

Valley of Gems Bonus Material

Rebecca Westin's grandfather left her a buried treasure – if she can decipher a complex series of clues leading to it. Her half-siblings are determined to reach the treasure first. Good thing Rebecca has help, in the form of a green-eyed charmer determined to make their desert adventure sexy and fun. But a treacherous enemy will do anything to get that treasure – and revenge.

Action and romance combine in this lively Southwestern adventure, complete with riddles the reader is invited to solve.

Bonus material includes a list of clues, plus Southwestern recipes.

The Southwest Romantic Suspense series includes *Desert Gold*, *Valley of Gems*, and *Silver Canyon*. Each novel stands alone and is complete, with no cliffhangers. This series mixes action and adventure with light romance in the Southwest. This series was originally published as *The Mad Monk's Treasure*, *The Dead Man's Treasure*, and *The Skeleton Canyon Treasure*.

THE CLUES

Clue #1, Chapter 5:

The Western Trail takes you past
At 106 degrees
42 minutes will get you there

Pass the mountain to the north
To where the ladies gather

The end is amazing
Where people smile and dance, and rock
These eyes have seen 500 years
Do not avoid their gaze, but meet it closely

Clue #2, Chapter 8:

Are they witches in disguise
Or prophets of the future?
The men who came here didn't know.
They had destruction on their minds.
And they changed the world.
They ate of the flesh among bombers and bullets.
And so should you!

Then past the dead soldiers you'll find a dead end.
One is the loneliest number

Walled off from its fellows.
Pay your respects and do not forget.

Clue #3, Chapter 13

NE N JRPUJV TURTHQ GIRSQJ UM GURQ EDQ YUMWQJ DIRVQ SQQEV EDQ TIUHV IG EDQ
MUMQ DQNJQJ VMNBQ

22 5-13-16-1-7-9 20-12-18-5 12-24 22 3-13-7-22-26 18-12-24-19-16-13 26-2-9-7 5-2-26
14-7-13-7 12-26 20-7-22-15-24 25-16-2 26-16 25-16-2-13 19-16-13-26-2-9-7

Clue #4, Chapter 19

You're almost there so raise a glass!
In this town whose name means –
Here you must deploy
To find pa—
In this hot black place
Called the mal—
In this landscape bleak
A mouth that does not –

If you want to scoop what's mine
Take a look behind the—

Clue #5, Chapter 25

The path was long
I hope you had fun
To finish this quest
And see what you've won
Go back to the start
The place it begun

RECIPES

Here are recipes for the New Mexican foods mentioned in *Valley of Gems*, along with a few bonus recipes. These are not necessarily traditional recipes. They have been adapted by my friends and me – sometimes to make them simpler, sometimes to make them healthier (and sometimes not), or simply to suit our tastes. The recipes are also a bit informal, the way we really cook. Experiment and make them your own.

About Chiles

New Mexico is most famous, at least in culinary terms, for its green chile, which comes slathered over almost any dish. The official state question is “Red or Green?” – which version of the chile sauce do you want? Despite what spell check thinks, I’m not talking about *chili*, which is a stew that may contain beans and/or meat. Rather, chile refers to chopped or puréed New Mexico chile peppers, possibly cooked in broth with some onion and garlic.

Red chile is simply green chile that has ripened. It is usually dried and powdered, whereas green chile is roasted over open flames, chopped, and frozen until use. The flavor of red chile is generally sweeter and milder, but either color can have a variety of heat levels. How hot a chile is depends on the particular strain and the weather conditions during the growing season.

“Red or green?” is partly a personal preference, though certain dishes tend to come with one or the other. You can also order something “Christmas” style, meaning with both red and green chile.

You can buy little cans of green chile in most grocery stores, but people who have lived in New Mexico and then move elsewhere often go to great lengths to get true New Mexican green chile. Some companies will even [ship frozen chilies](https://www.newmexicanconnection.com/), bought in packs of 5 or 10 pounds (<https://www.newmexicanconnection.com/>).

If you don’t want to go to that much trouble, or you like a milder flavor, canned chile from the grocery store may work fine for you. You can also try other fresh chile peppers and roast them yourself.

Learn more about the New Mexico Chile, including instructions for roasting peppers at home, from this [New Mexico Chile for Dummies!](http://www.focusnewmexico.com/chile.htm) page (<http://www.focusnewmexico.com/chile.htm>).

Learn even more about chile peppers of all kinds from [The Chile Pepper Institute](https://cpi.nmsu.edu/), an international organization “devoted to education and research related to *Capsicum* or chile peppers.” Should you be visiting Las Cruces, NM, the Institute’s Horticulture Center has a garden “showcasing 150 chile pepper varieties from around the world.” (<https://cpi.nmsu.edu/>)

Roasted Green Chiles

This is an important ingredient in many recipes. In New Mexico, you can buy bags of frozen, roasted, and chopped green chiles. Elsewhere, grocery stores may have small cans of green chilies in the Mexican section. You can also buy Anaheim chiles – the closest to the New Mexico green chile – in the produce section and roast them yourself. Poblanos (also called pasilla peppers) are good as well, though they have a different flavor.

A gas grill is ideal, but the broiler works, and for two or three peppers I use the toaster oven.

1. Wash the chiles. Use gloves if you don't want to risk stinging hands (and eyes, if you rub them).
2. Puncture the chile pepper so the steam can escape. Some people like to split each pepper lengthwise and scrape out the seeds and membranes first.
3. Arrange the chiles in a single layer on a barbecue grill and cook over high heat, or place on a foil-covered baking sheet 4 to 5 inches from your oven's broiler.
4. Grill or broil the chile peppers until the skin is starting to blacken and bubble, turning the peppers to blister each side evenly.
5. Cover the peppers with a damp kitchen towel, or seal them in a plastic container with a couple of ice cubes for at least ten minutes. This cools the chiles, and the steam also loosens the skin so it's easier to peel.
6. Peel off the skin while holding the chile under running water. Don't forget your gloves! Remove the seeds and membranes if you didn't do that at the beginning.
7. Use the peppers within a day or two, or freeze them in airtight bags. Chop them first if you expect to want chopped rather than whole green chiles for cooking.

Homemade Green Chile Sauce

from author/illustrator Lois Bradley

Easy and good as base for green chile stew, or for huevos rancheros, enchiladas, etc.

3 Tbsp. vegetable oil

1 finely diced onion

1/2 tsp cumin

dash oregano

1 Tbsp. minced garlic

Salt/pepper to taste

2 cups chopped roasted green chile (about 6-8 Big Jims or comparable mild chile)

2 cups +/- chicken broth.

3 Tbsp. cornstarch with 3 Tbsp. water

1. Sauté onion, cumin, oregano, garlic, salt, and pepper in vegetable oil until onion is translucent.
2. Stir in green chile and chicken broth. Bring to a boil.
3. Thicken with a slurry of cornstarch and water. Turn heat to low and simmer 30 minutes.

Breakfast Burrito

2 bacon strips per person

1/2 cup hash browns per person

2 eggs per person

Salt and pepper to taste

Green chile to taste (or salsa if you can't find green chile)

1 (8-inch) flour tortilla per person

1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese per person

1 thinly-sliced green onion per person (optional)

Red or green chile sauce or chopped chiles (optional)

1. Use your favorite method to cook the bacon until crisp. Drain, reserving 1-2 tablespoons drippings.
2. Add the hash browns to the bacon drippings in a skillet at medium heat. Cook until browned.
3. Lightly beat the eggs with salt and pepper. Add to the skillet. Mix in the green chile and stir until the eggs are set.
4. Divide the egg mixture between the tortillas, spooning it down the center.
5. Sprinkle cheese, green onions, and bacon over eggs.
6. Fold the tortilla into a burrito. Eat it out of hand, or smother the burrito with red or green chile sauce and eat it with a knife and fork.

Options:

- Use crumbled, cooked sausage, cubed ham, carne adovada (pork cooked with red chile), or chorizo instead of the bacon. Try different cheeses. Or make a veggie version with sautéed mushrooms, onions, bell peppers, and diced tomatoes.
- For a group, you can let people add their own choice of meat, cheese, and veggie.
- You can make a large batch, wrap each burrito in waxed paper and aluminum foil, and freeze for up to a month. To heat, remove the foil and place the waxed paper-wrapped burritos on a plate. Microwave at 60% power until hot, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Papas

Papas are potatoes. Chop a bunch of fresh potatoes and fry them, or use fresh or frozen bagged hash browns (ideally cubed rather than shredded). Put a pile on a plate or in a bowl.

Top with red or green chile sauce and cheddar and/or Jack cheese.

Serve with a couple of eggs, cooked any style, and a flour tortilla.

You can also add bacon, ham, sausage, carne adovada, or sautéed vegetables (onions, bell pepper, mushrooms, tomatoes).

For a dinner version, top french fries with your choice of meat, cheese, guacamole, salsa, and sour cream, as an alternative to nachos.

Huevos Rancheros

serves 4-6

One bag frozen, shredded hash browns (about 1/2 cup per person)

8-12 corn tortillas (2 per person)

One can refried beans

Shredded or sliced cheddar (about 1/4 cup per person)

4-6 eggs (2 per person)

One bottle or can of enchilada sauce (available in the Mexican section of most groceries)

1. Sauté the hash browns in a little oil until nicely cooked. Set aside.
2. Lightly brush a skillet with oil. Fry the tortillas until warm and turning golden, 30-60 seconds per side.
3. Place the tortillas in stacks of two on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Spread refried beans over the top tortilla in each pair.
4. Divide the hash browns among the servings, spreading them on top of the beans.
5. Sprinkle shredded cheese or lay a slice of cheese on each serving.
6. Put the baking sheet in a toaster oven or oven at about 300°, so the beans heat and the cheese melts.
7. Meanwhile, fry the eggs to the hardness of your choosing. Warm the enchilada sauce on the stove or in the microwave.
8. Move the tortillas to individual plates. Add two eggs to the top of each. Pour enchilada sauce over it all. Serve immediately.

Options:

- For a lower-calorie version, use only one tortilla and one egg, and eliminate the hash browns.
- Try whole pinto beans or black beans instead of refried beans. Experiment with different cheeses, such as Monterey Jack or queso fresco.
- Use green chile sauce, salsa, or hot sauce instead of, or in addition to, enchilada sauce.
- Use fresh or canned tomatoes, chopped avocado, jalapenos, diced yellow onion, lettuce, or cilantro to garnish.

Green Chile Cheeseburger

This is simple, but oh so good. Cook a hamburger by your favorite method. (Many New Mexican restaurants seem to fry the burger on a griddle. The years of grease add that special something.)

Serve on a bun with cheese – I prefer cheddar – and chopped, roasted green chile to taste, lettuce and tomatoes optional.

Rather than basic chopped green chile, you can try it with the Homemade Green Chile Sauce, or make a roux by sautéing onions and garlic in a little oil, mixing in a couple of tablespoons of flour and sautéing until it's golden, then adding chicken broth and green chile until you have a thick, delicious sauce. It will thicken more upon standing. Leftovers keep in the refrigerator for about a week.

For a variation, try a taco burger. My husband and I like crisp corn tortillas, but you can also wrap your burger in a flour tortilla.

Camie's Green Chile Stew

2 medium onions

1 Tbsp. garlic

2 Tbsp. oil

1 pound ground beef or cubed stew beef

Chopped green chile to taste, about 1/4 to 1/2 cup

4 cups chicken broth

salt and pepper to taste

Serve with any or all of: canned pinto beans or black beans; cubed, cooked potatoes; hominy; shredded cheddar or Jack cheese; shredded lettuce; chopped tomatoes; cilantro; extra green chile; chopped avocados or guacamole; sour cream.

1. Sauté onions and garlic in oil until golden.
2. Add beef and stir until browned.
3. Add chopped green chile and chicken broth. Bring to a simmer. Salt and pepper to taste. You can use it immediately, but it's even better if it cooks for a few hours on low heat.
4. Put the beans, hominy, cheese, etc. into individual bowls. Let people build their own blend of chile. Add ingredients such as beans, potatoes, and cheese, and heat each bowl in the microwave. Then add cold ingredients such as sour cream and avocado.

Green Chile Chicken Soup

6 servings.

1/4 cup butter

3/4 cup all purpose flour

2 cups milk

4 cups (32 oz) chicken broth

2 cups cooked, boneless and skinless chicken cut into bite-size pieces

1/2 cup chopped green chile or to taste

salt and pepper to taste

1 pinch garlic powder

1. Melt butter in a large pot. Add flour and stir the resulting paste over medium heat.
2. Slowly add the milk and chicken broth and whip to eliminate any lumps. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer.
3. Add the chicken, green chile, salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Stir well and cover.
4. Simmer for 30 minutes and serve.

Options:

- Add black beans or pinto beans.
- Add vegetables – carrots, peas, bell peppers, corn, summer squash, mushrooms, or whatever you like – to make it healthier.
- Try a version with ground beef or turkey and either red or green chile.

Quick Enchilada Casserole

This recipe is not exactly traditional, but it's my quicker and healthier version of an enchilada casserole. This is one of my standards, because it only takes about half an hour to put together, and it makes enough leftovers for lunches.

Several handfuls of tortilla chips

One large onion

1 Tbsp. oil for cooking

3 cups chopped cooked chicken

1 can (~10 oz) cream of chicken soup

1 can or jar (12-15 oz) of enchilada sauce

1 - 2 cans (15 oz) pinto beans, drained and rinsed

Red chile powder to taste (optional)

1 - 2 cups shredded cheddar, Monterey Jack, or Mexican blend cheese

1. Spray oil a 9 x 13 casserole dish or rub lightly with oil.
2. Scatter broken tortilla chips in the bottom of the dish. (This is a great way to use the broken chips at the bottom of the bag. It doesn't really matter what size they are or if they're stale.)
3. Chop a large onion and sauté in oil until golden.
4. Add about 3 cups of chopped cooked chicken (from a rotisserie chicken, leftover cooked chicken, or frozen chicken tenders that you cook in advance). You can also use fresh chicken and make sure you heat it long enough to cook.
5. Add cream of chicken soup, enchilada sauce, pinto beans, and red chile powder. Mix well.
6. Pour the chicken and sauce mixture over the tortilla chips. Cover with another layer of broken tortilla chips.
7. Top with a layer of shredded cheddar, Jack, or Mexican cheese.
8. Bake at 350° for about 45 min.

Options:

- Try black beans instead of pinto beans, or sautéed ground beef or turkey instead of chicken.
- Skip the meat and add extra vegetables – bell peppers, corn, zucchini, summer squash, mushrooms, or whatever you like.
- Use chopped green chile instead of the red chile powder.

Bob's Chicken Enchilada Casserole

Bob, who works at the Very Large Array, often brings this dish to parties.

1 medium-sized yellow onion, finely chopped
3-4 cloves garlic, crushed
1 habanero chile, finely chopped
Olive oil for cooking
1 quart chicken broth
1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts
1/2 pound green chile, roasted, peeled, chopped
About 24 corn tortillas
1 pound Colby cheese, shredded
1 pound Jack cheese, shredded

1. Lightly brown onion, garlic, and habanero in olive oil.
2. Add broth and poach chicken until well done. Turn off heat and allow to cool.
3. Shred chicken and put back in broth. Add green chile and cook on low heat for about 15 minutes.
4. Prepare tortillas by quickly immersing them in hot olive oil for 10-15 seconds each, until limp.
5. Line the bottom of a 9x13 glass baking pan with a layer of prepared tortillas, overlapping.
6. Add a layer of chicken and chile with a slotted spoon to limit the amount of liquid.
7. Add a layer of cheese. Repeat layering until the stuff is used up.
8. Bake at 350°F until bubbling and cheese is browning, about 30-40 minutes.

New Mexico Grilled Cheese

2 pieces of bread per person
About 1/4 cup refried beans per person
1 whole, roasted green chile per person, or chopped green chile to taste. If you can't get green chiles, try poblanos, chopped jalapenos, or salsa.
1 piece of pre-sliced cheddar cheese per person

1. Butter one side of each piece of bread, or spray with spray oil. Place half of the bread on a griddle buttered side down.
2. Spread refried beans on that piece of bread. Lay a whole, roasted green chile on top, or spread with chopped green chile. Cover with sliced cheddar cheese.
3. Top with the other piece of bread, buttered side up. Fry at low heat. Cover with a pot lid to help ensure that the refried beans get heated all the way through.
4. When the bottom side is getting toasty brown, flip over the sandwich and heat the other side.

New Mexico Mac and Cheese

Mix roasted, chopped green chiles, or green chile sauce, into your favorite macaroni and cheese recipe. Or use your favorite salsa. Adjust the amount to your taste.

Chili Cheese Tater Tots

This is one of the few dishes that use chili instead of chile.

Cook tater tots according to directions. Top with canned or homemade chili with meat and beans. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake until everything is hot and cheese is melted.

Crock Pot Cheese Fondue Dip

1 (10.75 oz) can cheddar cheese soup
2 cups grated cheddar cheese
1 cup milk
1/4 cup or more green chiles
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 Tbsp. chives
1 Tbsp. garlic
Serve with corn chips, celery sticks, cauliflower, etc.

1. Combine all ingredients in a fondue pot or small crock pot.
2. Heat on medium, stirring frequently, until smooth and well blended.
3. Adjust heat to warm and serve in the pot, with chips or veggies on the side. If it starts to get too thick, stir in a little more milk.

Kris Bock is the author of [The Accidental Detective humorous mystery series](#), [the Accidental Billionaire Cowboys sweet romance series](#), [the Felony Melanie: Sweet Home Alabama romantic comedy novels](#), and the [Furrever Friends cat cafe sweet romance series](#).

She has lived in ten states and one foreign country but is now firmly planted in the Southwest, where many of her books are set. [See all her romantic suspense books](#).

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