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Alessia Guehr of Alessia Patisserie in Santa Barbara adds an iconic dippin' element to the "Sippin' Pretty" feature in the December issue: her recipe for Mexican hot chocolate's traditional sidekick.

Churros

To get the churro shape, Guehr suggests using the Ateco number 845 or 846 piping tip, which can be found at home goods, craft, and restaurant supply stores, or at amazon.com.

Makes 18 churros

½ cup granulated sugar

¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Vegetable oil, for frying

1 cup water

¼ cup unsalted butter, diced into small cubes

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 large egg

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Whisk together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl. Transfer mixture to a shallow dish; set aside.

Heat about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches vegetable oil in a large, deep pot or deep skillet over medium-high heat to 360°F .

While oil is heating, prepare batter. Add water, butter, 1 tablespoon sugar, and salt to a large saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add flour, and reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula until mixture comes together and is smooth. (A few lumps may remain.)

Transfer mixture to a large mixing bowl and allow it to cool for 5 minutes. Add egg and vanilla to flour mixture, and blend immediately with an electric mixer until mixture comes together and is smooth. It will separate at first, but keep mixing. It will eventually come together.

Transfer batter to a 16-inch piping bag fitted with a rounded star tip (No bigger than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter). Carefully pipe batter into preheated oil, cutting it into six-inch lengths with clean kitchen scissors and frying in batches of no more than five at a time. Let churros fry, about 2 minutes. Turn over and fry 2 more minutes until golden brown. Transfer churros to a paper towel-lined plate to dry briefly, then roll in sugar-cinnamon mixture. Serve warm with caramel sauce or hot chocolate for dipping, if desired.