

Spice up holiday parties with Mexican flavors

During the busy holiday season, convivial cocktail parties are a favored form of entertaining. Ideally suited to our love of snacks and informality, they offer the opportunity to host a large group without long hours in the kitchen.

To set the stage for merry making, a selection of libations and an appealing array of "finger foods" are all that is needed. Cocktail with need not be extravagant or complicated, but to be memorable they should be imaginative, enticing and easy to eat.

One sure way to spice up party fare is to add south-of-the-border flavor. Everybody loves Mexican food, and appetizers boasting these festive flavors are sure to disappear quickly.

Chicken Flautas Appetizers are corn tortilla "flutes" filled with a zesty mix-

ture of chicken, cheese and onion, with picante sauce streamlining the way to authentic Mexican flavor. Choose mild, medium or hot picante sauce, as you prefer, for the filling and as a dip. Assemble these satisfying snacks an hour or two before the party if it's more convenient.

Store them uncovered in the refrigerator, ready to pop into the oven as the first guests arrive. Guacamole may be made up to an hour in advance. Press plastic wrap directly onto its surface to prevent discoloration, and refrigerate until serving time.

Served warm from the oven or microwave oven, Hot 'N' Spicy Shrimp Dip is sure to please any holiday crowd.

Teaming shrimp and two cheeses with artichoke hearts and the garden-fresh flavor of picante sauce, this extraordi-

nary dip invites a wide range of dippers. Surround it with a colorful complement of interesting veggies and crispy chips or crackers.

For additional exciting recipes prepared with picante sauce, send your name, address and zip code to:

Pace Second Edition Recipes
P.O. Box NB 583
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Quantity requests from school, clubs and other organizations will be honored.

HOT 'N' SPICY SHRIMP DIP
1 can (14 oz.) artichoke hearts (drained weight 8 oz.)
1 can (4 1/4 oz.) shrimp, rinsed and drained
1 package (3 oz.) cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup picante sauce
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Short, finely julienned red pepper strips (optional)
Thinly sliced green onion tops (optional)

Drain artichoke hearts; dice. Add shrimp, cream cheese, mayonnaise, picante sauce and Parmesan cheese; mix well. Spoon into 9-inch round pie plate or shallow baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees about 20 minutes or until heated through. Garnish with red pepper and green onion, if desired. Serve with chips and assorted vegetable dippers. Makes about 2 1/2 cups dip.

Microwave oven directions: Cook in microwave oven at HIGH about 3 minutes or until hot, stirring after each minute of cooking.

CHICKEN FLAUTAS APPETIZERS
2 cups finely shredded or chopped cooked chicken
1/2 cup picante sauce
1/2 cup green onion slices
1/2 cup corn
32 corn tortillas (6-inch diameter)
Vegetable oil
2 cups (8 oz.) shredded Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese
Guacamole (recipe follows)

Combine chicken, picante sauce, onion and corn; mix well. Heat about 1/2 inch oil in small skillet until hot but not smoking. Quickly fry each tortilla in oil to soften, about 5 seconds on each side. Drain on paper towels. Spoon 1

Thsp. chicken mixture and 1 Thsp. cheese down center of tortilla. Roll lightly; secure with wooden pick. Place seam side down on baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven at 400 degrees F. about 18 to 20 minutes or until crisp. Serve warm with Guacamole and additional picante sauce. Makes 32 appetizers.

GUACAMOLE
1 large ripe avocado, peeled and mashed
2 Tbsp. picante sauce
1 tsp. lemon juice
1/4 tsp. salt
Combine all ingredients; mix well. Makes about 1 cup.

Cool it Wine-tea punch complements hot chili

Drop-in entertaining is easy on the nerves as well as the budget, especially during the sometimes-frenzied days leading up to Christmas and New Year's Day. Keep things simple with a peppy chili dip and a punch bowl or pitcher brimming with a cooling wine-tea punch.

The recipe for this Hot-Hot Chili Con Queso brings into play a combination of tomatoes, chilis, chopped onion and various other seasonings, blended with cream cheese and milk. Serve warm with crunchy crudités of carrot sticks, celery, cauliflower and green pepper, plus crisp tortilla chips.

The festive holiday punch will cool down the palates of your guests while they are enjoying the peppery dip. Instant Tea, which is the base for the punch, never overpowers the remaining ingredients — lemonade concen-

trate, apple juice and dry white wine.

HAPPY HOLIDAY PUNCH
(Makes 3 1/2 quarts or 28 4-oz. servings)
3 rounded Tbsp. instant tea
4 Tbsp. sugar
6 cups ice water
1 (8-oz.) can lemonade concentrate, undiluted
2 cups apple juice
3 cups dry white wine

Combine instant tea, sugar and ice water. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Add remaining ingredients. Chill. When ready to serve, pour over ice in punch bowl or pitcher.

HOT-HOT CHILI CON QUESO
(Makes about 2 cups)
2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

1 (4-oz.) can chilis, drained and chopped
1 small onion, chopped
1/2 tsp. seasoned salt
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
dash white pepper
1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, cubed and softened
1/2 cup cream or milk
2 Tbsp. drained, chopped pimientos
Raw vegetables
Tortilla chips

In medium saucepan, simmer tomatoes, chilis, onion, seasoned salt, garlic

powder and pepper 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Blend in cream cheese and then cream. Over very low heat, stir and heat through. Turn into chafing dish or heat-proof casserole and keep warm over candle warmer, and garnish with pimiento. Serve with warm carrot sticks, celery, cauliflower florets, green pepper squares and tortilla chips. This with a little cream if needed during serving period. Any leftover dip may be chilled and used as cracker spread. For a milder dip, use only one chili

Knife know-how simplifies buying

Good knives are one of the cook's most important tools. But, if you're just starting out, the realm of cutlery can be a bit overwhelming. Professional chefs and food authorities suggest you buy just what you need and that you buy the best quality you can afford.

A four-piece cutlery set consisting of the following will handle most food preparations:

Used for cleaning and paring fruits and vegetables
• 5- to 6-inch utility—An all-round knife that can be used for most kitchen tasks

• 8- to 10-inch slicer—Used for slicing cooked meats
• 8- to 12-inch chef's knife—A must for chopping, dicing and mincing.

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Bran muffins: flavorful fiber

The benefits of fiber in our daily diets have received special attention in recent years. Fiber is a valuable aid to our digestive process and often can be indirectly helpful in preventing certain digestive-related disorders. It is found in many different foods, but most noticeable in bran, the outside seedcoat of cereal grains.

Bran has a flavorful taste and is used in countless recipes for muffins, breads, cakes and cookies. Dried Apple and Bran Muffins are a good example of how to put healthful and appetizing bran into your diet. These muffins rely on bran flake cereal and chopped dried apples for their wholesome taste and nutritious quality. Nutmeg and cinnamon are also used to add just a hint of spice flavoring.

Although muffins are traditionally served at breakfast, these tasty baked goods can easily find their way into menus for brunch, lunch, tea-time, or snack-time any time of day. Serve them piping hot with butter or jam and coffee, tea, or fresh-squeezed juice.

DRIED APPLE AND BRAN MUFFINS
(Makes 12 muffins)
1 1/2 cups bran flakes
1 cup water
1/4 cup oil
1 slightly beaten egg
1/2 cup chopped dried apples
2 1/4 cups flour
1/2 cup nonfat dry milk
1/2 cup sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1/4 tsp. salt
Soak bran flakes in water in medium bowl 5 minutes. Stir in oil, egg, and apple. Combine flour, dry nonfat milk, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Make a well in center. Stir in bran mixture just until moistened. Spoon into 12 buttered 2 1/2-inch muffin cups. Bake in moderate oven (375 degrees) 20 to 25 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from muffin cups and serve warm, or cool on wire racks.

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