

Tortilla Soup

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

America's Test Kitchen Cooking School

Submitted by Janet McElroy

Ingredients

Soup

- 8 Cups low-sodium chicken broth *
- 2 onions
- 4 garlic cloves
- 8 Sprigs fresh cilantro
- 1 Sprig fresh oregano
- table salt
- ground black pepper
- 2 bone-in, split chicken breasts or 4 bone-in chicken thighs (1 1/4 to 1 1/2 pounds)
- 8 (6-inch) corn tortillas
- 3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 Medium tomatoes (6 ounces each)
- 1 jalapeno chile **
- 1 1/2 Teaspoons minced chipotle chile in adobo sauce ***

Garnishes

- 8 Ounces cotija cheese ****
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 jalapeno chile
- 1/2 Cup Mexican crema or sour cream *****
- 1/2 Cup fresh cilantro leaves
- lime wedges

** For a spicier soup, leave the seeds in the chile and just puree the whole chile (minus the stem) with the other vegetables.

*** Canned chipotle chiles vary in spiciness so we suggest adding 1 1/2 teaspoons to the vegetable puree and then adjusting the heat level of the soup just before serving, adding as much as another 2 1/2 teaspoons if desired.

**** Cotija is a sharp, rich Mexican cheese with a crumbly texture. You can use queso fresco (milder in flavor) or Monterey Jack.

***** Mexican crema is a cultured cream with a thick but pourable texture. Sour cream, thinned with a little milk if you like, can be used in its place.

Instructions

Prepare Ingredients for Soup

1. Peel and quarter 2 onions.
2. Peel 4 garlic cloves.
3. Cut 8 corn tortillas into 1/2-inch-wide strips.
4. Core and quarter 2 tomatoes.
5. Stem and seed 1 jalapeño. (Leave seeds in chile if you want spicier soup.)
6. Mince 1 1/2 teaspoons chipotle chile, or more to taste, up to 4 teaspoons total.
7. Trim any excess fat hanging over edges of 2 split chicken breasts or 4 bone-in chicken thighs.

Make Broth and Cook Chicken

8. Bring 8 cups chicken broth, 1 onion, 2 garlic cloves, 8 sprigs cilantro, 1 sprig oregano, and 1/2 teaspoon salt to boil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat.
9. Add chicken and cover pot.
10. Simmer gently until chicken registers 160 to 165 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 15 to 20 minutes.



11. Remove chicken from pot, let cool slightly, then shred meat into bite-size pieces, discarding skin and bones.
12. Strain broth through fine-mesh strainer.
13. Let broth settle for 5 to 10 minutes.
14. Defat broth by skimming with spoon or with fat separator.
15. Wash and dry Dutch oven.

Bake Tortilla Strips

16. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees.
17. Toss tortilla strips with 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, then spread them out over rimmed baking sheet.
18. Bake, stirring occasionally, until crisp and dark golden, 10 to 15 minutes.
19. Season with salt and transfer to paper towel-lined plate.

Make Soup

20. Process tomatoes, remaining 1 onion, jalapeño, remaining 2 garlic cloves, 1 1/2 teaspoons chipotles, and 1/8 teaspoon salt in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds.
21. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering.
22. Add pureed mixture and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant and darkened, about 10 minutes.
23. Stir in strained broth, bring to a simmer, and cook until flavors blend, about 15 minutes.
24. Stir in additional minced chipotles, up to 2 1/2 teaspoons, to taste.
25. Stir in shredded chicken and let it heat through, about 2 minutes.
26. Off heat, season with salt and pepper to taste.

Prepare Garnishes

27. While soup cooks, crumble 8 ounces Cotija or queso fresco (or shred Monterey Jack) into serving bowl.
28. Use chef's knife to slice around pit of 1 avocado and through both ends.
29. With hands, twist to separate avocado halves.
30. Stick blade of chef's knife sharply into pit. Lift knife, twisting blade to loosen and remove pit.
31. Use large wooden spoon to pry pit safely off knife; discard pit.
32. Use dish towel to hold avocado half steady. Make 1/2-inch cross-hatch incisions in flesh with knife.
33. Using spoon inserted between skin and flesh, separate diced flesh from skin and gently scoop avocado cubes into serving bowl.
34. Stem, seed, and mince 1 jalapeño.
35. Place 1/2 cup Mexican cream or sour cream, 1/2 cup cilantro leaves, lime wedges, and 1 minced jalapeño each in their own in serving bowl.

Serve Soup

36. Place some tortilla strips in bottom of individual bowls and ladle soup over top. Serve, passing garnishes separately.