

**In case you missed it**, a few weeks ago Massachusetts and Maine celebrated Patriots' Day. The day commemorates the first battles of the Revolutionary War at Lexington and Concord. Those of us who grew up in Massachusetts learned a lot about the State's early history. We spent most of the fall studying the pilgrims. In the spring, we turned to Mad King George's tyrannical rule and our forbearers' heroic quest for freedom.

**I share this only to point out that**, as far as I know, no one in Mexico celebrated Patriots' Day. Okay, I'm sure that a few of their athletes came north to run the Boston Marathon. However, I can't imagine that there were lots of parties with baked beans and brown bread down in Cancun or Puebla.

**And yet, in a few short days**, we'll be pulling out all the stops for a fun and festive Cinco de Mayo. Before you go making assumptions, no, Cinco de Mayo doesn't celebrate Mexican independence. It's the anniversary of the victorious Battle of Puebla against the French in 1862. Just as the Battles of Lexington and Concord were early victories in the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Puebla was a quick win in the Franco-Mexican War.

**So why in the world do we celebrate Cinco de Mayo?** First of all, it's a lot easier for Americans to pronounce than Día de la Independencia – Independence Day. And second, Día de la Independencia is in mid-September. Life is good in September. The weather is fine. The leaves are starting to change to red and gold. We're busy picking apples and showing off our new pencil boxes. We don't have time for a Mexican fiesta.

**Compare that to early May.** It's mud season. There is no red or gold and very little green. The trees are barely in bud. If it's not raining, it's cloudy or it will be soon. Sand is everywhere and I could (almost) kill for a mudroom. We could all use a little celebration right about now. Why not shake off the mud season doldrums with a ginormous Cinco de Mayo potluck. Your friends and neighbors will love you for it.

**Don't worry, you don't need to make a huge fuss.** The point is to get everyone together and have some fun. Here are a few pointers –

**Start with a little color.** Track down that sunshine yellow tablecloth and throw it on the table. Use the bright red napkins and add some candles or tea lights. A bowl of lemons and limes will make a perfect centerpiece.

**Skip the hokey sombreros and silly mustaches** from the party store but encourage everyone to think spring. It's probably too cold and muddy for flip-flops but take a few minutes to find that bright pink sweater. It's in the back of the closet somewhere.

**Encourage everyone to bring a favorite Mexican-inspired dish.** Hopefully, your foodie friends will go one better and create something deliciously authentic.

Feliz Cinco de Mayo y buen provecho!

*Susan*

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## Mexican Chocolate Pots de Crème

*Very creamy chocolate with just a touch of Mexican spice, I can't think of a better dessert for Cinco de Mayo. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

1 1/3 cups half & half  
1 1/3 cups heavy cream  
Grated zest of 1 orange  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon for to taste chipotle powder  
8 ounces dark chocolate, finely chopped  
8 ounces milk chocolate, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon espresso or coffee powder  
8 large egg yolks  
1 tablespoon Triple Sec  
Garnish: unsweetened whipped cream



Put the half & half and cream in a heavy saucepan, add the cinnamon, chipotle and orange zest. Stirring frequently, heat until steaming. Remove from the heat and let the orange zest and spices steep for about 30 minutes.

Put the chocolate and espresso powder in a large measuring cup or bowl. Set aside.

Reheat the cream to steaming.

Put the egg yolks in a bowl and whisk until smooth. Whisking constantly, slowly add the hot cream to the egg yolks.

Return the egg-cream mixture to the saucepan and set over low heat. Stirring constantly, cook until the custard reaches 170 degrees on a candy thermometer.

Remove from the heat, stir in the Triple Sec and immediately strain the hot custard through a fine mesh sieve into the measuring cup with the chocolate. Let the chocolate sit for a few minutes and then whisk until smooth and completely melted.

Pour the chocolate crème into 8 small dessert bowls or glasses. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight.

Serve the pots de crème with unsweetened whipped cream.