



**Cook**

# Mexican

**in America**

Recipes with love from  
**The Robot Book  
Club**

# **Cook Mexican in America**

*Authentic Flavors and Techniques for the Everyday Kitchen*

The Robot Book Club

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# Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Mexican.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

# Prologue

There's a specific kind of alchemy that happens in a Mexican kitchen, especially one found tucked into the suburbs of America. It's not the bustling theatre of a high-end restaurant, nor the romanticized chaos of a village *mercado*. This is quieter, more resilient. This is where memory lives, simmering on the stovetop, permeating the very walls of a home with the scent of toasted chiles, roasted tomatoes, and slow-cooked pork. An invisible tether, stretched taut across generations and borders.

For those who grew up navigating two worlds – American weekdays and the vibrant, culinary heart of their heritage – these aromas are a direct line. A Proustian rush back to *abuela's* kitchen, to the comforting embrace of a *sopa de fideo* when you were sick, or the humble, ingenious *guisado* that fed a family of five on a lean Tuesday. Life moves fast now. The American 9-to-5 doesn't care about the traditional rhythms of *la comida*. But the hunger for home, for the tastes that defined a childhood, persists. And more profoundly, the drive to pass those foundational flavors to the next generation burns brighter than ever.

This isn't about reinventing the wheel, chasing ephemeral trends, or sanitizing a vibrant culture for a tourist's palate. This book respectfully steps past the caricatures, the hard-shell taco kits, and the oversized burritos that often masquerade as Mexican food. This is about the good stuff, the honest stuff, the real deal. It's about decoding the everyday magic, the brilliance of matriarchal resourcefulness. It's taking the unspoken wisdom – how to coax rich flavor from humble ingredients, how to turn necessity into something profoundly delicious – and making it actionable. In your kitchen. On a weeknight, or a slow weekend.

What follows is a collection of those essential, unforgettable meals. From the restorative power of a simple broth to the lightning-fast skillet dinners, and the cherished rituals reserved for family gatherings. These are the flavors that define 'home.' Unapologetically authentic, intensely practical. Real food, for real life. Let's cook.





# El Desayuno de Fin de Semana (Slow Weekend Mornings)

*The sacred Mexican-American weekend morning, celebrating the robust and unapologetic almuerzo tradition.*

The weekend morning is sacred territory. You wake not to a blaring alarm, but to the sharp, earthy scent of toasted chilies and the sweet, dark pull of cinnamon curling through the house. This is almuerzo—that heavy, unapologetic, utterly

necessary mid-morning feast bridging the gap between Friday night's sins and Sunday's eventual rest. It is a ritual built on bubbling salsas, fried tortillas, and time.

There is no rushing this. You stand at the stove, nursing a mug of café de olla, frying eggs in crackling oil until the edges crisp up like lace. Whether it is a viciously good plate of chilaquiles or the deeply satisfying, savory chew of machaca, this is the food of recovery and reconnection. It is the kind of meal that demands you sit a little longer at the table, tearing a warm tortilla, soaking up the yolk, the sauce, and the morning itself.





# Chilaquiles de la Casa

*chee-lah-KEE-less de lah CAH-sah*

This isn't the soggy, heavy casserole you find at a suburban brunch buffet. Real chilaquiles—the kind that pull a first-generation kid out of bed by the nose on a Saturday morning—are a masterpiece of architectural integrity. It's about plunging hand-fried, day-old corn tortillas into violently hot salsa just long enough to absorb the soul of the chilies while fighting like hell to keep their crunch. In our house, the debate between red and green was a weekly occurrence, so we've provided the masterclass for both. Choose your allegiance, but never compromise on the method.

## INGREDIENTS

|                 |  |                |   |
|-----------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>12 large</b> | corn tortillas<br><i>cut into sixths or eighths</i>      | <b>1 small</b> | fresh epazote<br><i>left on the sprig</i>             |
| <b>1/2 cup</b>  | neutral oil  | <b>1/8 tsp</b> | baking soda   |
| <b>4 med</b>    | Roma tomatoes  | <b>1 tsp</b>   | chicken bouillon powder                               |
| <b>2 med</b>    | dried Guajillo chilies<br><i>stemmed and seeded</i>      | <b>1/2 cup</b> | fresh cilantro<br><i>roughly chopped</i>              |
| <b>2 small</b>  | dried Árbol chilies<br><i>stemmed</i>                    | <b>2 tsp</b>   | Kosher salt   |
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b> | fresh tomatillos<br><i>husks removed and rinsed well</i> | <b>1/2 cup</b> | crema mexicana  |
| <b>2 small</b>  | fresh Serrano peppers                                    | <b>1/2 cup</b> | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled</i>                       |
| <b>1/2 med</b>  | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>                    | <b>1/4 med</b> | red onion<br><i>sliced into paper-thin half-moons</i> |
| <b>4 small</b>  | garlic   | <b>4 large</b> | eggs  |
| <b>clove</b>    | <i>3 peeled, 1 left in its skin</i>                      | <b>1 pt</b>    | refried black beans<br><i>warmed</i>                  |

## PREPARATION

- **Dry out the tortillas.**

Leave the corn tortillas out on the counter overnight. Drying them out means they will absorb significantly less oil when frying and stay much crunchier in the salsa.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Fry the totopos.**

Heat the neutral oil in a wide skillet over medium-high heat. Fry the tortilla triangles in batches until rigid, golden brown, and crispy. Drain on paper towels, salt immediately, and reserve 1 tablespoon of the oil in the pan.

**1. Boil the base for your chosen salsa.**

For red: boil the tomatoes and dried chilies for 10 minutes until soft. For green: boil the tomatillos and serranos, but pull them the absolute second they shift from bright to dull olive green—if they burst, the salsa turns bitter.

**2. Blend the salsa until perfectly smooth.**

For red, blend the boiled tomatoes and chilies with half the onion, the unpeeled roasted garlic, one raw garlic clove, salt, and 1/2 cup of the boiling liquid. For green, blend the boiled tomatillos and serranos with the remaining onion, two raw garlic cloves, cilantro, bouillon, and salt, using no additional water.

**3. Fry the sauce to deepen its flavor.**

Heat the reserved tortilla oil over medium heat and pour the blended salsa directly into the pan so it sizzles aggressively. Drop in the epazote sprig (for red) or a tiny pinch of baking soda (for green to kill the acid), and simmer for 5 minutes.

**4. Shock the chips in the boiling salsa.**

With the salsa at a rolling boil, dump in all the fried totopos. Fold them gently for exactly 30 to 60 seconds so they get drenched but retain their crunch, then immediately kill the heat.

**5. Plate immediately and garnish aggressively.**

Divide the steaming chilaquiles among shallow bowls. Crown each pile with a fried egg, a heavy drizzle of crema, crumbled queso fresco, thin onions, and cilantro leaves, serving warm beans on the side.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **On diaspora substitutions.**

If you can't find crema mexicana or queso fresco, substitute crème fraîche and a mild, crumbly feta cheese. They provide the exact lactic tang and salty punch required without needing a specialty grocer.

- **The secret to structural integrity.**

Never use thin, bagged commercial tortilla chips. They will disintegrate into mush the moment they hit the hot salsa. Frying slightly stale tortillas is non-negotiable for the authentic texture.



# Huevos Rancheros

There is a profound, rustic poetry in how a Mexican grandmother treats four simple ingredients. Forget the bloated, cheddar-smothered diner versions; authentic huevos rancheros were born of the ranch, designed to sustain farmhands through brutal dawn labor. The secret isn't a massive grocery list—it's the alchemy of technique. You blister the tomatoes, you fry the blended salsa in hot oil until its soul deepens, and you pass the corn tortillas through the pan so they stand tall against the sauce. It is honest, magnificent food that tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

**4 med** Roma tomatoes  
*cored*

**2 med** jalapeño or serrano peppers  
*stems removed*

**1/2 med** white onion  
*peeled and left in a solid chunk*

**2 large** garlic  
**cloves** *unpeeled*

**1 tbsp** neutral oil

**1/2 tsp** kosher salt

**1 pinch** ground cumin

**1/4 cup** neutral oil or bacon grease

**8 small** corn tortillas

**8 large** eggs

**15 oz** canned refried pinto or black beans

**1/2 cup** queso fresco or feta cheese  
*crumbled*

**1 med** avocado  
*sliced*

**1/4 cup** fresh cilantro  
*roughly chopped*

## PREPARATION

- **Mise en place is crucial for the final assembly.**

Assembly must happen very quickly while the eggs, beans, and tortillas are hot. Have your cheese crumbled, cilantro chopped, and avocado sliced before you begin frying the tortillas.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blister the salsa vegetables in a dry skillet.**

Place a dry cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and add the whole tomatoes, jalapeños, onion chunk, and unpeeled garlic. Roast, turning occasionally. Remove the garlic after 5 minutes so it doesn't turn bitter, and let the rest blacken and soften for 10 to 12 minutes.

- 2. Blend the roasted vegetables into a rustic puree.**

Peel the roasted garlic and add it to a blender with the charred tomatoes, chiles, onion, salt, and cumin. Pulse until cohesive but still slightly chunky, pulsing slowly to let the steam escape.

**1. Fry the blended salsa in hot oil to deepen its soul.**

Wipe the skillet clean, add a tablespoon of oil, and set over medium heat until shimmering. Pour the blended salsa directly into the hot oil so it splatters and sears, then reduce the heat and simmer for 5 to 8 minutes until it darkens into a rich, brick-red sauce.

**2. Warm and loosen the refried beans.**

Heat the refried beans in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring in a splash of water or oil to loosen them into a hot, creamy, easily spreadable consistency.

**3. Pass the corn tortillas through hot oil to build a moisture barrier.**

Heat the remaining quarter-cup of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Slide in the tortillas one at a time, frying for just 15 to 20 seconds per side. You want them blistered and golden on the edges but still pliable in the center. Drain on paper towels.

**4. Fry the eggs and baste the whites with the seasoned oil.**

In the same skillet, using the leftover seasoned oil, crack in the eggs and fry them sunny-side up. Use a spoon to gently baste the hot oil over the whites until they just set, leaving the golden yolk perfectly runny.

**5. Assemble the plates quickly while everything is hot.**

Smear the hot beans over two side-by-side tortillas, crown each with a fried egg, and spoon the warm, fried salsa generously over the top, leaving the bright yolk exposed. Garnish with crumbled cheese, sliced avocado, and cilantro, and break the yolks as soon as you sit down to eat.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Make the salsa ahead of time for a fast morning.**

The most time-consuming part of this recipe is roasting and simmering the salsa. To make this a viable 15-minute meal for busy mornings, make the salsa ranchera up to 5 days in advance and simply reheat it while you fry the tortillas.

- **Control the heat level of your chiles.**

American grocery store jalapeños vary wildly in spice. For a milder, family-friendly sauce, thoroughly remove the seeds and white internal ribs from the chiles before blending.

- **Use bacon fat if you have it.**

While standard neutral oil works perfectly, utilizing leftover bacon grease to fry the tortillas and eggs injects a profound, smoky depth into the dish typical of Northern Mexico.



# Machaca con Huevo

For those raised in Mexican-American homes, the hiss of onions and beef hitting a hot skillet on a Sunday morning signals one thing: real machacado. This is the elemental breakfast of the northern cattle ranches, far removed from the wet, braised meat slung at generic diners. True machaca is dried, salted beef pounded into a fibrous fluff that toasts in hot fat before drinking up the acidic juices of fresh tomatoes. The soul of the dish, however, is the green chile; omit it, and you have a sterile hotel buffet, but include it, and you are instantly back in a Monterrey grandmother's kitchen. If authentic packaged machaca is hard to source, pulsing unflavored beef jerky in a food processor is a bulletproof hack that delivers the exact, deeply nostalgic chew of the homeland.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                 |                                      |
|----------------|---|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>2 tbsp</b>  | vegetable oil or pork lard  | <b>2 med</b>    | Roma tomatoes<br><i>diced</i>        |
| <b>1/2 cup</b> | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>  | <b>6 large</b>  | large eggs<br><i>lightly beaten</i>  |
| <b>2 med</b>   | Serrano or Jalapeño chiles<br><i>stems and seeds removed, finely diced</i>  | <b>to taste</b> | salt and black pepper                |
| <b>1 cup</b>   | authentic dried machaca or<br>unflavored beef jerky<br><i>if using jerky, pulsed in a food<br/>processor until fluffy and finely<br/>shredded</i> | <b>8 med</b>    | flour tortillas<br><i>warmed</i>     |
|                |   | <b>1 cup</b>    | refried pinto beans<br><i>warmed</i> |
|                |   | <b>1 med</b>    | avocado<br><i>sliced</i>             |

## PREPARATION

- **Hack the machaca.**

If you cannot source authentic dried machaca from a Hispanic grocer, place high-quality, unflavored beef jerky in a food processor and pulse it until it breaks down into a light, airy fluff.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bloom the aromatics in hot fat.**

Heat the oil or lard in a large skillet over medium heat, then sauté the diced white onion and chiles for 3 to 4 minutes until the onions are soft, translucent, and fragrant.

- 2. Toast the dried beef.**

Add the shredded machaca to the skillet and stir constantly for 1 to 2 minutes so the dry meat absorbs the fat and lightly toasts without burning.

**1. Hydrate the meat with tomatoes.**

Stir in the diced tomatoes and cook for another 3 to 4 minutes, allowing the dry beef to drink up the released acidic juices and transform into tender strands. If the tomatoes are out of season and dry, add a couple tablespoons of water to assist hydration.

**2. Gently scramble the eggs.**

Lower the heat to medium-low, pour the beaten eggs evenly over the mixture, and let sit for just a few seconds before gently folding the eggs over themselves with a spatula until just set and fluffy.

**3. Season and serve immediately.**

Taste before seasoning, as the machaca brings its own salt, then remove from the heat immediately to avoid drying out the eggs. Serve hot with warm flour tortillas, refried beans, and sliced avocado.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The green chile is non-negotiable.**

While you can adjust the heat level by swapping Serrano for Jalapeño, the fresh vegetal bite of the chile is the defining characteristic that elevates this from a bland scramble to a true northern Mexican breakfast.

● **Do not overcook the eggs.**

Machaca is inherently a lean, dried product. If you over-scramble the eggs, the entire dish will become unpleasantly dry.



# Café de Olla

*ka-FEH de O-ya*

If you grew up in a Mexican household, you already know this smell. It is the scent of a slow Saturday morning, an aroma of floral cinnamon and dark, smoky sugar weaving through the house. The tradition comes from the Adelitas—the fierce women of the Mexican Revolution who brewed comfort for their troops on freezing nights. You don't need a traditional clay pot to make it, just a standard saucepan, some decent coffee, and the iron discipline to never, ever boil the grounds.

## INGREDIENTS

**6 cup** filtered water

**8 oz** piloncillo

**1 med** Mexican canela stick

**2 small** cloves  
*left whole*

**6 tbsp** medium-dark roast coffee  
*coarsely ground*

## PREPARATION

- **Grind the coffee coarsely.**

Use a medium-coarse grind, similar to what you would use for a French press, so it strains out easily and doesn't muddy the final brew.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the water, piloncillo, canela, and cloves in a medium saucepan.**

A standard stainless steel or enamel pot works perfectly if you don't have a traditional clay olla de barro.

- 2. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat.**

Stir occasionally to help the piloncillo dissolve completely, then let it boil gently for exactly five minutes to extract the essential oils from the cinnamon and cloves.

- 3. Remove the pot from the heat completely.**

This is the crucial step. Boiling roasted coffee grounds destroys their flavor and extracts harsh, bitter compounds.

- 4. Stir in the coarsely ground coffee and steep.**

Cover the pot and set a timer for exactly five minutes. Do not let it steep any longer, or the brew will turn astringent.

- 5. Strain immediately and serve.**

Pour the coffee through a fine-mesh strainer directly into mugs or a serving pitcher to catch the grounds and spices. Serve piping hot.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Sourcing the right sugar.**

Piloncillo is unrefined Mexican cane sugar with deep caramel notes, easily found in the international aisle of most supermarkets. If unavailable, substitute one cup of packed dark brown sugar mixed with one teaspoon of molasses.

- **Canela is non-negotiable.**

Do not use the hard, aggressively spicy Cassia cinnamon sticks commonly found in the baking aisle. Seek out Mexican canela (Ceylon cinnamon), which is soft, flaky, and yields the delicate floral sweetness essential to this drink.



# Migas Norteñas con Chorizo

*mee-gahs nor-ten-yahs kohn choh-ree-soh*

The smell of rendering pork fat and dried chiles means one thing: it's Saturday morning. In Northern Mexico, migas aren't a sloppy vehicle for heavy, melted cheddar. They are an elegant, frugal masterpiece designed to resurrect yesterday's tortillas. The secret your grandmother knew is sequence. You must cook the raw Mexican chorizo first, pull it from the pan, and then fry the stale tortillas in that glorious, bright-red rendered fat. It's a masterclass in texture—a deeply savory, softly scrambled, crispy-chewy plate of comfort. Simple things done perfectly.

## INGREDIENTS

**1/2 lb**

raw Mexican pork chorizo  
*casings removed*

**6**

stale corn tortillas  
*cut into 1-inch squares*

**1 tbsp** pork lard or canola oil  
**1/4 cup** white onion  
*finely diced*  
**1 med** serrano or jalapeño pepper  
*minced*  
**1 med** Roma tomato  
*cored and diced*

**5** large eggs  
*lightly beaten*  
**1/4 tsp** kosher salt  
**1/4 cup** queso fresco or cotija cheese  
*crumbled*

## PREPARATION

- **Dry your tortillas.**

Authentic migas demand day-old, stale corn tortillas. If yours are fresh from the supermarket, leave them out on the counter overnight or bake them at 250°F for 10 minutes. Fresh tortillas will absorb the oil and turn into a soggy mess.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Render the flavor foundation.**

Place a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the crumbled chorizo until deeply browned, about 5 to 7 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the meat to a paper-towel-lined plate, leaving the bright red rendered fat in the pan.

- 2. Fry the tortillas crisp.**

Assess your fat—you want about 3 tablespoons in the pan. If the chorizo was lean, add the lard or oil. Reduce heat to medium, add the tortilla squares, and fry until blistered and golden, about 4 to 6 minutes. Do not rush the crunch.

- 3. Sauté the aromatics.**

Push the tortillas to the edges of the pan. Drop the onion and pepper into the center, cooking until translucent. Add the tomato, cook for 1 minute more, then toss everything together.

- 4. Execute a gentle scramble.**

Lower the heat to medium-low. Pour the beaten eggs (seasoned with the salt) over the mixture. Let it sit undisturbed for 15 seconds, then use a spatula to gently fold the mixture over itself so the luxurious curds wrap around the tortillas.

**1. Reintegrate and serve.**

When the eggs are mostly set but still glossy, fold the reserved chorizo back into the pan. Remove from heat immediately—the residual pan heat will finish the eggs without turning them to rubber. Garnish generously with crumbled cheese.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Mind your chorizo.**

Make sure you purchase raw, crumbling Mexican pork chorizo (typically in the refrigerated meat or dairy section), not the hard, cured Spanish links.

● **Don't drown it in salsa.**

Unlike chilaquiles, which are simmered in liquid, migas are fundamentally an egg dish. Serve your salsa on the side to preserve the crunchy texture of the fried masa.



# Burritos de Desayuno

*boo-REE-tohs deh deh-sah-YOO-noh*

Forget the overstuffed, rice-padded monstrosities of the American diaspora; a true Northern Mexican breakfast burrito is an exercise in beautiful restraint. Born of necessity in border states like Sonora and Chihuahua, this is a masterpiece of working-class comfort food that relies on just three perfect elements: a fresh, pliant flour tortilla, the savory slick of refried pinto beans, and an intensely flavored guisado of chorizo and eggs. There is no avocado, no sour cream, and absolutely no hash browns to muddy the waters. Just pure, unadulterated nostalgia, rolled tight and blistered on a hot comal in its own rendered fat.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                |  |
|----------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>10 oz</b>   | Mexican pork chorizo<br><i>casing removed</i> | <b>6 large</b> | uncooked flour tortillas<br><i>brought to room temperature</i> |
| <b>6 large</b> | eggs<br><i>lightly beaten</i>                 | <b>1 cup</b>   | Queso Chihuahua or<br>Monterey Jack<br><i>shredded</i>         |
| <b>1 cup</b>   | canned refried pinto beans                    | <b>1/2 cup</b> | salsa verde or salsa roja                                      |

## PREPARATION

- **Beat the eggs.**

Crack the eggs into a medium bowl and beat them lightly with a fork before you begin cooking.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Render the chorizo in a dry skillet.**

Place a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat and break the fresh chorizo apart with a wooden spoon, cooking for 10 to 12 minutes until deeply caramelized and the vibrant red spiced fat has released.

- 2. Scramble the eggs directly into the fat.**

Reduce the heat to medium, pour the beaten eggs directly into the rendered chorizo, and stir gently and continuously until the eggs are just set but still soft and moist.

- 3. Warm the refried beans.**

Heat the refried beans in a small saucepan over medium-low heat until bubbling; add a splash of water or leftover bacon grease if they are too thick to spread easily.

- 4. Heat the tortillas on a hot comal or skillet.**

Cook the raw tortillas on a hot, dry skillet for about 60 seconds per side until they bubble, develop golden-brown spots, and become incredibly pliant and buttery.

**1. Assemble with restraint.**

Lay a warm tortilla flat, spread two tablespoons of the warm beans slightly off-center, top with a scoop of the chorizo and eggs, and sprinkle with a little cheese so it begins to melt.

**2. Fold and roll the burrito tightly.**

Fold the left and right sides inward over the filling, then pull the bottom edge tightly up and over, tucking it slightly underneath before rolling forward into a neat cylinder.

**3. Toast the seam to seal.**

Return the rolled burrito, seam-side down, to the warm skillet for 1 to 2 minutes until sealed shut and golden, preferably using a tiny bit of leftover chorizo fat in the pan to crisp the exterior.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Try the authentic machaca variation.**

For a profoundly traditional Northern flavor, replace the chorizo with 3.5 oz of shredded beef machaca. Sauté a handful of diced white onion, a diced Roma tomato, and a minced serrano chile in oil until soft, toast the machaca for one minute, then scramble the eggs in.

● **Keep the salsa on the side.**

Authentic burritos mañaneros are never stuffed with salsa, pico de gallo, or sour cream, which immediately turns the delicate tortilla soggy. Serve a high-quality salsa on the side to spoon over each bite as you eat.



# Molletes Tradicionales con Pico de Gallo

*moh-YEH-tess trah-dee-see-oh-NAH-less kohn PEE-koh deh GAH-yoh*

There is an old Mexican adage that everything can be fixed over a cup of coffee. In the bustling cafeterías of Mexico City, that coffee is almost always flanked by a plate of molletes. At their core, these are humble, open-faced sandwiches of crusty bread, refried beans, and melting cheese. But true Mexican home cooking relies on technique, not complexity. The secrets of the grandmother's kitchen are simple but absolute: excavate the soft crumb to prevent a soggy base, toast the buttered roll before it ever meets a bean, rub the hot crust with raw garlic, and ensure the beans are aggressively reduced. Crowned with a

bright, acidic pico de gallo to slice through the richness, it is a fiercely guarded piece of domestic heritage perfectly built for a slow weekend morning.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                  |   |
|----------------|---|------------------|---|
| <b>2 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes<br><i>cored, seeded, and finely diced</i> | <b>4 med</b>     | bolillo, telera, or demi-baguette rolls<br><i>halved lengthwise</i> |
| <b>1/2 med</b> | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>                      | <b>3 tbsp</b>    | unsalted butter<br><i>softened to room temp</i>                     |
| <b>2 small</b> | jalapeño or serrano peppers<br><i>finely minced</i>     | <b>1 large</b>   | garlic clove<br><i>peeled and sliced in half</i>                    |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh cilantro<br><i>finely chopped</i>                 | <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | refried beans   |
| <b>2 tbsp</b>  | fresh lime juice  | <b>2 cup</b>     | Queso Oaxaca, Monterey Jack, or Muenster cheese<br><i>shredded</i>  |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | kosher salt   |                  |   |

## PREPARATION

- **Macerate the pico de gallo.**

Combine the tomatoes, onion, chiles, cilantro, lime juice, and salt in a bowl. Letting the onions sit in the lime juice extracts their natural sweetness and removes their harsh, raw bite. This can be made up to 24 hours in advance.

- **Reduce the refried beans.**

Heat the refried beans in a small skillet over medium-low heat until hot and thick. They must not be watery, or they will soak into the bread and ruin the sandwich's structural integrity.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preheat the broiler to high and arrange a rack in the upper third of the oven.**

- 1. Hollow out the bread halves to create a shallow boat.**  
Use your fingers to gently pinch and scoop out the soft white interior crumb. This simple grandmother's trick prevents the dish from being overly dense and makes a cavity for the beans.
- 2. Spread the softened butter evenly across the cut side of each bread half.**
- 3. Broil the buttered bread for 1 to 3 minutes until deeply golden brown and crisp.**  
Watch them like a hawk to ensure they don't burn.
- 4. Rub the raw garlic clove over the hot, toasted bread.**  
The residual heat melts the garlic oils directly into the crumb, while the toasted butter creates a waterproof barrier against the heavy beans.
- 5. Spread a generous, even layer of the warm, thick beans into the hollowed-out cavity of each half.**
- 6. Top the beans completely with the shredded cheese.**  
Ensure the cheese covers the beans entirely and reaches the crispy, toasted edges of the bread.
- 7. Return the assembled molletes to the broiler for 2 to 4 minutes.**  
Broil until the cheese is bubbling furiously and developing beautiful caramelized, golden-brown spots.
- 8. Spoon a generous amount of fresh pico de gallo over the molten cheese and serve immediately.**

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Seek out day-old bread if possible.**  
Slightly stale bread holds up much better against the heavy, moist toppings without disintegrating.

- **Elevate weeknight canned beans with fat and heat.**

If you are using store-bought canned beans, quickly fry them in a skillet with a tablespoon of hot oil, butter, or bacon fat, stirring until they reach the requisite dense consistency.



# Enfrijoladas de Queso Fresco

*en-free-hoh-LAH-dahs deh KEH-soh FRES-coh*

When the scent of garlic and onions sizzling in hot fat hits the air, followed by the aggressive, sputtering hiss of blended black beans hitting the pan, it means the weekend has arrived. Enfrijoladas are the ultimate Mesoamerican comfort food—an unapologetic triumph of home economics where humble pot beans and day-old tortillas are transformed into a masterpiece. The secret to recreating that profound, nostalgic taste of the homeland isn't a luxury ingredient, but ancestral technique. The cooking fat must be infused with deeply charred onions, and the tortillas must be briefly passed through hot oil to build

a structural barrier against the velvety sauce. Bolstered by a hint of chipotle and a whisper of fennel to mimic elusive Oaxacan avocado leaves, this is a dish that tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                         |  |                |   |
|-------------------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>30 oz</b>            | canned whole black beans<br><i>undrained</i> | <b>1/4 med</b> | white onion<br><i>sliced into thin slivers</i>  |
| <b>3 med<br/>cloves</b> | garlic<br><i>peeled</i>                      | <b>1 tsp</b>   | kosher salt                                     |
| <b>1/4 med</b>          | white onion<br><i>left intact</i>            | <b>1/3 cup</b> | vegetable oil                                   |
| <b>2 med</b>            | canned chipotle peppers in<br>adobo sauce    | <b>12 med</b>  | corn tortillas<br><i>preferably a day old</i>   |
| <b>1/8 tsp</b>          | fennel seeds<br><i>crushed</i>               | <b>10 oz</b>   | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled</i>                 |
| <b>2 tbsp</b>           | manteca or bacon grease                      | <b>1/2 cup</b> | crema Mexicana                                  |
|                         |  | <b>1/4 med</b> | red onion<br><i>sliced into thin half-moons</i> |
|                         |  | <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh cilantro<br><i>roughly chopped</i>        |

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Simmer the canned beans with aromatics to replicate the depth of a slow-cooked pot.**

Pour both cans of black beans, including their starchy liquid, into a medium saucepan alongside the intact quarter of white onion, whole garlic cloves, and crushed fennel seeds. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat and cook for 15 minutes until the onion softens.

**2. Blend the bean mixture and chipotles into a velvety purée.**

Transfer the entire contents of the saucepan to a blender, add the chipotle peppers, and blend on high for 60 to 90 seconds until incredibly smooth. If the mixture resembles a thick paste, add a splash of water or chicken broth until it pours like heavy cream.

**1. Fry the remaining white onion in manteca until deeply browned to build the crucial flavor base.**

Heat the manteca in a wide skillet over medium-high heat, add the slivers of white onion, and cook until they border on burnt—this intense caramelization is the secret to authentic Mexican bean dishes. Carefully pour in the blended bean sauce, stirring continuously as it sputters and hisses, then lower the heat and simmer for 5 minutes until slightly thickened.

**2. Briefly pass each tortilla through hot oil to create a structural barrier.**

In a separate small skillet, heat the vegetable oil over medium-high heat. Using tongs, fry each corn tortilla for just 3 to 5 seconds per side to blister them slightly without turning them crispy, then transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. Do not skip this step, or the tortillas will disintegrate in the sauce.

**3. Submerge the fried tortillas in the hot bean sauce before filling with cheese.**

Working one at a time, use tongs to dunk a fried tortilla directly into the simmering black bean sauce for a couple of seconds. Transfer it to a serving plate, add a generous pinch of crumbled queso fresco to the center, and fold it in half like a half-moon.

**4. Top the enfrijoladas with extra sauce, crema, and fresh garnishes.**

Spoon an extra ladle of hot bean sauce over the folded tortillas, then drizzle generously with crema. Scatter the sliced red onions, fresh cilantro, and remaining queso fresco on top, and serve immediately.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing authentic herbs makes a profound difference if you can find them.**

The tiny pinch of fennel in this recipe is a clever diaspora trick to replicate the anise-like aroma of authentic Oaxacan avocado leaves. If you have access to a well-stocked Mexican market, replace the fennel with one dried avocado leaf (toasted briefly in a dry skillet) or a sprig of fresh epazote.



# Huevos a la Mexicana

*weh-vos ah lah meh-hee-kah-nah*

If you grew up in a Mexican household, the smell of these three ingredients hitting hot fat is the universal alarm clock of a Saturday morning. Named for the colors of the national flag, this is a masterpiece of making something profound out of next to nothing. The secret your grandmother knew, which separates this from generic eggs with vegetables, is patience: the tomatoes must cook down into a thick, jammy paste before the eggs ever touch the pan. This technique infuses every single curd with a savory, deeply comforting flavor that tastes exactly like home. It requires zero fancy ingredients—just fresh produce, a good hot pan, and respect for the technique.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                |  |
|----------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>2 tbsp</b>  | pork lard or neutral oil                            | <b>2 med</b>   | roma tomatoes<br><i>cored and finely chopped</i> |
| <b>1/2 cup</b> | white onion<br><i>finely chopped</i>                | <b>8 large</b> | eggs   |
| <b>2 med</b>   | serrano chiles<br><i>stemmed and finely chopped</i> | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | whole milk or water                              |
|                |   | <b>3/4 tsp</b> | kosher salt                                      |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Bloom the aromatics in hot fat.

Heat the lard or oil in a large 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering, then add the chopped white onion and chiles, sautéing for 3 to 4 minutes until the onions are soft, translucent, and deeply fragrant.

### 2. Reduce the tomatoes into a thick salsa.

This is the crucial step. Add the chopped tomatoes to the skillet and cook for 4 to 5 minutes until they break down, release their juices, and the ambient liquid mostly evaporates, leaving a chunky, concentrated, jam-like paste.

### 3. Vigorously beat the eggs.

While the tomatoes are reducing, crack the eggs into a mixing bowl, add the milk and salt, and whisk vigorously until the yolks and whites are completely combined and slightly frothy.

### 4. Scramble gently over medium-low heat.

Lower the skillet heat to medium-low, pour the beaten eggs directly over the tomato mixture, and let them sit undisturbed for a few seconds until the edges begin to set before gently folding them toward the center with a rubber spatula.

### 5. Pull from the heat while slightly soft.

Continue folding until the eggs are cooked through but still look soft, creamy, and slightly moist. Remove the skillet from the heat immediately so they do not dry out, and serve right away.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Control the heat of the chiles.**

For a milder scramble that still retains the essential green flavor, slice the serrano chiles in half and scrape out the seeds and white veins before chopping. You can also substitute jalapeños.

- **Manage watery tomatoes.**

If your Roma tomatoes are particularly watery, scoop out and discard the wet seed pockets before chopping to ensure the eggs do not turn out soggy.

- **Serve with the traditional accompaniments.**

To complete the classic morning table, serve alongside a rustic mash of refried pinto beans topped with crumbly queso fresco, and plenty of warm corn tortillas heated directly over a gas flame.



# Tamales Recalentados con Huevos Fritos

In Mexican households, the real feast often happens the morning after the party. The tradition of the recalentado isn't just about clearing out the fridge; it is a sacred culinary maneuver that transforms yesterday's steamed masa into something profound. By stripping day-old, chilled tamales of their husks and patiently crisping them in a heavy cast-iron pan, the exterior develops a deeply savory, golden crust while the interior re-steams in its own rich juices. Topped with a perfectly runny sunny-side-up egg, whose yolk acts as a luxurious sauce binding the crispy corn to creamy refried beans and sharp salsa, this is breakfast as an act of pure, unadulterated comfort.

## INGREDIENTS

|               |   |                |                                 |
|---------------|---|----------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>4 med</b>  | leftover savory tamales<br><i>chilled</i> | <b>4 large</b> | eggs                            |
| <b>2 tbsp</b> | pork lard or neutral oil                  | <b>1/4 cup</b> | salsa verde or salsa roja       |
| <b>1 cup</b>  | canned refried pinto or black<br>beans    | <b>1/4 cup</b> | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled</i> |
| <b>1 tbsp</b> | water                                     | <b>2 tbsp</b>  | Mexican crema                   |

## PREPARATION

- **Remove the husks from the chilled tamales.**

Carefully peel off and discard the corn husks from the cold tamales, brushing away any loose crumbles of masa so they do not burn in the skillet, and gently flatten them slightly with your palm.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the refried beans.**

In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, warm the beans with a splash of water, stirring constantly until silky and hot, then lower the heat to keep them warm.

- 2. Crisp the tamales in a heavy skillet.**

Heat one tablespoon of the lard or oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-low heat. Lay the unwrapped, flattened tamales flat in the pan and let them sizzle undisturbed for 5 to 7 minutes until a golden-brown crust forms.

- 3. Flip and finish crisping the tamales.**

Carefully turn the tamales with a spatula and fry for another 5 minutes to crisp the other side, ensuring the dense masa heats all the way through.

**1. Fry the eggs in a separate skillet.**

While the tamales finish, heat the remaining tablespoon of fat in a separate non-stick skillet over medium heat and fry the eggs until the whites are just set but the yolks remain perfectly runny.

**2. Assemble the plate and serve immediately.**

Smear a generous spoonful of warm beans onto a plate, lay down the crispy tamales, and slide a fried egg on top of each, garnishing with salsa, crumbled queso fresco, and a drizzle of crema.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Do not use sweet tamales for this preparation.**

This method relies on savory tamales like pork, chicken, or poblano and cheese; sweet masa will burn quickly in the pan and clash with the eggs and salsa.

● **Control your skillet temperature carefully.**

Resist the urge to crank the heat up to high, which will scorch the outside of the tamal while leaving the center refrigerator-cold.



# Sopitas para el Alma (The Food Mom Made When We Were Sick)

*Medicinal, comforting, and restorative broths and soups for the days you need to care for a sick child or comfort your inner child.*

There is a universal truth understood in every Mexican American household: the pharmacy doesn't hold a candle to the pantry. When the fever spikes, or the weight of the world just feels a little too heavy, the cure doesn't come in a pill bottle. It comes in a bowl. It's the smell of toasted fideo hitting hot oil, the slow-simmered fortification of a proper caldo de pollo, the unapologetic warmth of a broth laced with fat and memory. This is triage, administered from the stove.

These aren't weekend projects or culinary flexes. They are the quick, utilitarian miracles pulled from standard cupboards on Tuesday nights when someone needs fixing. Whether it's the gentle heat of a crema de poblano or the dense, meaty reassurance of albóndigas, these are the pots that stitched you back together. Now, it's your turn to tend the fire.





## Sopita de Estrellitas con Recaudo Casero

There is a distinct, unmistakable smell that defines a Mexican home kitchen, one that tells you instantly that someone loves you and wants you to feel better. This isn't the flashy, synthesized stuff of a Hollywood cantina; it's the beautiful, efficient, deeply comforting reality of grandmother's cooking. The secret to this soup isn't a complex list of ingredients, but two uncompromising, old-school techniques: toasting the dry pasta in hot oil until it smells nutty, and frying the raw tomato puree in that same pot until it darkens and sweetens. Skip these, and you're eating mush. Respect the process, and you get a rich, savory broth that tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                           |   |                   |                         |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>3 large</b>            | Roma tomatoes<br><i>roughly chopped</i> | <b>1 1/2 tbsp</b> | neutral oil             |
| <b>1/4 med</b>            | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>   | <b>7 oz</b>       | star pasta              |
| <b>2 large<br/>cloves</b> | garlic<br><i>peeled</i>                 | <b>6 cup</b>      | chicken broth           |
| <b>1/4 cup</b>            | water                                   | <b>1 tsp</b>      | chicken bouillon powder |
|                           |   | <b>1 sprig</b>    | fresh cilantro          |
|                           |   | <b>to taste</b>   | kosher salt             |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Blend the recaudo flavor base.

Combine the Roma tomatoes, white onion, garlic, and water in a blender and puree on high until completely smooth.

### 2. Toast the dry pasta to lock in its texture.

Heat the oil in a medium heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the dry pasta and stir continuously for 4 to 6 minutes until it blisters slightly and turns a deep, nutty golden-brown. Do not walk away; it will burn quickly.

### 3. Fry the tomato puree.

Carefully pour the blended tomato mixture directly into the hot pot with the pasta—stand back, as it will sizzle aggressively and release a plume of steam. Lower the heat slightly and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, scraping the bottom, until the puree loses its raw smell and darkens to a rich brick red.

### 4. Simmer and hydrate the soup.

Pour in the chicken broth, add the bouillon powder, and drop in the cilantro sprig. Bring to a gentle boil, then immediately lower the heat, cover, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until the star pasta is perfectly tender.

## 1. **Season and serve.**

Remove from the heat and discard the cooked cilantro sprig. Taste the broth, adjusting with kosher salt if needed, and serve immediately alongside warm corn tortillas, fresh lime wedges, and cubes of melting cheese.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The leftover phenomenon.**

The pasta will continue to absorb broth overnight in the fridge. By the next day, it will be thick. Simply add a splash of water or extra chicken broth when reheating to loosen it back to a brothy consistency.

- **Pantry emergency adaptation.**

If fresh Roma tomatoes are unavailable, substitute an 8-ounce can of standard American tomato sauce. You must still blend it with the onion and garlic, and crucially, fry it in the oil to eliminate the tinny canned flavor.

- **Optional add-ins.**

To make this a heartier meal, drop in a diced calabacita (Mexican squash) or a cup of shredded, cooked chicken breast during the last 5 minutes of simmering.



# Caldo de Pollo Estilo Semana

*kahl-doh de po-yo es-tee-lo se-ma-na*

This is the culinary equivalent of an abuela's embrace, deployed for everything from a winter cold to a broken heart. The secret to that deeply savory, transportive flavor isn't a powdered bouillon cube; it's the unyielding extraction of collagen from bone-in chicken and a late hit of fresh mint. We rely on the modern pressure cooker—a utilitarian workhorse Mexican grandmothers have actually embraced for decades—to pull every ounce of soul from those bones in a fraction of the time, leaving you with a golden broth that tastes exactly like home on a busy Tuesday.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |  |                      |   |
|------------------|--|----------------------|---|
| <b>2 lb</b>      | bone-in skin-on chicken pieces                                     | <b>2 med</b>         | waxy potatoes<br><i>scrubbed and quartered</i>          |
| <b>1/2 large</b> | white onion<br><i>root attached</i>                                | <b>2 med</b>         | zucchini<br><i>cut into thick half-moons</i>            |
| <b>4 med</b>     | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled and smashed</i>                         | <b>1/4 small</b>     | white cabbage<br><i>cored and cut into large wedges</i> |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | kosher salt  | <b>4 med</b>         | fresh mint sprigs                                       |
| <b>8 cup</b>     | water  | <b>1 small bunch</b> | fresh cilantro  |
| <b>2 large</b>   | carrots<br><i>peeled and cut into thick rounds</i>                 | <b>2 cup</b>         | cooked rice<br><i>kept warm</i>                         |
| <b>2 med</b>     | ears corn on the cob<br><i>shucked and cut into 2-inch rounds</i>  | <b>2 med</b>         | limes<br><i>cut into wedges</i>                         |
| <b>1 large</b>   | chayote squash<br><i>peeled, pitted, and cut into large chunks</i> |                      |   |

## PREPARATION

- **Prep the vegetables in advance.**

Because the pressure cooker works fast, having your vegetables chopped and segregated by their cooking phase will save you a headache once the lid comes off.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Extract the bone collagen under pressure.**

Place the chicken pieces, onion half, smashed garlic, and salt into an electric pressure cooker, cover with the water, and cook on high pressure for 20 minutes.

- 2. Strain the broth and shred the meat.**

Quick-release the pressure, then use tongs to transfer the chicken to a cutting board to cool; discard the spent onion and garlic so you're left with a pristine, golden liquid.

**1. Simmer the hard vegetables first.**

Switch the cooker to the sauté function, add the carrots, corn, and chayote, and simmer gently for 10 minutes to soften them without destroying their structure.

**2. Add the potatoes and prep the chicken.**

Drop in the potatoes to simmer for another 5 to 7 minutes while you pull the cooled chicken meat from the bones, discarding the skin and cartilage.

**3. Add the soft vegetables and the shredded chicken.**

Return the shredded meat to the pot along with the zucchini and cabbage wedges.

**4. Steep the crucial herbs off the heat.**

Turn off the cooker completely, submerge the fresh mint and cilantro directly into the hot broth, cover, and let sit undisturbed for 5 to 10 minutes to extract those volatile essential oils without obliterating the greens.

**5. Assemble the bowls.**

Place a scoop of warm rice at the bottom of each wide bowl, ladle the hot broth and chunky vegetables generously over the top, and serve immediately with fresh lime wedges for squeezing.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Bone-in chicken is strictly non-negotiable.**

Do not use boneless, skinless breasts for the base; the cartilage and skin are entirely responsible for the broth's restorative, lip-smacking texture.

● **Staggering the vegetables is critical.**

The golden rule of an authentic caldo is sequential cooking. Dumping all the vegetables in at once guarantees an unappetizing, mushy stew.

● **Chayote substitutions.**

If you can't find chayote at your local market, swap in a couple of peeled turnips or just rely on extra zucchini added at the very end.



# Albóndigas en Caldo con Yerbabuena

This is the real deal. Not some watered-down, cilantro-laced diner knockoff, but the soul-warming, complex bowl your grandmother would quietly assemble on a Tuesday. The secret lies in a fierce fry of the tomato base and the absolute refusal to swap spearmint for anything else in the meatballs. With a fifty-fifty split of beef and pork, laced with milk-soaked bread and raw rice, these albóndigas don't seize—they yield, drinking in a restorative broth built to cure whatever ails you.

## INGREDIENTS

**1/2 lb** ground beef

**1/2 lb** ground pork

|                |   |                |  |
|----------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>1 slice</b> | white sandwich bread<br><i>crusts removed</i> | <b>2 med</b>   | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>                       |
| <b>3 tbsp</b>  | whole milk                                    | <b>1 med</b>   | chipotle pepper in adobo<br>sauce<br><i>optional</i> |
| <b>1 large</b> | large egg<br><i>lightly beaten</i>            | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | neutral cooking oil                                  |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | long-grain white rice<br><i>rinsed</i>        | <b>8 cup</b>   | chicken broth  |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh spearmint<br><i>finely chopped</i>      | <b>2 med</b>   | carrots<br><i>peeled and cut into thick coins</i>    |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | white onion<br><i>very finely minced</i>      | <b>2 med</b>   | Yukon Gold potatoes<br><i>peeled and cubed</i>       |
| <b>2 med</b>   | garlic cloves<br><i>minced</i>                | <b>2 med</b>   | Mexican squash<br><i>cut into half-moons</i>         |
| <b>1 tsp</b>   | kosher salt                                   | <b>4 small</b> | fresh cilantro sprigs                                |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | black pepper                                  | <b>2 med</b>   | limes<br><i>cut into wedges</i>                      |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | ground cumin                                  | <b>8 med</b>   | corn tortillas<br><i>warmed</i>                      |
| <b>5 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes                                 |                |  |
| <b>1/4 med</b> | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>         |                |  |

## PREPARATION

- **Mince the aromatics finely.**

Take the time to very finely mince the onion and garlic for the meatballs, ensuring they melt into the meat rather than creating harsh, crunchy pockets.

- **Rinse the rice.**

Give the raw white rice a brief rinse under cold water to remove excess surface starch before mixing it into the meat.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Steep the panade.

Tear the bread into small pieces in a large bowl, pour the milk over it, and let it sit for two minutes until it forms a soft paste.

**1. Mix the meat gently.**

Add the ground beef, pork, rinsed rice, beaten egg, spearmint, minced onion, minced garlic, salt, pepper, and cumin to the panade. Mix with your hands until just combined, taking care not to overwork the meat, which makes the meatballs tough.

**2. Form the albóndigas.**

Roll the mixture into uniform, golf-ball-sized spheres and chill them on a plate in the refrigerator while you build the broth.

**3. Blend the recaudo.**

Puree the Roma tomatoes, the roughly chopped quarter onion, peeled garlic cloves, and the chipotle pepper in a blender until completely smooth.

**4. Fry the base to build real flavor.**

Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat, carefully pour in the sputtering tomato puree, and let it fry aggressively for five to seven minutes until it darkens and thickens.

**5. Construct the broth.**

Pour the chicken broth into the fried tomato base, bring the liquid to a rolling boil, and taste to ensure the seasoning is deep and savory.

**6. Set the meatballs.**

Lower the heat to a gentle simmer and drop the chilled meatballs into the pot one by one without stirring, allowing them to set their shape for fifteen minutes.

**7. Stage the dense vegetables.**

Add the cubed potatoes and carrot coins to the pot, cover, and simmer for another ten minutes.

**8. Finish with the squash and cilantro.**

Drop in the squash half-moons and fresh cilantro sprigs, simmering for a final five to seven minutes until the squash is tender but retains its structure.

**1. Serve immediately.**

Ladle the steaming broth, vegetables, and three or four meatballs into deep bowls alongside fresh lime wedges and pliable, warm corn tortillas.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

- **Keep the meatballs uniform.**

If you roll the albóndigas larger than golf balls, the raw rice inside will struggle to cook fully in the allotted time.

- **Do not swap the mint.**

While cilantro is welcome in the finishing broth, omitting the spearmint from the meatball itself robs the dish of its authentic, nostalgic soul.

- **Store for a better tomorrow.**

Like most real stews, this tastes even better the next day after the flavors meld, and it stores beautifully in the fridge for up to four days.



# Caldo Tlalpeño

*kahl-doh tlahl-pen-yoh*

If standard chicken soup is a gentle pat on the back, Caldo Tlalpeño is a deeply restorative embrace from a Mexican grandmother. Born in the Tlalpan borough of Mexico City—allegedly to cure a nineteenth-century president's brutal hangover—this smoky, complex broth is pure weeknight alchemy. The secret is not just tossing a chipotle into the pot; it is a fiery sofrito of blended tomatoes, onions, garlic, and chipotles fried until jammy and brick-red before hitting the broth. Staggering the vegetables keeps them crisp, while bone-in chicken and canned chickpeas deliver slow-simmered depth in a fraction of the time.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 1/2 lb** bone-in skinless chicken thighs  
**8 cup** water  
**1/2 med** white onion  
*left intact*  
**3 small clove** garlic  
*peeled and smashed*  
**1 1/2 tsp** kosher salt  
**2 large** bay leaf  
**3 med** Roma tomatoes  
*quartered*  
**1/4 med** white onion  
**2 small clove** garlic  
*peeled*  
**2 med** canned chipotle peppers in adobo  
**1 tbsp** adobo sauce  
**1 tbsp** neutral oil

**2 med** carrots  
*peeled and chopped into 1/2-inch rounds*  
**1 med** russet or Yukon gold potato  
*peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes*  
**1 cup** fresh green beans  
*ends trimmed and cut into thirds*  
**15 oz** canned chickpeas  
*drained and rinsed well*  
**1 med** zucchini  
*diced into 1/2-inch cubes*  
**2 small sprig** fresh epazote  
**1 large** avocado  
*diced*  
**4 oz** Queso Oaxaca or Monterey Jack cheese  
*cut into small cubes*  
**1/4 cup** fresh cilantro  
*chopped*  
**2 med** limes  
*cut into wedges*

## PREPARATION

- **Prep the garnishes while the soup simmers.**

Dice your avocado, cube your cheese, and wedge your limes before the zucchini finishes cooking. This soup waits for no one and must be served piping hot so the cheese melts on contact.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Simmer the chicken, half onion, smashed garlic, salt, and bay leaves in water to build the foundational broth.**

Bring the pot to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, skimming and discarding any white foam that rises to the surface. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover partially, and let it simmer gently for 25 to 30 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and tender.

- 2. Blend the tomatoes, quarter onion, peeled garlic, chipotles, and adobo sauce into a smooth purée.**

Place the ingredients in a blender and carefully ladle in about 1/2 cup of the hot chicken broth from your simmering pot. Blend on high until completely smooth.

- 3. Fry the tomato-chipotle purée in hot oil until it darkens and caramelizes.**

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Once shimmering, carefully pour in the purée, standing back to avoid splatters. Stir frequently and fry for 5 to 7 minutes until it reduces to a deep, brick-red, jammy consistency.

- 4. Remove the cooked chicken from the broth and shred the meat.**

Use tongs to transfer the chicken thighs to a cutting board. Discard the boiled onion, garlic cloves, and bay leaves from the broth. Shred the chicken meat with two forks and discard the bones.

- 5. Stir the fried sofrito into the clear chicken broth, then stagger the addition of the vegetables based on their firmness.**

Add the carrots and potatoes first, simmering for 10 minutes. Next, add the green beans, chickpeas, and epazote sprigs, simmering for another 5 minutes. Finally, return the shredded chicken to the pot along with the zucchini and simmer for a final 5 minutes so the squash remains beautifully tender-crisp.

- 6. Ladle the steaming soup into deep bowls and garnish aggressively.**

The garnishes are not optional. Customize each bowl at the table with melting cubes of cheese, diced avocado, fresh cilantro, and a heavy squeeze of fresh lime juice to cut through the rich, smoky broth.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the sofrito.**

Frying the blended tomato and chipotle base is the non-negotiable Maillard reaction that transforms plain chicken water into a complex, days-old-tasting restorative elixir.

- **Sourcing Epazote.**

Epazote is the authentic soul of the dish with a pungent, earthy flavor. If you absolutely cannot find it at a Mexican market, substitute a quarter cup of fresh cilantro stems, acknowledging the flavor profile will shift slightly.



# Caldo de Queso Sonorense

*kahl-doh deh keh-soh soh-noh-rehn-seh*

Caldo de Queso is the ultimate expression of northern Mexican comfort, born in the harsh, beautiful deserts of Sonora where cattle ranching dictates the table. This isn't the heavy, flour-choked cheese soup of American diners; it is a delicate, restorative broth built on roasted green chiles, sweet tomatoes, and starchy potatoes. The absolute soul of the dish happens at the very end, when cubes of fresh Queso Panela are dropped into the hot liquid off the heat. They soften into warm, yielding pillows without ever melting away. It's a brilliant, nostalgic bowl of resourcefulness that comes together on a busy Tuesday night, exactly the way mothers and grandmothers have made it for generations.

## INGREDIENTS

|                         |   |                |  |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>4 med</b>            | Anaheim peppers   | <b>4 cup</b>   | low-sodium chicken broth                       |
| <b>2 tbsp</b>           | neutral oil   | <b>1/2 tsp</b> | dried Mexican oregano<br><i>crushed</i>        |
| <b>1 med</b>            | white onion<br><i>finely chopped</i>  | <b>1 tsp</b>   | kosher salt                                    |
| <b>3 med<br/>cloves</b> | garlic<br><i>minced</i>   | <b>1/4 tsp</b> | black pepper                                   |
| <b>2 large</b>          | Roma tomatoes<br><i>diced</i>   | <b>1/2 cup</b> | evaporated milk                                |
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b>         | Yukon Gold potatoes<br><i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (do<br/>not rinse)</i> | <b>12 oz</b>   | Queso Panela<br><i>cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i> |
|                         |   | <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh cilantro<br><i>chopped, for garnish</i>  |

## PREPARATION

- **Roast the chiles.**

Broil the fresh Anaheim peppers until the skins are thoroughly blackened, about 10 minutes. Place them in a sealed bag or covered bowl to steam for 10 minutes, then peel off the charred skin, remove the stems and seeds, and cut the flesh into strips.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the sofrito.**

Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the diced tomatoes and cook until they break down into a thick, jammy paste. This neutralizes their sharp acidity, which is the crucial secret to keeping the dairy from curdling later.

- 2. Coat the potatoes.**

Add the cubed potatoes to the pot, tossing them in the tomato and onion mixture for a few minutes. Do not rinse the potatoes before adding them; their natural surface starches will act as a gentle, perfect thickener for the broth.

**1. Simmer the broth.**

Pour in the chicken broth, salt, pepper, and oregano. Bring the liquid to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for about 15 minutes until the potatoes are fork-tender. Stir in the roasted chile strips.

**2. Introduce the dairy off the heat.**

Turn the heat down to the absolute lowest setting, or better yet, turn it off entirely. Slowly stream in the evaporated milk while stirring continuously. Never let the soup boil once the dairy is added, or it will break into grainy lumps.

**3. Drop the cheese.**

With the pot off the heat, gently slide in the cubes of Queso Panela. Let the soup sit undisturbed for 3 to 5 minutes so the cheese softens into warm, savory bites without melting into the broth. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve with warm flour tortillas.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Weeknight Hack.**

If you are short on time, substitute a 7-ounce can of whole roasted mild green chiles, rinsed and sliced. Using evaporated milk instead of whole milk is also a brilliant, foolproof shortcut because its altered protein structure prevents it from curdling.

● **The Cheese Rules.**

Resist the urge to use Oaxaca, Monterey Jack, or Mozzarella. They will dissolve entirely into a greasy, stringy mess and ruin the broth. Queso Panela is the perfect, accessible stand-in for authentic Sonoran ranch cheese.



# Sopa de Lentejas con Tocino y Jalapeño

If there is a dish that captures the resourceful, unapologetic soul of a Mexican mother's kitchen, it is Sopa de Lentejas. Born out of the frugal necessity of the 'fin de quincena'—the end of the pay cycle—this is how humble pantry staples are spun into gold. The magic isn't in a rare spice; it's in the recaudo. By aggressively frying a puree of tomatoes and garlic in rendered bacon fat, you force the flavors to concentrate into a deeply savory, smoky base before a single drop of broth hits the pot. It's an honest, unvarnished bowl of food that tastes exactly like a Tuesday night in the suburbs, cooked by someone who gives a damn.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                |   |
|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| <b>3 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes<br><i>roughly chopped</i>                       | <b>1 med</b>   | fresh jalapeno<br><i>left whole or finely diced</i>           |
| <b>2 large</b> | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>                                | <b>1 cup</b>   | dry brown lentils<br><i>picked over for stones and rinsed</i> |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | water   | <b>6 cup</b>   | water   |
| <b>8 oz</b>    | thick-cut smoked bacon<br><i>chopped into 1/2-inch pieces</i> | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | chicken bouillon powder                                       |
| <b>1/2 med</b> | white onion<br><i>finely chopped</i>                          | <b>1 small</b> | bunch fresh cilantro<br><i>tied with a piece of string</i>    |
|                |   | <b>2 med</b>   | limes<br><i>cut into wedges for serving</i>                   |

## PREPARATION

- **Always inspect your dry lentils.**

Spread the dry lentils out on a light-colored plate or baking sheet to quickly pick out any small stones or debris before rinsing them.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blend the tomatoes, garlic, and a quarter cup of water until completely smooth.**  
Set this puree, known as the recaudo, aside for now.
- 2. Cook the chopped bacon in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until the fat renders and the meat is deeply golden.**  
Use a slotted spoon to remove about half of the crispy bacon to a paper towel for garnish, leaving the remaining bacon and all the rendered fat in the pot.
- 3. Add the chopped onion to the hot bacon fat and sauté until translucent and fragrant.**  
If you prefer a spicier soup, finely dice the jalapeño and sauté it alongside the onion.

- 1. Pour the blended tomato puree directly into the hot pot with the onions and bacon fat.**

This technique is called *chillar la cazuela* (making the pot squeal). Cook the mixture, stirring frequently, until it darkens to a rich brick-red and loses its raw tomato smell, about 5 to 7 minutes.

- 2. Pour in the six cups of water, chicken bouillon powder, and rinsed lentils.**

If you opted to leave the jalapeño whole to control the heat, poke a small slit in its side and drop it into the broth now.

- 3. Bring the pot to a rapid boil, then immediately reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.**

- 4. Drop the bundle of fresh cilantro into the pot, cover, and simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes until the lentils are tender.**

- 5. Discard the cilantro and whole jalapeño, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, and serve.**

Ladle the hot soup into bowls and top with the reserved crispy bacon and a heavy squeeze of fresh lime.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the chicken bouillon powder.**

While modern culinary trends lean heavily toward homemade bone broths, the undisputed backbone of authentic, late-20th-century Mexican-American home cooking is the distinctive yellow and green jar of chicken bouillon. It provides the exact nostalgic flavor profile you are looking for.

- **Control the spice by leaving the jalapeño whole.**

If cooking for a family with varying spice tolerances, do not dice the jalapeño. Instead, poke a single slit in the pepper and drop it into the simmering soup to extract the vegetal flavor and oils without unleashing the fiery seeds.



# Sopa de Avena Savory

*so-pah deh ah-veh-nah*

Americans think of oatmeal as a sweet morning punishment, a gluey bowl of brown sugar and cinnamon. But Mexican grandmothers know better. This is the ultimate sick-day comfort food, a brothy, deeply savory hug that trades the usual pasta for toasted rolled oats. It smells like a childhood kitchen in an Ohio suburb, entirely unpretentious and fundamentally restorative. The secret to making it taste like the old country is the 'tostado'—frying the oats until they smell like warm nuts—before hitting them with a freshly blended tomato recaudo. It practically cures a cold on contact.

## INGREDIENTS

|                   |  |                |  |
|-------------------|--|----------------|--|
| <b>3 med</b>      | Roma tomatoes<br><i>roughly chopped</i>  | <b>1/2 med</b> | zucchini<br><i>finely diced</i>              |
| <b>1/4 med</b>    | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>    | <b>5 small</b> | fresh cilantro                               |
| <b>2 large</b>    | fresh garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>     | <b>sprigs</b>  |  |
| <b>1 small</b>    | serrano pepper<br><i>seeded</i>          | <b>1 tsp</b>   | salt   |
| <b>1 1/2 tbsp</b> | neutral cooking oil                      | <b>1/4 tsp</b> | black pepper<br><i>freshly cracked</i>       |
| <b>1 cup</b>      | old-fashioned rolled oats                | <b>1 med</b>   | avocado<br><i>diced, for serving</i>         |
| <b>6 cup</b>      | hot chicken broth                        | <b>1/2 cup</b> | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled, for serving</i> |
| <b>1 med</b>      | carrot<br><i>peeled and finely diced</i> | <b>1/4 cup</b> | Mexican crema<br><i>for serving</i>          |
| <b>1 small</b>    | celery stalk<br><i>finely diced</i>      | <b>1 med</b>   | lime<br><i>cut into wedges, for serving</i>  |

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sift the oats through a fine-mesh strainer to remove the fine starchy dust.**  
Getting rid of this oat powder is a classic grandmother trick; it prevents the soup from becoming murky or burning in the pan later.
- 2. Blend the tomatoes, onion, garlic, and serrano pepper with a half-cup of the hot broth until entirely smooth.**  
This raw puree is your recaudo, the foundational flavor base of almost all authentic Mexican brothy soups.
- 3. Heat the oil in a soup pot over medium heat and toast the sifted oats.**  
This technique, known as *el tostado*, is non-negotiable. It partially gelatinizes the starches so the oats hold their shape instead of turning to mush. Stir constantly for three to five minutes until they turn golden brown and smell profoundly nutty.

**1. Fry the carrots, celery, and the blended tomato recaudo into the hot oats.**

Toss the diced carrots and celery in for a quick minute, then pour in the tomato puree. It will sizzle aggressively. Stir constantly until the puree deepens from pale pink to a rich brick red, which indicates the raw onion flavor has cooked out.

**2. Pour in the remaining hot chicken broth, bringing the pot to a gentle boil.**

Using hot broth is critical to ensure you don't shock the cooking process, allowing the toasted oats to hydrate evenly. Toss in the zucchini, fresh cilantro sprigs, salt, and black pepper.

**3. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and gently simmer for exactly seven to ten minutes.**

Oats cook far faster than pasta. You want the vegetables tender and the oats fully hydrated but still retaining a slight bite.

**4. Turn off the heat and let the soup rest for a few minutes before serving.**

The oats will continue to act like tiny sponges as they sit. If the soup looks too heavy, simply stir in an extra splash of hot broth or water to loosen it back into a comforting consistency. Serve hot, letting everyone garnish their own bowl with avocado, crumbled queso, crema, and a hit of lime.



# Guisados de Martes (Quick Weeknight Skillets & 'A La Mexicana' Magic)

*The utilitarian engine of the Mexican American kitchen, adapting traditional midday stews into fast, 30-minute weeknight dinners.*

Guisados are the unsung, blue-collar workhorses of the Mexican home. They are what happens when a tired cook stares down an unforgiving Tuesday evening and needs to put real food on the table, fast. This isn't the slow, ceremonial cooking of the weekend. It's the everyday, improvisational magic of a hot skillet and the foundational trinity—tomato, onion, and jalapeño—doing the heavy lifting.

These are the plates that raised you: the quick-simmered bistec, the bubbling picadillo, the squash melting into ribbons of cheese. They are fast, economical, and unpretentious, built for standard kitchens but tasting entirely of home.





## Bistec a la Mexicana

To ask a Mexican home cook what "a la mexicana" means is to invite a lesson in the tricolor flag: the fierce green of jalapeño, the sharp white of onion, and the vibrant red of Roma tomato. When you throw this holy trinity into a hot skillet with thinly sliced beef, the alchemy of the guisado takes over. There is no need to blitz a complex sauce in a blender; simply cover the pan and let the fresh tomatoes melt down into their own rich, rustic gravy. It smells exactly like the homeland on a Tuesday night, especially if you embrace the truest, most closely guarded grandma secret—a spoonful of beef bouillon rubbed directly into the meat.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |   |                           |  |
|------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b>  | top sirloin, thinly sliced<br>ribeye, or skirt steak<br><i>thinly sliced against the grain into 2-inch strips</i> | <b>2 med</b>              | serrano or jalapeño peppers<br><i>diced</i>                                  |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | neutral oil   | <b>2 large<br/>cloves</b> | garlic<br><i>finely minced</i>   |
| <b>1 tsp</b>     | beef bouillon powder  | <b>4 large</b>            | Roma tomatoes<br><i>cored and diced into 1/2-inch cubes</i>                  |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b>   | ground cumin  | <b>1/2 cup</b>            | water or low-sodium beef<br>broth  |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b>   | black pepper  | <b>1/4 cup</b>            | fresh cilantro<br><i>roughly chopped</i>                                     |
| <b>1 tsp</b>     | Maggi seasoning or soy sauce  | <b>2 med</b>              | Yukon gold or russet potatoes<br><i>peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes</i> |
| <b>1/2 large</b> | white onion<br><i>sliced into half-moons</i>  |                           |  |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Toss the beef with its seasonings and let it rest.

In a bowl, toss the beef strips with the beef bouillon powder, ground cumin, black pepper, and Maggi seasoning. Let it sit for 10 to 15 minutes. The salt and enzymes in the bouillon and soy sauce will begin to tenderize the meat, keeping it from toughening up in the skillet.

### 2. Sear the beef in a hot skillet until lightly browned.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add the seasoned beef in a single layer and let it sit undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes to develop a crust. Stir and cook for another 2 minutes until the juices have mostly evaporated. If you are using the potatoes, add them now to fry in the rendered beef fat for about 5 minutes.

### 3. Introduce the aromatics to the skillet.

Lower the heat to medium. Add the sliced white onion, diced peppers, and minced garlic directly into the pan with the beef. Sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until the onions become translucent.

**1. Add the tomatoes and cover to create the gravy.**

Pour the diced Roma tomatoes into the skillet and stir to combine. Turn the heat down to medium-low and cover the pan with a lid. Over the next 10 to 15 minutes, the trapped steam will break the fresh tomatoes down into a rich, natural sauce.

**2. Loosen the sauce and finish simmering.**

Remove the lid. If the pan looks a little dry, add the water or beef broth. Let it simmer uncovered for 3 to 5 minutes until the sauce reaches a gravy-like consistency and the meat is perfectly tender. Taste for seasoning, though the bouillon usually provides enough salt.

**3. Garnish and bring the skillet directly to the table.**

Turn off the heat and stir in the freshly chopped cilantro. Serve immediately with warm corn tortillas for scooping, alongside rice and refried beans.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **On the potatoes.**

Historically, adding potatoes was a brilliant trick to stretch an expensive protein to feed a large family. They absorb the beefy, tomato-infused broth and become soft, flavorful bombs that rival the meat itself. It is entirely optional, but highly recommended for ultimate comfort.



# Picadillo con Papas

*pee-kah-DEE-yoh kohn PAH-pahs*

If there is a dish that instantly teleports a first-generation kid back to their mother's kitchen on a Tuesday night, it's picadillo con papas. Forget the dry, heavily spiced taco meat slung at American drive-thrus; authentic Mexican picadillo is a deeply comforting, brothy guisado where ground beef, tender potatoes, and carrots simmer in a fresh, garlicky tomato sauce. The real secret your abuela knew wasn't some complex spice blend. It was a heavy hit of Knorr bouillon and tossing the aromatics straight into a blender, creating a rich puree so the raw potatoes soak up all that incredible liquid as they cook. Cheap, fast, and spooned over warm tortillas, it is the absolute definition of home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                 |  |
|----------------|---|-----------------|--|
| <b>4 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes<br><i>roughly chopped</i>           | <b>1 tbsp</b>   | Knorr Beef or Chicken<br>Bouillon powder                   |
| <b>1/4 med</b> | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>             | <b>1 tbsp</b>   | neutral oil  |
| <b>2 med</b>   | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>                    | <b>1 lb</b>     | 85/15 ground beef  |
| <b>1 med</b>   | Jalapeño or Serrano pepper<br><i>stem removed</i> | <b>1/2 med</b>  | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>                         |
| <b>1/2 cup</b> | water or low-sodium beef<br>broth                 | <b>1 large</b>  | Russet potato<br><i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i> |
| <b>1 tsp</b>   | dried Mexican oregano                             | <b>2 med</b>    | carrots<br><i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>       |
| <b>1/4 tsp</b> | ground cumin                                      | <b>1/2 cup</b>  | frozen peas  |
|                |   | <b>to taste</b> | Kosher salt and black pepper                               |

## PREPARATION

- **Prep your root vegetables while the beef browns.**

To save time on a busy weeknight, peel and chop your potatoes and carrots while the meat is cooking, keeping the potatoes submerged in a bowl of water if prepped ahead so they don't oxidize.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blend the tomato broth base.**

In a blender, combine the Roma tomatoes, the roughly chopped quarter of an onion, garlic, jalapeño, water, oregano, cumin, and bouillon powder, blending on high until completely smooth and liquid.

- 2. Brown the ground beef.**

Heat the oil in a large skillet with a tight-fitting lid over medium-high heat, add the beef, season lightly with salt and pepper, and use a wooden spoon to aggressively break the meat into very fine crumbles as it cooks.

**1. Drain the excess fat and sauté the aromatics.**

Once the beef is browned and no longer pink, spoon out most of the rendered grease leaving about a tablespoon in the pan, reduce the heat to medium, and stir in the finely diced onion until softened and translucent.

**2. Assemble the stew.**

Stir the diced potatoes and carrots into the meat, then immediately pour the blended tomato broth over the top so the mixture looks generously soupy.

**3. Simmer to cook the potatoes.**

Bring the liquid to a gentle boil, reduce the heat to low, cover the skillet tightly, and let it simmer undisturbed for 15 minutes so the potatoes absorb the savory broth and release their thickening starches.

**4. Finish with the peas.**

Remove the lid, poke a potato to ensure it is fork-tender, and stir in the frozen peas for a final 3 to 5 minutes of uncovered simmering until the sauce reaches a rich, juicy consistency.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Embrace the bouillon powder.**

Many chef-driven cookbooks turn their noses up at powdered bouillon, but if you want this to taste exactly like a first-generation American's childhood kitchen, Knorr consommé is absolutely non-negotiable for that essential hit of umami.

● **Pantry shortcuts are perfectly acceptable.**

Mid-winter supermarket tomatoes can taste like wet cardboard; if you're rushing or your tomatoes are subpar, skip the blender and substitute 1 cup of plain canned tomato sauce mixed with 1/2 cup of water, adding your spices directly to the pan.



# Tinga de Pollo

*teen-gah deh poh-yo*

If there is a smell that defines walking into a Mexican household on a Tuesday evening, it is the sharp, mouth-watering aroma of onions and chipotles sizzling in a pan. This isn't the watered-down, cumin-heavy imposter you find in suburban chain restaurants; this is Puebla's finest, exactly as mothers and grandmothers have made it for generations. The secret to that unmistakable, transportive flavor lies in two things: taking the time to truly fry the blended tomato sauce in hot oil until it stains the pan brick red, and an unapologetic spoonful of Knorr chicken bouillon—the undisputed, unspoken hero of the immigrant pantry. We are using a shredded rotisserie chicken to keep this firmly in weeknight territory without sacrificing a single ounce of soul.

## INGREDIENTS

|                 |  |                |  |
|-----------------|--|----------------|--|
| <b>3 tbsp</b>   | neutral oil or pork lard                                     | <b>3 med</b>   | garlic   |
| <b>1 large</b>  | white onion<br><i>halved and sliced into thin half-moons</i> | <b>cloves</b>  | <i>peeled</i>  |
| <b>4 cup</b>    | cooked chicken<br><i>shredded, skin and bones removed</i>    | <b>3 med</b>   | canned chipotle peppers in adobo                             |
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b> | Roma tomatoes<br><i>washed</i>                               | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | adobo sauce  |
| <b>2 small</b>  | tomatillos<br><i>husks removed and washed</i>                | <b>1 tsp</b>   | granulated chicken bouillon                                  |
|                 |  | <b>1/2 tsp</b> | dried Mexican oregano<br><i>crushed between your fingers</i> |
|                 |  | <b>1/4 tsp</b> | dried thyme  |

## PREPARATION

- **Build the perfect tostada.**

Tinga is best served on a crisp corn tostada. Smear the shell with a thin barrier of warm refried beans, mound the chicken on top, and finish with shredded iceberg lettuce, a drizzle of Mexican crema, avocado slices, and a dusting of crumbled Cotija cheese.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the tomatoes, tomatillos, and garlic until softened.**

Place them in a medium saucepan, cover with cold water, and bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat. Let them cook for about 10 minutes until the tomatoes turn a lighter red and their skins begin to split, but before they turn to mush. Transfer them to a blender with a slotted spoon.

- 2. Blend the boiled nightshades with the chilies and spices.**

To the blender, add the chipotle peppers, adobo sauce, chicken bouillon, Mexican oregano, and thyme. Add a quarter cup of the tomato boiling water to help the blades catch, then blend on high until the mixture is completely smooth and velvety.

**1. Sauté the onions patiently until deeply translucent.**

Heat the oil or lard in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the sliced white onions and cook slowly for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. You want them sweet, golden, and greatly reduced in volume—never burnt.

**2. Pour the blended puree directly into the hot skillet to fry the sauce.**

This is the master technique of Mexican home cooking. The sauce will sizzle aggressively when it hits the hot oil. Lower the heat slightly and let it simmer for 10 to 12 minutes, watching as the pale orange transforms into a dark, rich brick red and the oil slightly separates at the edges.

**3. Fold the shredded chicken into the simmering, mature sauce.**

Toss well to coat every strand, letting the mixture simmer for another 5 to 8 minutes. The chicken will absorb the flavors and the liquid will reduce. You want a moist, deeply saucy mixture that will not instantly turn a tostada into a soggy mess.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the bouillon.**

Do not substitute the Knorr Suiza for fancy homemade stock or plain salt. The specific umami profile of granulated bouillon is the literal flavor of nostalgia for millions of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, and it is entirely authentic to how this dish is cooked in modern domestic kitchens.



# Calabacitas con Elote y Queso

*kah-lah-bah-SEE-tahs kohn eh-LOH-teh ee KEH-soh*

If you ask a first-generation kid what their house smelled like on a random Tuesday night, it's this. This isn't restaurant food; it's a direct descendant of the milpa, the ancient Mexican cornfield. The secret to nailing that visceral memory of a grandmother's kitchen doesn't lie in complex technique, but in unapologetic home-cook truths: a pinch of powdered chicken bouillon for that deep, nostalgic umami, and catching the zucchini right before it turns to mush. It's fast, it's cheap, and when you trap the heat to melt a thick blanket of cheese over the top, it tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                       |   |                  |   |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|---|
| <b>1 tbsp</b>         | neutral oil   | <b>4 med</b>     | Italian zucchini<br><i>ends trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i> |
| <b>1/2 med</b>        | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>  | <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | corn kernels  |
| <b>2 small cloves</b> | garlic<br><i>minced</i>   | <b>1 tsp</b>     | powdered chicken bouillon   |
| <b>1 med</b>          | jalapeño or serrano pepper<br><i>finely diced, or left whole with a single slit</i> | <b>1 sprig</b>   | fresh epazote   |
| <b>3 med</b>          | Roma tomatoes<br><i>diced</i>   | <b>1 cup</b>     | Monterey Jack or Oaxaca cheese<br><i>shredded</i>                   |
|                       |   | <b>to taste</b>  | kosher salt and black pepper  |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Build the aromatic sofrito base.

Heat the oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat, add the onion, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes until translucent, then stir in the garlic and chile for 1 minute more.

### 2. Create the rustic sauce.

Add the diced tomatoes and chicken bouillon to the skillet, letting them cook down for 4 to 5 minutes until they release their juices and break down into a chunky, savory base.

### 3. Sauté the vegetables.

Stir in the cubed zucchini, corn, and epazote so everything is well coated in the tomato base.

### 4. Cover and simmer.

Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover the skillet, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, checking halfway through to stir gently. The zucchini should be tender but still have a slight bite—do not overcook it into mush.

**1. Melt the cheese off the heat.**

Turn off the heat completely, taste the broth for seasoning, and sprinkle the cheese evenly over the vegetables. Put the lid back on and leave it alone for 3 to 5 minutes so the residual steam melts the cheese perfectly without overcooking the squash.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Modulate the heat.**

If you want the incredible aroma of the chile without the searing spice, leave the pepper whole and simply pierce it once with a paring knife before adding it to the skillet.

● **Substituting epazote.**

If you can't find fresh or dried epazote, use a small handful of chopped fresh cilantro and a tiny pinch of Mexican oregano to mimic the earthy depth of the traditional herb.



# Chicharrón en Salsa Verde

*chee-chah-RROHN en SAHL-sah VEHR-deh*

There is a glorious, violent sound in a Mexican kitchen that tells you something beautiful is about to happen: the aggressive sizzle of freshly blended salsa hitting blistering hot fat. They call it making the pot scream—*que chille la cazuela*. This magical weeknight *guisado* transforms humble, crispy pork cracklings into savory, yielding bites suspended in a bright, herbaceous sauce. The secret to making it taste exactly like it does in a grandmother's kitchen isn't an exhausting list of spices. It is boiling the tomatillos just until they blush a dull green, and dropping in a tiny pinch of baking soda to perfectly disarm the acid.

## INGREDIENTS

|                 |   |                   |   |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|---|
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b> | tomatillos<br><i>husks removed and rinsed well</i>            | <b>1/4 tsp</b>    | baking soda   |
| <b>2 med</b>    | serrano chiles<br><i>stems removed</i>                        | <b>1/8 tsp</b>    | ground cumin  |
| <b>1/4 med</b>  | white onion   | <b>1/2 tsp</b>    | kosher salt   |
| <b>2 large</b>  | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>                                | <b>1 1/2 tbsp</b> | pork lard<br><i>or neutral vegetable oil</i>                    |
| <b>1 cup</b>    | fresh cilantro<br><i>packed, leaves and tender stems only</i> | <b>1/2 lb</b>     | authentic pork chicharrones<br><i>broken into 2-inch chunks</i> |
| <b>1 tsp</b>    | chicken bouillon powder<br><i>preferably Knorr brand</i>      | <b>1/2 cup</b>    | water   |

## PREPARATION

- **Wash the tomatillos thoroughly.**

Tomatillos naturally produce a sticky residue under their husks to deter insects; rinse them very well under warm water before boiling.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the tomatillos and chiles with absolute precision.**

Place the tomatillos and serranos in a medium saucepan, cover with water, and bring to a gentle boil. Let them cook for exactly 5 to 8 minutes, pulling them from the heat the second they shift from vibrant green to a dull olive; let them burst, and you will ruin the sauce with bitter pectins.

- 2. Blend the salsa and chemically disarm the acid.**

Transfer the warm tomatillos and chiles to a blender with a slotted spoon, discarding the boiling water. Add the onion, garlic, cilantro, chicken bouillon, cumin, and the crucial measure of baking soda—which will foam slightly as it neutralizes the tomatillos' harsh bite—and blend until perfectly smooth.

**1. Make the pot scream.**

Heat the lard in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully pour the blended salsa directly into the hot fat—it will sputter and roar—and stir immediately, letting the raw aromatics cook out and the sauce deepen in color for about 5 minutes.

**2. Hydrate the chicharrones.**

Stir the water into the bubbling salsa, then press the broken pieces of pork rind down into the sauce until completely submerged. Cover and simmer on low for 10 to 15 minutes, adding a splash more water if it gets too thick, until the pork is yielding and deeply infused with the salsa but retains a pleasant, meaty chew.

**3. Serve immediately.**

Spoon the guisado hot straight from the skillet alongside warm corn tortillas and a pot of whole pinto beans.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Source the right pork.**

Seek out traditional cracklings from a Mexican *carnicería* or the Hispanic aisle of the supermarket. Standard American gas station snack 'pork rinds' will disintegrate into mush when boiled.

● **Respect the baking soda.**

Tomatillos in American supermarkets are often picked under-ripe to survive transport, making them aggressively acidic. The baking soda is not a flourish; it is mandatory culinary science that balances the dish without adding unnecessary sugar.



# Rajas Poblanas con Crema y Elote

*rah-has poh-blah-nas kon kreh-mah ee eh-loh-teh*

If you grew up in a Mexican-American household, the smell of poblano peppers blistering on an open flame is the smell of a Tuesday night. This is the ultimate comfort food—strips of smoky, earthy peppers swimming in a rich, savory cream sauce dotted with sweet pops of corn. A lot of recipes try to fancy this up, but grandma knew the rules: char the life out of the peppers, let them sweat in a plastic bag, and whatever you do, do not rinse them under the sink. We are leaning on the exact, unapologetic techniques used in Puebla for generations, utilizing ingredients you can easily grab at the supermarket. Serve this scooped into warm tortillas, and taste home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |  |                |   |
|----------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>4 large</b> | fresh poblano peppers  | <b>1 cup</b>   | sweet corn kernels<br><i>frozen or drained from a can</i> |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>  | vegetable oil  | <b>1 cup</b>   | Crema Mexicana  |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>  | unsalted butter  | <b>1 tsp</b>   | chicken bouillon powder                                   |
| <b>1 large</b> | white onion<br><i>halved and sliced into thin half-moons</i> | <b>1/2 cup</b> | Oaxaca or Monterey Jack<br>cheese<br><i>shredded</i>      |
| <b>2 clove</b> | garlic<br><i>minced</i>                                      |                |   |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Char the life out of the peppers.

Turn your gas burners on medium-high and place the poblano peppers directly on the metal grates, rotating them with metal tongs until the skin blisters, pops, and turns completely black all over. If you have an electric stove, a dry skillet over screaming high heat or a run under the oven broiler works too.

### 2. Let the peppers sweat in their own steam.

Immediately transfer the hot, charred peppers into a plastic grocery bag or a tightly covered bowl, sealing it up to let them steam for 10 to 15 minutes to unglue the tough skin from the flesh.

### 3. Peel and slice the poblanos without rinsing them.

Using the back of a knife or your fingers, gently scrape off the blackened skin. Do not run them under water, or you will wash away all that hard-earned smoky flavor. Slice the peppers open, remove the stems, seeds, and inner veins, then slice the flesh into quarter-inch strips.

### 4. Sauté the aromatics gently.

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt the butter into the oil, then add the sliced onion and sauté until soft and translucent. Do not let it brown; we want it sweet and mellow. Stir in the garlic and cook for one more minute.

**1. Build the guisado.**

Toss the poblano strips and the corn into the skillet, tossing to coat the vegetables in the fat and letting them cook together for a couple of minutes.

**2. Simmer with the crema and bouillon.**

Turn the heat down to medium-low, pour in the Crema Mexicana, and sprinkle in the chicken bouillon powder. Let the mixture come to a very gentle simmer for 3 to 5 minutes—never a rolling boil—until the white cream takes on a beautiful pale green tint.

**3. Melt the cheese into the skillet.**

Turn off the heat, sprinkle the shredded cheese over the top, and cover the skillet with a lid for two minutes until it forms gooey puddles ready to be scooped up with warm tortillas.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Dairy Dilemma.**

If you cannot find a bottle of Crema Mexicana, do not just use straight sour cream—the lower fat and higher acidity means it will curdle in the pan. Whisk three-quarters of a cup of full-fat sour cream with a quarter cup of whole milk or heavy cream until smooth to mimic the real deal.

● **The Grandma Secret.**

Powdered chicken bouillon is the undeniable, unapologetic secret of modern Mexican home kitchens. It provides a profound umami backbone that elevates the dish from a simple vegetable sauté to a deeply satisfying stew.



# Salchichas a la Mexicana

In Mexican home kitchens, 'a la mexicana' is a magic incantation. It means whatever humble protein you're working with is about to be bathed in the colors of the flag: green chilies, white onions, and red tomatoes. While Americans treat hot dogs as baseball stadium fodder, in Mexico, sliced salchichas are a beloved, budget-friendly staple. Sizzled in a skillet until blistered and golden, then stewed into a quick, vibrant tomato guisado, they transform into something deeply comforting. This isn't resort food; this is exactly what it tastes like when you walk into a loud, busy household on a Tuesday night.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 tbsp** neutral vegetable oil or lard

|                |  |                |   |
|----------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>14 oz</b>   | Mexican-style sausages or turkey hot dogs<br><i>cut on a bias into 1/2-inch thick slices</i> | <b>1 large</b> | clove garlic<br><i>finely minced</i>    |
| <b>1/2 med</b> | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>   | <b>4 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes<br><i>diced</i>           |
| <b>2 small</b> | serrano or jalapeño peppers<br><i>finely diced, seeds removed for less heat</i>              | <b>1/2 tsp</b> | chicken bouillon powder                 |
|                |  | <b>1/4 tsp</b> | salt and black pepper                   |
|                |  | <b>2 tbsp</b>  | fresh cilantro<br><i>finely chopped</i> |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Sear the sausages to build texture.

Heat the oil in a large skillet with a tight-fitting lid over medium heat. Add the sliced sausages and let them sit and sizzle for about 4 to 5 minutes, tossing occasionally, until deeply golden and slightly crispy on the edges. Do not skip this; boiling unseared sausages in tomato juice turns them to mush.

### 2. Build the aromatic base.

Push the browned sausages to the edges of the pan. Add the diced white onion to the center and cook for 2 minutes until it softens and turns slightly translucent. Toss in the garlic and green chilies, sautéing for 1 more minute until incredibly fragrant, then mix everything together.

### 3. Stew the guisado.

Stir in the diced tomatoes and chicken bouillon powder. Turn the heat down to medium-low and cover the skillet. Let it simmer gently for 5 to 7 minutes. Do not add water unless absolutely necessary; the trapped heat will break down the tomatoes, releasing their natural juices to deglaze the pan and create a rich, thick sauce.

### 4. Season and finish.

Remove the lid to reveal a beautiful, chunky sauce clinging to the sausages. Taste for seasoning, adding a pinch of salt and pepper if needed, then stir in the fresh cilantro right before turning off the heat. Serve immediately, straight from the skillet, alongside warm tortillas.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The melty cheese upgrade.**

If you want to recreate the ultimate diaspora comfort food for your kids, sprinkle a generous handful of shredded Oaxaca or Monterrey Jack cheese over the top of the finished dish. Put the lid back on for 2 minutes off the heat until the cheese is gooey and melted.

- **Tomato moisture variations.**

If your Roma tomatoes are out of season and exceptionally dry, you can add up to 2 tablespoons of tap water during the simmering stage to help the sauce come together.



# Entomatadas Tradicionales de Queso Fresco

*en-toh-mah-TAH-dahs*

If you ask a Mexican kid what dish tastes most like a hug from their grandmother, they won't say tacos, and they certainly won't say a complicated mole. They will say entomatadas. Born from pure domestic pragmatism to stretch yesterday's tortillas and today's cheese, it is the gentle, comforting cousin of the enchilada. There are no baking dishes here, no heavy crusts of melted yellow cheese. Just corn tortillas passed quickly through hot oil, dragged through a velvety, simmering red tomato sauce, and folded around sharp, salty queso fresco and raw onion. It requires thirty minutes and ordinary supermarket staples, but it tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                 |                                   |                |   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| <b>1 1/2 lb</b> | Roma tomatoes<br><i>washed</i>    | <b>12 med</b>  | corn tortillas<br><i>left out on the counter for 20 minutes to dry slightly</i> |
| <b>1/2 med</b>  | white onion<br><i>peeled</i>      | <b>1/3 cup</b> | vegetable oil   |
| <b>2 med</b>    | garlic cloves<br><i>peeled</i>    | <b>12 oz</b>   | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled</i>   |
| <b>1 small</b>  | jalapeño pepper<br><i>stemmed</i> | <b>1/4 med</b> | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>  |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>   | vegetable oil                     | <b>1/4 cup</b> | Mexican crema   |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>   | chicken bouillon powder           | <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh cilantro<br><i>chopped</i>  |

## PREPARATION

- **Toss the crumbled queso fresco with the finely diced raw onion.**

Mixing the sharp, crisp raw onion directly into the cool cheese is crucial; it cuts right through the richness of the warm tomato sauce. Set this aside until you are ready to assemble.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the tomatoes, half onion, garlic, and jalapeño until the tomato skins split.**  
Submerge them in a medium saucepan covered with water over medium-high heat for about 15 to 20 minutes. Boiling, rather than roasting, removes the harsh acidity of the tomatoes and creates the velvety, nostalgic texture essential to this dish.
- 2. Transfer the boiled vegetables to a blender and purée until completely smooth.**  
Use a slotted spoon to move them over, discarding the boiling water. If your blender struggles, add just a splash of fresh water to get things moving.

- 1. Fry the blended tomato sauce in hot oil and simmer with the bouillon powder.**  
Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a wide, deep skillet over medium heat. Pour in the purée—don't panic if it splatters and sizzles aggressively, this reaction cooks out the raw garlic flavor. Stir in the bouillon, reduce the heat to medium-low, and let it gently simmer for 10 minutes until the color darkens to a rich red. Keep it warm on your lowest setting.
- 2. Quickly pass each corn tortilla through hot oil to make them pliable and create a protective barrier.**  
Heat 1/3 cup of oil in a separate frying pan over medium-high. Fry each tortilla for just 5 to 10 seconds per side so they turn golden but not crispy, then transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. If you skip this, they will dissolve into mush the second they hit the sauce.
- 3. Dip a fried tortilla into the warm sauce, fill with the cheese mixture, and fold it in half directly on the serving plate.**  
Work quickly. Submerge the tortilla completely, lift it out, place it on a plate, spoon about 2 tablespoons of the cheese-and-onion mix down the center, and fold it like a taco. Repeat to put three or four entomatadas on each plate.
- 4. Ladle extra tomato sauce over the plated entomatadas and garnish immediately.**  
Drench them heavily with the remaining sauce. Hit them with a zigzag of Mexican crema, any leftover cheese, and the fresh cilantro. Serve immediately while they are hot.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Boil, do not roast.**  
Boiling the tomatoes removes their harsh acidity and gives the sauce a velvety, nostalgic texture.
- **Sizzle the sauce.**  
Frying the blended salsa in a little hot oil cooks out the raw garlic flavor and deepens the umami.

- **The umami shortcut.**

A spoonful of powdered chicken bouillon is the ultimate Mexican home-cook secret for a savory, rich sauce.



# La Cena y Antojitos (Late-Night Bites & The Art of the Leftover)

*Mirroring the traditional lighter evening meal of Mexico, this chapter provides fast late-night snacking solutions, antojitos, and clever hacks to repurpose heavy weeknight leftovers.*

In a Mexican household, the heavy lifting of the day's eating is done by mid-afternoon. The evening is a different beast entirely. La cena isn't some grand production—it's an improvisation, a quiet, late-night hustle where remnants of yesterday's triumph find new, glorious life. This is the sacred hour of the

leftover, where the real magic happens standing by a faintly lit stove. It's about coaxing cold tinga onto a crisp tostada, frying humble potatoes into shatteringly loud tacos dorados, and mastering the holy grail of perfectly rendered refried beans. These are fast, honest bites born out of necessity and pure craving, served up with zero pretense.





# Sincronizadas Clásicas de la Noche

*seen-cro-nee-zah-dahs*

In Mexico, the evening meal isn't a heavy affair—it is a time for simple comforts and the sound of the comal hitting the stove at eight o'clock. A true sincronizada is a distinct masterpiece, often misunderstood by outsiders as a mere quesadilla. It means "synchronized," a perfect harmony of two soft flour tortillas bound together by molten cheese and savory ham. Grandma didn't need artisanal flourishes to make this; she just needed good tortillas, the right cheese, and five minutes of patience.

## INGREDIENTS

**4 med** flour tortillas

**4 slices** deli ham  
*thinly sliced*

**1 1/2 cup** Monterey Jack cheese  
*freshly grated from a block*

**1 tsp** unsalted butter

## PREPARATION

- **Always grate your own cheese from a solid block.**

Pre-shredded cheeses are coated in cellulose to prevent clumping, which actively hinders the smooth, creamy, pulling melt that a sincronizada requires.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat a large cast-iron skillet or flat griddle over medium-low heat.**

Do not rush the heat; if the pan is too hot, the flour tortillas will burn before the internal core of cheese has a chance to fully melt.

- 2. Melt a tiny sliver of butter in the center of the pan and lay down the first flour tortilla.**

While many grandmothers toast these dry, the butter creates a deeply nostalgic, shatteringly crisp golden crust.

- 3. Scatter an even, generous layer of shredded cheese over the tortilla.**

Ensure you spread the cheese almost all the way to the edges to create a proper seal.

- 4. Arrange two slices of ham flat over the melting cheese in a single, even layer.**

- 5. Sprinkle a smaller, secondary handful of cheese directly over the ham and cap it off with the second flour tortilla.**

This top layer of cheese is the secret to the synchronization, acting as the crucial adhesive for the roof of the dish.

**1. Allow the assembly to cook undisturbed for about two minutes.**

Carefully lift the edge with your spatula to check for beautiful, golden-brown toasted freckles and a slight crispness on the bottom.

**2. Slide your spatula entirely underneath and confidently flip the whole stack over.**

Cook the second side for another one to two minutes until the structure feels solid and the cheese begins to gently weep and sizzle out of the edges.

**3. Transfer the hot sincronizada to a cutting board, slice into quarters, and serve immediately.**

Serve alongside a generous spoonful of pico de gallo, slices of fresh avocado, and your favorite salsa.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the ambient heat.**

The biggest mistake first-generation cooks make is treating this like a fast-food operation. The magic of la cena is patience, giving the cheese time to slowly liquefy while the wheat flour naturally toasts.

- **The ultimate vessel for leftovers.**

While the pure classic is just ham and cheese, the sincronizada is highly forgiving. If you have leftover pulled pork, shredded chicken, or a spoonful of refried beans in the fridge, you can absolutely tuck a thin layer inside with the ham.



## Sopes Sencillos de Asiento

Sopes are the undisputed champions of the Mexican weeknight—the ultimate canvas for the art of the leftover. To make one that actually tastes like you're standing in a bustling cenaduría in Sinaloa, you need a secret weapon: asiento, the deeply savory, roasted pork sediment found at the bottom of the carnitas pot. Since you aren't rendering ten pounds of pork in an Ohio suburb on a Tuesday night, we rely on a brilliant grandmother's hack of blending quality lard with crushed pork rinds. It's simple, honest, hands-on cooking that transforms yesterday's shredded chicken or beef roast into an absolute masterpiece.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |  |                  |  |
|------------------|--|------------------|--|
| <b>1/2 cup</b>   | pork rinds<br><i>finely crushed</i>                | <b>1 cup</b>     | refried beans<br><i>warmed</i>                     |
| <b>4 tbsp</b>    | pork lard<br><i>divided, softened to room temp</i> | <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | leftover cooked meat<br><i>shredded and warmed</i> |
| <b>2 cup</b>     | masa harina  | <b>2 cup</b>     | iceberg lettuce<br><i>shredded</i>                 |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | all-purpose flour                                  | <b>1/2 cup</b>   | queso fresco<br><i>crumbled</i>                    |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b>   | kosher salt  | <b>1/2 cup</b>   | Mexican crema                                      |
| <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | warm water   | <b>1/2 cup</b>   | salsa  |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | vegetable oil                                      |                  |  |

## PREPARATION

- **Crush the chicharrones.**

Place the pork rinds in a sealed zip-top bag and crush them with a rolling pin or the bottom of a heavy skillet until they resemble coarse, gritty sand.

- **Prep your plastic press.**

Cut the zip top and side seams off a standard one-gallon Ziploc bag to create a non-stick folder for pressing the masa without it sticking.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Synthesize the faux-siento.**

Melt 3 tablespoons of the lard in a small skillet over medium-low heat. Add the crushed pork rinds and gently sizzle for a few minutes until deeply fragrant and slightly darkened, then remove from heat.

- 2. Hydrate the dry masa.**

In a large bowl, whisk together the masa harina, all-purpose flour, and salt.

**1. Cut in the fat.**

Work the remaining 1 tablespoon of room-temperature lard into the dry ingredients using your fingers until the mixture resembles wet sand.

**2. Knead in the water.**

Gradually stream in the warm water while kneading with your hands until the dough feels like soft clay—pliable and moist, but not sticky.

**3. Press the sopes.**

Roll the masa into golf-ball-sized spheres, place each between two sheets of cut plastic, and press gently with a heavy dish to form thick, quarter-inch discs.

**4. Pre-cook the discs.**

Lay the masa discs onto a hot, dry cast-iron skillet and cook for 1 to 2 minutes per side until opaque and slightly speckled, then transfer to a towel.

**5. Pellizcar (The Pinch).**

While the discs are still hot and pliable, use your thumb and index finger to pinch the outer edge into a raised rim, creating a shallow little boat.

**6. Fry and assemble.**

Return the skillet to medium heat with a light film of vegetable oil, smear a half-teaspoon of your faux-siento inside each sope, and fry until the bottom is deep golden crisp.

**7. Top and serve.**

Load the hot sopes with a spoonful of warm beans and your leftover meat, then top immediately with shredded lettuce, crema, crumbled cheese, and salsa.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Protect your masa.**

Keep the dough covered with a damp kitchen towel while you work to prevent it from drying out; if it cracks when pinched, return it to the bowl and knead in another tablespoon of warm water.

- **The Northern Trick.**

The small addition of all-purpose flour provides just enough elasticity to prevent the edges from cracking when you pinch the hot dough.



# Esquites de Sartén

*es-KEE-tes de sar-TEN*

If there is one scent that instantly teleports a first-generation kid back to the plazas of their parents' homeland, it's the smell of esquites. The beauty of this dish is that the original Nahuatl word literally translates to 'toasted corn.' That means dragging out a cast-iron skillet on a busy Tuesday night isn't some cheap Americanized shortcut—it's a direct connection to the ancient, authentic way to prepare it. Searing the hell out of the corn and hitting it with pungent, earthy epazote recreates the exact sensory magic of a street cart, right in your kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 tbsp** neutral oil

**2 tbsp** unsalted butter

|                |   |                |   |
|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| <b>1/2 cup</b> | white onion<br><i>finely diced</i>  | <b>2 small</b> | fresh epazote sprigs<br><i>leaves removed and roughly chopped</i> |
| <b>2 large</b> | garlic cloves<br><i>minced</i>  | <b>1/3 cup</b> | chicken broth   |
| <b>2 med</b>   | fresh serrano peppers<br><i>finely diced</i>                                      | <b>1/3 cup</b> | mayonnaise  |
| <b>4 cup</b>   | corn kernels<br><i>cut from the cob, or thawed and thoroughly dried if frozen</i> | <b>1/3 cup</b> | Mexican crema   |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | kosher salt   | <b>1/2 cup</b> | Queso Cotija<br><i>crumbled</i>                                   |
|                |   | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | chili powder  |
|                |   | <b>2 med</b>   | limes<br><i>cut into wedges</i>                                   |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Heat the fat and sauté the aromatics.

Get a heavy cast-iron skillet screaming hot over medium-high heat. Add the neutral oil followed by the butter—the oil raises the smoke point and prevents the milk solids from burning. Once foaming, toss in the diced onion, garlic, and serranos, cooking for a couple of minutes until translucent and immensely fragrant.

### 2. Blister the corn undisturbed.

Crank the heat to high. Dump in the corn kernels and kosher salt, toss to coat in the seasoned fat, and then step back and leave it entirely alone. Give it two solid minutes untouched to sear and caramelize, then stir once and let it sit another two minutes until deeply charred and popping.

### 3. Steam and infuse the kernels.

Toss the chopped epazote into the skillet and pour in the chicken broth. Scrape up any browned bits as the liquid hisses and steams, then drop the heat to medium-low, cover the pan, and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes so the corn absorbs the herb's pungent, earthy flavor.

### 4. Reduce the liquid to a glossy glaze.

Remove the lid and let any remaining moisture cook away for another minute until the corn is tightly coated in the savory fat, then remove from the heat.

## 1. **Assemble the cups.**

Scoop the hot corn into individual bowls or small cups. Hit each with a squeeze of fresh lime juice, a dollop of both mayonnaise and crema, a generous handful of crumbled Cotija cheese, and a heavy dusting of chili powder. Mix it all together so every bite is creamy, tangy, and spicy.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not substitute cilantro for epazote.**

Epazote is an indigenous herb with an earthy, slightly medicinal bite that is the absolute soul of this dish. Swapping it for cilantro turns this into a generic southwestern salad. Find it fresh in the produce section of a Latin market, or use dried from the spice aisle.

- **Embrace the Maillard reaction.**

American sweet corn has a much higher sugar content than the white field corn used in Mexico. Charring it aggressively in the cast-iron skillet balances that sweetness and replicates the smoky flavor of a traditional street cart.



# Chalupas Poblanas Rápidas

*chah-loo-pahs poh-blah-nahs rah-pee-dahs*

A true Poblano chalupa is an exercise in beautiful, ruthless restraint. Born on the banks of the San Francisco River, the authentic street-side chalupa flatly rejects the deep-fried taco shells and cheddar cheese of the Americanized drive-thru. Instead, it relies on the pure, unadulterated alchemy of masa, hot pork lard, deeply charred salsa, and whatever leftover shredded meat the cook has on hand. It is street food stripped down to its absolute, blisteringly hot essentials, designed to transport any first-generation kid right back to their grandmother's kitchen on a busy Tuesday night.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |   |                |  |
|------------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>16 small</b>  | corn tortillas<br><i>taquera size</i>                   | <b>1 small</b> | garlic<br><i>peeled</i>                    |
| <b>1/4 cup</b>   | pork lard   | <b>1/4 cup</b> | fresh cilantro                             |
| <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | leftover shredded meat<br><i>chicken, pork, or beef</i> | <b>1/2 tsp</b> | kosher salt                                |
| <b>1/2 large</b> | white onion<br><i>very finely diced</i>                 | <b>3 med</b>   | roma tomatoes                              |
| <b>1/2 lb</b>    | tomatillos<br><i>husks removed and rinsed</i>           | <b>2 med</b>   | dried chile morita<br><i>stems removed</i> |
| <b>2 med</b>     | fresh serrano peppers<br><i>stems removed</i>           | <b>1/4 med</b> | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>      |
| <b>1/4 med</b>   | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>                   | <b>1 small</b> | garlic<br><i>peeled</i>                    |
|                  |   | <b>1/2 tsp</b> | kosher salt                                |

## PREPARATION

- **Boil the salsa verde ingredients.**

Place the tomatillos and serrano peppers in a small saucepan, cover with water, and simmer over medium-high heat for 5 to 7 minutes until the tomatillos turn a dull olive color.

- **Blend the salsa verde.**

Drain the tomatillos and serranos, transfer them to a blender along with a quarter of an onion, one garlic clove, the cilantro, and salt, then blend until completely smooth.

- **Boil the salsa roja ingredients.**

In another saucepan, boil the Roma tomatoes and dried chile moritas in water for about 10 minutes until the tomatoes soften and the chiles plump up.

- **Blend the salsa roja.**

Transfer the tomatoes and chiles to a clean blender with the remaining quarter onion, garlic clove, and salt, blending until smooth.

- **Fry the salsas for depth.**

For a true grandmother's touch, heat a teaspoon of lard in a small skillet until shimmering and carefully pour the blended salsas into the hot fat to fry for 2 to 3 minutes, cooking out the raw edge before they ever touch the chalupas.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Warm the tortillas on a dry skillet.**

Place a large cast-iron skillet or flat griddle over medium heat and lay the cold tortillas directly on the dry metal for 10 to 15 seconds per side so they become soft and pliable.

- 2. Melt the lard.**

Add a generous spoonful of the pork lard to the hot skillet, allowing it to melt and coat the cooking surface.

- 3. Fry the first side of the tortillas.**

Place three or four of the warmed tortillas into the hot fat and fry them for about 30 seconds.

- 4. Flip and immediately bathe in salsa.**

Flip the tortillas with tongs and, while the second side is frying, immediately spoon about a tablespoon of salsa verde or roja onto each one, spreading it evenly so it sizzles aggressively as it hits the hot fat pooling on the edges.

- 5. Add the meat.**

Quickly drop a small pinch of your leftover shredded meat directly onto the bubbling salsa so it can warm through.

- 6. Finish the fry.**

Let the chalupas fry for another 30 seconds until the bottoms are golden and slightly crisp, but the center of the tortilla remains chewy and soft.

- 7. Plate and garnish aggressively with onion.**

Remove the chalupas to a serving platter, immediately sprinkle generously with the finely diced raw white onion, and serve piping hot.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the lard.**

Manteca is the non-negotiable soul of this dish. If you cannot find high-quality pork lard, bacon grease is a phenomenal substitute. Neutral oils will work, but you will sacrifice the foundational nostalgic flavor of a street cart.

- **Keep it uncompromisingly minimalist.**

The state of Puebla holds the high ground in the chalupa wars for a reason. Resist the urge to add cheese, sour cream, or lettuce. The sharp, harsh bite of the raw white onion is precisely what you need to cut through the heavy, rich fat and deep umami of the meat.

- **Master the art of the leftover.**

Chalupas are a historic street food meant to stretch scarce ingredients. Repurpose Sunday's leftover shredded beef, rotisserie chicken, or pulled pork for this Tuesday night masterpiece.



# Alambre de Sobras

*ah-LAHM-breh deh SOH-brahs*

In a Mexican household, a feast doesn't end when the table is cleared. The real magic happens the next day, when cold, leftover roasted meats are reborn in a screaming-hot cast-iron skillet. This is alambre de sobras, the ultimate act of culinary alchemy. Plunging yesterday's carne asada or holiday turkey into rendered bacon fat with fresh peppers and onions, then burying it all under a heavy blanket of melted cheese, transforms the remnants into something arguably better than the original meal. It is fast, unapologetically rich, and tastes exactly like a late-night taquería stall brought right into an American suburban kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                 |  |
|----------------|---|-----------------|--|
| <b>8 oz</b>    | thick-cut bacon<br><i>chopped into 1/2-inch pieces</i>                      | <b>1 lb</b>     | leftover cooked meat<br><i>cut into bite-sized cubes</i>         |
| <b>1/2 med</b> | white onion<br><i>diced</i>   | <b>2 cup</b>    | Muenster or low-moisture<br>mozzarella cheese<br><i>shredded</i> |
| <b>1 large</b> | green bell pepper<br><i>stemmed, seeded, and cut into a<br/>medium dice</i> | <b>12 small</b> | corn or flour tortillas<br><i>warmed</i>                         |
| <b>1 large</b> | red bell pepper<br><i>stemmed, seeded, and cut into a<br/>medium dice</i>   | <b>1 med</b>    | lime<br><i>cut into wedges</i>                                   |
|                |   | <b>1/2 cup</b>  | salsa  |

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Render the bacon fat.

Place a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, add the chopped bacon, and cook for 6 to 8 minutes until crispy and the fat has completely rendered into the pan.

### 2. Sauté the aromatics.

Drop the diced onion and bell peppers directly into the hot bacon fat and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until the onions are translucent and the peppers are tender.

### 3. Revive the leftovers.

Fold the cubed leftover meat into the skillet, tossing it thoroughly to coat it in the bacon fat and vegetable juices, and let it heat through for 3 to 4 minutes until the edges begin to brown.

### 4. Melt the cheese.

Spread the hash into an even layer, blanket it heavily with the shredded cheese, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cover the skillet to sit for 2 to 3 minutes until the cheese is completely melted, gooey, and bubbling.

### 5. Serve immediately from the skillet.

Remove the pan from the heat, set it on a trivet at the table, and let everyone scoop the hot, cheesy hash directly into warm tortillas with a squeeze of fresh lime.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the cast iron.**

A heavy cast-iron skillet is the closest thing a home cook has to a taquería's flat metal plancha, retaining the high heat necessary to sear the vegetables instead of steaming them.

- **Never drain the fat.**

Modern American sensibilities might tell you to pour off the bacon grease, but in traditional Mexican cooking, that fat is an essential ingredient that rehydrates the dry, leftover meat.

- **Use the cheese you can find.**

While authentic Queso Oaxaca or Chihuahua is ideal, Muenster or low-moisture mozzarella are perfect, widely accessible supermarket substitutes that deliver the required cheese pull.

- **Everything is a candidate for sobras.**

Whether it is yesterday's carne asada, pulled pork, or Thanksgiving turkey, the technique remains exactly the same.



# El Fin de Semana y Tradiciones (The Abuelita Rituals & Sunday Suppers)

*Generational recipes and Sunday feasts, adapted for the modern American kitchen  
without losing their soul.*

The week is for survival; the weekend is for legacy. These are the dishes that demand time, the unapologetic labor of love passed down from grandmothers who measured nothing and tasted everything. When Sunday rolls around, the house smells of toasted chiles, simmering pork, and damp masa. It is a ritual of endurance and affection, loud with family and heavy with anticipation.

But you don't need a backyard fire pit to make carnitas, and you don't need three days to build a mole. The tools have changed—the slow cooker steps in for the copper cazo, the blender does the heavy lifting of the metate—but the soul of the food remains fiercely intact. These are the feasts of holidays and hangovers, rendered achievable in an everyday kitchen, right down to the last steaming tamal.





# Tamal de Cazuela Clásico

*tah-MAHL deh kah-SWEH-lah CLAH-see-koh*

The traditional tamalada is a beautiful thing—an all-day affair fueled by gossip, strong coffee, and an army of aunts. But for a first-generation kid craving the unmistakable aroma of steamed corn husks on a busy Sunday night, the tamal de cazuela is the ultimate cheat code. Hailing from central Mexico, this deconstructed casserole layers deeply spiced pork and whipped masa into a single baking dish. The secret isn't in the wrapping; it's in the mechanical whipping of the lard until it is as fluffy as a winter cloud. Serve this straight from the oven, and watch the whole room be instantly transported back to the motherland.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |  |                  |  |
|------------------|--|------------------|--|
| <b>2 lb</b>      | pork shoulder<br><i>cut into 2-inch chunks</i>     | <b>1 tsp</b>     | ground cumin   |
| <b>1/2 large</b> | white onion  | <b>1 tsp</b>     | Mexican oregano  |
| <b>4 med</b>     | garlic clove<br><i>peeled</i>                      | <b>1/8 tsp</b>   | ground cloves  |
| <b>2 med</b>     | bay leaf   | <b>1 tbsp</b>    | pork lard  |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | kosher salt  | <b>1 tsp</b>     | kosher salt  |
| <b>6 cup</b>     | water  | <b>4 cup</b>     | Masa Harina  |
| <b>4 med</b>     | dried Guajillo chiles<br><i>stemmed and seeded</i> | <b>1 1/2 cup</b> | pork lard<br><i>softened to room temp</i>                                    |
| <b>2 med</b>     | dried Ancho chiles<br><i>stemmed and seeded</i>    | <b>1 tbsp</b>    | baking powder  |
| <b>1 med</b>     | dried Pasilla chile<br><i>stemmed and seeded</i>   | <b>1 tbsp</b>    | kosher salt  |
| <b>1/2 med</b>   | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>              | <b>4 cup</b>     | pork broth<br><i>warm</i>  |
| <b>3 med</b>     | garlic clove<br><i>peeled</i>                      | <b>1 large</b>   | dried corn husks<br><i>soaked in hot water for 30 minutes<br/>until soft</i> |

## PREPARATION

- **Split the labor across two days.**

The pork and red chile adobo can easily be prepared a day or two in advance and kept in the fridge. Just ensure you gently warm the reserved broth before beating it into the masa.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Simmer the pork until tender.**

In a large Dutch oven, combine the pork shoulder, the unchopped half onion, 4 garlic cloves, bay leaves, 1 tablespoon of salt, and the water. Bring to a boil, reduce to a gentle simmer, and cook for 1 1/2 to 2 hours until the meat falls apart, then shred the pork and strain the broth, reserving at least 4 cups.

### 2. **Toast and hydrate the dried chiles.**

Lightly toast the Guajillo, Ancho, and Pasilla chiles in a dry skillet over medium heat for about 30 seconds per side until fragrant, then soak them in a bowl of boiling water for 15 minutes until pliable.

### 3. **Blend and fry the adobo.**

Blend the softened chiles, the chopped half onion, 3 cloves of garlic, cumin, oregano, ground cloves, 1 teaspoon of salt, and 1 cup of the reserved pork broth until entirely smooth. Heat 1 tablespoon of lard in a skillet and fry the blended sauce for 5 minutes until it thickens, then fold in the shredded pork and remove from the heat.

### 4. **Whip the lard into submission.**

Using a stand mixer or electric hand mixer, beat the 1 1/2 cups of softened lard on medium-high speed for 3 to 5 minutes until it transforms from pale yellow to stark, fluffy white.

### 5. **Hydrate the masa.**

Whisk the masa harina, baking powder, and 1 tablespoon of salt together, then gradually beat the dry mixture into the whipped lard, alternating with splashes of the warm reserved pork broth until the dough resembles a thick, spreadable buttercream frosting.

### 6. **Perform the float test.**

Drop a half-teaspoon of the masa into a glass of cold water; if it floats, it has enough incorporated air, but if it sinks, beat the dough for two more minutes and try again.

**1. Line the baking vessel.**

Preheat your oven to 375°F. Liberally grease a 9x13-inch glass baking dish with lard and line the bottom and sides with the softened, overlapping corn husks, allowing the tops to hang slightly over the edges.

**2. Layer the casserole.**

Using a wet spatula, spread exactly half of the masa evenly across the bottom husks. Spoon the pork and red chile filling over the base, leaving a slight border, then gently smooth the remaining masa over the top to completely seal the meat inside.

**3. Cover and bake.**

Fold the overhanging corn husks down over the top masa, add a few extra husks to cover the surface completely, and seal the dish tightly with aluminum foil. Bake on the center rack for 60 minutes.

**4. Uncover, set, and rest.**

Remove the foil and the top layer of corn husks, returning the dish to the oven for another 15 minutes to firm up the top. Crucially, let the casserole rest for at least 20 minutes before slicing to prevent a messy collapse.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Pork and broth shortcuts.**

To make this a viable weeknight meal, substitute the from-scratch pork with 4 cups of shredded leftover or rotisserie chicken, and use a high-quality store-bought bone broth to hydrate the masa.

● **Biological wrappers are essential.**

Do not skip lining the pan with corn husks or banana leaves. Baking the masa directly against the glass will create a standard crust; baking it against a biological wrapper creates a micro-steamer that infuses the dish with the distinct aroma of a traditional tamal.



## Carnitas Rápidas en Olla de Presión

Americanized recipes for carnitas often read like a tragedy of chicken broth and heavy chili powder. Ignore them. Real Michoacán carnitas are a masterclass in utilization, traditionally slow-confited in a massive copper cauldron of bubbling lard for a communal weekend ritual. To pull this off on a suburban weeknight without the cauldron, the pressure cooker becomes the great equalizer. The secret here is twofold: searing in genuine manteca, and pouring in evaporated milk with whole citrus peels before sealing the pot. The milk sugars

caramelize under pressure, mimicking the slow-browning effect of a copper pot, while the essential oils from the orange skin cut the rich fat. This is how you make it taste exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

|                  |  |                |                                     |
|------------------|--|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>3 lb</b>      | bone-in pork shoulder<br><i>cut into large 3-inch chunks with fat cap intact</i> | <b>6 med</b>   | garlic<br><i>peeled and smashed</i> |
| <b>1/2 cup</b>   | manteca de cerdo   | <b>1 large</b> | orange<br><i>halved</i>             |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>    | kosher salt  | <b>1/2 cup</b> | evaporated milk                     |
| <b>1 tsp</b>     | black pepper<br><i>freshly cracked</i>   | <b>3 med</b>   | dried bay leaves                    |
| <b>1/2 large</b> | white onion<br><i>peeled and left intact</i>                                     | <b>1 tsp</b>   | dried thyme                         |

## PREPARATION

- **Source genuine manteca.**

If you absolutely cannot find high-quality lard, neutral oil can serve as a distant substitute, but manteca is the soul of this dish.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the pork in shimmering lard to build the flavor foundation.**

Set your pressure cooker to the Sauté function on high and melt the manteca.

Season the pork chunks generously with the salt and pepper, then sear in batches to avoid overcrowding. Cook until a deep, golden crust forms on at least two sides, about 5 to 7 minutes per batch. Remove the seared pork to a platter.

- 2. Construct the confit environment.**

Cancel the Sauté function and return all the meat and its resting juices to the pot. Squeeze the orange halves directly over the meat, then drop the spent peels into the pot. The citrus oils in the skin will infuse the fat as it cooks.

**1. Add the caramelizing catalyst and aromatics.**

Pour the evaporated milk over the pork. The milk solids will cling to the meat and caramelize under pressure. Nestle the intact onion half, smashed garlic, bay leaves, and thyme between the chunks of meat.

**2. Cook under high pressure to hydrolyze the connective tissue.**

Secure the lid and ensure the vent is sealed. Cook on manual High Pressure for 45 minutes. When the cycle finishes, let the machine naturally release pressure for exactly 15 minutes before manually venting any remaining steam. Rushing this step will cause the liquids inside the meat to erupt, leaving you with dry pork.

**3. Shred and perform the crisping ritual.**

Transfer the impossibly tender pork to a large rimmed baking sheet with a slotted spoon, discarding the aromatics and orange peels. Gently shred the meat with two forks, leaving some larger rustic chunks intact. Ladle a half cup of the cooking liquid and rendered fat over the meat, then place under a high broiler for 4 to 6 minutes until the edges are sizzling and deeply caramelized.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The truth about the liquid.**

Do not add water or broth to the pot. The pork will release its own juices, mingling with the milk, orange juice, and melted lard to create an intensely flavorful, shallow braise perfectly suited for the pressure cooker.

● **Scaling and storage.**

Store leftover pork submerged in its own rendered fat in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to five days. To reheat, place the meat in a hot cast-iron skillet; the fat will melt and crisp the meat perfectly.

● **Serve it simply.**

True carnitas require no heavy smothering in cheese or sour cream. Serve immediately on warm corn tortillas with diced white onion, cilantro, lime, and a fierce salsa verde cruda.



## Mole Poblano de Licuadora

If you grew up in a Mexican household, you know the smell of mole—that intoxicating scent of Sunday afternoons and your grandmother standing over a simmering clay pot. For a long time, we thought this dark, complex sauce was an untouchable magic trick requiring three days and a volcanic stone grinder. But the truth is, modern Mexican grandmas hacked the system decades ago with the blender. We are using the canonical chiles and the old-school abuelita secret of animal crackers for thickening, but optimizing the process for your actual life. Make the concentrated paste on a Sunday, freeze it, and on a busy Wednesday you will have the authentic, uncompromising taste of the homeland on the table in fifteen minutes flat.

## INGREDIENTS

|                |   |                |  |
|----------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>6 med</b>   | dried Chile Mulato<br><i>wiped clean, stemmed, and seeded</i>   | <b>1/2 med</b> | white onion<br><i>roughly chopped</i>          |
| <b>4 med</b>   | dried Chile Ancho<br><i>wiped clean, stemmed, and seeded</i>    | <b>4 small</b> | garlic<br><i>peeled</i>                        |
| <b>4 med</b>   | dried Chile Pasilla<br><i>wiped clean, stemmed, and seeded</i>  | <b>2 med</b>   | Roma tomatoes<br><i>quartered</i>              |
| <b>2 med</b>   | dried Chile Chipotle<br><i>wiped clean, stemmed, and seeded</i> | <b>1 small</b> | tomatillo<br><i>husked and quartered</i>       |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | raw almonds   | <b>1/2 med</b> | ripe plantain<br><i>peeled and sliced</i>      |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | raw unsalted peanuts  | <b>1/4 cup</b> | raisins  |
| <b>1/4 cup</b> | sesame seeds  | <b>1 med</b>   | stale corn tortilla<br><i>torn into pieces</i> |
| <b>1 med</b>   | Mexican cinnamon stick<br><i>broken into pieces</i>             | <b>1/2 cup</b> | animal crackers                                |
| <b>3 med</b>   | whole cloves  | <b>5 cup</b>   | chicken broth<br><i>warmed</i>                 |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | black peppercorns   | <b>1 med</b>   | Mexican drinking chocolate                     |
| <b>1/2 tsp</b> | anise seed  | <b>1 tsp</b>   | salt   |
| <b>1/2 cup</b> | neutral oil   |                |  |

## PREPARATION

- **Organize your ingredients before turning on the stove.**

The frying stages move aggressively fast. Have your chiles cleaned, spices measured, and aromatics chopped before you begin so nothing burns while you are rummaging through the pantry for cloves.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Flash-fry the dried chiles to release their oils without turning them bitter.**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat. Fry the chiles in small batches for just 15 to 20 seconds per side until they blister slightly, then transfer them to a large bowl and cover with hot water to soak for 20 minutes.

**2. Toast the nuts, seeds, and spices in the hot oil until incredibly fragrant.**

Add another splash of oil to the pot if needed. Toss in the almonds, peanuts, sesame seeds, cinnamon, cloves, peppercorns, and anise seed, stirring constantly for about 2 minutes before transferring them to a large holding bowl. Quickly fry the raisins until they puff up, then add them to the bowl.

**3. Fry the aromatics and thickeners to develop a deep, caramelized sweetness.**

Add 2 more tablespoons of oil and cook the onion, garlic, tomatoes, and tomatillo until soft and slightly charred, then transfer to the bowl. Finally, fry the plantain slices, torn tortilla, and animal crackers until deeply golden brown, saving whatever oil remains in the pot for later.

**4. Blend the softened chiles and fried ingredients into a velvety puree.**

Discard the bitter chile soaking water. Working in batches, load your blender with the chiles, the fried nut and aromatic mixture, and about 2 cups of the warm chicken broth. Blend on high until completely smooth, passing the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer if your blender struggles to break down the skins.

**5. Fry the raw mole paste in hot oil to trigger the Maillard reaction and transform the flavor.**

This is the crucial abuelita secret. Heat 2 more tablespoons of oil in the pot over medium heat, carefully pour in the blended paste, and stir constantly for 15 to 20 minutes until the color darkens to a rich brown and small pools of oil separate and rise to the surface.

**1. Finish the sauce with broth and chocolate for tonight, or pack the paste away for an effortless weeknight dinner.**

If you are eating immediately, whisk in the remaining 3 cups of chicken broth to reach a gravy-like consistency, add the Mexican chocolate and salt, and simmer for 15 minutes. If saving for later, let the thick paste cool completely and freeze it in glass jars; on a busy Wednesday, simply heat a scoop in a saucepan with broth and a chunk of chocolate.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

- **Sourcing the Mulato chile is absolutely non-negotiable for authentic Poblano flavor.**

While Ancho and Pasilla chiles provide the fruity, earthy backbone, the Mulato chile is what gives this mole its signature dark color and deep, chocolatey sweetness. It is entirely worth the trip to a local Mexican market.

- **Animal crackers are the ultimate old-school thickening secret.**

While tortillas provide necessary starch, throwing a handful of animal crackers into the blender adds a nostalgic, subtle vanilla sweetness that perfectly balances the bitter chiles and rich chocolate.



# Pozole Rojo Express con Pollo

There is a profound maternal ingenuity in Mexican home cooking, a brilliant pragmatism that refuses to sacrifice soul for the sake of the clock. This express pozole trades hours of simmering tough pork for bone-in chicken, leveraging standard kitchen equipment to conjure the deeply comforting, restorative broth of a weekend ritual on a random Tuesday. The real secret lies not in the simmering, but in the sear—frying the chile adobo to coax out an earthy depth that instantly tastes like home.

## INGREDIENTS

**3 lb** bone-in skin-on chicken      **4 qt** water  
pieces  
*a mix of breasts and thighs*

|                |  |                |   |
|----------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>1 large</b> | white onion<br><i>cut in half, reserving one quarter for the adobo and dicing the rest for garnish</i> | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | Mexican oregano<br><i>divided</i>                           |
| <b>1 large</b> | head garlic<br><i>halved crosswise, reserving 3 extra cloves peeled for the adobo</i>                  | <b>1 tbsp</b>  | neutral oil   |
| <b>3 med</b>   | bay leaves   | <b>29 oz</b>   | canned white hominy<br><i>thoroughly rinsed and drained</i> |
| <b>1 tbsp</b>  | kosher salt  | <b>1/2 med</b> | green cabbage<br><i>thinly shredded</i>                     |
| <b>6 med</b>   | dried Guajillo chiles<br><i>wiped clean, stems and seeds removed</i>                                   | <b>1 bunch</b> | radishes<br><i>thinly sliced</i>                            |
| <b>2 med</b>   | dried Ancho chiles<br><i>wiped clean, stems and seeds removed</i>                                      | <b>2 large</b> | limes<br><i>cut into wedges</i>                             |
|                |  | <b>12 med</b>  | corn tostadas   |

## PREPARATION

- **Clean and seed the dried chiles.**

Wipe the dusty exterior of the chiles with a damp towel, snap off the stems, and aggressively shake out the seeds to prevent a bitter, gritty broth.

- **Rinse the hominy.**

Canned hominy is completely acceptable, but it must be rinsed under cold water until the water runs clear to wash away the starchy, metallic canning liquid.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil and skim the chicken.**

Place the chicken, half the onion, the unpeeled garlic half, bay leaves, and salt in a large pot, cover with the water, and bring to a boil. Skim off the grayish foam during the first 10 minutes to ensure a pristine broth, then simmer for 35 minutes until the chicken is tender.

- 2. Hydrate the dried chiles.**

While the chicken simmers, boil the cleaned Guajillo and Ancho chiles in a small pot of water for 10 minutes until soft and pliable.

**1. Blend the adobo.**

Transfer the softened chiles to a blender with a quarter of the white onion, the three peeled garlic cloves, a teaspoon of oregano, and a cup of the simmering chicken broth, blending on high until completely smooth.

**2. Shred the cooked chicken and clear the broth.**

Remove the tender chicken to a cutting board to cool, and use a slotted spoon to fish out and discard the spent onion, garlic head, and bay leaves from the broth. Shred the cooled chicken meat, discarding the bones and skin.

**3. Fry the adobo sauce.**

Heat the neutral oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, set a fine-mesh strainer over the pan, and pour the blended chile puree directly through it into the hot oil. Discard the tough skins left in the strainer, and let the sauce sizzle and fry for 5 to 7 minutes until it deepens to a rich brick-red.

**4. Marry the stew.**

Pour the fried adobo, shredded chicken, and rinsed hominy back into the cleared chicken broth. Simmer everything together for 15 minutes, tasting aggressively for salt, as the starchy corn requires heavy seasoning.

**5. Serve with the traditional garnishes.**

Ladle the hot pozole into deep bowls and present them alongside a communal platter of shredded cabbage, sliced radishes, diced onion, crushed oregano, and lime wedges, letting everyone build their own perfect bowl.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Do not fear the canned hominy.**

While traditional pozole requires soaking dried cacahuazintle corn in mineral lime, modern Mexican mothers rely on canned hominy for weeknight dinners; simply rinse it thoroughly so it acts like a sponge for the rich broth.

- **Never skip frying the adobo.**

Pouring raw, blended chiles into a soup results in a flat, bitter liquid. Searing the strained sauce in hot oil caramelizes the sugars and toasts the flavors, instantly providing the illusion of a soup that has simmered all day.