Cinco de Marzo

I’m a few months early, but a Mexican food celebration sounded like a good idea. Actually, I was working on an all cheese dinner club, but all the good recipes kept being Mexican. I will come up with a good Mexican cocktail to serve as well. I will make the enchaladas.

See you all on Saturday

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## Appetizer: Bacon Wrapped Jalapeno Poppers

Ingredients:

25 fresh jalapeno peppers

14 -16 ounces cream cheese

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

2 (16 ounce) packages bacon

Directions:

Cut stems off of peppers and cut them all in half longways. Remove seeds from peppers. Fill each pepper with cream cheese and sprinkle cheddar cheese on top. Wrap 1/2 slice of bacon around each pepper half. Place on baking sheets and place in 450 degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until bacon is fully cooked. Remove and serve when cooled.

## Soup: Chicken Tortilla Soup

Ingredients:

2 teaspoons olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 medium jalapeno pepper, chopped

1/2 medium green pepper

4 small boneless skinless chicken breasts

2 cups frozen corn

1/2 cup dry white wine or 1/2 cup water

2 teaspoons cumin

1 teaspoon chili powder

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

4 (14 ounce) cans chicken broth

2 (14 ounce) cans diced tomatoes

2 (8 ounce) cans tomato sauce

Topping:

1 cup non-fat tortilla chips (optional)

Directions:

Sauté onion, garlic, jalapeño and green pepper with olive oil in a large pot until soft. Add all the rest of the ingredients to the large pot and bring to a boil. After about 15 minutes, remove the chicken breasts and shred. (Two forks work well to pull the chicken apart!). Return shredded chicken to the pot and simmer an additional 45 minutes. Serve, topped with crushed tortilla chips if desire.

## Side Dish: Mexican Rice

Ingredients:

12 ounces tomatoes, very ripe and cored

1 medium white onion

3 medium jalapenos

2 cups long grain white rice

1/3 cup canola oil

4 minced garlic cloves

2 cups chicken broth

1 tablespoon tomato paste (may omit if using canned tomatoes)

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

1/2 cup fresh cilantro, minced

1 lime

Directions:

Adjust rack to middle position and preheat oven to 350. Process tomato and onion in processor or blender until pureed and thoroughly smooth. Transfer mixture to measuring cup and reserve exactly 2 cups. Discard excess. Remove ribs and seeds from 2 jalapenos and discard. Mince flesh and set aside. Mince remaining jalapeno. Set aside. Place rice in a fine mesh strainer and rinse under cold running water until water runs clear- about 1 1/2 minutes. Shake rice vigorously to remove excess water.This step removes the starch from the rice so it will not stick. IF YOU OMIT THIS STEP YOUR RICE WILL NOT BE DRY AND FLUFFY. Heat oil in heavy bottomed ovensafe 12 inch straight sided sautee pan or Dutch oven with tight fitting lid over medium high heat about 2 minutes. (The recipe is very specific about this but I used a 10 inch dutch oven and it worked out fine.) Drop a few rice grains in and if they sizzle then it is ready. Add rice and fry stirring until rice is light golden and translucent, about 6-8 minutes. Reduce heat to medium, add garlic and 2 minced jalapenos and cook , stirring constantly until fragrant, about 1 1/2 minutes. Stir in broth, pureed mixture, tomato paste, and salt. Increase heat to medium high, and bring to a boil. Cover pan and transfer pan to oven to bake until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender, 30-35 minutes. Stir well after 15 minutes. Stir in cilantro, minced jalapeno to taste, and pass lime wedges separately. If you can't get good fresh tomatoes you are better off using canned tomatoes. Don't use those awful hard and underipe tomatoes that are at most supermarket chains. Just be sure that the processed tomatoes and the one onion equals 2 cups. One the other hand- if you find that after processing your tomatoes and onions that you have less than 2 cups- simply add enough bottled salsa to make up the difference. Do not skip any of the steps. It may seem stupid- but rinsing the rice to remove the starch is very important if you want fluffy rice. It will only take two minutes of your time but it makes the difference. Leftovers are just as delicious the next day so this is a perfect dish to make ahead time for potlucks. This rice also freezes well. For Freezing Ahead: Cool, portion and freeze in a ziploc bag. To reheat from frozen: Place in a pyrex dish and warm in the microwave, stirring every 2-3 minutes until heated through.

## Side Dish: Mexican Black Beans

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 large jalapeno, seeded and chopped

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained

1 (14 1/2 ounce) can chicken broth

fresh lime juice

fresh cilantro, chopped

1 cup monterey jack cheese

Directions:

Heat oil in heavy large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add garlic, chili and cumin and sauté 30 seconds. Add beans and broth and cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Coarsely mash beans with potato masher. Continue boiling until thick, stirring frequently, about 20 minutes. Season to taste with lime juice, salt and pepper. Transfer to bowl. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve. I add the monterey jack cheese on top and microwave for 2 minutes to melt the cheese.

### Entrée: Chicken Enchiladas

Ingredients

4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves

1 onion, chopped

1/2 pint sour cream

1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

1 tablespoon dried parsley

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)

1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce

1/2 cup water

1 tablespoon chili powder

1/3 cup chopped green bell pepper

1 clove garlic, minced

8 (10 inch) flour tortillas

1 (12 ounce) jar taco sauce

3/4 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). In a medium, non-stick skillet over medium heat, cook chicken until no longer pink and juices run clear. Drain excess fat. Cube the chicken and return it to the skillet. Add the onion, sour cream, Cheddar cheese, parsley, oregano and ground black pepper. Heat until cheese melts. Stir in salt, tomato sauce, water, chili powder, green pepper and garlic. Roll even amounts of the mixture in the tortillas. Arrange in a 9x13 inch baking dish. Cover with taco sauce and 3/4 cup Cheddar cheese. Bake uncovered in the preheated oven 20 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before serving.

## Dessert: Sopapilla Cheesecake

Ingredients:

2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese

2 (8 ounce) packages refrigerated crescent dinner rolls

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 cup butter, melted

1/2 cup cinnamon sugar

Honey to drizzle on the top

Directions:

Using a 9 x 13 baking pan, unroll one package of refrigerated crescent rolls and line the bottom of the pan. Flatten. Mix together the cream cheese, sugar and extract. Spread over the crescent rolls. Unroll the other can of crescent rolls and place on top of cream cheese mixture. Pour one stick of melted butter or margarine over the top and sprinkle with about 1/2 cup of the cinnamon sugar mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Plate and drizzle with honey before serving.