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Make Mojo your marinade - and more

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The Cuban sauce called *mojo* criollo, which is primarily served with yuca and other root vegetables, is simple, citrus-based and loaded with garlic. I find this lively Hispanic blend also crosses over, serving easily as both a great marinade, and as an accompaniment to seafood, chicken, and lean pork.

Mojo (mo-ho) is a traditional combination of garlic, fat, and the intensely sour juice of Seville oranges, *naranja agria* in Spanish. While these bumpy skinned oranges are available in the ethnic produce section of many supermarkets and at Hispanic markets, they are not essential for a good *mojo*. A combination of freshly squeezed lime and orange juices nicely produces the same clean, sharp flavor.

Miami chefs, including Norman Van Aken, Alan Sussner, and Steven Raichlen, often embellish *mojo's* trio of ingredients by adding sizzling habanero chiles, aromatic cumin, and herbs. As cooks with an interest in healthier fare, they use oil rather than the hot lard favored in Cuba.

Whether made with traditional ingredients, or in nuevo latino style, *mojo* is pungent, tart and refreshing, especially

at a summer barbecue. To make it serve double duty, my favorite, *mojo rojo*, starts with citrus and seasonings. After pouring off a portion to use for marinating, I then add red bell pepper, paprika, and fresh bread. Together, they further intensify the *mojo's* flavor while also adding body that thickens it into a sauce.

You may skip the bread, if you like, and still enjoy the thinner *mojo* as a sauce with grilled shrimp, salmon, and even burgers. However, it is essential to discard the portion used for marinating, as raw food can contaminate it with bacteria. (Boiling a marinade after it has been used can kill this bacteria, but it changes the flavor of this *mojo*.)

Marinating animal foods before grilling helps to reduce the formation of carcinogenic nitrosamines.

When you want to change from sweet barbecue sauce and other familiar choices, *mojo* is an enticing, quick alternative to use before and after cooking.

MOJO ROJO MARINADE FOR GRILLING

6 garlic cloves
1 cup chopped cilantro leaves
1 cup fresh orange juice
1/2 cup fresh lime juice (about 4 limes)
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive

oil
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 medium red bell peppers, seeded and diced
1 cup cubed Italian bread, including crust
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
1/2 teaspoon cayenne

Place garlic, cilantro, orange juice, lime juice, oil, cumin, oregano, salt, and black pepper in blender and whirl to puree. Pour off half, about 1 cup, to use as a marinade for salmon, firm white fish such as snapper, bass, or cod, salmon, or shrimp.

To the rest of the marinade in the blender, add the bell pepper, bread cubes, paprika, and cayenne.

Whirl until mixture is a loose, very finely chopped sauce. Use like salsa, to accompany the grilled seafood. Also, makes a good dressing for a crisp salad of romaine lettuce, cucumber and tomato, and dip with celery sticks. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

Nutritional information per 2 tablespoons serving: 28 calories, 1 g. total fat (less than 1 gram saturated fat), 4 g. carbohydrate, less than 1 gram protein, less than 1 gram dietary fiber, 184 milligrams sodium.
Dana Jacobi, author of *The Joy of Soy*, writes for the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Quick fixings are sometimes best

It's the beginning of the make-it-ahead season. The end of school, graduations and weddings don't leave the home cook time for elaborate, last-minute dishes. Quick, easy meals are a harbinger of summer.

Hot weather calls for can-opening, slicing, mixing and assembling rather than braising, sautéing, stewing and roasting. And if a meal's worth of flavor and substance can be packed into a one-dish meal, so much the better - especially if it's nutritious.

One secret to a successful one-dish meal is variety. Ingredients of many colors, flavors and textures taste good, look good, and are chockful of phytochemicals, those disease-fighting natural substances found in plant-based foods like vegetables and fruits. The vegetables typically used in a salad - leafy greens, tomatoes, bell peppers - each offer different phytochemicals, each with their own health benefits.

Just one serving of dark leafy greens, for example, contains more than 100 different phytochemicals.

Dark, leafy greens like romaine lettuce and spinach contain lutein and zeaxanthin, powerful antioxidants linked to reduced risk of age-related macular degeneration and lung cancer. Bell peppers are a good source of phytochemicals called phenols, especially cummarins and terpenes, which help fend off cancer. Tomatoes are rich in lycopene (even more so when cooked), considered the most powerful antioxidant in the carotenoid family and believed to reduce the risk of prostate cancer and possibly breast cancer.

Many one-dish salad ingredients are in your refrigerator or cupboards. See what you have, put them together and have a refreshing, filling, healthy one-dish meal. This Mexican-style chicken salad is just one colorful example.



AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Many one-dish salad ingredients are in your refrigerator or cupboards. See what you have, put them together and have a refreshing, filling, healthy one-dish meal, like this Mexican Chicken Salad.

MEXICAN CHICKEN SALAD

3 cups cooked, cubed chicken breast
1 can (15 ounces) corn, drained (1 3/4 cups)
1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
1/2 cup peeled jicama, diced small
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
2-3 tablespoons fresh lime juice, or to taste
3/4 cup thick salsa
3 drops, or to taste, red pepper sauce (optional)
2-4 tablespoons water
1/4 cup low-fat shredded cheddar cheese for garnish (optional)
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro or flat-leaf parsley leaves, for garnish (optional)

In a large bowl, place chicken, corn, beans, bell peppers and jicama.

Gently toss until well mixed and set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together olive oil and lime juice.

Mix in salsa. Add red pepper sauce if desired.

Add enough water to thin consistency so dressing can be thinly drizzled over salad.

Transfer to serving pitcher. Drizzle dressing over chicken mixture, tossing to coat salad ingredients evenly.

Cover and chill 1 to 3 hours so flavors can meld. Bring to room temperature and check seasoning before serving.

Add salt and pepper to taste, if desired.

Drain off any excess dressing. Place in serving bowl.

Sprinkle top of salad with cheese (if using) and cilantro. Serve with baked tortilla chips, if desired.

Makes about 10 servings.

Nutritional information per serving: 239 calories, 13 g. total fat (2 g. saturated fat), 10 g. carbohydrate, 16 g. protein, 4 g. dietary fiber, 413 mg. sodium.

Recipe courtesy of the American Institute for Cancer Research.

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