

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo!



Cinco de Mayo, the fifth of May, is one of Mexico's liveliest national holidays. Commemorating the Mexican army's 1862 victory in battle over the invading French in the small town of Puebla, it's a time for merriment and feasting.

The ideal menu choice for a Cinco de Mayo party is Mole Poblano (MOE-lay poh-BLAH-no), the national dish of Mexico.

Created by nuns in Puebla over 200 years ago to honor visiting church dignitaries, the dish consists of chicken or turkey in a distinctive, dark sauce. Full-flavored and spicy, the sauce traditionally requires twenty or thirty ingredients, including unsweetened chocolate and a multitude of different chiles, seasonings and spices.

For home cooks who love Mexican food but lack time for involved preparation, a streamlined version of this favorite fiesta food has been created.

Easy Mole Poblano shortcuts preparation while carefully preserving the traditional taste of the original dish. To shorten cooking time, it begins with boneless skinned chicken breasts in place of whole chicken or turkey.

Rice is the traditional accompaniment for this dish and Cumin-Avocado Rice is an easy, flavorful choice. Seasoned boldly with cumin, and given a lively flavor boost with pimiento sauce, avocado and green onion, it provides a colorful complement for the saucy, spicy chicken.

EASY MOLE POBLANO
(Chicken in Spicy Brown Sauce)

and skinned
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce
1/2 cup pimiento sauce
4 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. oregano
1/2 tsp. garlic salt
Dash of ground cloves
Dash of ground nutmeg
Dash of ground allspice

Pound chicken to 1/2-inch thickness. Lightly brown in oil in large skillet about 2 minutes on each side; drain off fat. Combine remaining ingredients; mix well. Pour over chicken in skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer gently 10 minutes. Remove chicken to serving platter; keep warm. Cook and stir sauce until slightly thickened, about 3 to 5 minutes. Spoon sauce over chicken and serve with Cumin-Avocado Rice. Makes 6 servings.

CUMIN-AVOCADO RICE

1 cup regular long grain rice
1 Tbsp. butter or margarine
2 chicken bouillon cubes
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 ripe avocado
1/2 cup pimiento sauce
2 green onions with tops

Cook rice according to package directions, adding butter, bouillon cubes and cumin, but omitting salt. Peel, seed and coarsely chop avocado; stir into rice with pimiento sauce and green onion. Serve with additional pimiento sauce. Makes 4 servings.

3 whole chicken breasts, split, boned

6 cheeses key to special manicotti

This is rich. I mean RICH! It may be the richest pasta dish in the world.

The six cheeses can be found at the supermarket or an Italian specialty store.

The first time I prepared the dish I made the mistake of tasting the two-cheese mushroom sauce too many times. Resist the temptation so you can enjoy it over the four-cheese filled manicotti.

This creation will make you a big cheese at home.

FOUR-CHEESE MANICOTTI

The four-cheese filling:

1/2 cup Asiago or Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup grated Romano cheese
1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1 lb. Ricotta
4 walnuts, finely chopped
2 Tbsp. chopped parsley
3 eggs, beaten
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 Tbsp. salt
Liberal amount milled black pepper

Mix cheeses in large bowl, add remaining ingredients and blend well.

The two-cheese mushroom sauce:

2 shallots, finely chopped
1/4 lb. butter
1 lb. mushrooms, chopped
7 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
2 1/2 cups milk
2 cups heavy cream



pilot light
Greg Melikov

1 cup shredded Gruyere cheese
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and black pepper to taste

In large saucepan, saute shallots in butter until soft, add mushrooms, simmer on low heat 5 minutes, stirring. Warm milk and cream, blend into mixture with flour, raise heat to medium low, stir until sauce is smooth and thickened. Add cheeses, salt and pepper; stir until well blended. Yields 4 1/2 cups.

The manicotti:
1 pkg. (8 oz.) manicotti, 14 tubes
1 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil

In large pot, bring to boil 5 quarts salted water, add 1 tablespoon oil, drop in manicotti 4 or 5 at a time, cook about 5 minutes, remove tubes with slotted spoon to paper toweling, drain. Fill tubes with four-cheese mixture, place in casserole greased with remaining oil, spoon on liberal amount mushroom sauce, bake in 400-degree oven 15 to 20 minutes. Pass rest of mushroom sauce at table. Serves 5-7.

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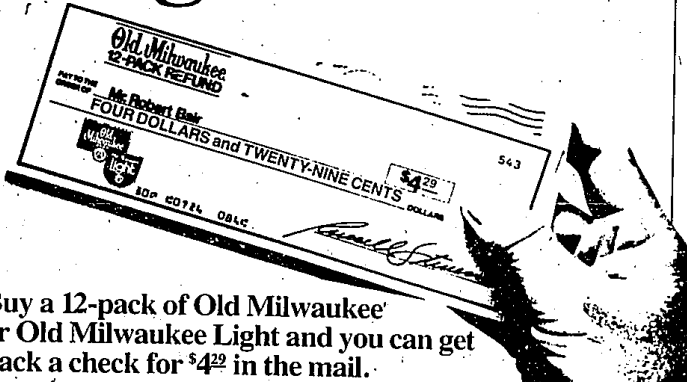
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