for road trips, hikes, campouts or just days stuck in traffic. What sets it apart is the quality of the beef combined with viciously tasty ground habanero spice.

It's the best jerky we've ever had.

They also make an array of other options (each amusingly named after Colombia's historic drug cartels and revolutionary guerilla fighters), and for the true jerky fanatic, they provide several subscription service options, too.







# **Fuller Foods**

Here's a million dollar question. What exactly is in a Cheeto? It's a yummy thing, don't get us wrong, but the ingredient list is something close to toxic waste.

The owners of Fuller Foods out of Portland, Oregon have – like a lot of us – a formidable craving for the cheese puffs we ate as kids, coupled with an equally strong distaste for mass-produced, processed foods. They got to work sourcing real cheddar cheese from the Pacific Northwest, and non-GMO corn from Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods.

The result is without a doubt the world's best cheesy puff. Since this box is *En Fuego*, we selected the Sriracha and Cheddar flavor.

To make these, they use corn grits that are puffed, similarly to popcorn. The cheese is made from antibiotic-free dairy and there's an all-natural sriracha pepper seasoning on the finished, baked puff.

Warning: make sure to lick the dust off your fingers before touching your faces!









#### THOUGHTS ON TASTE & HEAT

# Chef Jet Tila

Growing up in Los Angeles, Chef Jet Tila was the kid in the kitchen while the rest were out playing. "I started cooking as soon as I could stand, learning from my grandmother," he says. "If she was making something, I was on a stool right next to her. And, being both Thai and Chinese, the first things we learned to eat were spicy."

Chef Jet is now a global name in the culinary world, refusing to pin down his passion. His love for the spice and the flavors of Asia has manifested in countless, cool ways. He opened the acclaimed Wazuzu at The Wynn in Las Vegas, and he's appeared on No Reservations with Anthony Bourdain and battled Morimoto on Iron Chef America. In 2013, he partnered with Compass Group to launch Modern Asian Kitchen – a fast-casual, Pan-Asian chain with locations around America.

The only thing he hasn't done, it seems, is chatted with Robb Vices. We're fixing that here and now. The Thoughts on Taste this month comes courtesy of Chef Jet – a man who's worked with seven of the world's spiciest peppers ... and lived to tell us all about it.

THOUGHTS ON TASTE ROBB VICES \* CHEF JET TILA

# What does intense spice bring to a great meal?

JT A lot of things. Savory is nice but when you add heat and even a little sour, it touches all your senses. The sweat effect can cool you down through evaporative cooling, and spice just creates another level in the dining experience.

# What are great spices if someone wants heat sans the lingering burn?

JT I think the realistic chiles – the ones that are easy to find in the average grocery – are a good way to start. Serranos and red Jalapeños are phenomenal for flavor. Then you can graduate up to something like a Thai chile, which is on the hotter end.

# How can someone train their palate? Is there a method?

JT You have to start slowly, but be consistent and eat small amounts, building up. Fresh chiles can be pretty devastating on your palate. Start with dried. Most are a little smoky and aren't as potent, depending on the chile. Layer some flavors like sweet that will counteract the pain of the heat.

# What's your version of the good life?

JT You guys are basically bringing it! For me, the good life is being able to travel and experience the world with my family.

THOUGHTS ON TASTE ROBB VICES × CHEF JET TILA

# Can you explain how to handle Oaxacan and ghost peppers?

If I've worked with the seven hottest peppers in the world. They are fine until pierced, but once you cut into them, you have to be careful of the oils. Wear gloves with the ghost peppers. Do not touch your eyes or scratch yourself when working with any pepper. This absolutely applies to dried chiles too. Goggles might even be advisable with the ghost pepper or Trinidad Scorpions if they are in powder form and could go airborne. As to cooking with them, I really believe in dilution. I like making sauces and use one pepper in a full pot of sauce. Or, make a bottle of a chile vinegar from one chile and then just use it sparingly. Remember, a little goes a long way.

# The worst has happened and we somehow swallowed a piece of ghost pepper. In this scenario, what should we do?

IT I think the best way is to get a bunch of ice cream into your mouth as fast as possible. You need things that are fatty to cut the heat, and sweet/cold does not hurt, either. Chiles are fat soluble. The only way to get them out of your tongue is milk products, but I think ice cream is best.



#### **DIRECTORY OF PRODUCTS**

## **Ancho Reyes Ancho Chile Liquor**

anchoreyes.com
 anc

Melissa's Produce Dried Oaxacan Chiles + Dried Ghost peppers

₡ melissas.com

NW Elixirs Hott Sauce Co. Hott Jolokia No. 5

# nwelixers.com/shop

Hank Sauce Cilanktro

# hanksauce.com

Royal Rose Three Chile Simple Syrup

Righteous Felon Jerky Cartel Habanero Escobar

righteousfelon.com

Little Bird Kitchen Fire Bark™

€ LittleBirdKitchen.com

**Fuller Foods Seriously Cheesy Puffs** 

# fullerfoods.com

Recipes, Books & More From Chef Jet Tila



Did you receive this edition as a gift?

Are you interested in becoming a member of Robb Vices?

Join us at

**ROBBVICES.COM** 

