

Enchiladas Under a Salad

Serves 6 with leftover sauce and picadillo.

You will have sauce and filling leftover for more enchiladas or to freeze. You can make the sauce a day before making the enchiladas.

Sweet Mole Sauce:

- 5 dried ancho chiles
- 6 dried guajillo chiles
- 2 dried California chiles
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt + more later to taste
- 3 garlic cloves — 2 peeled, 1 with husk
- 2 tablespoons white sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seed
- 1 small tomato
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 4 whole cloves, crushed
- 1 2-inch piece canela (cinnamon bark), broken up
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 small Knorr chicken bouillon cubes or 1 tablespoon Superior Touch "Better than Bouillon" (optional)
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar or one 3-inch piece piloncillo
- 1 1/2 ounces Mexican chocolate (Abuelita brand or Oaxacan), chopped

Family Picadillo:

- 2 peeled carrots, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 small zucchini, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 small Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 pound low-fat ground beef
- 1/2 cup minced onion
- 2 teaspoons to 1 tablespoon olive oil, as needed
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste
- Black pepper to taste

The enchiladas:

- Canola or olive oil for softening tortillas
- 12 corn tortillas

The salad:

- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- Pinch of kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- About 3 cups crisp romaine lettuce cut into 1/2-inch thick ribbons
- 4 radishes, washed, and thinly sliced
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 1/2 cup grated or crumbled cotija cheese

For the Sweet Mole Sauce:

Put on a teakettle of water to boil and then use scissors to cut stems off dried chiles and cut chiles in half. Shake out seeds. If I see large white veins (the hottest part of chiles), I cut them out with the scissors. Do this operation over a spread out newspaper or your kitchen will be covered with seeds. Place chiles in a large heat-proof bowl and pour boiling water over them. If the chiles are cut up they tend to float less, but keep pushing the chiles into the water. Add the 2 teaspoons salt and the peeled garlic and soak for 1 hour.

While the chiles are soaking, heat a 10-inch skillet and toast the sesame seeds on medium heat until deeply golden, stirring constantly; remove from pan and set aside. While the pan is still hot, quickly toast the cumin seeds until dark brown and aromatic (be careful — they can burn quickly), then add to the sesame seeds.

Increase heat to medium high; add the small tomato and remaining garlic clove (with husk). Cook the tomato until charred around the edges along with the garlic, turning the tomatoes over to char the other side. Add the oregano; stir to toast, about 30 seconds. Put aside to cool.

After 45 minutes to 1 hour, the chiles should be rehydrated. Pour off the soaking liquid, which can be bitter. Use a blender to puree the chiles (in batches as needed), adding just enough water to help puree. Pour puree through a wire strainer placed over a large bowl. Discard the skins (they are great in compost). After straining the last batch of chiles, pour the liquid back into the blender jar. Add the charred tomato, toasted garlic, sesame seeds, cumin, oregano, cloves and canela; puree.

Heat the olive oil in a deep, heavy pot and blend in flour until well mixed and smooth. Cook until slightly toasted or golden. Slowly whisk in the



Photo by Robert McMahan

chile-spice puree and 3 cups water. Lupe always adds the bouillon because it is traditional. Add the sugar or piloncillo and the Mexican chocolate. Simmer the sweet sauce for 20 minutes over the lowest heat because it can splatter. Stir often to make sure the chocolate and sugar are well-dissolved. Add salt to taste, if needed. This sauce can be made a day in advance and refrigerated. Makes about 1 quart, enough for the enchiladas plus leftovers.

For the Family Picadillo: Pile the carrots, zucchini, potatoes and diced tomato in a microwave-safe bowl with 2 tablespoons water. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and poke a couple of steam vents on top. Microwave on High for 90 seconds; let cool slightly and drain. Meanwhile, saute the ground meat and onions, adding olive oil by the teaspoon as needed.

When the hamburger is cooked, stir in the vegetables. Add oregano, salt, and pepper to taste. Occasionally stir the picadillo and cook for another 10 minutes or until potatoes are cooked through. Set aside, cover and keep warm. Makes about 5 cups, enough for the enchiladas plus leftovers.

To assemble: Preheat the oven to 375°. Oil a 9- by 13-inch baking pan or 3-quart baking dish. Pour enough sauce into a small saute pan (just large enough to hold a tortilla) to fill the pan about 3/4-inch deep — about 2 cups. Heat until warm, if necessary.

If the sauce has been refrigerated and has thickened, blend in a bit of water or chicken broth to thin it out.

Meanwhile, pour about 1 teaspoon of oil into another small skillet. Heat until just shimmering, then dip the tortillas, one at a time, into the oil to soften, about 30 seconds on each side. Place in foil to keep warm. Repeat with remaining tortillas, adding oil to the pan as needed.

Dip one tortilla at a time into the sauce, then lay it out on a flat plate. Place 1/4 cup of picadillo along one edge and roll up tightly. Place each rolled enchilada into the baking dish, seam side down. Place baking dish in the oven, and heat through, about 4 to 8 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the salad.

Whisk together vinegar, salt and oil. Add lettuce and radishes, toss together.

To serve: Remove enchiladas from the oven, and place 2 on each plate. Pile a heaping 1/2 cup salad over each serving, top with 2-3 avocado slices and sprinkle with cotija cheese. Or, serve family-style on a platter.

Per serving: 484 calories, 18 g protein, 49 g carbohydrate, 25 g fat (7 g saturated), 46 mg cholesterol, 896 mg sodium, 7 g fiber.

Wine pairing: The mole is not overly hot, and it finishes with a sweet edge. A beer, a soft white or lighter-bodied red like Beaujolais will all work.

The Spanish Table



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Wines from Spain,
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123 Strawberry Village,
Mill Valley
1814 San Pablo Ave.
Berkeley
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