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INDUSTRY NEWS



American Culinary Federation
Chicago Chefs

ACF Chefs and Culinary Professionals of Chicagoland, founded in 1925, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for more information.

Early Inspirations

I began my culinary journey in the early '80s, when we were just getting a taste of California cuisine from legends like Alice Waters and Jeremiah Tower. On the east coast, in restaurants like Lutèce, La Côte Basque and La Grenouille French Nouvelle cuisine was all the rage. After learning in these famous kitchens, young chefs branched out to discover their own country by exploring flavor that were isolated in small pockets of the country.

One movement gravitated to the Southwest, with its colors, vibrancy and influences of Mexican cuisine. Chefs like Mark Miller-who worked at Chez Panisse-began promoting the flavors of this cross-border culture. I, like most, jumped on the bandwagon and started to explore the flavors. However, there was a problem with learning my craft in the Northeast. No one had chilis in the local grocery store. These were highly specialized ingredients and not as common as they are today. But we did have one thing to help us learn.

If you are a culinary student of the '80s, you'll know we had posters! There was a whole list of ingredient posters, from fresh and dried chilis to citrus and everything in between. These posters ended up everywhere: dorm rooms, kitchens, hallways, and I mean *everywhere*. I had to even give mine up on my transference from single cook to married chef. I did hang on to one citrus poster from Allen Susser of the famed Floridian Cuisine of South Florida from the early '90s; it was framed and given to me as a gift.

We had books to read and really good magazines back in the day before Food Network, as the internet was barely in its infancy. Years later, I am fortunate to have worked with great chefs on my staff and their families who reintroduced me to the beauty of their cuisine. I was never a fan of Chi-Chi's or those chain restaurants that sprang up as the popularity of chips and salsa spread across the heartland. Those cooks and chefs brought tamales and tripe-laden menudo for breakfast, a "stand at my station taco" made with an odd cut of meat we couldn't serve and the ever decadent bag of potato chips doused in hot sauce with a cold beer after work.

The term "mild" should be included in Mexican cuisine. Mild is for those who want something different but can see

Trib Food

Recipes, reviews and resources for everything food and dining in the Chicago area. [Check out](#) what's happening this week.



The Cicerone Certification Program certifies and educates beer professionals in order to elevate the beer experience for consumers. cicerone.org.



The hunt for unique craft beers is just as fun as the tasting. Here is [The List](#) of beers that we have tasted at our weekly craft beer tap room meeting.



CHEESE

beyond the aisles of snack food or frozen appetizers. Mexican cuisine is vibrant, complicated and diverse, from mole to ceviche. How did I relearn and revitalize my palate with these early inspirations?

We would go to markets, eat in carnicerías and shop. You have to challenge yourself to try something once and see how it goes. Take dried chilis, for example; in an average market today, you can find anything from Arbol to Pasilla and a whole bunch in between. They are sweet, fragrant, smoky, sublime and spicy. They are the backbone of the dishes you really want to eat on Taco Tuesday. Salsa in a jar will never be the same when you taste the difference of fire-roasted chilis, charred vegetables, fresh cilantro and limes.

It just takes some understanding, some trial and error, a commitment to throw out that yellow packet of seasoning, a couple of simple tools and your family to make a stay-at-home Taco Tuesday more than just a marketing campaign.

I nested and cleaned out my cabinets. I found a whole bunch of chilis and decided to dust off some of the old books buried by my latest collection of beer books that have made their way to the front of the bookshelf. What did I make? Take a look at Episode #2 of the Digital RubberBand Doorknob below, and try your hand at a few of the recipes that I am making available on my website.

Be safe, and buena comida!

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

THE VIRTUAL RUBBER BAND DOORKNOB

Episode 2: Dried Chilis





Not to be shy about it, but I have been able to work with some of the best Italian cheeses you can get, and they do make awesome pizza. If you haven't tried them, definitely look for [Galbani](#) next time.

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