

Mexican Food

The Mexican diet of today is a blend of Indian and Spanish cooking, with some influence from French and Italian cuisine. The peasants developed most of the recipes, using ingredients easily available to them. Corn, chilies, tomatoes, and beans are the staples of the Mexican diet. Corn, for example, is ground into *masa* and set to make tortillas, or Mexican bread.



Project

Prepare Mexican dishes to taste, or as part of a fiesta (page 35).

Materials

See individual recipes for ingredients and materials to prepare each dish.

For the Teacher

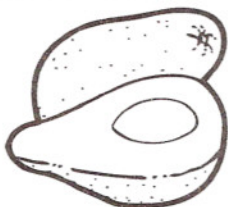
If making tacos, prepare beef before class:

Heat olive oil in a frying pan over medium-high heat. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs of beef, sliced into thin slices. Add 3 Tbsp. black pepper and 1 tsp. salt. Stir. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup lime juice and 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce. Let simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Guacamole is made from mashed avocados, which are native to Central America. Serve it with tortilla chips or as a sauce for other dishes.

- 2 large ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. (2.5 ml) salt
- 2 Tbsp. (30 ml) diced onion
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. (2.5 ml) garlic salt
- 2 Tbsp. (30 ml) olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. (30 ml) lemon or lime juice

Mash the avocados until smooth. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.



Rice is another staple in the Mexican diet.

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. (15 ml) oil
- 1 cup (240 ml) uncooked rice
- $2\frac{1}{3}$ cup (560 ml) beef broth
- 1 cup (240 ml) canned tomato puree

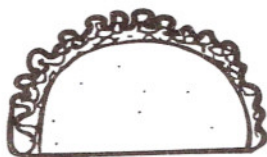
Cook onion in oil in electric skillet. Add uncooked rice and cook, stirring constantly, for a few minutes until rice begins to color. Add beef broth and canned tomato puree. Cover and cook about 25 minutes until rice is tender.



Tacos are a form of Mexican sandwich. They are folded tortillas that are filled with a variety of ingredients.

- warm corn tortillas
- diced cilantro
- diced onion
- hot sauce
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- sliced beef, cooked in lime juice and Worcestershire sauce

Top one corn tortilla with a serving of meat. Top with cilantro and onion. Squeeze lime juice over the meat and add hot sauce if desired.



Beans, or frijoles, are as important in the Mexican diet as tortillas and, like them, are served throughout the day. Often, the beans are mashed and served as frijoles refritos (refried beans).

- 1 lb (450 g) dried pink or pinto beans
- 6 cups (1.5 L) water
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. (7.5 ml) salt
- 2 Tbsp. (30 ml) bacon fat

Cover dried pink or pinto beans with water. Simmer over low heat for 12 hours. Add salt and bacon fat. Continue cooking until beans are tender.



Mexican Recipes

Mexican soup is either liquid, *aguada*, or dry, *sopa seca*. A dry soup is like a casserole.

Pozole (Corn Chowder)

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 ml) chopped onion
- 1 small can chopped green chilies, drained
- 1 tsp. (5 ml) chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. (15 ml) oil
- 3 cups (750 ml) chicken broth
- 2 15 oz. (430 g) cans white hominy, drained

Saute onion, chilies, and chili powder in oil for 7 minutes. Add broth; simmer 30 minutes. Add hominy and cook another 30 minutes.



A nutritious drink enjoyed at the marketplace is called a **licuado**.

- 1½ cups (360 ml) milk
- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 ripe banana, sliced

Combine milk, strawberries, and banana slices in blender. Blend until smooth. Makes about 2 servings.



Cacao was cultivated by the Indians long before the arrival of the Spanish. The Aztecs considered chocolate to be a special beverage and used cacao beans as a form of money. The Aztecs made their hot chocolate with water. Mexican cooks roast and grind the cacao beans at home! A molinillo is used to whip the hot chocolate until it foams.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml) unsweetened cocoa
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml) sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. (4 ml) cinnamon
- salt
- 4 cups (950 ml) milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 ml) half & half
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. (4 ml) vanilla

Heat 1 cup milk in a saucepan until simmering. With a whisk, stir in cocoa, sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Turn up heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Stir in remaining 3 cups of milk and return to a boil. Whisk until frothy. Add vanilla and half & half.



Mexican Wedding Cookies (**Polvorones**) are crumbly cookies that are baked for many traditional parties.

Preheat oven to 350° F (180° C). Combine:

- 2½ cups (590 ml) flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 ml) sifted powdered sugar
- 1 cup (240 ml) chopped pecans
- 2 tsp. (5 ml) vanilla
- 1 cup (240 ml) softened unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. (5 ml) cinnamon

Cream sugar and butter. Add flour, vanilla, cinnamon, and pecans. Knead dough until all ingredients are incorporated. Chill for one hour. Shape into small balls and place 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheet. Flatten slightly with a spoon. Bake 15 minutes or until slightly browned. Roll in powdered sugar when cool. Makes about 30 cookies.



A favorite dessert is a custard pudding called **flan**. It is made of eggs, sugar, and milk with a caramelized sugar glaze. Packaged flan mix is available at the supermarket. Prepare according to package directions.

