

Chestnut Tortilla Dressing

Serves 8-10

This dressing goes well with roast chicken or turkey dinners. You can start saving and drying tortillas and biscuits or bread the week before. Use absolutely the whitest, softest bread you have – conventional hamburger and hotdog buns are good for this. Serve with plenty of turkey pan drippings or gravy. This becomes a substantial vegetarian dish if you use mushroom stock and leave out the bacon.

- 8 five-inch corn tortillas (dried overnight or in 100-degree oven for 1 hour)
- 4 slices bacon, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup half-and-half
- 4 to 5 cups chicken or mushroom stock
- 8 cups leftover biscuits or soft white bread, crusts removed, dried (1-inch cubes)
- 4 eggs
- 3 tablespoons softened unsalted butter (if not using bacon drippings) plus additional softened butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped white onions, in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped celery, in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup minced fresh flat leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh sage (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- About $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 cups peeled, roasted chestnuts, roughly crumbled (may be purchased, see Note)

Instructions: Make sure the tortillas are well dried. For last-minute, speed-drying, place tortillas and bread cubes on a baking sheet in a 100° oven for about 1 hour. Preheat oven to 350°. If using bacon, render in a large fry pan until crisp. Using a slotted spoon, remove bacon bits and set aside, leave the fat in the pan.

Tear up tortillas and soak in the half-and-half and enough of the stock to cover, about 2 cups. When they are softened, pour into food processor and puree into a mush. Pour into a bowl, add biscuits and begin to mash with a potato masher. Add eggs and enough remaining stock to make a wet mixture, and continue to mash the mixture with a potato masher. The mixture should resemble a pancake batter.

Heat the reserved bacon fat or melt butter in a saucepan and sauté the garlic, onions and celery until the aromas are released and the onions are slightly softened, 2-3 minutes. Add to the bread mixture along with herbs and mix in thoroughly. Season with salt, pepper and cayenne to taste and add more stock to make the mixture into the consistency of a light pancake batter. Fold in chestnuts.

Pour into a buttered rectangular or oval baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes and check to see if it is golden on top and firm through the center. If necessary, bake for additional 5-10 minutes. Remove from oven and dot with additional butter. Serve immediately, with plenty of gravy.

Note: To roast fresh chestnuts, preheat oven to 350°. Score the flat side of each chestnut with a sharp knife and soak in boiling water for 30 minutes. Place in a single layer on a baking pan or sheet and roast for 1 hour. Remove, cool and peel.

Per serving: 290 calories, 9 g

