

SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

April 2024

Join us to discuss

Tuesday, 4/30 / 6:00pm / Annex

Spend the month cooking with your spice and join us to discuss your opinions, experiences, and recipes!

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This month's spice: Chipotle Powder

History

When Columbus came to the New World in 1492, he was looking for, among other things, new sources of black pepper. This helps to explain why, when he was introduced to the capsicum family--his first experience of another spice that was hot like pepper--he referred to chiles as pepper. To this day, both true pepper from the *Piper nigrum* vine and chiles are referred to as peppers in North America and many parts of Europe. This often leads to confusion.

Unknown to the Old World at the time, there is evidence that chiles were eaten by the native Mexican peoples as early as 7000 BCE and possibly cultivated sometime between 5200 and 3400 BCE, making them among the oldest plants cultivated in the Americas. The history of the chile has been relatively short in many parts of the world, including India, Africa, and China. Given the enormous tonnage of chile peppers consumed in these countries, it almost defies logic to try and imagine how they every survived without them a mere 500 years ago.

Use

Chipotle itself is a dried, smoked jalapeño pepper with a deep smoky taste and well-balanced heat. It is used in various Mexican dishes (such as whole peppers in adobo sauce), and vegetarians use it as a substitute for ham bones in cooking.

Chipotle Shrimp Tacos for One

Total prep and cook time: 30 minutes

Yields 1 serving

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons sour cream or Greek yogurt

¼ teaspoon grated lime zest plus 1½ teaspoons juice, plus lime wedges for serving

1 tablespoon oil divided

¼ cup fresh or frozen corn

¼ cup chopped cherry or grape tomatoes

¼ teaspoon table salt divided

¼–½ teaspoon chipotle chile powder

¼ teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon garlic powder

8 ounces extra-large shrimp (21 to 25 per pound), peeled, deveined, tails removed, and halved crosswise

2 (6-inch) corn tortillas, warmed

1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

STEPS:

1. Combine sour cream and lime zest and juice in bowl; set aside until ready to serve. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in 10-inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add corn and cook until softened and beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Stir in tomatoes and ⅛ teaspoon salt and cook until tomatoes are softened, about 1 minute. Transfer to second bowl and wipe out skillet with paper towels.
2. Combine chile powder, oregano, garlic powder, and remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt in medium bowl. Pat shrimp dry with paper towels then add to chile mixture and toss to coat. Heat remaining 2 teaspoons oil in now-empty skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add shrimp to skillet in single layer and cook until spotty brown and edges begin to turn pink, about 1 minute. Off heat, flip shrimp, cover, and cook second side using residual heat of skillet until shrimp are opaque throughout, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Evenly divide corn-tomato mixture between tortillas, top with shrimp, drizzle with sour cream mixture, and sprinkle with cilantro. Serve with lime wedges.

Spicy Mexican Shredded Pork Tostadas (Tinga) With Homemade Chorizo

Total prep and cook time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Yields 4 to 6 servings

INGREDIENTS:

Tinga

2 pounds boneless pork butt trimmed of excess fat and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 medium onions 1 quartered and 1 chopped fine

5 medium garlic cloves 3 peeled and smashed and

2 minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)

4 sprigs fresh thyme
table salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon dried oregano

1 (14.5-ounce) can tomato sauce

1 tablespoon ground chipotle powder

2 bay leaves

STEPS:

1. FOR THE TINGA: Bring 1 1/2 pounds of trimmed pork, quartered onion, smashed garlic cloves, thyme, 1 teaspoon salt, and 6 cups water to simmer in large saucepan over medium-high heat, skimming off any foam that rises to surface. Reduce heat to medium-low, partially cover, and cook until pork is tender, 75 to 90 minutes. Drain pork, reserving 1 cup cooking liquid. Discard onion, garlic, and thyme. Return pork to saucepan and, using potato masher, mash until shredded into rough ½-inch pieces (see Step-by-Step below); set aside.
2. TO MAKE CHORIZO: Place remaining 1 pound of pork pieces on large plate in single layer and freeze until firm but still pliable, about 15 minutes. Once firm, toss pork with 1 teaspoon table salt, 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon minced garlic, 1 1/4 teaspoons chili powder, 3/4 teaspoon hot paprika, 3/4 teaspoon chipotle powder, 3/4 teaspoon dried oregano, 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper, and 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin in medium bowl. Place half of chorizo mixture in food processor and pulse until meat is finely chopped, 8 to 10 one-second pulses. Transfer to bowl and repeat with remaining chorizo mixture.

Chorizo

1 pound boneless pork butt trimmed of excess fat and cut into 1-inch pieces

1 teaspoon table salt

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon minced garlic

1 ¼ teaspoons chili powder

¾ teaspoon hot paprika

¾ teaspoon ground chipotle powder (see note)

¾ teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

⅛ teaspoon ground cumin

Tostadas

¾ cup vegetable oil

12 (6-inch) corn tortillas

table salt

Garnishes

queso fresco or feta cheese | fresh cilantro leaves
sour cream | diced avocado | Lime wedge

Spicy Mexican Shredded Pork Tostadas (Tinga) With Homemade Chorizo

STEPS (cont.):

3. Heat olive oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add chorizo mixture; cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly crisp and no longer pink, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer meat to paper-towel lined plate, leaving rendered fat in skillet. Add shredded pork (from step 1), chopped onion, and oregano; cook, stirring often, until pork is well browned and crisp, 7 to 10 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

4. Stir in tomato sauce, chipotle powder, reserved pork cooking liquid, chorizo mixture, and bay leaves; simmer until almost all liquid has evaporated, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove and discard bay leaves and season with salt to taste.

5. TO FRY TOSTADAS: Heat vegetable oil in 8-inch heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat to 350 degrees. Using fork, poke center of each tortilla 3 or 4 times (to prevent puffing and allow for even cooking). Fry 1 at a time, holding metal potato masher in upright position on top of tortilla to keep it submerged (see photo below), until crisp and lightly browned, 45 to 60 seconds (no flipping is necessary). Drain on paper towel-lined plate and season with salt to taste.

Repeat with remaining tortillas.

6. TO SERVE: Spoon small amount of shredded pork onto center of each tostada and serve, passing garnishes separately.

