

ANAHEIM CHILE PEPPERS

At no other time of the year will you find the chile pepper profusion that exists now. Brilliantly colored, festive peppers of every size and shape await you—the adventurous cook. Degrees of fiery flavor vary, from mild to impossibly hot, depending on the type of chile, but both the red and green Anaheim are reliably on the mild side, ranging from 1 to 3 on the Heat Scale. The Heat Scale goes from 1 to 10, with 10 being hottest.

Nowadays, there isn't a lot of farming going on in Anaheim, California, but it was once fertile farmland. Legend has it that Emilio Ortega introduced the pepper to the Anaheim area in 1896. Although the pepper was originally from New Mexico, it grew so well in its new locale that it developed a reputation as an "Anaheim" chile. Skillful marketing probably played a part, too, because in 1900, Ortega opened the first chile cannery near Anaheim. Those days are gone, and New Mexican chile enthusiasts are now trying to reclaim their pepper by calling it a "New Mexican" instead of an "Anaheim". (Thanks to *The Whole Chile Pepper Book* for the above information.)

Anaheim chile peppers are a great pepper to cook with because they offer chile pepper flavor without making your eyes water and your mouth burn. Joe Herbert of Joe's Vegetables sells bell and chile peppers to us every year. He generously passed along his favorite recipe for making a baked (not fried) Chile Relleno. Thanks Joe!

Baked Chile Relleno

4 oz Monterey Jack cheese, cut into strips
5-7 green Anaheim peppers; roasted; skin, stem and pith removed.
4 eggs
1/3 cup milk
1/2 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup grated cheddar cheese

1. Oil a baking pan.
2. Spread half of the chiles on the bottom of the pan.
3. Spread the Jack cheese over the chiles.
4. Lay the other half of the chiles over the cheese.
5. Whip the eggs until thick and foamy. Add milk, flour, and baking powder. Beat the mixture until smooth.
6. Pour the egg batter over the chiles.
7. Spread the cheddar cheese over the concoction.
8. Bake uncovered at 375°F for about 30 minutes or until mixture is puffy and lightly browned.
9. Serve immediately.