

Fiesta Fun on Cinco de Mayo

The Mexican holiday, Cinco de Mayo, is celebrated on May 5 in the United States by eating tacos and drinking margaritas. Just like St. Patrick's Day, we have Americanized this holiday. You won't find people in Ireland drinking green beer, and you won't find people in Mexico eating ground beef tacos with iceberg lettuce. In the countries of origin, they eat their own traditional food and drink.

So what is Cinco de Mayo? Cinco de Mayo celebrates the anniversary of Mexico defeating the French army on May 5, 1862, at the battle of Puebla. This holiday is sometimes mistaken for Mexican Independence Day, which actually occurred on September 16, 1810, about 50 years earlier.

In 1862, during the U.S. Civil War, the French Army marched towards Mexico City. Emperor Napoleon III was eager to establish a second Mexican empire for the French that would serve as a French outpost in the New World. It would be a replacement for the French land that was sold to Thomas Jefferson in the Louisiana Purchase. Napoleon sent a fleet to Veracruz to land their ships and then march to Mexico City for an attack. However, the French troops were defeated before they could get there. When they reached the city of Puebla, a Mexican general named Ignacio Zaragoza defeated Napoleon's troops in a bloody confrontation.

In Mexico, Cinco de Mayo celebrates that battle, the first battle of Puebla, but Cinco de Mayo is not an official federal holiday in Mexico. The celebrations are focused around Puebla, where there are battle reenactments, fireworks, and parades. In the United States, it has become time to enjoy parts of the Mexican culture with tequila, guacamole, and tortillas. Mexicans prefer more traditional dishes such as mole, chalupas, and barbacoa.

Cinco de Mayo has an authentic, official dish, which is mole poblano. Mole is a dark red-brown sauce made of chocolate, chili pepper, and other spices. There are many variations of mole, but thick, dark mole poblano is probably the most well-known version. Mole can be considered a combination of traditional and new ingredients and cooking styles. Making this sauce can be intimidating. It requires many ingredients and requires time and preparation. Those who have eaten it will say that all of the toasting and roasting is worth it. The velvety smooth sauce is ideal for spooning over chicken or smothering steamed veggies.

If you want to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with real Mexican food, chalupas are also another authentic choice. Chalupas are fried thick tortillas topped with shredded meat, chopped onion, and salsa. The name chalupa is said to be connected to canoe-like boats used by the Aztecs in the canals of Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City. Chalupas are a popular snack in Mexico and are served in Puebla in street stands as well as the fanciest restaurants.

This year, try celebrating Cinco de Mayo with an authentic Mexican dish to accompany your margarita and guacamole.

Chalupas are an excellent way to use leftover roast meat or chicken, but can also be served with no meat at all. Although many people prefer to cook without lard, chalupas do not taste the same

without it. Corn oil may be substituted, but don't expect the authentic, succulent flavor of chalupas fried in manteca.

Puebla-style Chalupas: Chalupas Poblanas

Recipe Source: <https://www.mexconnect.com/articles/2341-puebla-style-chalupas-chalupas-poblanas/>

Servings: 24

Ingredients:

1/2 cup manteca (pork lard) or corn oil
24 (3 inch-diameter) tortillas
1 cup salsa verde, homemade or canned
1 cup salsa roja, homemade or canned
1 1/2 cups cooked, shredded beef, pork, or chicken
1 1/2 cups queso fresco or mild feta cheese
1 medium white onion, peeled and finely chopped

Instructions:

In a large, deep frying pan, heat the lard or oil until a few drops of water sprinkled into the pan bounce and sizzle.

Place tortillas, as many as will fit, into the pan and soft-fry them, just 3-4 seconds on each side. They should remain pliable and not crispy. Drain them well on paper towels as they are removed from the pan.

Spoon salsa verde, about 1 tablespoon per chalupa, over half of them, and salsa roja over the other half. Top each with a bit of shredded meat, crumbled cheese, and onion.

Serve immediately.

(Sources:

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