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A delightful post-Cinco de Mayo menu



Chicken Enchiladas

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

A few weeks ago, one of our Lamorinda Weekly readers wrote to inquire about freezing the chicken enchiladas we featured in our Jan. 18, 2012 issue. I truly loved hearing that someone is still enjoying a recipe that we published eight years ago. But I told her that since that publication, I've made a few changes to the recipe and sent her the new one. I thought it might be a good idea to share these changes with all of our readers. One of the main changes was substituting fresh diced Anaheim, poblano and jalapeno peppers in place of the canned fire-roasted Ortega chilies. This makes the en-

chiladas taste so fresh and even if you plan to freeze them before baking, the peppers hold up very well. I also incorporated nonfat plain yogurt and cilantro into the chicken filling, instead of just using these as garnishes. (We also still use them as garnishes, because we love cilantro, and yogurt is so

yummy on top.) And finally, I had to change from Marilyn Greco's enchilada sauce when I accidentally bought a chili powder that was smoking hot and nearly killed our houseguests! From that day forward, I decided to go the safe route and I doctor up either Lawry's or McCormick's Enchilada Seasoning packets for our sauce and it's consistent and perfect every time and no one has caught on fire as a result! That recipe is included in this column. When my sister was giving a big 50th birthday party, she wanted a meal plan to go along with the enchiladas, so I included one of our favorite Costa Rican dishes, Gallo Pinto, as well as a crunchy Southwest Chopped Salad with Salsa Vinaigrette. I know we just celebrated Cinco de Mayo, but this is a super fun meal any time of the year.

Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Salsa Lizano is similar to Worcestershire Sauce and is used in the Gallo Pinto recipe. You can purchase it through Amazon if you can't find it in your local markets. For more about Salsa Lizano: <https://theculturetrip.com/central-america/costa-rica/articles/how-lizano-became-costa-ricas-national-sauce/>

Beware of rattlesnakes when venturing outside the home



Photo provided

lying down with the affected limb lower than the heart. Getting medical attention quickly is critical – do not spend time on tourniquets, "sucking," or snake bite kits. If you are by yourself, walk calmly to the nearest source of help to dial 911. Do not run.

1. If bitten by any other kind of snake, wash the wound with soap and water or an antiseptic and seek medical attention.
2. If you are not sure what kind of snake bit you, check the bite for two puncture marks (in rare cases one puncture mark) associated with intense, burning pain. This is typical of a rattlesnake bite. Other snakebites may leave multiple teeth marks without associated burning pain.

Snakes are an important resource in the natural environment. They are prime controlling agents of rodents, insects, and other reptile populations. Enjoy them from afar and leave them where they are found. It is illegal to collect, kill, or remove any plants or animals from the East Bay Regional Park District. Please help us to protect wildlife and their environment for present and future generations. Additional information is available at ebparks.org/SnakeSafety.

Submitted by Jen Vanya, EBRPD

With the warm weather on the rise, the East Bay Area has been seeing a spike in rat-tlesnake encounters and the East Bay Regional Park District is advising that the public take snake safety precautions when visiting Regional Parks.

Safety tips include:

1. Avoid hiking alone so you have help in case of emergency. (Per local health orders, hike only with members of your immediate household during COVID-19)
2. Scan the ground ahead of you as you walk, jog, or ride. Stay on trails and avoid walking in tall grass.
3. Look carefully around and under logs and rocks before sitting down.
4. Avoid placing your hands

or feet where you cannot see clearly.

5. Keep leashed pets on designated trails and away from snakes if they see one. (All dogs should be on-leash at all times, in all parks during COVID-19)

6. Bring plenty of water for yourself and your pets as drinking fountains are temporarily closed. Many parks do not have a direct water supply.

If you see a rattlesnake, leave it alone – do not try to capture or harm it. All park wildlife is protected by law. If you see a snake on a trail, wait for it to cross and do not approach. Then move carefully and slowly away.

What to do if bitten by a snake:

1. If bitten by a rattlesnake, stay calm and send someone to call 911. Remain calm by

Chicken Enchiladas

(Makes about 14-16 enchiladas)

INGREDIENTS

- 16 flour tortillas (about 8" diameter)
- 6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, (cut into smaller pieces if large)
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- Water to almost cover chicken
- 2 poblano peppers, seeded and diced
- 2 Anaheim chilies, seeded and diced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 1/2 bunch fresh cilantro leaves, snipped with kitchen scissors to smaller pieces
- 3 cups grated mixed Mexican cheese (split 1 cup for filling and 2 cups for on top of enchiladas)
- 1 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- 1 batch enchilada sauce (recipe below)
- Garnishes: sliced avocado or guacamole, sliced black olives, fresh cilantro leaves

DIRECTIONS

Place chicken breasts in a large frying pan with a tight-fitting lid. Pour salsa over chicken and fill pan with enough water to cover chicken. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and bring to a boil. Immediately reduce heat and simmer just until chicken is fully cooked. Remove from heat and cool. When cool enough to handle, shred with two forks or clean fingers. Discard liquid.

Mix shredded chicken with all three diced peppers, cilantro and cheese. (Can freeze chicken-pepper mixture at this point and thaw when ready to continue.) Stir in yogurt and about 1/2 cup of the enchilada sauce. Mix well.

To assemble enchiladas, heat the stack of tortillas in the microwave for just about 1 minute to make them more pliable. (Take them out of the plastic wrap before doing this!) Then lay the tortillas out on a flat surface and spoon about 1/4 cup of filling in the center of each tortilla. Drizzle one spoonful of enchilada sauce and a light sprinkling of cheese and roll tightly. Lay in a greased or sprayed 9x13 baking dish. Can cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate or freeze at this point, too. If you want to make ahead and freeze, the aluminum pans are great, and the 8-inch ones fit right inside of a gallon Ziploc baggie.

To bake, drizzle remaining enchilada sauce over the tops of the enchiladas and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake at 350 F for approximately 25 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown. Serve any extra enchilada sauce on the side.

Enchilada Sauce (can make up to a week ahead)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil or canola oil
- 2 packets of enchilada sauce seasoning (McCormick or Lawry's)
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cider vinegar

DIRECTIONS

Heat oil in a medium-sized pot. Add seasoning packets, flour, cumin, oregano and salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring with a wire whisk, for about 3-4 minutes, just to slightly bloom the spices and brown the flour. Slowly add water, stirring with a wire whisk, until desired consistency. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 5 minutes. Stir in cider vinegar. You may need to add more water as you cook the sauce.

Gallo Pinto

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2 tablespoons red bell peppers, chopped
- 2 tablespoons onions, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups black beans, cooked (I use canned black beans)
- 2 1/2 cups rice, cooked
- 1 tablespoon Salsa Lizano or Worcestershire Sauce
- 2 tablespoons of your favorite hot sauce (optional)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

DIRECTIONS

Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Sauté onion and bell pepper, along with cumin seeds for about 2 minutes. Add the black beans and salsa and simmer for about 10 minutes on medium heat. Then, add the cooked rice and mix in the cilantro. Cooked bacon, pork, chicken or sausage can be added. For breakfast, scrambled eggs can be added.

Southwest Chopped Salad with salsa vinaigrette

INGREDIENTS

- 1 head romaine, chopped
- 1 orange bell pepper, chopped
- 1 Anaheim chili, chopped
- 1/2 jicama, julienned or chopped
- 2 tomatillos, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 cup black or green olives, chopped or sliced
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 1/2 cup grated cheese (Mixed Mexican or Monterey Jack or sharp cheddar)
- 1 recipe salsa vinaigrette:
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1-2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2/3 cup olive oil (more or less as needed to taste)

DIRECTIONS

Toss all with salsa vinaigrette. Serve with crunchy tortilla strips or just all by itself!