

CUISINE & WINE

NEW MEXICAN CUISINE

New Mexican cuisine is a fusion of Spanish, Native American and Mexican ingredients and techniques. While familiar items like corn, beans and squash are often used, New Mexican cuisine has its own distinct preparation, ingredients and flavor. The defining ingredient is chile, a spicy chile pepper that is a staple in many New Mexican dishes. Chile comes in two varieties, red or green, depending on the stage of ripeness in which they were picked. Harvested in the late summer, the long, narrow peppers are served freshly roasted and peeled, or frozen for use throughout the year. Most commonly, green chile is made into a spicy sauce that's ladled over enchiladas, burritos and stuffed sopaipillas. Green chile is also found piled on top of cheeseburgers, stuffed into breakfast burritos, fried into rellenos (stuffed chiles) and made into a stew with chunks of potatoes and ground beef, but green chile is such a prominent part of the cuisine that it is also found in breads, on pizza, in pasta and much more. Red chiles, left on the plants to ripen to a deep garnet color, are strung into ristras to dry. These dried red chiles are rehydrated and pureed into a smooth sauce that adds spice to huevos rancheros, tamales, enchiladas and much more.



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New Mexico Cuisine Facts

- New Mexico state fruit: Chile (red and green)
- New Mexico state question: "Red or Green?" This refers to the kind of chile you would like with your meal. To get both, simply answer "Christmas."
- New Mexico state cookie: Biscochito, a crispy butter cookie flavored with anise and cinnamon.
- New Mexico grows more chile than any other state with more than 120,000 tons of chile produced annually.

WINERIES & BREWERIES

Nearly 150 years before the first wines were made in California, Spanish missionaries planted grapes in the Rio Grande Valley, making New Mexico the country's oldest wine-making region. Today, grape growers continue to take advantage of the high desert's warm, sunny days and cool, crisp nights, producing award-winning wines that you'll find offered on wine lists all over town. There are several wineries and vineyards in the Albuquerque area. The high desert climate and soil are ideal conditions for New Mexico's award-winning favorites including sparkling wine, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Johannisburg Riesling, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel. New Mexico is considered to be one of the oldest wine producing regions in the Americas. It is believed that the first grapevines planted in New Mexico were brought in 1629 to Senecu, a Piro Indian pueblo south of Albuquerque, by Fray Gracia de Zuniga, a Franciscan, and Antonio de Arteaga, a Capuchin monk, to prepare wine for communion. www.nmwine.com

Albuquerque is also home to an active and enthusiastic brewing community. Local brews are served all over town at restaurants, bars and brewpubs where you can eat while you watch the brewmasters at work. Some also offer tasting rooms where you can drink in the difference between ales, lagers, bocks and porters.

Additional details on wine and cuisine can be found at www.itsatrip.org/activities/wine-culinary.