

Have a midweek Mexican fiesta

Cinco de Mayo, the fifth of May, commemorates a turning point in Mexican history. One of Mexico's most enthusiastically celebrated holidays, it's a day filled with fun and feasting.

The year was 1862, the place, the small town of Puebla. It was there that Napoleon's toughest troops, charged with taking over the country, clashed with a poorly equipped Mexican army.

Outnumbered three to one, the Mexican defenders triumphed; Mexicans honor the victory each year with a celebration. Cinco de Mayo falls on a Wednesday this year. Why not join in the celebration with a midweek Mexican fiesta for friends?

Two new south-of-the-border style enchilada recipes from the Pace Picante Sauce Test Kitchen will make preparations easy. Both recipes bypass specialty store spices and hard-to-handle chilies and rely on a recipe for hot Pace Picante Sauce for their garden-fresh, authentic south-of-the-border flavor.

Fillings require no cooking, and when flexible flour tortillas replace traditional corn tortillas, which must be fried in oil, they can be rolled; both recipes are oven-ready in minutes.

Enchiladas de Camaraones (shrimp enchiladas) combine cooked shrimp with two cheeses, picante sauce and a medley of vegetables and spices including broccoli, green onions and cilantro. Creamy, colorful and richly flavored, they're sure-fire crowd pleasers. Enchiladas con Dos Quesos (enchiladas with two cheeses) combine ricotta and Monterey Jack cheese with picante sauce and confetti-colored vegetables in a satisfying meatless main dish that's chock-full of savory seasonings.

With either enchilada recipe, be sure to pass a selection of optional toppings including additional picante sauce or extra cheese "customizer" they'll treat to suit personal tastes.

ENCHILADAS DE CAMARAONES (SHRIMP ENCHILADAS)

- 12 ounces cooked shrimp, chopped (2 cups)
- 1 1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 1/4 cups Pace Picante Sauce
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped fresh broccoli
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions with tops

- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- Vegetable oil
- 12 corn tortillas (four tortillas may be substituted; omit frying)

Optional toppings: Chopped tomato, avocado slices, sour cream

Combine shrimp, 1/4 cup of the shredded cheese, 1/4 cup of the picante sauce, broccoli, cream cheese, onions, cilantro and garlic salt; mix well. Heat about 1/4-inch oil in small skillet until hot.

Quickly fry each tortilla in oil to soften, about 2 seconds per side; drain on paper towels. Spoon 1/4 cup shrimp mixture down center of each tortilla; roll up and place seam side down in ungreased 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Spoon remaining 1 1/4 cups picante sauce evenly over enchiladas. Bake at uncovered 350 degrees F, 25 minutes or until hot. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Return to oven until cheese melts.

Top as desired and serve with additional picante sauce. Makes 6 servings.

ENCHILADAS CON DOS QUESOS (TWO-CHEESE ENCHILADAS)

- 1 1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese

- 1 1/2 cups Pace Picante Sauce
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup thinly sliced green onions with tops
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 8 flour tortillas (8 to 7-inch) (or substitute corn tortillas. Fry briefly in hot oil to soften and drain on paper towels before filling)

Optional toppings: Shredded lettuce, ripe olive slices, chopped tomato, chopped cilantro

Combine 1 cup of the shredded cheese, 1/4 cup of the picante sauce and remaining ingredients except tortillas and optional toppings; mix well. Spoon about 1/4 cup mixture down center of each tortilla; roll up.

Place seam side down in ungreased 11 by 7-inch baking dish. Spoon remaining picante sauce evenly over enchiladas. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F, 20 minutes or until hot. Sprinkle with remaining shredded cheese. Top as desired and serve with additional picante sauce. Makes 4 servings.



THE PACE PICANTE SAUCE TEST KITCHEN

Fiesta dishes: On Cinco de Mayo or anytime you're feeling festive, serve fuss-free-to-fix Enchiladas de Camaraones — shrimp enchiladas.

Visit France or California to discover the joys of wine

If recent inquiries from readers are any indication, there are a significant number of you planning travels to wine regions over the next several months. Undoubtedly, traveling to northern California, the domestic wine mecca, is easier to arrange than scheduling an equivalently great experience in a foreign country.

Do not, however, be deterred by the latter statement. With sufficient advance planning, you will have a dynamic experience to be remembered over many years and bottles of wine!

Visit France

French wines remain the benchmark for premium wine production. France, then, is the European country for a first experience in a world renowned industry. To do this well, a car is a necessity.

If you're traveling three weeks or longer, consider the Renault USA European Delivery Services which offer a new, factory-fresh car with unlimited mileage and non-deductible collision insurance which are usually added expenses when dealing with a car rental agency.

The Renault Eurodrive program is also tax-free, a fact that could save you as much as 20 percent. If you drive a diesel, you can save 30 to 40 percent on fuel costs. For more information on the Renault USA program, call toll-free 1-800-221-1052.



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

Now in its 10th year, the French Experience offers a variety of options to personalize a trip to France, including several wine regions, such as Alsace, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Provence, the Rhone Valley, and the Loire Valley.

Through the French Experience, stays in castles, rustic French country homes, cozy apartments on a farm or in a small village or houseboat rental can be arranged. Contact The French Experience at (212) 986-1115 or Fax (212) 986-3208. For those who prefer houseboating on a canal in one of France's wine regions, check out the boats offered by the Maine-Anjou Riveriers barge-rental agency Chenille-Change, 49220 Le Lion d'Angers, France. Call 1-800-221-1052. Most agencies require rentals for a week or longer. Maine-Anjou Riveriers has weekend rentals on barges accommodating 2 to 15 people.

Recently, the Bordeaux Wine Bureau moved in with Food and Wine from France, sharing office facilities in New York. Call (212) 477-8492 or Fax (212) 473-4315 to inquire about maps and other information on visiting wine producers. If this agency can't get you a copy of "Decouverte Medoc," an indispensable booklet for learning which chateau welcome visitors and the times for such visits, contact Conseil des Vins du Medoc, 11, cours du XXX-Juillet, 33000 Bordeaux, France. In writing or call 66.48.18.62 or Fax 66.79.11.05.

Paris restaurants

Everyone's trip to French wine regions should begin or at least terminate with a stay in Paris. Deals for Paris accommodations abound, starting with the airlines, usually accompanied by bonus frequent-flyer miles.

If you want to meet Parisians and not just tourists, stay on the Left Bank. With this recommendation, we're answering one of your most frequent questions about where to eat and drink wine well, but inexpensively in Paris — on the Left Bank: Chez Toutaine, 5 rue de Pont-Neuf, 11, cours du XXX-Juillet, Le Petit Zing, 11 rue St. Benoit. This restaurant is better than others recommended here, but is outstanding. Waiters are uncommonly friendly to English-speaking patrons. Restaurant Folidor, 41 rue M.

Sample budget-minded wines

To put you in the mood for planning a wine trip to any of the world's great wine regions, sample the following budget-minded wines that please both palate and purse.

Starting with California, 1991 J. Lohr Riverstone Chardonnay (\$11), from Dunewood 1990 Merlot and 1991 Chardonnay (both \$7), 1991 Cypress Merlot (\$9), 1990 Innisfree Cabernet

Sauvignon (\$11); 1990 Pravin Merlot from Trentino (\$10).

From Australia, Jamesons Run, 1992 Chardonnay and 1990 Shiraz-Cabernet (both \$13), 1991 Lindemans Bin 95 Chardonnay (\$7) and 1991 Lindemans Semillon Chardonnay Bin 77 (\$7). From South Africa, 1990 Springbok Pinotage and 1989 Shiraz (both \$8).

a much smaller production, doesn't attract crowds of tourists, but has a cozy tasting room.

St. Supery's tasting room is the most unique while Robert Mondavi Winery still offers the best guided tour. Domaine Chandon's the place to learn about sparkling wine production and the winery's restaurant offers the best dining experience in the Valley. Advance restaurant reservations for either lunch or dinner are advised. Pine Ridge Winery's new caves give you the idea of California high-tech aging facilities.

If you're experienced with touring in the Napa Valley and have not visited in the much larger Sonoma Valley, then consider Ferrari-Carano, Preston, Dry Creek, Domaine Michel and Quivira north of Santa Rosa. South of Santa Rosa, call on Chateau St. Jean, Kenwood, Ravenswood (especially if you like Zinfandel), Buena Vista and Gundlach-Bundschu. Also visit the newly-opened Sonoma County Wine & Visitors Center open (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), 5000 Roberts Lake Road in Rohnert Park (seven miles south of Santa Rosa). At the center you can find information on wine tours special events, lodging, restaurants and obtain maps.

To leave a message on the Heald's voice mail — dial 553-2047, mailbox 1854.

Exploring California

First-time California wine explorations can begin in Napa Valley. The following are recommendations for wineries with exceptional tours, a different twist or sufficiently small to offer a one-on-one experience.

Starting in the north, visit — Clos Pegase if you like art in addition to wine. A few hundred yards south is Sterling Vineyards with a self-guided tour and superior tasting room. Continuing south, drop in at Freemark Abbey and Beringer. Flora Springs, with

le Prince, is very casual, but with fine steaks from Burgundy, each other regional specialties. Chez Maitre Paul, 12 rue M. le Prince; Restaurant des Beaux Arts (across from Ecole des Beaux Arts) is good for lunch and Allard, 41 rue St.-Andre-des-Arts will not disappoint.

Our nearby Ile St. Louis, Au Gourmet de Lisle, 42 rue Saint-Louis-en-Ile has a fixed-price four-course daily offering with a choice of 10 entrees for 110 French Francs. Just don't let them send you in the basement dining room! For a special, fine-dining experience, we highly recommend the one-star Michelin restaurant Le Dome, 108 Blvd du Montparnasse (14th Arr). Try sensational seafood in an historic setting with a classic zinc bar. If

you have time to investigate an open-air food market, the most colorful stalls are along the rue de Buci and adjacent side streets.

Battered, deep-fried, or broiled, smelt are delicious

See Larry Jones column Taste Buds on Taste front.

HOMEMADE BATTER FOR SMELT

- 2 egg yolks
- 1/4 cup milk or buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 egg whites beaten until stiff

Beat together the egg yolks, milk and melted butter until smooth. Mix flour, salt and seasoned bread crumbs and mix with a whisk until a batter is formed.

Wash and pat dry smelt. Just before frying, fold in beaten egg whites. Dip smelt in batter and deep fry or pan fry in 375 degree oil until golden, about 2 to 3 minutes. Drain on paper towel.

BROILED SMELT

- 2 pounds smelt, dressed
- 1 stick butter or margarine, melted
- 1/2 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup cream

Coat cleaned smelt in melted butter or margarine, place on waxed paper and refrigerate until butter or margarine has solidified and coated the fish. Remove from fridge, dip in cream, then roll in seasoned bread crumbs to coat. Place on a lightly greased broiler pan and broil until golden, about 3 to 4 minutes.

DEEP FRIED SMELT

- 2 pounds smelt, dressed
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup seasoned bread crumbs

mixed with 1/4 cup flour oil for deep-frying

Preheat oil in deep-fryer to about 370 degrees. Dip the cleaned smelt in crumbs, then in beaten egg, then in crumbs again. Fry in small batches, being careful not to crowd the fryer for 3 minutes. Drain on paper towel.

BAKED SMELT AU GRATIN

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped carrot
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 2 pounds smelt, dressed
- 1/2 cup chopped dry white wine
- 1/2 cup seasoned bread crumbs mixed with 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Lightly grease low baking dish with olive oil. Combine and spread chopped vegetables on the bottom of the dish. Place smelt on top. Sprinkle with all the wine. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, sprinkle with bread crumb and cheese mixture and pop under the broiler for 4 minutes or until nicely golden brown.

BEER BATTER

- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 cups cold beer
- 2 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour

Stir baking soda into the eggs. Stir in beer. Mix well. Stir liquid mixture into the sifted flour. Lightly dip smelt in flour to coat, then dip in beer batter and fry in oil heated to 375 degrees. Do not crowd the

fryer. Makes enough batter for 2 1/2 pounds of smelt.

Chef's note: Beer can be omitted and water can be used. For a different taste try white wine or apple juice.

LEMON, LIME OR PARSLEY BUTTER

- 2 sticks butter, melted

The juice from 2 lemons or limes or 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley

Using a wire whisk, whip ingredients into the butter, place in a small plastic tub and refrigerate 1 hour or until firm. Chef's suggestion: Before deep-

frying your smelt, dip a bunch of parsley in the hot fat and fry for about 2 minutes or until crisp for an unforgettable taste sensation!

TARTAR SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons finely chopped dill pickle or 2 tablespoons dill pickle relish

- 12 tablespoons finely minced onion
- 1 tablespoon finely minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Makes 1 1/2 cups.

Outstanding home economist shares recipe

See related story on Taste front "Home economist pioneer for working moms."

KAHLUA TORTE

- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup kahlua

1 large container frozen whipped dairy topping, thawed

1 large package Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookies

Marschino cherries, winter-green candy and shaved chocolate for garnish

Mix milk and kahlua. Dipping cookies in the milk mixture for 3 to 5 seconds, use them to line an 8-inch springform pan. Spoon a layer of thawed whipped topping over

cookies. Continue to make 3 to 5 layers. Freeze. After removing torte from pan, garnish with additional whipped topping and cherries, candy and/or chocolate.

Irene Cameron, host of "In Good Taste," City Channel 8, Livonia.

whipped cream tastes good too.

Do you have a cooking question? Write Dear Betty Crocker, Box 1112, Dept. Betty, Minneapolis, MN 55440.

Helpful Betty Crocker cooking tips to use, share

Here are some cooking tips from Betty Crocker to use or share with a friend.

- Radiators, shaped like car radiators, is a ruffly little pasta perfect for salads. The delicate flavors of the salad dressing get caught in the ruffles, giving the salad lots of flavor in every bite.
- Dried pasta will keep indefinitely. Store it at room temperature in the original package. Fresh pasta is stored in the refrigerator and keeps for three to five days.
- For most quick breads, fill pans, no matter what the size, slightly over half to three-fourths full.
- You can buy pasta both fresh and dried. Look for pasta either prepackaged or in bulk bins.

Fresh pasta is found in the refrigerated section of the supermarket.

■ Cake lends itself to innovation. Pipe flavored whipped cream

(found in pressurized cans in the dairy case) onto the top of an unfrosted angel food or pound cake. Then, drizzle with pureed, thawed frozen fruit and top with shaved chocolate. Fruit chutney with

many delicious national dishes.

Ingredient basics

Mexican cooking relies primarily on foods native to Central and South America, such as chili peppers, corn, tomatoes, beans, sweet potatoes, avocados and squash. From the Americas came such foods as pork, almonds, citrus fruits and rice. Pork is still

used frequently, as are beef and chicken. Dishes with fish and shellfish are abundant along the coasts. Of course, the staple bread of many Mexican meals is the tortilla, made of cornmeal in the south and wheat flour in the north.

Signature sauces

Often, it's the sauces that give Mexican dishes their character.

True Mexican cuisine more than tacos