

## DINNER TONIGHT QUICK WEEKDAY ENTREES

# Pumpkin seed sauce conjures up Mexican trip

By JOE GRAY

Tribune Newspapers

Coming home from vacation with memories of some of the glorious food you ate extends the trip long after — at least in your mind.

Such is the case with our recent trip to Sayulita, Mexico, a quiet beach town about an hour north of the popular resort city of Puerto Vallarta. While there, a local personal chef cooked for us three nights. We loved Sofia Silva's cooking so much — her sauces for chicken and pork, her luscious chocolate cake flavored with chilies and her coffee-spiked flan — that we were delighted with her generosity in sharing her recipes.

Among the dishes, a toasted pumpkin seed dip, served with tortilla chips, was especially surprising — so thick and smoky and rich. (Silva explains that the dip is a Yucatan peninsula dish called sikil-pak in Mayan.) We couldn't get enough, and I knew I would make it back home.

Here, with Silva's blessing, it's thinned with broth to serve as a sauce for chicken. To make Silva's version, use  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water instead of the broth. (And if you're ever in Sayulita, contact Silva: [sayulitachef.com](http://sayulitachef.com).)

## Tips

To save time, we used already toasted pumpkin seeds; but you may get deeper flavor by toasting your own, as Silva does.



BILL HOGAN/TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS PHOTO;  
LISA SCHUMACHER/FOOD STYLING

A toasted pumpkin seed dip can be thinned down into a sauce for chicken.

Heat in a heavy skillet over low heat, stirring often, until toasted, 20-25 minutes.

This recipe makes a generous amount; refrigerate and use over shrimp, swirled into soups or spread on sandwiches.

[jxgray@tribune.com](mailto:jxgray@tribune.com)

## Chicken with toasted pumpkin seed sauce

**Prep:** 10 minutes **Cook:** 30 minutes **Makes:** 4 servings

- 2 Roma tomatoes
- $\frac{1}{2}$  medium onion, cut in half
- $\frac{1}{3}$  habanero chili pepper
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon sea salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup toasted pumpkin seeds
- 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 1 cup chicken stock

**1** Roast the tomatoes, onion and habanero on the stovetop in a dry, heavy skillet over medium-high heat, turning to cook evenly, about 30 minutes.

**2** Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat; season the chicken with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Cook, 5 minutes. Turn;

cook until cooked through, about 15 minutes.

**3** Grind the pumpkin seeds with remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt in a blender; transfer to a bowl. Puree the roasted vegetables, cilantro and capers, adding the broth as needed for a smooth consistency; return the ground pumpkin seeds to the blender. Add remaining broth; process until smooth. (You might have to stop to scrape down the inside of the blender.) Serve the sauce over the chicken, with sides of steamed vegetables and rice, if you like.

**Nutrition information per serving (with 2 tablespoons sauce):** 381 calories, 26 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 116 mg cholesterol, 2 g carbohydrates, 33 g protein, 455 mg sodium, 0 g fiber