

RECIPES

Tex-Mex Red Chile Enchiladas

Sauced with a special beef gravy, these enchiladas are the mainstay of Tex-Mex combination plates, the menu item that keeps customers coming back! While the very best versions include chunks of beef in the sauce, you can omit them, if you wish. Also, although the sauce is traditionally made with whole, dried *ancho* chiles, in some parts of the country they can be difficult to find and of poor quality. Pure chile powder from *ancho* chiles is much easier to find and store, and it makes the preparation much simpler and more consistent. However, the powder must be top quality. The best I have found is available from Penzey's Spices at www.penzeys.com.

Sauce ingredients

2 teaspoon cooking oil
3 ounces lean beef chuck cut into 1/4 - 1/2 inch pieces
2 tablespoons pure chile powder made from *ancho* chiles
4 large cloves garlic
1 1/2 cups Swanson's lower sodium beef broth
1 3/4 cups water
2 1/2 tablespoons butter
2 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon whole oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin seed
2 1/2 tablespoons tomato sauce
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste

Sauce directions

1. Prepare the optional beef. If you decide to include the beef, at least an hour and 15 minutes before making the sauce, heat a small to medium-sized saucepan over medium-high to high heat then add and sear the meat. Cover the meat with at least 3 inches of water, bring to a boil, and simmer, partially covered, for 1 1/4 hours. Drain and discard the liquid and reserve the cooked meat.



2. Blend the sauce ingredients. To make sure the chile sauce as smooth as possible, about 15 minutes before making the sauce place the chile powder and garlic in a blender, add 1/2 the broth and water and blend for two minutes. Add the rest of the liquid and blend briefly to combine. Reserve

3. Make the roux. In a large saucepan, melt the butter over just below medium heat, whisk in the flour, and cook, whisking constantly, until it is the color of a brown paper grocery bag. This usually takes between 4 - 5 minutes, but can be done as quickly as 1 minute, if the pan is particularly hot. Watch the

color and stop the process if it become much darker than the paper bag description. Also, do not stop whisking the mixture until it is done, or it can scorch and ruin the sauce.

4. Make the sauce. Remove the saucepan, blend the chile mixture briefly to make sure all the items are well combined, and whisk in about ½ cup of the blended chile mixture into the roux (the flour butter mixture). When it thickens and any lumps disappear, add another half cup of the chile mixture then repeat until the liquid combines easily. Replace the pan on the heat, and slowly whisk in the remaining chile mixture and bring to a simmer. Add the oregano, cumin, the tomato sauce, and the reserved meat and cook at a low simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce coats a spoon well. It should be the consistency of a very thin milkshake. This should take about 20 minutes.

Makes approximately 2 cups sauce, enough for 4 servings of 2 - 3 enchiladas, each.

The enchilada ingredients

8 - 12 corn tortillas (depending on whether you want to make 2 or 3 each)

Spray oil

9 - 12 ounces mild cheddar cheese, grated

1/4 cup finely chopped white onion (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

2. "Soften" the tortillas. To make the tortillas pliable enough to roll without cracking and to keep them from becoming soggy they must be "softened." The traditional way to do this is to dip each tortilla briefly into very hot cooking oil then drain it on absorbent towels. A much easier and less messy method is to barely coat both sides of the tortillas with spray oil. You then place them in a plastic tortilla warmer or wrap them in a towel and microwave them at high for 30 - 45 seconds or until they are very hot and pliable.

3. Roll the enchiladas. After the tortillas have been softened, place about 3/4 of an ounce of the cheese just off center of each one, sprinkle on some onion (if using it) and roll them into tight cylinders. (Please note that using too much filling is a common error). Either place all the tortillas in a baking dish, or on individual, oven-proof serving plates.

4. Heat and serve the enchiladas. Top the enchiladas with the sauce, sprinkle them with the cheese and a little more onion, if you wish, and bake for 10 - 12 minutes, or until they are hot and the sauce is bubbling. Alternatively, and perhaps easier, the enchiladas can be heated in a microwave for about 45 seconds on high. Serve with coleslaw, rice, and/or refried beans.