



HOMESTEAD MEXICAN FOOD



Chiles En Nogada, A Traditional Mexican Meal

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CHILES EN NOGADA, A TRADITIONAL MEXICAN MEAL

This recipe for chiles en nogada is a traditional Mexican meal from the state of Puebla that is reserved for special occasions. Poblano chilies that have been roasted, stuffed with a picadillo made of ground turkey,

smothered in a sauce made of walnuts and cream, and topped with pomegranate seeds are what we use to make ours. It's an astonishing mashup of different flavours.

Chiles en Nogada: A Brief History

In her important work, *The Cuisines of Mexico*, Diana Kennedy has some really insightful things to say about the dish.

It is reported that the dish was concocted by the thankful people of Puebla as they were hosting a dinner in honor of Don Agustín de Iturbide's saint's day on August 28 in the year 1821. He and his supporters had staged the final insurrection against the Spanish domination, and as a self-proclaimed emperor, he had just signed the Treaty of Córdoba. He was also known as Montezuma. At the banquet, each dish had an ingredient that corresponded to one of the colors on the Mexican flag. This particular dish had red pomegranate seeds, green chiles, and white sauce, which were the colors of the Mexican flag.

Modifications of the Picadillo Pattern

Traditional Mexican cuisine is made with a pork picadillo that is seasoned with various spices and dried fruit. When I used to have Guaymas from a restaurant in Tiburon, California, called Guaymas, they'd use ground chicken. The ground turkey I used in my version of this dish was leaner. Despite its complexity, this dish is well worth the time and energy required to prepare it. The combination of flavors is quite remarkable. In other words, you won't be let down.

Extra Information on Chiles en Nogada

On September 16, this dish containing the colors of the Mexican flag — green from the chiles, white from the sauce, and red from the pomegranate seeds — is widely served in Mexico. Some consider it to be the country's national dish.

Modifications to Chiles en Nogada

Apples and golden raisins accompany the ground pork in this dish, although pears, peaches, or plantains can also be substituted. Almonds or pecans may be substituted for walnuts, albeit inauthentically.

For a crispier variation, dunk the stuffed peppers in batter and fried them.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of shelled walnut halves
- Milk (approximately 2 cups) (about 2 cups)
- 1/4 pound queso fresco (or farmer's cheese)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons thick sour cream (or creme fraiche)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon powder

The Chiles:

- Use 6 big poblano peppers (use only poblanos, not another type of chile, for this dish)

The Picadillo:

- 1 pound and a quarter of ground turkey thighs
- Kosher salt
- 4 tablespoons of canola oil or olive oil
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped small
- 3 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped very small
- 1 spoonful of butter
- 3/4 of a teaspoon of cinnamon powder
- 1/2 teaspoon of black pepper that has just been ground
- 1/8 teaspoon of clove powder
- 1 cup of roasted tomatoes that have been crushed
- 1/2 cup of yellow raisins
- 2 tablespoons almonds that have been washed, sliced and roughly chopped
- 1 peeled, cored and chopped apple

Garnish:

- pomegranate seeds, 1/2 cup
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped

Method

The Night Before

1. Take off the skins of the walnuts:

Remove the bitter papery skins from the walnut chunks. (This is the challenging part.) The skins can sometimes be readily rubbed off. I've discovered that for us, the skins do not easily peel off and that we must first blanch them in boiling water for 1 minute to release the skins.

After blanching the walnuts, allow them to cool and carefully peel off as much of the bitter skins as possible. This is tedious work, but unless you remove the bitter skins from your walnuts, the sauce may be bitter.

2. Soak the walnuts in water overnight:

Place the skinned walnuts in a basin, cover with milk to soak, and chill in the refrigerator overnight.

The Day Of

3. Griddle the chiles:

To sear the outside tough skin, lay the chiles directly over the flame of a gas stove or beneath a hot broiler. Turn the chilies over to char all sides. Blacken as much of the outside skin as possible; it will be easier to remove this way.

4. Take off the skins:

Cover the blackened chiles with a plate or a moist clean towel and let aside for 20 minutes. The scorched skin will then flake off easily, and the flesh will become somewhat more cooked in the steam, allowing the skin to flake/peel off easily. Remove the skin.

5. Remove the seeds:

Make a slit on the side of each chile and carefully remove the seeds and veins. Keep the top of the chile, the region surrounding the base of the stem, intact. Rinse and pat the chiles dry.

Make the walnut sauce:

6. Combine the sauce ingredients:

The walnuts should be drained. In a blender, combine the soaked and drained walnuts, queso fresco, sour cream, sugar, and cinnamon and puree until totally smooth.

Make the picadillo stuffing:

7. The ground turkey should be browned:

In a big wide saucepan over medium-high heat, heat one tablespoon of the oil. Brown the meat on at least one side in batches to avoid crowding the pan, and sprinkle it with kosher salt as it cooks. If necessary, add another tablespoon of oil for the following batches. Place the meat in a basin and put it aside.

8. Cook the onion in oil and add the spices:

Put a tablespoon of oil in the pan and turn the heat to medium. Cook the onion until it is soft. Cook for another minute after adding the cinnamon, black pepper, cloves, and garlic.

9. Put back the turkey, and add the butter, tomatoes, raisins, almonds, and apples:

Melt the butter in the pan and add the ground meat, breaking up any clumps with a wooden spoon.

Add the chopped slivered almonds, golden raisins, and crushed tomatoes. Add a tablespoon or two of water if the mixture seems a little dry. Mix in some chopped apples to the picadillo. Depending on your taste, add more cinnamon, salt, or ground cloves (go easy on the cloves, they can overpower).

Assemble the chiles en nogada:

10. Fill the chiles with:

Fill the chiles with the picadillo so that they are full. Put them on plates for each person or on a platter.

11. To serve, top the stuffed chiles with the walnut sauce and sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley or cilantro and pomegranate seeds.

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