

## **Got the November blahs? Here's a fiesta cure!**

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November plays with my mind. As I mourn the loss of summer and pull out my winter woolies I need a pick me up. My annual tradition is to hold a Mexican fiesta with friends.

I love summer. As for winter, well, I tolerate it. Though my children have taught me to ski again and skating has always been a favorite, winter is the penance I do to get to summer. So at this time of year (or at any point during this long Canadian winter), whenever I start to feel those winter blahs, I invite friends over, crank up the heat, fire up the blender, and cook up my favorite Mexican dishes for a Mexican fiesta. There's no better way to beat those cool-day blues!

Here are the crucial ingredients:

- Friends willing to freeze their butts off by arriving in shorts and t-shirts (The only entry requirement to the party is to dress in your favourite summer clothes).
- Thermostat set to 25° C.
- Some great Mexican music, but anything "hot" will do. I love Cuban Jazz.
- A blender is optional but strawberry margaritas do add a special touch.
- A piñata full of treats for the kids.
- Some great Mexican food.

Here are two recipes to get you started:

### **Nachos**

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Nachos are an easy first course. I love to get the round tortillas chips, lay them out flat on a cookie sheet and drop some spicy ground beef onto them (just fry ground beef or chicken with taco seasoning). Add some salsa and top with lots of cheese. Broil for a few minutes until the cheese melts. Let the nachos cool for a minute and add a glob of guacamole. The hot and cold go great together. These make fantastic poppers!

*Note:* if you need a guacamole recipe [email me](#) for an easy one. You can often buy it in the grocery store as well.

### **Enchiladas**

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I love Mexican, and I love nothing more than enchiladas - this is my favorite recipe.

It's one I've modified from one submitted by Kathleen Herndon in Texas to the La Leche League International cookbook called "Whole Foods for the Whole Family."

**Ingredients:** (to serve 6)

- 3 large (6 small) chicken breasts. I have sometimes substituted beef or ground beef (1kg or 2 lbs) and even refried beans out of a can.
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- A can of well strained tomatoes
- A cup of tomato sauce
- In a bowl mix 2-3 gloves garlic (to your taste), 1 or 2 chopped jalapeno peppers, 1 or 2 teaspoons ground cumin, a teaspoon each of salt, oregano and basil.
- 12 tortillas (corn or flour). The corn ones are 6" and you may need more but I use 12" flour ones since I find them easier to work with.
- 2-3 cups of grated cheese (Monterey Jack or Mozzarella work well)
- 1 cup yogurt or sour cream

**The filling:**

Fry the chicken or beef in olive oil. Add 1-½ cups of the chopped onion and the garlic until cooked. Add half the chilies, cumin, salt, oregano and basil mixture. Fry for 5 minutes. Reduce heat and simmer until the chicken is fully cooked.

**The sauce:**

In a separate pan, fry the remaining ½ cup of onion in a tablespoon of olive oil. Add the second half of the chilies, garlic, cumin, salt, oregano and basil mixture. Fry for about 3-5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and tomatoes sauce. Bring to a boil and then simmer for about 20 minutes. Turn heat off and blend the yogurt into the sauce.

Spread a few drops of olive oil in a 9x12x2" baking dish. This will stop the tortillas from sticking. Place a tortilla on a clean flat surface and add some of the filling and 2-3 tablespoons of cheese (enough to fill but not too much or you will find them hard to roll up).

Roll up the tortilla and place it seam side down in the dish. Fill the dish fairly tightly. Pour the sauce over the filled tortillas and add the rest of the cheese on top. Bake for 20-30 minutes. Do not over bake.

Serve with a big smile! These enchiladas are very filling and make for a great meal when served with a green salad.

I almost always double or triple this recipe because it freezes very well. I often make several pans full and freeze them for a cold day - or bring them over to a "blue" neighbor to cheer them up.

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