



# Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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## Chile Roasting on an Open Fire

Carolyn Utter, *Editor*

Fall brings with it visions of colorful fallen leaves; warm, fuzzy sweaters; and the soothing aroma of pinion wood drifting from the chimenea. Now you can add "smell of roasting chiles" to your list of autumn favorites because this fall at Johnson's, we'll be roasting chile peppers for you!

Green chile is an essential ingredient in most Southwestern recipes. But the problem is getting rid of the pepper's skin. Roasting makes the peeling process easier and also intensifies the flavor. Chile peppers can be roasted in the oven or on the grill, but the easiest solution is to have someone else roast them for you. That's where we come in.

We'll be roasting chile peppers for you this fall in large, professional chile roasters from New Mexico. The chile peppers are placed in big rotating drums and then roasted and tumbled over an open flame. The cage rotates slowly, gently tossing the chile peppers around as it goes. The chile peppers are done when the skins are charred fairly evenly and can be peeled away. Out comes hot, smoky, roasted, ready to eat, green chile.

Strip the skins off, cut off the stems, and remove as many of the seeds as you wish. The seeds add "heat" but very little flavor.

Remember to wear kitchen gloves when working with chile peppers. Otherwise ... and I speak from experience ... it may take days for the tingling heat to wear off.

Some recipes say to remove the charred skin by running the whole pepper or chile under running water. While this method is quicker and less messy, it also loses all the intensely flavored juices.

We recommend placing the chiles in a strainer over a bowl. The blackened skin will easily slip off, and the bowl will catch the sweet, flavorful juices. Remove the loose seeds and discard them along with the skin.

As you are peeling the peppers, run your fingers under running water as they become coated with the charred skin, rather than holding the pepper under the water. This way, the chile is cleaned without sacrificing the wonderfully sweet, concentrated juices. Don't worry about a little skin left on the chile.

Fresh green chile peppers are seasonal, but roasted green chile peppers freeze beautifully. To store your roasted chile for winter use, leave on the charred skin and seal tightly in plastic bags. Fill each bag with just enough peppers for your favorite Southwestern dishes. The charred skin helps to protect the pepper's delicate flavor from undesirable freezer taste. Thaw before cooking and remove the skin, again catching the juices. You can freeze green chile as well as sweet bell peppers.

To get you started, we've included a recipe for Chile Relleno Casserole. Please email your favorite roasted chile recipes to [askus@johnsonsgarden.com](mailto:askus@johnsonsgarden.com) and we'll compile them to share with all our customers.

Fill a 9 X 13 pan with roasted green chiles (peeled). Slit the peppers and line them up on the bottom of the pan. Fill each chile with Monterey jack cheese and pork (amount to your liking). First, though, parboil the pork in water with garlic salt.

Put the following in a blender: 2 cups milk, 6 eggs, tabasco sauce (a few dashes), 4 slices of bread (made into bread crumbs). Blend ingredients and pour over chiles.

Sprinkle grated longhorn cheese on top. Bake 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes at 350°.