“SMOKIN’ ON THE HARD--SAUCE”

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups dried De Arbol Chili pods – stems and some seeds removed  
1 1/2 cups warm water  
2 cloves garlic, pressed  
1 teaspoon ground cumin and/or 1 teaspoon of coriander seed  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon cider vinegar  
1 teaspoon of oregano (optional)

INGREDIENT NOTES:
These chilies are small, red, dried -- little finger size -- MOST IMPORTANTLY - DRIED.  Gotta' say, in South East Asia - its hard to find DRIED - that aren't re-humidified.  You can use the "count them method" if you want.  Put about 50 or so in a 10 inch pan - but basically, you want to fill the pan you are using.

Cumin or Coriander -- either give a special pizazz that makes it nice  
Brown sugar is smoother than regular sugar - but you can use either.  
Vinegar - this may be up to a cup. This is where you get to experiment -- extra can be added after blending and tasting.
TOOLS:
Grill -- Your heat source
Cast Iron Pan (10 inch) or griddle -- this is what you cook in/on
Gloves - latex etc Stay safe!
Blender - Mix and smooth

NOTE: The Beers are ingredients for the chef - not the sauce.
Mask, Glove, Shades. Essential safety equipment!
DIRECTIONS:

WARNING --- READ ALL STEPS BEFORE STARTING!

1. Remove stems and some of the seeds from the dried chili pods. Wear gloves - wash your hands - don't touch your eyes! Technique: Cut the top off of each chili to remove the stem. Now, slit the side of the chili to split it. Dump the seeds - and scrape the lining of the pods. Now there are a lot of these little suckers in 2 cups - so you're gonna get lazy -- thats OK. Just top 'em and dump the seeds.

NOW, GO OUTSIDE! Fire up the gas grill or what ever you are going to use to toast the pods - don't do it inside! Get a 10 inch cast iron pan, griddle - or whatever.

2. Heat the cast-iron skillet over medium - medium high heat. Add the chilies.

3. Care for your eyes! Stand UP WIND!

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4. Toast the chili pods in the skillet until lightly brown, about 2 to 3 minutes. You will smell the chilies as they cook. Get close - but stay safely upwind!

NOTE: Any seeds that are in the pan - will darken and brown first. Use this as a indicator of when you are finished. If the seeds burn same results - bad batch! It does not take very long. If you burn them - pitch it out and start over. The burnt flavor will be in the sauce and very bitter.
5. When they’re done == quench the chilies in the pan with the water. **Stand UP WIND!**
   Watch the steam - its potent! **Cleared your sinuses and melts your eyeballs.**

![](image1)

**Look! It pealed the paint off the neighbor’s boat!**

6. Transfer the chili pods and water to a container. Let them soak for 30-40 minutes. These little hot puppies like to float - so use a spoon, plate, or bowl to weight them down. At this point you are reconstituting -- so they gotta get wet!

![](image2)

7. Taste the water after 30 minutes. Bitter?? --- Throw out the water and use fresh for the next step - else use what you got. You can save a little and use as a chili stock or for a nice beef marinade too.

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8. Place the chilies (and water old or new), the garlic, cumin, salt, brown sugar, salt, and vinegar all in a food processor. Puree the mixture until smooth. An alternative -- you can blend the chilies and liquid just into a paste and use as needed. This makes a potent starter for a number of dishes - Like my buddy Steve’s baby back ribs. The plan here is to get to a salsa-like consistency for tacos, chips etc. So, add liquid as you like while blending.

*Looks Good? -- UMMM...TASTES GREAT!!!*

If its done right - you get a nice, **smooth, sweet-hot burn that rolls from the tip of your tongue to the back of your throat**. Heat - not flame! Good enough to make you have some more!

**Mr. Science** says:

“**Its the sugar and vinegar that helps the heat roll through your mouth.**”

**IMPORTANT TIPS:**

No tomatoes - it will keep shelf stable because the vinegar and sugar will preserve it. If concerned about the garlic or oregano going off over time - then refrigerate it. But we’ve had it on the shelf for months at a time. My friend Steve saved some for several years!
CLOSING NOTES:

The pictures were shot as part of my new tradition -- to make a batch when ON THE HARD! I made a double batch - and only a few minor changes to the recipe.

1. I did the chilies in 2 batches. So the first was soaking a bit longer - no problem.
2. I added equal amounts of Cumin and Coriander and Oregano - using the amounts for each batch per above.
3. Doubled the amount of Brown sugar - this was after tasting.
4. Finished up with about 3 tablespoons of cider vinegar. That's the beauty of tasting!

It is Hot - but not a **Burn and Blister** - very pleasant, full mouth warmth.

**WHO SAYS, "Its a hard life on the hard?"**

Ask **hotheads/chili-heads** why they eat hot foods. You'll get many answers. BUT the TRUTH has got to be endorphin **RUSH**. Its like Brain Freeze - BUT IN REVERSE! ARGHHHHH! Your tongue and mouth are just the "warm up." When it hits the sinus and goes straight to the brain. Like a great hot mustard or wasabi. Endorphins - natural opiates - are released by the brain to signal pleasure rather than pain. Done right the **RUSH** will mask the flame and fire -- and take you back for more.

You can eat hot food, be breathing hard, sweating, your lips on fire - and smiling because you really enjoy it!

*Me*, I like the taste, the heat - the RUSH. Smokier the better. Thats what great with Mario's. You control the roasting of the dried peppers. Darker but not burnt - a nice chipotle! I reckon if its not smokey enough to your liking - you could add a little liquid smoke --- but that would be cheating. **Eat the batch and make another!**

**ENJOY!**

Jim and Nancy Hegland  
S/Y Laughing Buddha  
(on the Hard Stand)  
Rebak Marina, Lankawai, Malaysia

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