



COMIDA CASERA INGREDIENT GUIDE

I know cooking can sometimes be daunting especially if it's a cuisine that is unfamiliar. So let me walk you through the essentials of the vegan Mexican pantry and all the ingredients you will need to make the recipes in this book, where to purchase them, and common substitutions. Happy cooking!

Achiote paste is a brick-red paste is made from ground-up dried annatto seeds. It is a very important ingredient in the cuisines of southeast Mexico, specifically Yucatán, where it is used to make soups, marinades, tamales, and even chorizo. The paste is known as recado rojo there, but it differs from the paste in other states because it is spiced with black pepper, oregano, and cloves. You can find it at your local Mexican and Central American market or [online](#).

Agar agar is a plant-based gelatin used to make jellies and puddings and to thicken sauces in vegan cooking. It comes in powdered and flake form. I use the powdered form. You can find it at Asian grocery stores or [online](#).

Amaranth (amaranto), also known as alegría (joy), is an herbaceous plant endemic to Mexico that has been cultivated since pre-Hispanic times. The small, cream-colored seeds are used to make breads and [atoles](#), and when puffed to make a candy also called alegría. The leaves are called [quintoniles](#) and are used to make soups, quesadillas, and stews. I usually puff my own amaranth seeds, but you can purchase them already puffed. You can find them at Mexican candy stores (dulcerías), where they usually sell them in bulk, or [online](#).



Anise seed is a small greenish-brown seed of the anise plant with a characteristic sweet, aromatic, and licorice-like flavor. It is used to flavor pan dulce, mole, and syrups for [buñuelos](#). You can find it at most grocery stores or [online](#).



Aquafaba is a fancy name for the liquid in the can of chickpeas. It is as simple as it sounds: Drain the chickpeas and reserve the liquid, which is what you will be using for the recipe. Aquafaba is used as a substitute for egg whites, as is it acts as a binder, but you can also whip it to create a foam that when added to baked goods gives them structure and leavening. Be sure to buy low-sodium or no-salt chickpeas when you are using aquafaba for dessert purposes.

Avocado leaf (hoja de aguacate) is an Army-green color and has a strong anise-like flavor. These leaves can be used fresh or dried to make stews, beans, moles, and soups from the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Veracruz. You can find them at Mexican markets or [online](#).



Avocado oil is extracted from the pulp of avocados. It is the oil I prefer when cooking because I like the mild flavor and the high smoke point. It is a little pricey, so if you are looking for a more budget-friendly oil I suggest canola oil.

Ayocote morado bean is the biggest variety of bean in Mexico. Although it has a thick, bright purple skin, the bean becomes extremely creamy when cooked, while maintaining its structure and bite, giving it a hearty texture that makes it a great meat substitute. The purple variety is used in soups and stews in the central states of Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, and Estado de México and in Mexico City. There is also a [black variety](#) that is used in Oaxaca in mole coloradito. These beans are difficult to find outside of Mexico, but you can purchase them [online](#).



Banana leaf is the large green leaf of the banana plant. In the central and southern Mexican states it is used to wrap tamales, and to bake meat or vegetables in an underground oven (pib). You can find them fresh at your local Mexican market or frozen in the freezer section of your grocery store.



Ceylon cinnamon, also known as true cinnamon, comes from the bark of the *Cinnamomum verum* tree, which grows in Sri Lanka. It is less potent than cassia cinnamon and has a thin papery texture that easily crumbles. This is particularly important, because some recipes call for blending the cinnamon stick with the sauce, and that's not possible with cassia cinnamon. You can find it at your local Mexican market or in the Mexican section of your grocery store.



Chamoy is a spicy and sweet sauce made from pickled dried apricots and dried chiles. It is most commonly used in desserts—drizzled on fruit, raspados, and even potato chips. You can find it at Mexican candy stores or the Mexican section of your grocery store or [online](#).

Chaya, also known as tree spinach, is a big leafy shrub native to the state of Yucatán and parts of Central America. The leaves are large, maple-shaped, and bright green and have a mild spinach like flavor. Chaya was

domesticated by the Mayans and is used to this day in the states of Yucatán, Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz to make soups, stews, tamales, and aguas frescas, and for medicinal purposes. It is hard to find outside of Mexico, but check your local Mexican market, or you can substitute spinach.



Chayote is a green, pear-shaped squash with white flesh, a thin skin, and a mild crisp flavor similar to a cross between cucumber and apple. It can be eaten raw or cooked and is used throughout Mexico to make soups and stews, or it is stuffed and baked. It is easily found in your local grocery store or Mexican market, you can substitute it with zucchini or Mexican squash.



Chepil (chipilín), a leguminous plant, is native to the southern states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Tabasco. Its leaves and shoots are used as [quelites \(wild greens\)](#) to make soups, tamales, and stews. The flavor is

reminiscent of a cross between spinach and purslane. It is difficult to find outside of Mexico, but you can substitute pea shoots, watercress, or purslane.



Chickpea flour, made by grinding dried chickpeas into a fine powder, is used as a thickener, binder, or flour substitute in gluten-free baking. I like to use it as a binder, but also because it adds an eggy flavor to dishes. It is often found in the gluten-free section of the grocery store or [online](#).

Chiles are an irreplaceable component of Mexican cuisine. They were cultivated along with corn, tomato, and beans by the Indigenous civilizations of Mexico approximately 8,000 years ago. In Mexico, chiles equal flavor, and what better way to express this than the popular saying, “¡Sin chile no sabe!” (Without chile there is no flavor), and that certainly holds true for many Mexicans. Chile not only adds heat to dishes, but each one has a characteristic flavor and aroma that defines certain dishes like [Chiles en Nogada](#).

I realize not everyone has the same tolerance for chile, so if you are looking to reduce or increase the spice in the recipes, here are a few things you can do. If you want to reduce the heat in the recipe, the easiest way to do it is to reduce the amount of chiles. If you are working with dry chiles you can omit the very spicy ones like [chile de árbol](#). If you want to keep the flavor of the chile but with less heat, you can remove all the seeds and

ribs from the chiles. If that is still too hot, soak the fresh chiles in cold water for 10 minutes, then rinse and use as directed.

To increase the heat with fresh chiles, the best way is to leave in the seeds and ribs and increase the amount of chiles in the recipe. When working with dried chiles, adding a couple of spicier chiles, such as chile de árbol or [chile piquín](#), increases the heat and doesn't affect the flavor too much.

I also recommend that if you are working with very spicy chiles or are not used to working with chiles, you wear gloves and wash your hands very well. Rubbing your eye after working with chiles is the worst!

Types of Chiles

Fresh Chiles	Dried Version
<p>Poblano chile: Large green chile used to stuff or cut into strips. It needs to be roasted and peeled before use. It has a mild to medium heat and a smoky flavor.</p>	<p>Ancho chile: Large chile with a brick-red color, mild heat, and a rich, almost plum-like flavor.</p> <p>Mulato chile: Large chile with an intense dark red color, mild heat, and a smoky, chocolaty flavor.</p>
<p>Jalapeño chile: Small to medium-size green or red chile, with medium to high heat, and a fresh bell pepper flavor.</p>	<p>Chipotle meco: Small to medium-size chile with a light brown color, medium-high heat, and a grassy flavor.</p> <p>Morita chile: Small to medium-size chile with a dark red color, medium heat, and a smoky, berry-like flavor.</p>
<p>Serrano chile: Small bright green pepper with medium-high heat and an intense bell pepper flavor.</p>	<p>Dried serrano: Small chile with a deep maroon color, medium-high heat, and a fruity mildly smoky flavor.</p>
<p>Chile de árbol: Small, elongated bright red chile with high heat, and a fruity taste with smoky undertones.</p>	<p>Dried chile de árbol: Small, elongated, bright red chile with high heat and a smoky, nutty flavor.</p>
<p>Mirasol chile: Medium-size, conical shape chile with a bright red color, mild heat, and a fresh fruity flavor.</p>	<p>Guajillo chile: Medium-size, elongated chile with a reddish-brown color, mild heat, and a sweet, fruity flavor.</p>
<p>Chilaca chile: Medium-size, elongated, dark green chile with mild heat and an earthy flavor.</p>	<p>Pasilla chile: Thin, elongated chile with a dark red, almost black color, mild to medium heat, and a smoky, fruity, and raisin-like flavor.</p>
<p>Piquín chile: Tiny oval shaped chile with very high heat</p>	<p>Dried chile piquín: Tiny bright red chile with very high heat and a nutty, earthy flavor.</p>
<p>Chile tuxta (tusta): Small chile that can be green, red, or orange in color, with medium to high heat and a smoky but</p>	<p>Dried chile tuxta: Small, elongated chile with a deep red color and medium to high heat, and a smoky but sweet flavor.</p>

<p>sweet flavor. This is a rare chile native to Oaxaca.</p>	<p>Can substitute with chipotle meco.</p>
<p>Chile güero (Hungarian wax pepper): Medium-size light yellow chile with mild to medium heat and sweet bell pepper flavor.</p>	<p>Dried chile güero: Medium-size, elongated chile with a deep red color, that can range from low to high heat, and a smoky but sweet flavor.</p>
<p>Habanero chile: Small orange or green chile, with extremely high heat and a fruity flavor. It is used extensively in Yucatecan cuisine.</p>	<p>Dried habanero chile: Small reddish chile, with extremely high heat and a fruity citrusy flavor.</p>
<p>Anaheim chile: Medium-long green pepper with mild heat and a sweet bell pepper flavor.</p>	<p>California chile: Medium-long, maroon red chile with mild heat and a sweet flavor. Can be used as a substitute for guajillo chile.</p>
<p>Chilhuacle Negro: Medium-size, bell pepper shaped chile with a dark brown color and medium heat, and a sweet and fruity flavor.</p>	<p>Chile chilhuacle negro: Small, pear-shaped chile with medium heat and a chocolaty, smoky, dried-fruit flavor. Native to Oaxaca, it is a famous ingredient in mole negro.</p>

Poblano Chile



Jalapeño Chile



Habanero Chile



Güero Chile



Serrano Chile



Anaheim Chile





Chipotles en adobo are dried chipotle chiles marinated in a paste of dried chiles, piloncillo, vinegar, cloves, pepper, garlic, salt, and marjoram. They are sold canned at Mexican markets or the Mexican section of your grocery store or [online](#).

00 (“double zero”) flour is a very finely ground Italian flour made from the endosperm of the wheat kernel. It is so fine it resembles cornstarch in texture. It is commonly used in Italy to make pizza dough and softer pasta

shapes like ravioli because it provides elasticity to the dough and results in delicate pasta. You can find it at specialty food stores or [online](#).

Dried corn husks are one of the many tamal wrappers available. They are sold in bags at Mexican markets or in the Mexican section of your local grocery store or [online](#). Sometimes they have dirt or dried corn silk on them, so it is very important to rinse them. Be sure to check for mold; if a corn husk has black spots, discard it.



Dried dent corn/native corn (maíz criollo) is dried field corn that has been cultivated and bred selectively by small groups of farmers in Mexico for generations. This corn is a reflection of its environment, so each variety has its own characteristics and identity. Outside of Mexico it is known as heirloom corn and can be purchased [online](#) to make masa for tortillas or tamales.



Epazote, an aromatic herb native to Mexico and Central America, has been used since pre-Hispanic times. It has 2- to 3-inch-long (5 to 7.5 cm) flat green leaves with serrated edges, a strong medicinal aroma, and a distinct flavor reminiscent of oregano, thyme, pine, and citrus. It is used to flavor stews, salsas, soups, and moles. It is well known for its gas relief properties, so it is most often used to cook beans. You can find epazote at Mexican markets or in dry form [online](#). You can substitute a combination of cilantro and oregano.



Fava beans (habas), also known as broad beans, are usually available in the spring and early summer. They are light green and oval shaped, with long green pods. Fresh pods are sold at farmers' markets, specialty food

stores, Mexican markets, or online. Dried beans are sold at Mexican markets or your local grocery store. They are very popular in Mexico City, where they are used to make tlacoyos, salads, and soups.



Fresh corn is quite different across countries, which will affect some recipes. American sweet corn, which is what is widely available in US grocery stores, is lower in starch and higher in sugar than Mexican corn. Mexican corn, sometimes known as field corn, has a higher starch content and is denser than American corn. Mexican corn takes longer to cook, so if you live in Mexico, you will need to adjust the cooking times according to the recipe notes.

Hibiscus (jamaica), a flowering plant native to Africa but cultivated in Mexico and Central America, is known for its large colorful flowers. The flower's calyxes are dried and used to make teas, aguas frescas, margaritas, ponche, and tacos. Hibiscus has an acidic, cranberry-like tart flavor with floral notes. You can find it at your local Mexican market or [online](#).



Huitlacoche, also known as cuitlacoche or corn smut, is a fungus that grows on young corn. It looks like a conglomeration of swollen grayish-black bulbs and has an earthy mushroom taste with a sour undertone. It is considered a delicacy in central Mexico, where it is used to make quesadillas, mole, and soups and to fill crepes. You can find it canned at Mexican markets or [online](#).



Ibes is a small white bean cultivated on the peninsula of Yucatán and used in soups, stews, and pipián. Ibe soup is often eaten during funerals because it is thought that the white of the beans helps the departed soul find its purity. They are hard to find outside of Yucatán, but you can substitute other small white beans such as [alubia blanca](#), [caballero](#), or [navy beans](#).

Jackfruit (yaca) is a very large, green, spiky tropical tree fruit native to Southeast Asia. When it is unripe its stringy meat-like flesh is used as a meat substitute. You can find it canned in brine or fresh at your local grocery store, Asian grocery store, or [canned online](#). I like to use the canned version, because cutting and prepping it when fresh is time consuming and messy.



Jalapeños en escabeche are jalapeño chiles pickled in a brine of vinegar, oil, oregano, thyme, bay leaf, garlic, and onion. They are sold canned at Mexican markets or the Mexican section of your grocery store or [online](#).



Jicama is a tuberous root vegetable with a thick, brown outer skin, and crisp flesh. Jicama is native to Mexico and has been eaten since pre-Hispanic times. It tastes like a cross between a pear and a potato—a little bit sweet, but hearty. It is mostly eaten raw in salads, with chile powder and lime, but it can also be cooked. It is usually available in the tropical fruit section of the grocery store.



Kala namak, also known as Himalayan black salt, is a sulfurous mineral salt mined in the areas surrounding the Himalayas. It is used in Indian cooking but is also popular for vegan recipes as it adds an eggy flavor to dishes such as tofu scramble. You can find at your local Indian grocery store or [online](#).

Kappa carrageenan powder is a food additive derived from red seaweed that is used as a thickener and emulsifier in vegan cooking. Food-grade carrageenan comes in powdered form and can be found [online](#) or at health food stores.

Masa is dough made from nixtamalized corn. Nixtamalization is the process of soaking dried field corn in an alkaline solution, made by mixing slaked lime and water, draining, rinsing, and then grinding it. This process improves the flavor, makes it easier to grind, and draws out essential nutrients. The dough that results is called masa, but in Mexico it is simply known as nixtamal. This masa is used to make tortillas, tamales, gorditas, and many other corn-based appetizers. You can purchase fresh masa at your local tortillería or Mexican market, or you can make it at home. If you can't find it, you can substitute masa harina.

Masa harina is nixtamalized corn flour, or in other words dehydrated masa. The corn goes through the same process as for fresh masa, but it is dried first, then ground. Alternatively, the fresh masa is made then dried, and ground into a fine powder. Masa harina is widely available at grocery stores and Mexican markets. If you are looking for high quality non-GMO masa harina I recommend [this one](#).

Mexican hot chocolate tablillas are chocolate disks made by drying and toasting cacao beans, then grinding them with sugar, spices, or nuts. Tablillas are mainly used to make hot chocolate by dissolving it in water or milk or to sweeten mole. You can find commercial varieties at Mexican markets, but I recommend you use artisanal brands without like [this one](#).



Mexican pepperleaf (hoja santa) is an aromatic herb native to Mexico, Central America, and South America with large (up to 9 inches/23 cm in diameter), thin, heart-shaped green leaves. It has a flavor reminiscent of anise, black pepper, and basil. Pepperleaf is used to make soups, tamales, stews, and moles. You can find it at Mexican markets or [dried online](#). You can substitute a combination of chopped fennel leaves and basil.



Mushrooms have been an integral part of the Indigenous diet in Mexico since before the Spanish conquest. They were used for daily meals, medicinal purposes, and celebrations and rituals for their hallucinogenic properties. In Náhuatl (the language of the Mexican and Toltec civilizations), mushrooms were called *nanácatl*, which means meat, and it is precisely because of that meaty texture that mushrooms make a great substitute in vegan cooking. Today, mushrooms still hold an important place in the local cuisine, and it is estimated that there are almost 200,000 different species in Mexico, of which 320 have been documented as being used for cooking. Mushrooms are my favorite meat substitute so I use several varieties of them in the

recipes that follow, some are easier to find than others, but you can substitute any mushroom with whatever is available to you

- **Amanita basii/bas' Caesar** are brown to reddish mushroom with yellow flesh and are native to the pine and oak forests of Estado de México and Oaxaca. Their common name is enbeyeupe or red mushroom. They are one of the most appreciated mushrooms in Oaxaca for their meaty flavor, aroma, and characteristic color and are eaten grilled, in soups, and in quesadillas. They are difficult to find outside of Mexico, but you can substitute [fresh](#) or [dried lobster mushrooms](#).
- **Cremini**, or [brown button mushrooms](#), are commonly found at US grocery stores. They are the more mature version of the white button mushrooms, which means they have a richer flavor. These are my go-to mushrooms because they are the most widely available.
- **Dried snow fungus**, also known as white fungus, is a dried white wood ear mushroom that grows on the bark of dead tree branches and is used in Asian cuisine and traditional Chinese medicine. When rehydrated it has a jelly-like texture similar to tripe. You can find it at Asian grocery stores or [online](#).



- **King oyster**, also known as [king trumpet mushrooms](#), are large mushrooms (2 inches (5 cm) in diameter and up to 8 inches (20 cm) long) with a brown cap and a white stalk. They are very versatile, as you can shred them to make shredded “meat” or cut them into rounds to make vegan scallops. You can find them at Asian grocery stores or specialty food markets.
- [Oyster mushrooms](#) are named after their oyster-shaped caps and short stems, and are available year-round at farmers’ markets or Asian grocery stores. They are a great shredded meat substitute because you can pull the caps into strands that crisp up when cooked.



- **Yellowfoot** are trumpet-shaped, yellow-brown mushrooms native to the pine and oak forests of Oaxaca and Chiapas. They are commonly known as patitas de pollo and have a deep, smoky, rich flavor. They start sprouting in the month of August but are more abundant in the month of September. They are traditionally used in soups, yellow mole, and empanadas. You can substitute fresh or **dry chanterelles**.

Nopal is the common name used to refer to several varieties of the *Opuntia* cactus. The cacti have flat, tender paddles that are covered in spines and release a slime when cut and cooked. The flavor is similar to a cross between okra and asparagus, with a citrusy undertone. You can find the paddles being sold whole with the spines, whole without the spines, or already cut with the spines removed at Mexican markets. I like to buy the paddles whole without the spines so I can cut them to the shape I prefer. If you can't find fresh nopales you can use **jarred nopales in brine**; just make sure to drain and rinse them before use.

Nopal de castilla/nopal grueso, is a very large cactus with paddles that can grow as big as 23 inches (58 cm) long and 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. They are native to Oaxaca and consumed primarily grilled or in soup. It is hard to find outside of Mexico, but you can substitute the regular nopales found at your local Mexican grocery store.



Nutritional yeast is a deactivated form of baker's yeast commonly used in vegan cooking to mimic the flavor of cheese. It has a nutty, savory flavor and is a rich source of vitamin B12. It is available in powdered and flake form. You can find it at health food stores, the gluten-free section of the grocery store, or [online](#).

Piloncillo, also known as panela, is an unrefined whole cane sugar, usually sold in cone form. It has a flavor reminiscent of molasses and is used to make pan dulce, desserts, and drinks. You can find it at Mexican markets, the Mexican section of the grocery store, [or online](#). You can substitute it with dark brown sugar. Piloncillo is very hard and takes a while to melt if added to a sauce whole, so I prefer to break it up into pieces. To do this I whack it with a hammer or a heavy skillet (please be careful when doing this!).



Pink pine nuts are native to north-central Mexico, specifically from the state of Hidalgo, from the *Pinus cembroides* tree. These rose-colored pine nuts have a sweet aromatic flavor and a firm texture, and are used to make candy, cakes, salads, desserts, and mole rosa. They are hard to find outside of Mexico, but they are available [online](#) or you can substitute regular pine nuts

Pipitza (pipicha) is a quelite (edible wild plant) with long, thin, blue-green leaves that are similar to dill. Pipitza has a strong flavor of dill, marjoram, cilantro, and mint and is mainly used in Oaxacan cuisine to make white rice and sopa de guías. It is hard to find outside of Mexico, but you can substitute a mixture of cilantro, marjoram, and mint.



Pepita menuda (chinchilla) is a small seed from the *Cucurbita moschata* (small native squash known as k'uum) used in Yucatecan cuisine. It is most often sold pre-ground at Mexican markets. You can substitute regular hulled [pumpkin seeds \(pepitas\)](#).



Porcini mushroom powder has the meaty, rich, pungent flavor of fresh porcini mushrooms. I use this powder when I'm trying to infuse a dish with a "porky" flavor or add umami to a dish. It is [available online](#), but if you can't find it, you can use any mushroom powder.

Pumpkin seeds (pepitas de calabaza) are the seeds of several varieties of pumpkin that are extracted, dried, and used to make candy, mole, soups, and stews. They are of vital importance to Mexican cuisine especially in the central and southern states of Yucatán, Veracruz, and Oaxaca. In the US you usually find them already hulled, at Mexican markets or your, labeled as raw pumpkin seeds. They are small and a dark Army green.



Quelites (edible wild plants) is a blanket term for edible wild plants eaten throughout Mexico. This includes but is not limited to quintoniles (amaranth), verdolagas (purslane), chaya (tree spinach), squash vines, radish

greens, huazontle (lamb's quarters), and the garbanzo plant. Currently over 500 different plants are considered quelites in Mexico. They are consumed for their nutritional value and taste, and have been an integral part of the Mexican diet since before the Spanish conquest. The earliest recorded mention of quelites is in *Historia General de la Cosas de la Nueva España* written by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún in 1577, where he mentions more than 60 wild greens consumed by the Nahuatl civilization. In the US, purslane, radish greens, Swiss chard, and watercress are easy to find and can be used in this book whenever quelites are called for.

Quintoniles is a term given to several species of quelites eaten mostly in central Mexico. The most common one is amaranth, whose leaves and stems are consumed raw or in tacos, stews, soups, empanadas, or quesadillas. Swiss chard makes a great quintonil substitute.



Salt when called for in the recipes in this book should be iodized table salt. If you use sea salt, Himalayan pink salt, or kosher salt, you will need to adjust the salt measurements in the recipes. The salt measurements are a starting place, as everyone's salt tolerance is different, and I know some of you may have to limit your salt intake for health reasons. Please remember to always season according to your preference, and taste the food during the cooking process.

Semolina flour is a coarse, light yellow durum wheat flour that is high in protein and gluten, which makes it ideal for making pasta. The high gluten makes the dough more elastic and helps it keep its shape during cooking. Semolina is also used to make bread and pizza dough. You can find it in specialty food stores or online.

Slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) is a key ingredient in the nixtamalization process for corn. You can find it in

powdered form [online](#), but make sure it's food-grade.

Soy curls are an all-natural alternative to meat made from minimally processed whole soybeans. They are non-GMO, which means that they are as close to whole food as you can get for a meat substitute. They are a great alternative to chicken, beef, and pork. The most popular brand is Butler which you can find at natural food stores or [online](#).

Tamarind is the fruit of a leguminous tree native to Africa. It is a brown, [elongated bean](#) pod with a hard exterior and a soft flesh that contains seeds. It is tart and sweet with caramel undertones. It is very common throughout Mexico, where it is used to make chile-covered candy, aguas frescas, and cocktails. You can find it in Mexican or Asian markets.



Tapioca flour, also known as tapioca starch, is a fine white flour made from the starch of the cassava plant. It is used in gluten-free baking to add crispness to baked goods and as a thickener in savory applications. You can find it in the gluten-free section of the grocery store or [online](#).

Tofu is also known as [soybean curd](#) and is made by curdling fresh soy milk, then pressing it into blocks. There are silken (soft), firm, and extra-firm varieties available at your local grocery store or Asian market. Tofu is packaged in water to keep it fresh, so I recommend you press the tofu either in a tofu press or in between two plates with a heavy object on top, to squeeze out the water from the tofu. This allows the tofu to better absorb the sauce it is marinated or cooked in.

Tomatillos are small, bright green tomatoes covered in a papery husk native to Mexico. They are highly acidic with sweet undertones, and can be eaten raw or cooked. Tomatillos are most commonly used to make salsa verde or as a flavor component in stews and soups. You can find them fresh at your local Mexican market or grocery store. They are also [sold canned](#).



TVP (textured vegetable protein) is a processed form of soybeans (the protein is separated from the whole soybeans) used as a meat substitute. TVP has the texture of ground beef but has no real flavor itself. This is actually a good thing because it means that it absorbs the flavor of whatever marinade or seasoning you are using. It is available at health food stores or [online](#).

Vegan bouillon comes in powdered, paste, or cube form. It is a great substitute for a common chicken or beef bouillon used in Mexican home cooking, Knorr Suiza. I like to use it when trying to mimic meaty flavor. You can find it at many grocery stores, specialty food stores, and [online](#).

White miso, also known as yellow miso, is a soybean paste fermented with koji (rice cultivated by fungus). It is commonly used in Japanese cuisine, but in vegan cooking it is used to add umami to dishes. It is mild and sweet, and a yellowish-brown color. You can find it at Asian markets, specialty food stores or [online](#).

Young squash vines are the young, tender vines of the squash or chayote plant. The leaves are tender and used as greens, and the stems are cut and used as a vegetable. In Mexico they are sold in markets in bunches and are used to make soups and stews or served in mole. In the US, you will have to grow your own, or talk to the vendors at your local farmers' market. You can substitute Swiss chard, using both the leaves and the stems.



Yuba, also known as tofu skin or bean curd skin, is the thin skin that forms on the top of soy milk when it boils. It is often used as a meat substitute in Chinese and Japanese cuisine because of its chewy texture. You can find it fresh, dried, or frozen in Asian markets, specialty food stores, or [online](#).



Zucchini blossom (flor de calabaza) is the edible flower of the *Cucurbitaceae* family of plants that includes squash, pumpkin, zucchini, and gourds. It is eaten raw in salads, cooked in soups and quesadillas, or stuffed and fried. You can find zucchini blossoms during the rainy months of June to October at farmers' markets. You can also find them canned, but I prefer to use them fresh.



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