

A decorative border of circular food images on a dark brown textured background. The images include various Mexican dishes such as tacos, burritos, salads, soups, and fruits, arranged in a curved path along the left and bottom edges of the cover.

MEXICAN COOKING SURVIVAL GUIDE

mexicanplease.com

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Introduction

Thanks for downloading the Mexican Cooking Survival Guide! This is the quickest and easiest way to get your home kitchen pumping out the best Mexican food in town. You'll be shocked at the quality and range of dishes you can make just by keeping these key ingredients on hand.

Once your kitchen is stocked with the included pantry list you'll have the option of making any of the 27 recipes listed in this Guide.

I've made each of the recipes multiple times and can vouch for all of them as the real deal. Don't worry if you've never made Mexican food at home before, it's easy and all of these recipes offer great reward for very little effort (why isn't all of life like that?). Get in the habit of keeping these ingredients on hand and you'll always have authentic Mexican cuisine at your fingertips.

I'll keep this document up to date but don't forget that you can always check back to the original web page for an online list of these recipes:

www.mexicanplease.com/mexican-cooking-survival-guide/

Note that in addition to the pantry list and ingredient tips, this document contains step-by-step photos and instructions for the 5 most popular recipes in the Guide. Photos and instructions for the remaining 22 recipes will live on the website for now and a link will be provided back to the site for each of these recipes. The corresponding web page has a recipe box that can be printed out for future use.

I want this Guide to be a genuinely valuable resource for anyone who thinks life is better with Mexican food in it, so please send me your feedback and suggestions on how I can make it even better. Thank you!

Patrick

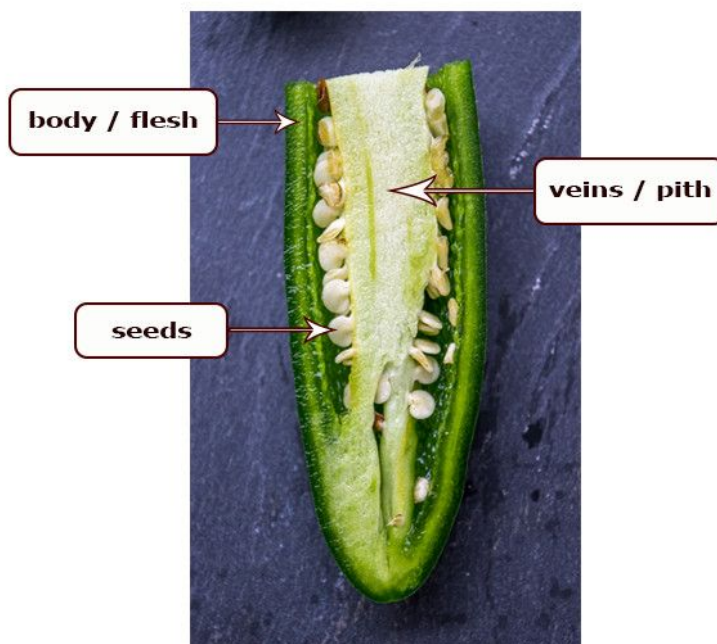
[Mexican Please](http://www.mexicanplease.com)

Chili Peppers -- Key Info

First I want to offer a few key facts that will have you on your way to becoming an expert on the essential peppers of Mexican cuisine. Bueno?

Capsaicin is the active component in chili peppers that gives them their distinctive flavor and 'heat'. It's the ingredient that is most responsible for the unique taste of Mexican cuisine.

Take a look at this cross section of a jalapeno pepper:

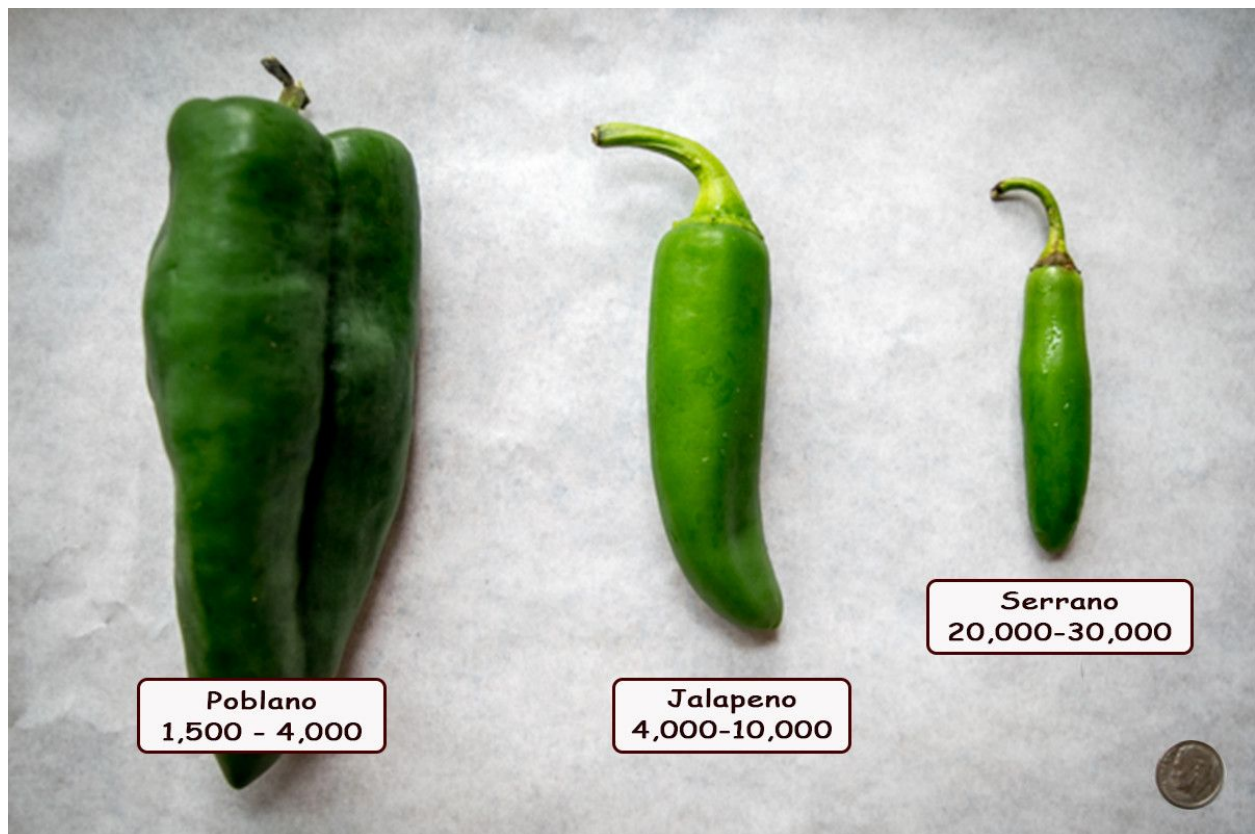


The highest levels of capsaicin exist in the seeds and veins of chili peppers. Yes, you'll get a bit of heat (capsaicin) from the body, but the highest concentrations will be in the seeds and veins.

So if you've got any fears about using these seeds in your cooking it's time to banish them. The seeds (and the surrounding pith) have all the good stuff!

Different varieties of peppers contain varying levels of capsaicin, so the Scoville scale was introduced to measure the amount of capsaicin in each of the varieties. Think of it as a quick way to gauge how 'strong' a chili pepper is.

Our workhorse chili peppers will be the jalapenos, serranos, and poblanos. Here they are with accompanying Scoville Heat Units.



Note how the serrano is about twice as strong as the jalapeno, and how the poblano has much less capsaicin than either the jalapeno or serrano.

OK, we now know that the highest concentrations of capsaicin lie in the seeds and veins of chili peppers, right? So why is this good to know?

Because monitoring the level of heat in sauces and salsa is easily the most neglected part of Mexican cooking.

People have such a wide range of likes and dislikes, and that includes how much heat you like in your food.

Getting the heat level to your liking, what I call Capsaicin Control, is one of the most important techniques that will have you on your way to cooking mouth-watering Mexican food. There's nothing more disappointing than spending an hour on a sauce only to have it turn nuclear when you add too much heat.

You'll quickly find that your favorite sauces have a delicate balance between the flavors of the main ingredients and the level of the heat.

Too much heat overwhelms the other flavors.

Too little heat and it doesn't taste 'Mexican'.

That meeting point where the heat and flavors are balanced is what makes Mexican cuisine so unique and distinctive.

This is why I always recommend that people start with the Tomato Jalapeno Salsa that's listed first in the Guide. We'll be adding the heat incrementally in this Salsa by adding portions of the jalapeno and taste testing, as opposed to just throwing it in and going with the result.

Once you get a feel for the heat level you like you can streamline the process for the other recipes in the Guide. Bueno?

Okay, here's the pantry list that will allow to make any of the 27 recipes whenever you get the craving. Don't forget that chicken is listed as my preferred protein source, but feel free to get creative because nearly all of these recipes can be made with your protein of choice: tofu, pork, lentils, steak, beans. I'll list item amounts for two people but you can adjust accordingly for family size kitchens.

Pantry List

- ☐ Avocados (4)
- ☐ Jalapenos (5)
- ☐ Serranos (5)
- ☐ Poblanos (2)
- ☐ Chipotles in adobo (2 cans)
- ☐ Tomatoes (10 Roma)
- ☐ Tomatillos (10 fresh or 2 cans)
- ☐ Onions (4)
- ☐ Garlic (2 bulbs)
- ☐ Cilantro (1 bunch)
- ☐ Potatoes (3)
- ☐ Limes (5)
- ☐ Rice (white, long grain)
- ☐ Black beans (whole, 2 cans)
- ☐ Refried beans (2 cans)
- ☐ Flour tortillas (burrito sized)
- ☐ Corn tortillas
- ☐ Tortilla chips
- ☐ Protein source: Chicken breasts
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Cheese (Monterey Jack)
- ☐ Stock (chicken or vegetable)
- ☐ Cream (heavy cream, creme fraiche, or Mexican crema)
- ☐ Yogurt, plain (Greek)
- ☐ Bread crumbs (or corn flakes)
- ☐ Hot sauce
- ☐ Kitchen staples: salt, pepper, oil, flour, mayo, cumin, oregano, chili powder

Ingredient Explanations and Storage Tips

Here are some ingredient tips for the pantry list.

There's a good chance you can find all of these items at your main grocery store, but that depends a bit on the store. Sometimes you'll need a backup specialty market for items like poblano peppers and chipotles in adobo. Of course, if you have a Latin market close by than you are lucky as they will have just about everything. I tend to buy the produce and more common items from the big grocers and rely on my local Latin market for the more specific items.

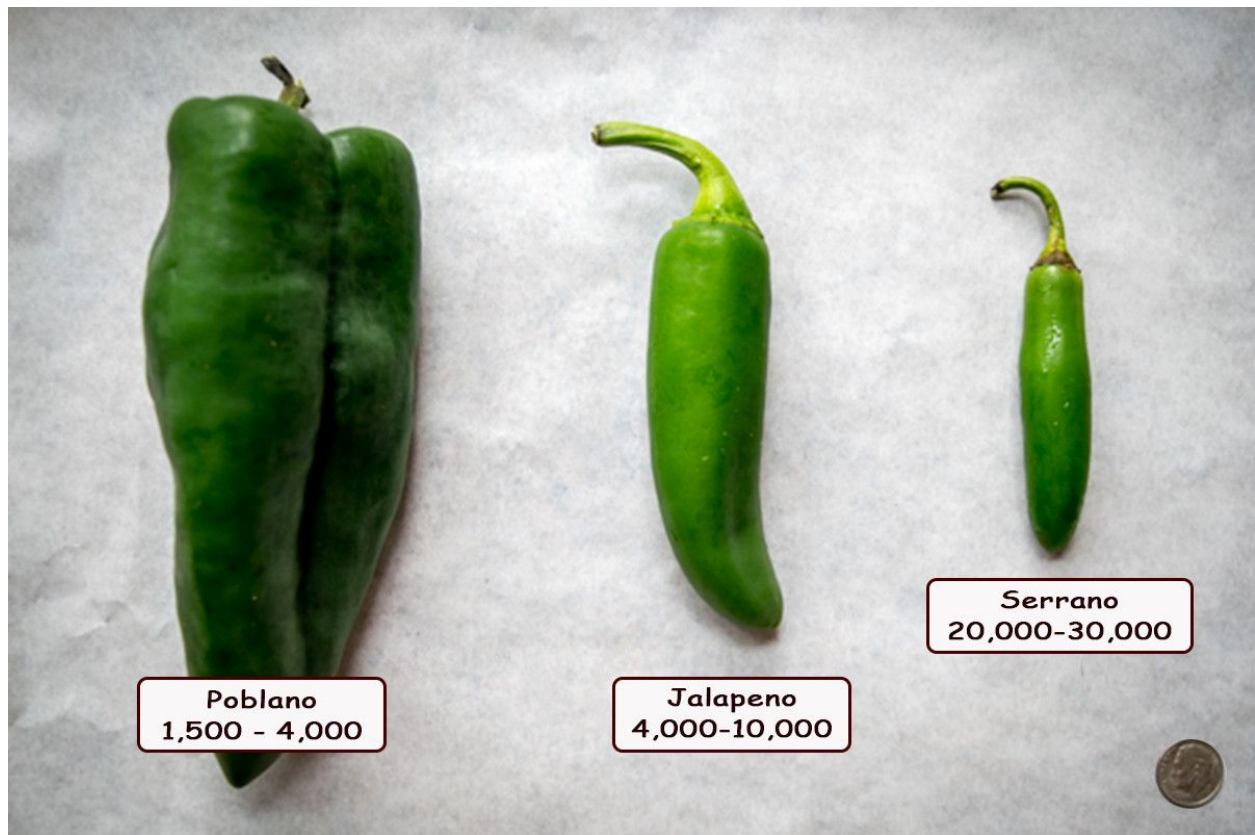
If you don't find everything at first, don't give up! Sometimes you'll find items in strange places so it's always worth asking if you're coming up blank on things like Chipotles in Adobo.

Avocados (4)

The easiest way to keep fresh avocados on hand is to let them ripen on the countertop (until brown and slightly smooshy) and then put them in the fridge. This halts the ripening process and they will keep for an additional week or so.

Jalapenos (5)

Your new best friend! Buy the ones that are green and taut. Most areas have fresh jalapenos year round, but sometimes you have to check a couple different markets. Here's a comparison of the main peppers you'll be using. The numbers listed are Scoville Heat Units; the higher the number the hotter the pepper.



I tend to store chili peppers in a large ziploc in the fridge where they keep for 1-2 weeks.

Serranos (5)

Serrano peppers look like skinny jalapenos. They are significantly hotter than jalapenos and have a sharper, grassier taste.

Most importantly, please know that you can always use jalapenos in place of serranos and the difference is minimal. For example, [Salsa Verde](#) is typically made with serranos, but I'd say 75pct of the time I make it I am using jalapenos. So don't fret if you can't find serranos, just use jalapenos!

Poblanos (2)

These are a bit tougher to find in certain areas. Buy the ones that are dark green and have taut skin.

Note that smaller chili peppers tend to be hotter than larger varieties. So in this case, you'll find that poblanos are surprisingly mild compared to the smaller jalapenos and serranos. But when they are roasted they have a unique flavor that is all their own.

Chipotles in Adobo Sauce (2 cans)

These are dried jalapenos swimming in a tangy sauce. The result is a smoky sweet pepper that does wonders in salsa and dishes like [Chicken Tinga Tacos](#). You'll find them in some of the bigger grocers and in all of the Latin markets. After opening a can, I store the peppers in a small tupperware container in the fridge.



Tomatoes (10, Roma/plum)

I usually stick with Roma/plum tomatoes because they have a more favorable flesh to seed ratio, but 'normal' tomatoes work just as well.

Tomatillos (10 fresh or 2 cans)

Tomatillos are the heart of the green sauces you'll be making. You'll find them in the produce section of most markets, usually tucked in next to the jalapenos. Take a peek inside the husk and buy the ones that are taut and greenish. If they are overly wrinkled they are past their prime. If you can't find fresh tomatillos then buy canned tomatillos from a Latin or gourmet market.



Onions (4)

You'll go through lots of onions. White or yellow will do. White onions are slightly sharper and yellow onions will be slightly sweeter. I use white onions out of habit.

Garlic (2 bulbs)

Buy heads of garlic that are firm. The fastest way to peel a single clove of garlic is to cut off the top stem portion and then lightly smash the clove with the flat blade of a knife. If you are a pro smasher the skin will then pull off in one piece.

Cilantro (1 bunch)

Cilantro adds a freshness to [Salsa Verde](#) and other sauces that you can't get from any other herb. The only downside is that it can be difficult to store. I keep it in some water (Mason jar) in the back corner of the fridge with a plastic bag loosely covering it. This will keep it usable for up to 2 weeks.

Potatoes (3)

I tend to use Russet potatoes but you can get by with just about any potato you have on hand.

Limes (5)

Limes cost a nickel in many parts of Mexico. Not so north of the border, so it's worth price checking the options in your neighborhood. Sometimes the specialty or Latin markets will sell them 5 for \$1 or something similar. Store in the refrigerator.

Rice (white, long grain)

White, long-grained rice is the most common rice used in Mexican cuisine.

Black beans (whole, 2 cans)

Yes, eventually you might cook your own [batch of beans](#), but it's worth keeping a couple cans of black beans in the pantry. Most of the recipes in the Guide will be flavoring the beans so buying the cheap ones is fine.

Refried beans, black or pinto (2 cans)

Soon you'll be an expert on [making your own refried beans](#), but keeping a couple cans in the pantry is a good option for those days when you are short on time.

Flour Tortillas (burrito-sized)

Your default market will have adequate flour tortillas. Store in refrigerator. One package will do.

Corn Tortillas

White or yellow corn tortillas from your default supermarket will be sufficient. But if you have a Latin market near you then check to see if they stock any tortillas from local producers as sometimes these can be a slight improvement. Store in refrigerator. 1-2 packages.

Tortilla chips

Once you are in the habit of making your own [guacamole](#) in a matter of *seconds*, it's always good to keep a bag of tortilla chip close by. And if nachos are in your future, the thicker, heartier chips will serve you better.

Protein source: chicken

Chicken dominates in my kitchen so most of the "meat" dishes in the Guide will use chicken. The good news though is that most of the recipes will work just as well with your preferred protein source, so feel free to get creative with your choice of tofu, pork, lentils, beef, etc.

Eggs

Having eggs on hand gives you instant access to some mouthwatering breakfast dishes that work great as dinner too.

Cheese (Monterey Jack)

Any melting cheese will serve you well in Mexican dishes, but Monterey Jack cheese is a great default cheese to always have on hand. Cheddar and Mozzarella are decent substitutes. You'll also see [Cotija cheese](#) mentioned occasionally. Cotija is a salty, crumbly cheese that is a great final (optional) garnish on many dishes. Don't fret if you don't have any on hand as it's not required, but definitely keep an eye out for it in your neighborhood.



Stock (chicken or vegetable)

Having chicken or vegetable stock on hand will improve the flavor of your Mexican sauces. You've got lots of choices on stock. A low sodium storebought version will suffice in most cases. You'll get a slight improvement buying in-house stock from your local butcher or gourmet store. And of course, you always have the option of [making your own](#). Note that in most cases when stock is called for, you always have the option of substituting water if your kitchen is stockless and you'll still get a good result (although slightly inferior).

Cream (heavy cream, creme fraiche, or Mexican Crema)

We are mostly using cream to enhance sauces, i.e. [Enchiladas Suizas](#), so keeping a pint of heavy cream on hand is the easiest solution. But creme fraiche and [Mexican Crema](#) are in the same realm, so they can be used as well. Note that heavy cream holds up best under high temps and is the traditional choice when cooking or simmering is involved. Mexican Crema is traditionally used as a topper; a final drizzle over a completed dish.

Yogurt (plain, Greek)

Having some yogurt on hand will give you the option of making 'light' versions of some of the sauces we'll be using. For example, you can make Chipotle Mayonnaise using all Greek yogurt in place of mayonnaise and most people won't notice the difference.

Bread crumbs (or cornflakes)

You'll only need these on hand if you want to make [Milanesa cutlets](#): breaded chicken cutlets that can be used in tortas, tacos, etc.

Hot sauce

My default is Valentina hot sauce, [here's why](#). Other good choices include Cholula and Tapatio.



Kitchen Staples

Your kitchen probably already has all of these on hand: cumin, oregano, chili powder, salt, pepper, oil, flour, mayo.

And that's it!

Send me an email (or use the contact form) if you have any questions about any of these ingredients. It's pretty easy to incorporate these items into your weekly grocery list. In fact, there's a chance that it will become your weekly grocery list :)

Okay, here are 27 authentic Mexican recipes you can make using the simple pantry list.

5 Most Popular Recipes in the Guide

[Tomato Jalapeno Salsa](#)

I always come back to this Tomato Jalapeno Salsa. Even after dozens of other salsa expeditions to far away flavors, I always come back. A warm salsa blended together *moments ago* simply cannot be beat.

Don't let the innocent looking ingredient list fool you. It's one of the simplest Mexican recipes in existence, but it also happens to be one of the most satisfying. Roasting the tomatoes is the hidden step that will have you boycotting your grocer's salsa aisle.

For anyone new to home-cooked Mexican, or anyone sick of their local taco joint, I always recommend starting with this salsa. It's the perfect example of the sum being far greater than the parts.



Here is your ingredient list for 2 cups worth of *whoa-what-is-this* homemade salsa:



Not pictured is the absolutely crucial step that I've already hinted at. You **MUST** roast the tomatoes if you want the salsa to taste authentic. This sweetens them up, lowers the acidity, and makes the salsa warm (yes!).

I usually put them in the oven at 400F for 20 minutes or so. I recommend you start by trying that method too.

Start by rinsing the tomatoes and cutting out the stems. Leaving the stems is fine too but I'm in the habit of cutting them out.



Put them in the oven at 400F. After 20 minutes or so they'll look like this:



You can leave the skins on; it won't affect the flavor too much either way. But if the skins char considerably then I tend to pull them off.

Into the blender they go, along with $\frac{1}{2}$ onion, 1 clove garlic, and if it's your first time making this salsa, add only *one quarter* of the jalapeno for now.



Start by pulse blending. We don't want to blend it 'til it's thin and frothy. It'll taste better if it's left chunky.

And now the most important part: taste it! Be honest about the heat level. Not enough? Just right?

Most people will say not enough. If so, add in another $\frac{1}{4}$ of the jalapeno, give it a pulse blend and try it again. Heat level good?



Keep going until it tastes right to you. Everyone's taste buds are different and most salsa recipes overlook this. It's worth it to add the heat incrementally the first time you make it.

Eventually you'll get good at knowing your preferred heat/spice level and can streamline this process in the future. For example, I usually start by adding $\frac{1}{2}$ of the jalapeno, tasting, and then adding more if necessary

OK, you've got the heat level you like, the sauce is pureed roughly, and now you can add some salt to taste. The majority of the time I make this salsa I don't add salt because the flavor is already rich enough for me. If you have tomatoes that were struggling, a pinch of salt may enhance them.



And that's it! This is the world's easiest salsa to make but it also happens to create one of the most unique flavors across all cuisines.

Not shown in the above photo is your friends and family's reaction to tasting a warm salsa after eating cold-salsa-from-the-jar their *entire* lives. Be warned.

Roasting the tomatoes and adding the heat incrementally are two techniques that will become a permanent part of your Mexican weaponry. Even after trudging through salsa recipes with 15 ingredients there's a good chance you'll always come back to the flavor of this one.

TOMATO JALAPENO SALSA

★★★★★
5.0 from 1 reviews

PREP TIME
5 mins


COOK TIME
20 mins

TOTAL TIME
25 mins

Roasting the tomatoes and adding the jalapeno incrementally is the key to finding your perfect homemade salsa.

Author: Patrick Calhoun | Mexican Please
Serves: 2 cups



 PRINT

INGREDIENTS

3 tomatoes
½ onion
1 jalapeno
1 garlic clove
salt to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse and de-stem the tomatoes
2. Roast the tomatoes in the oven at 400F for 20-30 minutes
3. Add the roasted tomatoes to a blender along with ½ onion, 1 garlic clove, and only ¼ of the jalapeno
4. Pulse blend until combined
5. Taste for heat level. Add another ¼ of the jalapeno if you want additional heat. Keep adding additional quarters of the jalapeno until you find a heat level that works for your taste buds.
6. Salt to taste.
7. Serve immediately
8. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator

NOTES

Typically I do not add salt to this salsa but it depends on the tomatoes.

Pan roasting the tomatoes works too if you don't want to roast them in the oven.

Chicken Tinga Tacos

“Tinga” denotes torn or shredded meat in Spanish, but to Western ears *Teeengaaaa* rolls off the tongue like an exotic dish you can pay good money for, but make at home?! Never!

Taquerias north of the border have responded by making Tinga Tacos the star attraction, but the long trip up from Mexico has left these popular tacos struggling to reclaim their identity, and not tasting nearly as Tingalicious as they could be.

Luckily it’s easy to make your own batch of *Teeengaaaa*, and doing so will once and for all confirm that they can taste just as good as they sound.

If you’ve ever come across a Tinga recipe there’s a good chance it relied on tomatoes as the base. While this will produce a sauce that ain’t so bad the first few times you have it, I think it whiffs on the true potential of the dish.

Pairing the tomato with a few of these beauties....



...gives the sauce a sharp tartness that goes missing if you are only using tomatoes as the base.

Now add the smoky heat of chipotles....



.....and you've got a rich, complex sauce that will outperform anything you can get from your local taqueria.



This batch was 4 tomatillos, 2 roma tomatoes, 1/2 onion, 2 garlic cloves, and 3 chipotles in adobo — this gets simmered with a 1/2 cup of stock, 1/8 teaspoon of oregano, a dash of cumin, and then mixed with two shredded chicken breasts.

Keep some of the adobo sauce on standby as the initial heat of the sauce can sometimes get diluted once you add the chicken.

I added approximately 2 tablespoons of adobo sauce and a few more pinches of salt to the above pan.



Serving with a stack of warm corn tortillas is totally acceptable, but it's worth trying them with the tortillas crisped up if you have the luxury of eating them as you make them.

Using a comal or skillet, cook for 2-3 minutes on medium-high heat or until brown spots start to appear on the underside.



This slightly crispy version lies somewhere between a taco and a tostada and it is *delicioso*.

Normally I'm a big fan of customizing the toppings to your liking, but there is one specific combo that is worth trying at least once in your life, and there's a chance it will be the end boss of Tinga toppings for you.

Avocado bits, finely chopped raw onion, and crumbled cheese pair with the crisp, Tinga loaded tortilla as if they are all a pack of old buddies. Cotija and Monterey Jack are good choices for cheese.

Not pictured is the squeeze of lime juice that officially sends this combo into the Tingalicious category and will keep people coming back to the most authentic taqueria in town (yours)

CHICKEN TINGA TACOS (ARE EVERYWHERE)

★★★★★
5.0 from 1 reviews

PREP TIME
15 mins

COOK TIME
20 mins

TOTAL TIME
35 mins

Using tomatillos in these Chicken Tinga Tacos gives them an authentic flavor that is tough to beat.

Author: Patrick Calhoun | Mexican Please
Serves: 2-3 people

INGREDIENTS

4 tomatillos
2 roma tomatoes
½ onion
2 garlic cloves
3 chipotles in adobo
½ cup stock
⅛ teaspoon oregano (use Mexican if you have it)
salt
dash cumin
2 chicken breasts (or rotisserie chicken)
8-12 corn tortillas
1 avocado
finely chopped onion for garnish
cheese (Monterey Jack or Cotija)
lime wedges



PRINT

INSTRUCTIONS

1. If you are cooking the chicken, cover 2 chicken breasts with water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 20-25 minutes or until the chicken is no longer pink inside.
2. Roughly chop ½ an onion and peel 2 garlic cloves
3. Cook the onion and whole garlic cloves in a dollop of oil on medium heat until the onion is just starting to brown
4. You can pan roast the tomatoes and tomatillos if you want, but I usually just use the oven. Roast the tomatoes in the oven at 400F for 15-20 minutes. Add the tomatillos to the tomatoes about halfway through the roasting period as they need less time to roast than the tomatoes
5. Add the onion, garlic, tomatoes and tomatillos to a blender along with 3 chipotles in adobo (I usually scrape out the veins and seeds of the chipotles)
6. Pulse blend until combined well
7. Simmer this sauce in a dollop of oil on medium heat.
8. Add ½ cup stock, ⅛ teaspoon oregano, a dash of cumin, and a pinch of salt to the sauce.
9. Let reduce for 5-10 minutes
10. Add the shredded chicken and combine well with the sauce, bringing everything to a uniform temp.
11. Give a final taste before serving and add more adobo sauce if you want more heat, and add salt to taste.
12. Garnish with finely chopped avocado bits, cheese, diced onion, and a sprinkle of lime juice.
13. If crisping up the tortillas, add the tinga mixture to a tortilla and cook on a skillet or comal over medium-high heat until brown spots appear on the underside (2-3 minutes).

NOTES

If you don't have fresh tomatillos, you can use canned tomatillos and get a similar result. Don't worry about roasting the tomatillos if you are using canned as it doesn't have the same effect on tomatillos that have been resting in liquid.

The Only Guacamole Recipe You'll Ever Need

Spend three minutes reading this post and your reward is a lifetime of Epic Guac that can be made in seconds, not minutes.

You'll be surprised how such a simple recipe can make guacamole taste so *complete*.



One ripe avocado, half a lime, a couple tablespoons of onion, and some salt. That's all you need.

With one important step that's been around since the Aztecs were making this *ahuaca-mulli* in a mortar and pestle.

Traditional molcajetes use weighted mashing to release additional flavors and oils that lie dormant after traditional chopping. Applying that concept to our recipe will provide all the enhancing the avocado needs, but no mortar and pestle is needed!

Start by finely chopping 2-3 tablespoons of onion (white or yellow). Then use the back of a fork to crush the onion until it flattens and turns translucent.



Add to a bowl along with the flesh of one avocado, a generous pinch of salt, and the juice of half a lime. You can use 1/8 teaspoon of salt per avocado as a starting point.

Mush and mix well. This onion smooshing technique will infuse the flavor of the onion into the avocado.



And now the most important part....taste it!

Guacamole is hypersensitive to salt amount and each avocado has it's own personal seasoning needs.

Keep adding tiny dashes of salt (and lime) until you like it. If it still tastes like an avocado you probably need a bit more salt.

Once you find the right balance for your taste buds you'll be able to whip up this recipe in about the same time it takes to grab a bag of tortilla chips from the pantry.

And now the good news. I use this version of guacamole well over 90 percent of the time Guac is called for. It's so good that you rarely ever need additional ingredients.

It also happens to be the foundation for just about every other Guac recipe in existence. Here's a common recipe making the rounds today:



Did you spot the onion and lime? Yup, our simple Guac that we made above is the most important component here. And now you can use that foundation as your starting point any time you need a standout on the appetizer table.

Okay, one last thing....

The easiest way to keep this Guac handy is to make sure your kitchen always has ripe avocados. To avoid running out to the market every time you crave Guac, start buying avocados in bunches. Once they've ripened on the countertop put them in the refrigerator. This halts the ripening process and you'll get another 4-6 days out of them, sometimes even longer.

Give this Guac recipe a try. It wants to be your best friend!

THE ONLY GUACAMOLE RECIPE YOU'LL EVER NEED

PREP TIME
5 mins

TOTAL TIME
5 mins

You'll be surprised how good this guacamole tastes. Easy to make too!

Author: Patrick Calhoun | Mexican Please
Serves: 1 cup

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 lime
- 2-3 tablespoons of finely chopped onion (white or yellow)
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt (plus more to taste)



 PRINT

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Finely chop 2-3 tablespoons of onion
2. Use the back of a fork to smooch the onion until it turns translucent
3. Add onion to a bowl along with the avocado flesh, $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of salt, and the juice of a half lime.
4. Mash and mix well.
5. Taste for salt level.
6. Avocados vary and some need more salt than others.
7. Keep adding tiny dashes of salt (and lime) until you like it. If it still tastes like avocado add another dash of salt.

NOTES

The easiest way to keep ripe avocados on hand is to use the refrigerator. Once ripe, put them in the fridge and they'll keep for another 4-6 days.

This core recipe is the foundation for countless other variations that involve additional ingredients.

Easy Red Sauce Enchiladas

This is my go-to recipe for red sauce enchiladas. Fast, incredible flavor, and stress free to make. Sound too good to be true?

Don't let the simple ingredient list deceive you. The combo of roasted tomatoes, cumin, and chipotles in adobo creates a where-have-you-been-all-my-life flavor that is far superior to anything you can get at your local Mexican joints.



First things first. If you have enchilada sauce in a can somewhere in your pantry, start by placing that can at the very bottom of the nearest trash receptacle.

Then get three tomatoes roasting in the oven at 400F.



And saute 1/2 an onion and 3 garlic cloves in a dollop of oil. You can chop roughly as all of this is going in the blender eventually.



You've got options for the chicken. Rotisserie chicken will work if you want to streamline this recipe even further, or you can poach a chicken breast for 15-20 minutes in simmering water. That's what I did for this batch.

Okay, in about 10-15 minutes the tomatoes will be roasted 'enough'.



Add them to the onions along with 3 chipotles in adobo, 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon oregano, 1 cup stock, and some freshly ground pepper.



If you're new to [chipotles in adobo](#) you can find them in the Latin goods section of most grocery stores.



1-2 Tablespoons of chili powder would be a viable substitute for the chipotles in adobo, but I think it's worth it to keep a few cans of the chipotles in adobo on hand for recipes like this one. They create a rich, complex flavor that is hard to duplicate.

After the mixture comes to a uniform temp (2-3 minutes), add it to a blender and combine well. Return to saucepan and simmer on mediumish heat.



Take a taste for seasoning. For this batch I added another pinch of salt and another pinch of oregano.

Also note that using 3 chipotles in adobo creates some real heat. If you want a less spicy dish you can dial back and use only 1 or 2 chipotles.

After warming up the tortillas (I used the oven for a couple minutes), add a dollop of the enchilada sauce to a plate. Dredge a tortilla in it and flip. This ensures you have some of the delish sauce inside each enchilada. Fill with chicken, cheese, and a few bits of raw onion.



Roll tight and place on a baking dish. You can line the bottom of the baking dish with some enchilada sauce to prevent sticking if you want.

Cover the enchiladas with the remaining sauce and give 'em a jiggle so the sauce seeps in between them.



Bake at 400F for 8-10 minutes, or until you can't wait anymore.

You've got lots of choices for garnish. Of course, it's tough to beat some [Mexican Crema](#) and a sprinkling of cheese.

[Mexican Rice](#) and a [Basic Guacamole](#) also work really well with the flavor of this dish.



So good!

Please oh please give these Red Sauce Enchiladas a try if you've never made your own enchilada sauce before. By keeping just a few ingredients on hand you'll always have the option of eating the best Mexican food in town in less than 30 minutes.

EASY RED SAUCE ENCHILADAS

PREP TIME
15 mins

COOK TIME
20 mins

TOTAL TIME
35 mins

This is my go-to recipe for red sauce enchiladas. Fast, incredible flavor, and stress free to make. You might even have all the ingredients on hand already.

Author: Patrick Calhoun | Mexican Please
Serves: 2-3 people



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INGREDIENTS

3 tomatoes
½ onion
3 garlic cloves
½ teaspoon cumin
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon oregano
3 chipotles in adobo
1 Tablespoon adobo sauce
1 cup stock
freshly ground pepper
oil
1 chicken breast
8-10 corn tortillas
Monterey Jack cheese
2-3 Tablespoons finely chopped onion
crema (optional)
Cotija cheese (optional)
Basic Guacamole (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Start by roasting 3 tomatoes in the oven at 400F
2. If you are poaching the chicken, cover the chicken breast with cold water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and let cook until the chicken is no longer pink inside, approx. 15-20 minutes. You can also add onion and salt to the simmering water for additional flavor.
3. Saute ½ onion and 3 garlic cloves in a dollop of oil.
4. Add the roasted tomatoes to the onions and garlic, along with 3 chipotles in adobo, 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce, ½ teaspoon cumin, ¼ teaspoon oregano, 1 cup stock, ½ teaspoon salt, and freshly ground pepper.
5. Let the mixture simmer for a few minutes and then add to a blender
6. Blend well and return to the saucepan.
7. Taste for seasoning. (I added additional pinches of salt and oregano to this batch)
8. Let simmer for 5-10 minutes on mediumish heat
9. Meanwhile, heat up 8-10 corn tortillas in the oven for a couple minutes and shred the chicken using two forks
10. Add a dollop of the enchilada sauce to a plate. Dredge a tortilla in the sauce and flip.
11. Fill with chicken, chunks of cheese, and some bits of raw onion
12. Roll tight and place on a baking dish. You can line the baking dish with enchilada sauce to prevent sticking
13. Continue rolling the enchiladas until all the chicken is gone. A single chicken breast will make 7-9 enchiladas.
14. Cover the enchiladas with the remaining sauce and give it a jiggle.
15. Bake at 400F for 8-10 minutes
16. Serve immediate with your choice of crema, cheese, rice, and guacamole

NOTES

Mexican oregano works really well in this dish so use that if you have some, but you will still get a great result using regular oregano.

I used a homemade chicken stock but virtually any stock (or even water) would work for this dish.

Be sure to warm up the tortillas before building the enchiladas. This makes them easier to roll. I use the oven for a couple minutes but you can also microwave them for 20-30 seconds.

Spicy Black Bean Nachos

It's tough to beat the combo of warm tortilla chips, melted cheese, and spicy black beans. In other words...NACHOS!

nachos / nah-cho-zz! / *noun*

1. tortilla chips topped with melted cheese and warm goopy beans
2. an increasingly popular exclamation used to denote an impending, much deserved reward; similar in use to Yes! or Right on!

We're using chipotles in adobo to give the beans some real kick, and the result is a combo that can be described best with one word...

Nachos!



We're building this delight using canned beans as that is easiest, but of course you are welcome to use 2 cups of [homemade beans](#) if you have some on hand.

Roughly chop 1/2 an onion and peel 2 garlic cloves. Saute in a dollop of oil over medium heat for 5-7 minutes.



Rinse and drain a can of black beans and add to the onion mixture, along with 2 chipotles in adobo, 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, 1/2 teaspoon salt, freshly ground pepper, and 1/2 cup of water (or stock).



Simmer for 5-8 minutes and then combine ingredients in a blender or food processor. Take a taste for salt after combining. I added another pinch to this batch.

You're left with a delicious bean puree that is capable of both drizzling and clinging at the same time. If for any reason your batch comes out too liquidy (to cling to chips) then you can saute it over mediumish heat for a few minutes and it will reduce to a thicker consistency.

And note that using 2 chipotles in adobo creates real heat! I tend to make this bean mixture extra spicy knowing that it will be diluted down by the chips and fixings. Using only a single chipotle is a good option if you're not a huge fan of spicy foods.



And now I'm going to make a suggestion that might send some of you nacho experts running for the hills....

I think these nachos taste best when they are done in moderation. I know, I know, nachos are an infrequent delight designed to be over the top goopy decadence, amirite?!

This version tries to have the best of both nacho worlds: some goopy decadence but also some restraint so that the beany cheesy flavors stay at the forefront. In other words, don't dump everything in the kitchen on top of them. I've made double and triple layer batches of nachos before and they quickly turn into a soggy mess.

So while you'll have enough quantity to make a triple layer batch, this recipe far prefers a single layer of nachos, ensuring that you'll always have chips in tact and they'll be warm and crispy. Nachos!

Start by creating a dense, single layer of chips on a sheetpan. Drizzle with some of the bean mixture and add a layer of cheese. I'm using a mix of Monterey Jack and Cheddar.



This gets baked in the oven at 400F for 5-7 minutes or until the cheese is thoroughly melted.

And now give yourself a quick pat on the back as all the hard work is done. The combo of warm chips, melted cheese and spicy black beans is good enough to be eaten on its own and the rest is just a bonus that can be customized to your liking.

I think a fresh, cool Avocado Salsa Verde is the perfect complement to cheesy nachos so consider that a good option for these Spicy Black Bean Nachos.

I'll put instructions for the Avocado Salsa Verde in the recipe box below. Essentially, you are roasting some tomatillos and combining them with onion, garlic, cilantro, jalapeno, and avocado.



You're left with vibrant salsa that does wonders in this dish.

Additional garnishes, all of them optional, include tomatoes, jalapeno slices, avocado bits, cilantro, and Cotija cheese.

I combined a few of those options and made a quick double batch of our default [Pico de Gallo](#) recipe that you'll find [here](#).



So this nachos version is topped with drizzled Avocado Salsa Verde, jalapeno slices, Pico de Gallo, and a sprinkling of cilantro.



One last thing....

Keep the bowl of spicy black beans close by to give yourself the much deserved option of double dipping, i.e. dipping the warm cheesy chips into both the beans *and* the Avocado Salsa Verde. Because you deserve it.



Tough to beat beany cheesy tortilla chips eh?

Nachos!

SPICY BLACK BEAN NACHOS

PREP TIME
25 mins

COOK TIME
5 mins

TOTAL TIME
30 mins

It's tough to beat the combo of warm tortilla chips, melted cheese, and spicy black beans. In other words, NACHOS!! Quantities listed are enough for three single layer sheetpans of nachos.

Author: Patrick Calhoun | Mexican Please



 PRINT

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can black beans
- ½ onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 chipotles in adobo
- 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- freshly ground pepper
- ½ cup water (or stock)
- 1 bag tortilla chips
- 4-5 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- oil
- jalapeno slices (optional)
- chopped cilantro (optional)

Avocado Salsa Verde

- 4 tomatillos
- ½ onion
- 1 garlic clove
- ½ jalapeno
- 10-12 sprigs cilantro
- 1 avocado
- salt to taste

Pico de Gallo

- 1 tomato
- ¼ onion
- ½ jalapeno
- 10-12 sprigs cilantro
- juice of ½ lime
- ¼ teaspoon salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Roughly chop ½ an onion and peel 2 garlic cloves
2. Saute the onion and garlic in a dollop of oil over medium heat for 5-7 minutes
3. Drain and rinse one can of black beans
4. Add the black beans to the onion mixture along with 2 chipotles in adobo, 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce, ½ teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon salt, freshly ground pepper, and ½ cup water (or stock).
5. Simmer for a few minutes until heated through
6. Combine the bean mixture in a blender or food processor
7. Salt to taste (I added another pinch for this recipe)
8. Shred 4-5 cups of Monterey Jack cheese. This is enough cheese for three single layer batches.
9. Add a dense, single layer of chips to a sheet pan. (You can line the sheetpan with foil or parchment paper if you want to make cleanup easier).
10. Drizzle some of the beans over the chips. Note: you have enough beans for three single-layer batches.
11. Add a layer of cheese to the chips
12. Bake in the oven at 400F for 5-7 minutes or until all the cheese is melted
13. Top with your favorite fixings and serve immediately
14. This batch was drizzled with Avocado Salsa Verde and topped with Pico de Gallo, chopped cilantro, and jalapeno slices.
15. If you are making Avocado Salsa Verde, start by rinsing four fresh tomatillos.
16. Roast the tomatillos in the oven at 400F until cooked through and they start to turn army green.
17. Add the roasted tomatillos to a blender along with ½ onion, 1 garlic clove, 10-12 sprigs cilantro, and ½ of a jalapeno pepper.
18. Pulse blend and taste for heat, adding the additional ½ of the jalapeno if you want more heat. Add the avocado to the blender and combine well.
19. Salt to taste.
20. If you are making Pico de Gallo, start by finely chopping the tomato, ¼ onion, and ½ jalapeno into ¼" sized chunks
21. Finely dice the cilantro
22. Combine the tomato, onion, jalapeno and cilantro in a mixing bowl
23. Add ¼ teaspoon salt and the juice of a ½ lime
24. Mix together well and taste for seasoning
25. Add additional salt and lime if necessary

NOTES

Keep the beans close by so you have the option of dipping the chips in both the beans and the Avocado Salsa Verde.

Using two chipotles in adobo gives the beans real kick. If you want a milder version you can use a single chipotle or even ½ of a chipotle. Note that some of the heat will get diluted once you combine the beans with all the fixings, so my version tastes extra spicy right out of the blender.

Feel free to use cheddar cheese instead of Monterey Jack. Or both!

More info on [chipotles in adobo here](#)

You can use canned tomatillos for the Avocado Salsa Verde and still get a stellar result. Note that if you are using canned tomatillos you can skip roasting them as it won't have the same effect.

You can substitute a serrano for the jalapeno in the Avocado Salsa Verde.

22 Additional Recipes

Clicking the title of each recipe links to a page on my site that has full instructions and a recipe box that can be printed out for future use.

Huevos Ahogados -- Eggs Drowned in Salsa

If you've never had eggs poached in homemade salsa before then wait no longer! You simply cannot beat the flavor of eggs cooked in a vibrant homemade salsa. [Recipe](#)



Salsa Verde -- Tomatillo Serrano Salsa

A homemade green salsa can transform eggs, carnitas, and enchiladas into something otherworldly. Getting good at whipping up this authentic Salsa Verde opens up loads of possibilities. [Recipe](#)



Enchiladas Suizas -- Creamy Green Sauce

Enchiladas

An authentic version of Enchiladas Suizas is always near the top of my list -- this recipe stars cheesy chicken enchiladas that are drenched in a creamy green sauce made from tomatillos and poblanos. [Recipe](#)



Huevos a la Mexicana -- Mexican Scrambled Eggs

These Mexican Scrambled Eggs are perfect for lazy weekend mornings: well-balanced, easy to make, and they have real kick. Try draining the tomatoes before adding them to the pan, so much better! [Recipe](#)



Tomato Chipotle Salsa

This Tomato Chipotle Salsa has a rich, smoky flavor from the delightful chipotles in adobo. And if you roast the tomatoes you end up with a warm, authentic salsa -- so good! [Recipe](#)



Arroz Rojo -- Simple Mexican Rice

You'll be amazed how much flavor you get in this delicious Mexican Rice using such a simple ingredient list. It's my default rice dish and couldn't be easier to make. [Recipe](#)



Chicken Burrito with Tomato Chipotle Salsa

This Chicken Guacamole Burrito relies on a Tomato Chipotle Salsa to create a rich, full flavor. Don't forget to roast those tomatoes. So good! [Recipe](#)



Avocado Salsa Verde

Adding fresh avocados to an authentic salsa verde creates something magical. Eat it early and often because it's always the star of the dinner table and will disappear fast.

[Recipe](#)



Easy Burrito Bowls with Creamy Avocado Sauce

These Easy Burrito Bowls have a secret weapon that can instantly save your day: creamy avocado sauce with some zip from a jalapeno. So good! You can also customize these burrito bowls ad infinitum. [Recipe](#)



Simple, Epic Refried Beans

Here's a convenient way to make killer refried beans using either homemade or canned beans. Loads of flavor and can be used for tacos, tostadas, quesadillas, etc. [Recipe](#)



Huevos Rancheros Skillet

Refried beans, potatoes and a homemade Tomato Chipotle Salsa make it easy to please everyone with this Huevos Rancheros Skillet. Lots of ways to customize this for picky eaters too. [Recipe](#)



Authentic, Well-Balanced Pico de Gallo

Every kitchen needs a versatile Pico de Gallo to rely on. This recipe keeps the tomatoes in check by using plenty of onion and seasoning. [Recipe](#)



Mexican Black Bean Soup

Chipotles in adobo and roasted tomatoes give this Mexican Black Bean Soup incredible flavor. I like it best when the heat is subtle, but you can always amp it up a notch.

[Recipe](#)



Baked Taquitos dipped in Tomato Chipotle Salsa

Dipping a crispy taquito into a bowl of homemade salsa can transport any dinner table straight to the heart of Mexico. This recipe uses a warm Tomato Chipotle Salsa that is delicioso. [Recipe](#)



Cilantro Lime Rice

By keeping just a few ingredients on hand you'll always have the option of whipping up this light, effervescent Cilantro Lime Rice. Works well in burrito bowls but also tastes great on its own. [Recipe](#)



Enfrijoladas

Corn tortillas drenched in a Chipotle infused Black Bean puree? I'm in! These Vegetarian Enfrijoladas have a surprisingly full flavor and can be customized to your liking. [Recipe](#)



Roasted Poblano Quesadilla

The perfect example of the rich, otherworldly flavor that Mexican cuisine can generate by using just a few simple ingredients. Don't forget to roast the poblanos! [Recipe](#)



Mexican Breakfast Taquitos

These Baked Taquitos make for a quick Mexican infused meal when you are short on time and knee deep in hunger. [Recipe](#)



Torta de Milanesa -- Breaded Chicken Cutlet Sandwich

This Baked Milanese Torta is loaded with avocado, Pico de Gallo and Chipotle Mayo. Yowsa! No frying either, just bread the chicken cutlets and give 'em 12 minutes in the oven. [Recipe](#)



Tingadillas -- Cheesy Chicken Tinga Quesadillas

Got leftover Tinga? Make Tingadillas! These Cheesy Chicken Tinga Quesadillas with Green Sauce will change the course of your day for the better -- includes recipe for making Tinga from scratch. [Recipe](#)



Crispy Chicken Tacos

This delight uses Chicken Milanese strips to create a unique, satiating meal. Homemade Chipotle Crema drizzled over fresh guacamole turns it into a keeper. [Recipe](#)



Wet Poblano Burrito

Think of this as the ultimate comfort food. A chicken guacamole burrito swimming in a creamy, goopy poblano sauce with otherworldly flavor. Don't forget to roast those poblano peppers! [Recipe](#)



Adios!

Thanks for reading the Mexican Cooking Survival Guide! Feel free to get in touch if you have any questions. There's a [contact form](#) on [Mexican Please](#) that you can always use to contact me.

Please consider sharing the Guide with friends and family who may benefit from it. There are share buttons at the top of the Guide's main webpage for all of the social media channels:

[Mexican Cooking Survival Guide](#)

Thank you!

Buen Provecho.

Patrick