

# Cinco de Mayo

THE FLAVORS ARE SO GOOD YOU SHOULD ENJOY THEM ALL MONTH.

Alyssa Thayer



Taste of Puebla

Cristobal at Market

WE'VE TURNED THE CORNER INTO MAY, WHICH IN most years means one thing. Break out the margaritas, it's time for Cinco de Mayo!

As you may know, Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Mexican Army's victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla. Now, it's become so widely celebrated that in our country it rivals the Superbowl in beer sales.

"People don't understand that it's only a big deal in the U.S.," says Isaias Castaneda, part of the family team behind *Taste of Puebla*, a food and catering business based in Kennett Square. "The main battle even happened in our family's hometown," he says "but it's still a bigger deal in this country."

Well, commercialized or not, we'll gladly accept any excuse to eat authentic Mexican food, and the Castaneda family is happy to serve it up.

Isaias' parents, Mariana and Cristobal Castaneda, immigrated from Puebla, Mexico in 1986 to work in the Kennett Square mushroom industry. After about 30 years in agriculture, Mariana wanted to do something different and had dreams of selling homemade salsa in the community. In 2010 the family opened up a small restaurant in West Grove. As popularity grew, they quickly outgrew the space, eventually moving to a larger one in Kennett Square.

Mariana has always been the culinary mastermind behind it all. She learned to cook back in Mexico out of necessity, as she helped care for all her siblings. "She grew up cooking with whatever she had... Now that she has her own kitchen, she basically can make anything," chuckles Isaias proudly.

But as anyone in the restaurant industry will tell you, the hours are brutal. In 2016 with a young family to think of, Mariana and Cristobal made the difficult decision to close the brick and mortar location and focus on their catering and farmers market business.

Although Isaias refers to this move as "sizing down," they continued to cook an expansive menu out of their commercial kitchen in Kennett Square, offering everything from guacamole to tamales at the 16+ farmers markets they attend.

When I asked how they manage to cover all the market locations with just their family, Isaias says, "We have two other employees who help out on weekends, my best friends. They're basically family."

This spring, due to an ever increasing following at markets and events, they planned to expand and open a food truck. The truck would allow them to offer ready-to-eat dishes at larger markets, as well as become their set up on wheels for large catering and food festivals. Isaias and his older brother Chris Jr. will be running the show and Isaias says they are "ready to go." Here's hoping that happens!



Taste of Puebla offerings



Isaias and his older brother Chris Jr. at market

## Pico de Gallo

This fresh condiment can go on just about anything—tacos, quesadillas. But don't stop there, dump it on your favorite protein, like broiled fish, grilled skirt steak or even scrambled eggs!



- ½ onion, finely chopped *TIP: raw onion can be sharp, but 5 min. in a cold water and vinegar bath takes the edge off*
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 fresh green chile, finely chopped (seeds optional)
- ½ lime, juiced (can substitute 1 Tb. red wine vinegar)
- 4 medium tomatoes – Romas have less juice, but get whatever looks the ripest, particularly when buying out of season
- Coarse sea salt to taste
- ⅓ C. fresh cilantro leaves chopped

Combine onion, garlic, chile and lime juice in a small bowl and let sit for 5 minutes.

While those flavors meld, start prepping your tomatoes. Use a paring knife to hull the tomatoes (cut a circle around the stem on an angle and remove). Slice the tomato in half and scoop out the seeds to prevent your salsa from being too watery.

Incorporate tomatoes into chile mixture and finish with salt and cilantro. Although you'll want to dig in right away, let the salsa stand for 10–15 minutes for the flavors to mingle.

Lasts in a sealed container in the fridge for up to 1 week, but fresh is best since tomatoes will soften and cilantro will wilt over time.

Makes 2 cups.

*\*\* The beauty of making this at home is that you can adjust to your liking. So feel free to kick up the spice, dial up the acid, or nix the garlic. Do whatever makes your taste buds dance!*

To make it your own, here are some variations:

- For fresh tartness: sub tomatillos for tomatoes.
- For smokiness: char fresh poblanos, cool, and add diced.
- For sweet and tropical: add diced fresh pineapple.
- For crunch: mix in matchsticks of fresh jicama.

## Chicken Enchiladas

These cheesy crowd-pleasers won't disappoint. They're as tasty as they

## Chiles

The secret sauce of the best Mexican? Well, it's the sauce. Whether it's mole, salsa verde, fresh salsa... we love them all. The key ingredient that makes them so delicious? Chiles of course!

They are native to Mexico and have been an integral ingredient for centuries. With over 60 varieties, it can be hard to know where to start, but here are 5 varieties to get you started.

**Jalapeño:** One of the more common chiles, this small to medium-sized green chile can be cooked with, but is often used as a fresh garnish or chopped in salsa fresca. Although they certainly bring some heat, they are less spicy than some of their other capsicum counterparts like the serrano.

**Chipotle:** These peppers are the smoked version of a jalapeño. While jalapeños are usually harvested and sold green, if left on the vine, they mature into a reddish hue come fall. They are then harvested, smoked and are then considered chipotles. They can be found in a variety of forms, from dried powder to canned in adobo sauce. They maintain their heat but it is less sharp than a fresh chile.

**Poblano:** These larger-sized chiles come in two colors, green and red. The dark green are more common and milder in spice level. They are often roasted to allow the removal of the waxy peel and can be stuffed to make delicious dishes like chile rellenos.

**Ancho:** Is actually the dried version of a poblano. They are brown and wrinkled from the process and have a deliciously sweet and earthy taste to them. Rehydrate or add straight into blended sauces for tremendous depth of flavor.

**Habanero:** This little firecracker packs a punch. Different varieties and colors of habaneros have started to hit the market, but the most common and spiciest are the bright orange/yellow. They can be minced up and added to a sauce for a nice glow or cooked down and blended into homemade hot sauce.

**\*\*** When working with hotter chiles, be sure to wear gloves or wash hands quickly after handling, as they can irritate the skin and burn if they touch your eyes. To turn down the heat, carve out the seeds and membrane before adding it into the recipe.

are simple. Reinvent leftover rotisserie chicken, or make it fresh and lean with pan-seared chicken breasts.

- 2 Tb. olive oil
- ½ red onion, diced finely
- 1 tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. chile powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1, 15-oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 4 oz. roasted, skinned and chopped green chiles (serrano or jalapeno for heat, poblanos for mild)
- Substitute canned green chiles if needed
- 3 C. cooked chicken (diced or shredded)
- 2 Tb. chicken broth (optional)
- 10 corn tortillas
- 2½ C. Monterey Jack cheese shredded
- 2 C. enchilada sauce (see below for recipe)





Preheat oven to 375°. In a large fry pan heat olive oil and add in onion. Sauté until translucent (about 5 minutes).

Add spices, beans and chiles to pan and continue to sauté over medium heat for 5–10 minutes or until beans start to lose their shape and chiles are softened.

Turn heat to low and add cooked chicken, making sure flavors and ingredients are well mixed and chicken is warmed through. If dry, add chicken broth 1 tablespoon at a time. The consistency should be a thick chunky paste.

Warm tortillas in an oiled cast iron pan until soft and pliable. Ladle ½ cup of enchilada sauce into the bottom of the pan and spread around. One by one, spoon chicken filling to the center of each tortilla and roll. Place seam side down in a large roasting pan leaning first wrap against side and the rest against each other so they do not unravel. Pour remaining enchilada sauce over the center of each rolled tortilla leaving an inch or two uncovered at each end. Top with shredded cheese and a drizzle of olive oil to help it brown.

Bake in 375° oven for 20 minutes, turning on broiler for last few minutes to achieve desired browning.

Makes 10 enchiladas.

*Top it off:* cilantro leaves, roasted pepitas, queso fresco crumbles, avocado chunks, radish slices, sour cream.

### At Home Smokey Enchilada Sauce

- 3 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1½ tsp. chili powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- Optional: pinch of cinnamon
- 3.5 oz. chipotle chiles in adobo sauce  
(scale according to desired spiciness)

### A few tools of the trade:

**Molcajete Pronounced: mohl-kah-HEH-teh:**  
a Mexican version of the mortar and pestle made from volcanic rock. This age-old tool is said to release flavors in a different way because it is actually grinding the ingredients rather than chopping finely (as with a food processor or blender).

**Blender or food processor:**  
We admit these are less traditional options, however, they really can't be beat when it comes to creating finely chopped or smooth textured sauces from the complex assortment of chiles and aromatics.

**Comal - Clay or cast iron griddle & tortilla press:**  
Although it is easy to go out and buy a bag of premade corn tortillas, the ingredients for making your own couldn't be more simple (water and masa harina) and it's a fun activity for the whole family. You can substitute a cast-iron skillet for the Comal, just make sure it is well-seasoned and your mixture is fairly dry so as not to stick.

- 1 Tb. honey
- 1, 28-oz. canned diced fire-roasted tomatoes  
(you can use regular or crushed tomatoes)
- 2 C. vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar



In a medium-sized pot sauté onion in olive oil until soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, spices and salt and pepper and continue to sauté until fragrant (additional minute). Add all remaining ingredients (except vinegar) to the pot, and keep at a low simmer for 20–30 minutes.

Stir in vinegar and blend.

Depending on what tools you have, you can do batches in a blender, or grab your immersion blender to blend inside the pot. Make sure consistency is silky smooth so it can easily be poured over your enchiladas.

*Notes:* Have some extra time? Simmer it down even longer to achieve a richer flavor. Want to dial back the spice level? Use less chipotle.



### Slow Cooker Tacos Al Pastor

*Al pastor translates to "shepherd style" and was originally made from shaving crispy pieces of pork off the spit (yum!). The meat is sweet and succulent because of adding pineapple, which both gives it an amazing flavor and helps tenderize the meat.*

- 2–3 lb. pork shoulder, chopped into 3-inch cubes  
with extra fat trimmed off
- 2 tsp. salt, plus more to taste
- 1 Tb. vegetable or canola oil
- 2 chipotle peppers or 3.5 oz chipotles in

- adobo sauce  
(half of a standard size can)
- 2 C. fresh diced pineapple (or canned with juice)
- ½ red onion (rough chop)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 Tb. apple cider vinegar
- ¼ tsp. ancho chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds

- 2 tsp. dried coriander
- Juice of 1 lime

Pat pork portions dry and sprinkle generously with salt. Heat oil in a large skillet before adding pork in batches. (The goal is to get a quick browning on most sides, so it's important not to crowd the pan.) Once all pieces are seared, add them back into the slow cooker.

Put all other ingredients in the blender, blend on high until smooth. Pour blended

sauce over the pork and set to cook on high for 4–5 hours or low for 7–8 hours.

Once cooked, remove the meat and shred roughly (leaving large chunks intact). Place the shredded meat back in the slow cooker to rehydrate with the juices.

Before serving spread the meat out on a cookie sheet with sides, and broil until crispy browned top edges begin to appear (4–6 minutes).

Serve in tortillas, over rice, or ladled over chips for ultimate nachos. ♦

*Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.*



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