

## **Biker Information Guide**

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*Biker Billy hosts a syndicated television cooking show*

### **"Biker Billy Cooks with Fire"**



#### **Turning, Turning, Turning**

This month I wanted to share some thoughts on a few different issues involving turns. First, it is strange how something as seemingly simple as making a turn at a traffic light can become illegal and dangerous when riding a motorcycle. Where I live in North Carolina, we have a problem with signalized left turn lanes that do not recognize the presence of a motorcycle. The sensors simple do not "read" the motorcycle and thus don't trigger the left turn light. The traffic lights will go through all the timed changes and respond to cars at other sensors and never signal the left turn for the motorcycle. The rider is faced with two choices, wait for a car to pull up behind you for the same turn and trigger the signal, or make an illegal left turn. Neither is a good choice. I am sure this is a problem in other states too.

The Concerned Bikers Association of North Carolina is working on getting a law passed that will make it legal for motorcycles to make left turns at non-responding traffic lights. To fix the existing traffic light sensors would cost millions of dollars the state doesn't seem to have or wish to spend. Only time will tell if the law can successfully work its way through the legislative process and be signed by the Governors. Till then I have to remember to approach my home from a route that avoids the lights at both ends of my country road or wait for a car to free me from the signal trap.

Even if the law is passed it will take some time to get the word out to law enforcement, the court system and the driving public, along with updating drivers education and motorcycle safety foundation training programs. During that period of time it will be a pretty risky affair (although legal) and I am sure that some of the opponents of motorcycle rights will try to use this against us. I can even foresee some car drivers who make illegal left turns and cause accidents using this as an excuse, while it would sound like "but I didn't see the motorcycle." Some slick lawyers will sure make it work in court, because the government failed to take all legal road users into account when they designed and installed these faulty signal systems.

The second turning issue I have some thoughts on are right turns on red. This was a gas saving idea that has its origins in the 1970s with the oil crisis of 73' and the energy crisis of 79'. Since 1992 it has been a part of federally governed and assisted energy conservation plans. It still has a valid fuel saving function especially in these days of gas prices routinely above the three-dollar mark. But the use of it by the driving public has some problems. While the law requires a full stop before the turn and then allows the turn only when the road

is clear, I observe most drivers failing to fully stop. Many use it to enter a road dangerously close in front of traffic. It seems that over time many drivers have evolved to feel that they can just turn right at red lights as if they have no responsibility to stop and observe the traffic conditions. Ironically, this seems to happen less often at stop signs; maybe the clear message of STOP gets more respect. Of course it goes without saying that more drivers will cut out in front of me on my motorcycle than my SUV.

Lastly, I have issues with the yield sign and how folks respond to it. Seems that many drivers read the word yield in different ways. Some folks must see the word as meaning "merge drag race strip," and then race to get ahead of the vehicle they should have yielded to. At the opposite end there are drivers who will come to a complete stop at the yield sign and wait for a vehicle that is so far away that ten cars could safely go in front of it. It can be a wild scene if you have the drag racer behind the stop and waiter; I have seen a few really smoky skids at one intersection that comes to mind. All of these issues with turns point to one common tool that all road users should have and apply; that is good judgment. Often it is tragically absent. So while you are out riding, remember to obey the laws of the road and use good judgment, just don't expect that others will. Be alert and ride safe!

### **Warm Tomato Salsa**

While I love most fresh salsas cold, this warm version is a notable exception. The chipotle adds a smoky flavor. Consider it a new road to travel and enjoy the adventure.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 chipotle peppers, stemmed and crushed
- 2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried cilantro
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, coarsely chopped and drained

Heat the oil in a large sauté pan over a medium heat. Add the chipotle peppers, onions, and the garlic and sauté for 3 to 5 minutes or until the onions are golden. Add the black pepper, salt, cumin, cilantro, and tomatoes and reduce the heat to low. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve warm.

Makes about 4 cups

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