

Recipes from

TRES LECHES CUPCAKES

A CULINARY MYSTERY BY

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Tres Leches Cupcakes

Cupcakes

1½ cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
5 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside. In a separate bowl, beat butter for 1 minute until very smooth. Add sugar and mix well. Add eggs one at a time, beating until yellow and frothy. Add vanilla. Add flour mixture in three batches and beat an additional minute. Fill cupcake liners halfway. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until tops are lightly browned and an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Do not overbake. Cool completely.

Makes approximately 24 cupcakes.

Glaze

1 (5-ounce) can evaporated milk (or half of a 12-ounce can)
1 (11-ounce) can of sweetened condensed milk
1 cup cream, coconut milk, half and half, OR whole milk

Mix milks together. When cupcakes are cool, carefully slice off the top crust to expose the sponge cake. Drizzle the milk mixture one spoonful at a time over the cupcakes, allowing the cake to soak up the milk in between additions. (Cupcakes typically hold between 1 and 2 tablespoons of glaze.) Once milk seems to be pooling at the top of the sponge cake, cover the cupcakes and refrigerate for at least six hours.

Note: An easy way to add glaze is to use a medicinal syringe. (You can find them in the pharmacy section of your local grocery store.) Instead of slicing off the tops of the cupcakes, simply inject the milk one syringe at a time.

Cinnamon Buttercream Frosting

1 cup butter, softened
3½ cups powdered sugar
3 teaspoons vanilla
1 to 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
Dash of salt
Milk, as needed

In a mixing bowl, whip butter until smooth. Add 2 cups of powdered sugar and mix well, scraping the sides of the bowl as needed. Add vanilla and mix well. Add remaining powdered sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Mix; add milk as needed to create a smooth, but thick frosting. Pipe frosting onto cupcakes using a 1A tip, or spread frosting over cupcakes with a butterknife or spatula.

Meringue Frosting for Tres Leches Cupcakes

1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup water
2 egg whites
Pinch of salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

In a small saucepan, mix water and sugar. Heat on medium-high heat until boiling. Cook until soft-ball stage* (about 10 minutes), stirring frequently. Keep syrup on medium-high heat. (Use caution when handling hot syrup; it will burn you if not respected!)

In a separate bowl, beat egg whites about a minute, then add salt. Continue beating until soft peaks form. Add cinnamon and mix only until combined.

While still beating the egg whites, add hot syrup steadily and beat until the mixture reaches the consistency of marshmallow cream.

*To know whether or not you have reached soft-ball stage, drop a small amount of syrup into a bowl of cold water. If it gels together and forms a soft ball, you have reached the correct consistency.

For a filled tres leches cupcake, use an apple corer or small paring knife to remove a "plug" from the center of each cupcake. Add the three milks as directed in the recipe on previous page. Before frosting, fill hole with stabilized whipping cream, then frost cupcakes using a decorator's bag.

Stabilized Whipping Cream

1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin (one packet of Knox is a full tablespoon)
4 teaspoons cold water
1 cup heavy whipping cream
¼ cup powdered sugar

Mix together gelatin and water in a small microwave-safe bowl. Set aside and allow to thicken. In a mixing bowl, whip whipping cream with powdered sugar until slightly thick. Put gelatin mixture in the microwave and cook for 12 seconds. Remove, stir to even out any hot spots in the mixture, then, while mixing the cream on low speed, slowly add gelatin mixture. Once added, beat cream on high speed for about 5 minutes, or until very thick.

Using a decorator's bag, or zip-top plastic bag with a corner snipped off, fill the holes in the cupcakes. Store any leftovers in refrigerator.

Note: Leftover stabilized whipping cream can be used in place of frosting.

Dulce de Leche Bars

1½ cups flour
 1½ cups quick oats
 1 cup brown sugar
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 cup butter, softened
 1 (13.4-ounce) can dulce de leche
 1 cup Heath toffee bits or chocolate chips
 ½ cup chopped nuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine dry ingredients. Cut in butter with pastry blender or fork until crumbly. Reserve ¼ cup for the topping, then press remainder of the mix into an ungreased 9x13 pan. Bake for 10 minutes.

While crust is baking, soften dulce de leche in a small saucepan over low heat (about 5 minutes). Spread dulce de leche over hot crust. Sprinkle with toffee bits and the rest of the crumb mixture. Add nuts if desired. Return to oven and bake 25 to 30 minutes.

Let cool 15 minutes and then run a knife around the edges of the pan to loosen.

Let cool completely and cut into bars.

Makes 24 bars.

Tostadas Compuestas

Chili con carne

2 pounds course ground pork or beef (pork tastes better)
 4 tablespoons red chili powder
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 4 tablespoons flour
 4 tablespoons oil
 1 medium onion, chopped
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon ground cumin
 1 tablespoon oregano
 4 cups hot water
 Tomato juice, as needed

In a large mixing bowl, combine meat, chili powder, garlic, and flour. In a large, heavy skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until tender. Add meat and cook until brown. Add salt, cumin, and oregano. Add water and simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour. Add tomato juice as needed if chili becomes too dry. Add additional amounts of salt, cumin, and oregano as needed to get the flavor you prefer. Keep mixture warm on stove until the tortillas are done being fried.

Note: For a slow cooker version, brown meat according to recipe, then transfer to a slow cooker. Add seasonings, three cups of water, and one cup of tomato juice. Cook on low for up to 8 hours, or on high for 2 to 3 hours.

Tostadas

2 quarts oil, for frying

Corn tortillas (3 to 4 per person)

Cheese, grated

Lettuce, shredded

Sour cream

Pinto beans, warm

Tomatoes, diced

Guacamole (optional)

In a deep, heavy saucepan, heat oil over medium to medium-high heat. (You know the oil is at the right temperature when you can drop a small piece of tortilla into the oil and it floats to the top and starts to sizzle. If it sinks to the bottom, the oil is not hot enough. *No bueno.*)

Stack the tortillas three at a time and make 4 slits, about an inch out from the middle on each side, forming a rough square pattern in the center of the tortilla. Set a cooling rack over a sheet pan to drain and cool the shells. Drop the tortillas one at a time into the hot oil. When the tortilla floats back up to the surface, press a soup ladle into the middle of the tortilla so that the edges fold up and around the ladle. This will form the shape of the tortilla bowl.

Hold the ladle in place for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the ladle and flip the tortilla over to check brownness. You want the tortilla to just barely have some color. If it looks too golden, then it will taste overcooked. Place the tortilla bowl upside down on the rack to drain and cool.

Once all the tortillas have been fried, layer the additional ingredients according to your preference. Enjoy!

Note: If using canned pinto beans, drain and rinse them. Add them to a small saucepan with a small amount of fresh water, and heat up before serving.

Note: Caro always puts the cheese into the tortilla shell first, so that the chili makes it all gooey and melty. Mmmm.

Note: Caro is offended that I put "optional" after guacamole.

Breakfast Burritos

½ pound chorizo sausage (other types of sausage can be used, or omitted altogether)
8 eggs, beaten
1 (4-ounce) can diced green chilies, drained
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
8 flour tortillas

Brown sausage in large skillet over medium-high heat, drain. Remove from pan, drain oil, and set aside. In the same pan, add beaten eggs and cook until scrambled, but not yet dry. Add chilies and sausage and finish cooking. Remove from heat. Add mayonnaise and mix. Place a large spoonful of sausage-and-egg mixture in the center of a warmed tortilla and fold into a burrito.

Serves 8.

Note: Shawn prefers regular country sausage; Breanna prefers no sausage at all.

Caro's Cinco de Mayo Chicken Salad

2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts
½ cup picante sauce
½ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup sour cream
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 ripe avocado, chopped
1 cup diced celery
Bibb or leaf lettuce
4 crisply cooked bacon slices, crumbled

Cut chicken breasts into ½-inch cubes. Set aside. In a 10-inch skillet, combine picante sauce, cumin, and salt. Add chicken and cook about 4 minutes, stirring frequently until done. Transfer contents of skillet to large mixing bowl; cover and chill.

To serve, combine chicken mixture, sour cream, and mayonnaise; mix well. Add avocado and celery; mix lightly. Spoon chicken salad onto lettuce-lined salad plates or mix together with torn lettuce in large mixing bowl. Sprinkle with bacon.

Serves 4.

Notes: In a pinch, you can use 8 ounces of canned chicken, skip the cooking, and mix up the salad immediately. Also, a handful of chopped green peppers adds great flavor and texture. This salad is also great with tortilla chips or wrapped in a flour tortilla. Mmm!

Crock-Pot Posole

- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans golden hominy, drained
- 1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chili peppers, not drained
- 1 medium onion, chopped (about ½ cup)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts and/or thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can tomatoes, cut up and not drained
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
- ½ teaspoon salt (or more to taste)
- 2 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro
- Sour cream (optional)

Place hominy, green chili peppers, onion, garlic, chicken, tomatoes, chicken broth, and spices in a 3½-, 4-, or 5-quart crockery cooker. Cover and cook on low setting for 5 to 6 hours, or on high setting for 2½ to 3 hours. Stir in cilantro. Garnish each serving with a dollop of sour cream, if desired.

Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Note: You can use canned corn in place of hominy. Canned chicken works great, too!

Mexican Hot Chocolate

- 2 (12-ounce) cans evaporated milk (or regular milk if you like; it won't be as rich)
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

In a medium saucepan, whisk together milk, cinnamon, vanilla extract, nutmeg, and cayenne pepper on medium heat. When mixture is hot, but not boiling, add chocolate chips. Stir until chocolate is melted. Reduce heat to low and simmer 5 minutes. Whisk and serve. If desired, dust finished mugs of hot chocolate with cocoa powder.

Serves 4.

Note: To cook in a slow cooker, combine all ingredients, cover, and cook on low for 2 to 3 hours, stirring every 15 to 20 minutes.

Dulce de Leche Frosting

2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
4 cups sifted powdered sugar, divided
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
¼ cup heavy cream or milk, divided
1 (13.4-ounce) can of dulce de leche, divided (found in the Mexican food section of your grocery store, or at a Mexican market)
Dash of salt

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter. Slowly add 2 cups powdered sugar. Add vanilla and half of the cream and half of the dulce de leche; mix until well blended. Add the remaining cream and dulce de leche and blend well. Add salt. Continue adding up to the remaining 2 cups of powdered sugar until you reach desired consistency. Mix on medium for about 2 minutes to achieve a smooth and creamy result.

Green Chile Stew

1 tablespoon oil
2 pounds cubed beef or pork stew meat
1 medium onion, chopped
1½ cups beef broth
1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chilies
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garlic powder
Salt, to taste
Ground black pepper, to taste
2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Brown meat and onion until the onion is translucent. Add broth and green chilies. Stir in cumin, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour. (Add more broth or water if needed while simmering.) Stir in cubed potatoes and simmer an additional 30 minutes, or until tender.

Note: Caro's girls like this stew boiled down until it's thick enough to use in a tortilla.

Note: It's worth buying pork stew meat when you can find it and freezing it for later. Pork is so good with green chilies.

Note: This is easy to convert to a slow-cooker recipe. Add browned meat and everything but the potatoes to a slow cooker. Cook on low 4 to 6 hours. Add potatoes for the final hour.

Sopapillas

2 cups flour
 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1½ teaspoons vegetable oil

Warm water (¼ to ¾ cup, depending on
 your climate: more humid=less water)
 Oil
 Honey

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. Add oil. Add water a little at a time, mixing as you go in order to form a smooth dough.

On a lightly floured surface, knead into a soft, slightly sticky dough. Let rest, covered, 20 to 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a deep pot or skillet, heat oil over medium to medium-high heat until it reaches 400 degrees. Divide dough into 12 equal portions and roll into balls. On a floured surface, roll each ball into a thin circle, about ⅛-inch thick. (The thickness is the key to success here. If the dough is too thick, the sopapillas will not puff up when fried.) Cut each circle into quarters.

Drop dough, one piece at a time, into the hot oil. The dough will sink slightly. When the dough resurfaces, push it back under the oil. This will make it puff up. After about 20 seconds, flip the dough over and cook the other side. After another 30 seconds, remove the sopapilla with a slotted spoon and allow to drain on a cooling rack set over a sheet pan. Keep the cooked sopapillas warm in the oven on the lowest setting while you cook remaining dough. To eat, tradition requires you to bite off one corner and pour honey inside.

Note: Sopapillas are also delicious when sprinkled with powdered sugar. And for a savory sopapilla, stuff the cooked sopapilla with pinto beans, lettuce, tomato, and onions.

Biscochitos

1 cup shortening—butter flavor works well
 1 cup sugar, divided ¾ cup and ¼ cup
 1 egg
 3 cups flour
 ¼ teaspoons salt
 1½ teaspoons baking powder
 2 teaspoons anise seed, crushed or ground (or 1 teaspoon anise extract)
 3 tablespoons brandy or apple juice
 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream shortening and ¾ cup sugar together. Add egg. Mix well, then add flour, salt, baking powder, and anise seed. Mix well. Add brandy or apple juice and mix well. Dough will be a little crumbly, so add more liquid if needed and press together with hands. Combine ¼ cup sugar and cinnamon.

Roll dough out to ½-inch thickness and cut with cookie cutters. (Fleur-de-lis is the traditional shape.) Dust with sugar and cinnamon mixture. Place cookies 2 inches apart on cookie sheet.

Bake for 10 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on pan 2 minutes before removing to cooling rack.

Makes about 2 dozen 2-inch cookies.