

TOMATILLO-SAUCED ENCHILADAS WITH SPINACH AND MUSHROOMS

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Prepared by: Rhonda O'Dell , May 2016

Makes: 4 servings

3 garlic cloves, peeled

Fresh hot green chiles to taste (2 seranos or 1 jalapeno), stemmed and quartered

1 ½ pounds (10 to 12 medium) tomatillos, husked, rinsed and cut into quarters

¾ cup (loosely packed) roughly chopped cilantro, plus a few extra sprigs for garnish

3 tablespoons vegetable oil, olive oil or bacon drippings (divided use), plus some for the tortillas

2 cups chicken broth

8 ounces mushrooms (button, oyster or shiitake are good), stemmed and sliced

1 large red onion, thinly sliced

10 ounces (about 10 cups) spinach, stems removed

1 cup (about 4 ounces) cooked chicken (about one-quarter of a large rotisserie chicken) or cubed ham (optional)

Salt

12 corn tortillas, Preferably store-bought

2 tablespoons Mexican crema, sour cream, heavy cream or crème fraiche

½ teaspoon sugar (optional)

1 cup (4 ounces) crumbled Mexican queso fresco or other fresh cheese such as feta or goat cheese.

Turn on the oven to 350 degrees. With a food processor or blender running, drop in the garlic and chiles one piece at a time, letting each piece get finely chopped before adding the next. Add the tomatillos and cilantro; process until smooth.

Heat 1 ½ tablespoons of the oil or bacon drippings in a medium (3-quart) saucepan over medium-high. Add the puree and cook, stirring nearly constantly, until the mixture has reduced to the consistency of thick tomato sauce, about 7 minutes. (The more you cook down this base, the richer and sweeter the tomatillo sauce will be.) Add the chicken broth and simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes to blend the flavors.

While the sauce is simmering, heat the remaining 1 ½ tablespoons oil or bacon drippings in a very large (12 inch) skillet over medium-high. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring nearly constantly, for a couple of minutes, until they begin to brown. Add about ¾ of the onion (reserve the rest for garnish) and continue cooking, stirring frequently, for another minute or two, until the onion looks translucent. Add the spinach and the optional chicken or ham and cook, stirring constantly, for a minute or so, until the spinach is wilted. Season with salt, usually a scant teaspoon. Cover to keep warm.

Lay out the tortillas on a baking sheet and spray or brush lightly on both sides with oil or bacon drippings, then stack in twos. Slide the tortillas into the oven and bake just long enough to make them soft and pliable, about 3 minutes. Remove from the oven and stack them in a single pile, cover with a kitchen towel to keep warm.

Stir the crema (or its stand-in) into the sauce. Taste and season with salt, usually about 1 teaspoon (add the sugar if the sauce seems quite tart to you). Holding a tortilla by one edge, dip most of it into the sauce, then lay it on a plate. Spoon a heaping 2 tablespoons down the center, roll up and lay seam side down on a dinner plate. Repeat with 2 more tortillas, arranging them on the same dinner plate. Douse the enchiladas with about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of warm sauce, sprinkle with a quarter of the crumbled cheese and garnish with some of the reserved onion and cilantro sprigs.

Assemble the rest of the servings, and carry to the table without hesitation.



