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## Baked jalapeño poppers the perfect starter for the New Year

By Susie Iventosch



Chorizo-Jalapeno Poppers Photo Susie Iventosch

A friend served these tasty baked jalapeño poppers for hors d'oeuvres one night and we thoroughly enjoyed them. The novelty of adding chorizo to the cheese filling and wrapping them in bacon made them pretty darn irresistible. When we made them, we added some grated sharp cheddar cheese and a sprinkling of Tajin seasoning and we loved that addition, too.

Lately, the jalapeños have been pretty big in the markets and this recipe makes 20 poppers from 10 good-sized peppers. If you find smaller peppers, you can make more than 20 with this recipe.

When it comes to the chorizo, Cacique makes pork, beef or soy versions, which are available at most grocers, and Jennie-O offers a turkey chorizo as well. But, you can also make your own chorizo by adding chili pepper, cumin, coriander, oregano, garlic, onion and lime juice to any kind of ground meat. I've made my own with elk and venison, too.

We like turkey and duck bacon best, and those are usually precooked, so if you use them, reduce the baking time by a few minutes.

### Chorizo-Jalapeno Poppers

#### Ingredients

- 10 jalapeño peppers, cut in half lengthwise, seeds and veins removed
- 10 oz. chorizo (pork, beef, turkey or soy)
- 4 oz. sharp white or yellow cheddar cheese, grated
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon Tajin Classic Seasoning (or lime chili seasoning)
- 10 strips of thin-cut bacon (pork, turkey, or duck), cut in half length-wise

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 F. Prepare a baking sheet with cooking spray.

Cook chorizo in a pan over medium heat until crumbled and cooked through. Sop up any pools of extra fat with paper towels. (Turkey or soy chorizo will have very little fat, but beef and pork will have quite a bit.) Set chorizo aside to cool.

Cut jalapeños in half, leaving the stem intact, if possible. Scoop out seeds and veins and lay peppers out on the baking sheet with the cavity side facing up.

In a small bowl, beat cream cheese with a fork or electric beater until creamy and soft. Stir in grated cheddar, cooked chorizo, garlic and Tajin. (If you want an easy version, add cooked and crumbled bacon to this mixture, but otherwise, wait to wrap the filled peppers with the bacon strips.)

Fill cavities of the cleaned jalapeño halves with the cream cheese mixture. Fill all the way up to the top.

Now, for the bacon you can either wrap it around each stuffed jalapeño half, or you can cut a strip just the length of the jalapeño and lay it over the top of the filling. Using either method, gently press it into the filling to keep it in place, and if wrapping the bacon around the pepper, tuck the last part of the strip of bacon under the first part to help keep it secure.

\*You can also just mix precooked, crumbled bacon to the filling for an easy version. See above.

Bake at 400 F for approximately 15-20 minutes, or until the bacon is cooked and the cheese filling is bubbly and beginning to turn a nice golden-brown.

Serve hot!



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