

Baked Chile Rellenos with Cinnamon Salsa

Baked. So easy, so good, you'll wonder why you've never tried this before. And really, with all the chopping, dicing, slicing and everything else that goes into the making of the perfect Cinco de Mayo fiesta, (*tacotamaleen*chilada...I like to say them together, I feel like I'm really speaking Spanish when I do!) who has time to batter and fry?! We ate this on Dos de Mayo and again on Tres de Mayo, but alas, there was nothing left on Quatro de Mayo! But you'd better believe I'll be making this again on Cinco de Mayo - it's the perfect dish! We're going to have ourselves a small fiesta...the mister, even though he loves this dish, is not looking forward to our fiesta...he's afraid, after gorging himself with a *tacotamaleen*chilada, his backside might convert to a flame thrower - his words - I suggest you not try to get a visual...so after dinner he'll get a dose of *Pepto Rio Bismol!* Have I told you how much he likes Pepto Bismol? He drinks it like it's an after-dinner cordial...it's pretty amusing...he'll take a sip, bark a command or two, then another sip, then he'll fire up the remote with one more last sip until he licks his lips. Sometimes he'll even hum the "*Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is*" Alka-Seltzer song while he sips his pink Pepto...this is how we spend our evenings folks...it's magic!

Restaurant style Chile Rellenos are dipped in a batter and fried to a golden brown with with a molten-lava-of cheese center that I love to watch ooze out into a little puddle on my plate...aye Chihuahua! But again, who has time for all that?!?

This dish comes together in minutes thanks to canned chiles - already fire-roasted, which means the skins have been removed so all you have to do is open them so they're flat and lay them nicely into a baking dish. A good dose of green onions and cheese top the chiles and then it starts all over again, chiles, onion, cheese. A mixture of milk, eggs, and spices is poured over the top and it's ready to bake.

Pretty, no? And it tastes every bit as good as it looks. Oh, and because I know you're dying to ask, yes, the cheese oozes slowly into a nice puddle on your plate...it's heart-stopping beautiful! But that's not all! The cinnamon salsa is spooned over each serving - just enough so you'll want to eat every bit, lick the plate, sit back contentedly in your chair, possibly stifling a burp as you utter an enthusiastic *Ohhh-lay!*

The Cinnamon Salsa has only a hint of cinnamon, it's not over-powering - just enough to make you wonder what it is, enough to make you pour more onto your plate, eat with chips straight from the bowl - make it your new signature dish - really, it's different, refreshing and down-right *delicioso!* And, you can make it as mild as you like or spicy/hot by adding in a jalapeno or two. It all comes together quickly in a blender - easy and fast...you'll want this one in your *Mexican Repertoire!*

Baked Chile Rellenos with Cinnamon Salsa- Pots and Pins Inspired by Marisa Sapienza

(My neighbor Marisa brought me a baked Chile Rellenos about a year ago and gave me her recipe, which I promptly misplaced. So I have tried to recreate her recipe, making version after version until I came up with this. Thank you Marisa for inspiring me with your fabulous Chile Rellenos! I couldn't bring myself to ask you again for the recipe!)

3 (10 oz.) cans fire roasted and peeled green chiles	1/2 cup milk
4 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese (I used a 4-cheese Mexican blend which I recommend)	1 teaspoon cumin
1/2 cup green onions, thinly sliced	1 teaspoon chili powder
5 eggs	1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder, optional
	Cinnamon Salsa recipe below

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 10-inch deep, dish pie pan (or something similar in size) with cooking spray. Drain chiles well. Open each chile carefully, scrape out any remaining seeds, and lay flat in pie pan; you will use half the chiles, over-lapping a bit. Top chiles with half of the cheese then half of the onions. Repeat with the other half of the chiles, cheese, onions, making the next layer.

In a medium-size bowl, combine the eggs, milk, cumin, and chile powders, whisking together. Pour egg-milk mixture over dish as evenly as possible. At this point you can cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 24 hours before baking. When ready to bake, remove from refrigerator, remove plastic wrap and let sit on counter for 20 minutes. If baking immediately, *cover with foil* for the first 20 minutes, then remove foil and continue to bake for an additional 20 minutes. 40 minutes total baking time. (If you are baking dish after it has been in the refrigerator you may need to add an additional 7 to 10 minutes of baking time.) Serve hot with Cinnamon Salsa. Serves 4 as an entree, 6 as a side.

Cinnamon Salsa

4 to 5 large, ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped	handful of fresh cilantro
1/2 medium-size sweet onion (like a Vidalia or Walla Walla)	1 serrano or jalapeno pepper, optional (with seeds or without - seeds provide more heat)
6 cloves garlic	1 tablespoon kosher salt
	1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Put all ingredients into a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Transfer to a saucepan and bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until most of the liquid has evaporated and salsa has thickened, about 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Spoon over Baked Chile Rellenos or serve with chips on the side. Makes about 3 cups.