

Verde Chicken Enchiladas

Green enchiladas with a bright, tangy tomatillo sauce and tender shredded chicken. The sauce is the star—roasted peppers and aromatics create depth, while simmering concentrates flavor. Perfect for a 9×13 pan.

Ingredients

Chicken thighs, bone-in	2½ lb.	Black pepper	½ tsp.
Mexican spice blend	2 Tbsp.	Vegetable oil	3 Tbsp. (divided)
Water	2 cups	Corn tortillas (6-inch)	12–14
Better Than Bouillon, chicken ..	1 Tbsp.	Monterey Jack cheese, shredded ..	12 oz.
Tomatillos, canned	28 oz.	Queso fresco, crumbled	4 oz.
Jalapeños, medium	2 (about 2 Tbsp. minced)	Reserved chicken broth	1½ cups
White onion, medium	1	Chicken broth (if needed)	½ cup
Garlic cloves	4		
Fresh cilantro, chopped	½ cup		
Lime juice	2 Tbsp.		
Ground cumin	1 tsp.		
Mexican oregano	1 tsp.		
Salt	1½ tsp. (divided)		

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F — Grease a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish — Drain tomatillos, reserving liquid; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Halve jalapeños lengthwise and remove seeds and ribs; set aside on a small plate — Quarter onion; set aside on plate with jalapeños — Peel **garlic cloves**; set aside on plate — Chop cilantro; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Juice **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Shred **Monterey Jack cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Crumble **queso fresco**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Combine 1 tsp. **cumin** and 1 tsp. **oregano** in *Small Bowl #4* (sauce spices)

1. Prepare **chicken broth**: Combine 2 cups **water** and 1 Tbsp. **Better Than Bouillon** in a measuring cup, stirring until dissolved. Place 2½ lb. **chicken thighs** in Instant Pot and coat thoroughly with 2 Tbsp. **Mexican spice blend**, rubbing it in well. Add prepared **broth** to the pot. Seal Instant Pot and cook on *high* pressure for 15 minutes, then allow natural release for 5 minutes.

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2. While **chicken** cooks, roast the aromatics: Arrange **jalapeños** (cut-side down), **onion** quarters, and **garlic cloves** on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** and toss to coat. Roast at 400°F for $15\text{-}20$ minutes until **jalapeños** are blistered and slightly charred, **onion** is softened and browned at edges, and **garlic** is golden and tender. **Jalapeños** are done when skin is blistered and peppers feel soft when pressed. Remove from oven and let cool slightly.
3. When Instant Pot is ready, quick release remaining pressure. Transfer **chicken** to a plate and let rest for $5\text{-}10$ minutes until cool enough to handle. Strain the **cooking liquid** through a fine-mesh sieve and reserve $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups in *Medium Bowl #2* for the sauce. Discard skin and bones, then shred **chicken** into bite-sized pieces; set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
4. Transfer roasted **jalapeños**, **onion**, and **garlic** to a blender. Add drained **tomatillos** (*Medium Bowl #1*), 1 tsp. **cumin** and 1 tsp. **oregano** (*Small Bowl #4*), 1 tsp. **salt**, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **black pepper**. Blend on high for $2\text{-}3$ minutes until completely smooth. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of reserved **tomatillo liquid** or **chicken broth** if needed to reach a smooth, pourable consistency.
5. Heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully pour in the blended **sauce** (it will sputter). Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for $15\text{-}20$ minutes until sauce darkens slightly, thickens to coat the back of a spoon, and loses its raw flavor. The sauce is done when it has reduced by about one-third, appears darker green, and coats a spoon without running off immediately.
6. Stir in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups reserved **chicken broth** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and simmer for $2\text{-}3$ minutes more to integrate. Remove from heat and stir in **cilantro** (*Small Bowl #1*) and **lime juice** (*Small Bowl #2*). Taste and adjust **salt** (add remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. if needed). Transfer approximately 2 cups to a wide, shallow bowl for dipping tortillas; keep remaining sauce warm in the saucepan.
7. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F . Warm **corn tortillas** in the microwave wrapped in a damp paper towel for *30 seconds*, or heat briefly on a griddle until pliable. Working one at a time, dip each **tortilla** completely in the warm **sauce** from the bowl, coating both sides (about $2\text{-}3$ seconds total). Let excess drip off briefly.
8. Place sauce-coated **tortilla** on a plate. Spoon $2\text{-}3$ Tbsp. shredded **chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) down the center, then sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*). Roll tightly and place seam-side down in the prepared baking dish. Repeat with remaining **tortillas**, arranging them snugly in the pan.
9. Pour remaining warm **sauce** from the saucepan evenly over the **enchiladas**, covering them completely. Sprinkle remaining **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*) evenly over the top, then scatter **queso fresco** (*Small Bowl #3*) over the cheese.
10. Bake at 350°F for $25\text{-}30$ minutes until cheese is melted and bubbly, sauce is bubbling around edges, and **enchiladas** are heated through. **Enchiladas** are done when **cheese** is golden brown in spots, sauce is actively bubbling, and center of pan feels hot when tested with a knife. Continue baking in *2 minute* increments if needed.

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11. Let rest for *5 minutes* before serving. Garnish with additional **cilantro** if desired. Serve hot.

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot (6-quart or larger)
- Rimmed baking sheet
- Large saucepan (3-4 quart)
- High-powered blender
- Fine-mesh strainer
- 9 inch×13 inch baking dish
- Wide shallow bowl (for dipping tortillas)
- Small prep bowls (4)
- Medium prep bowls (2)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Tongs or slotted spoon
- Measuring cups and spoons

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — chopped **cilantro** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
- Small Bowl #2 — **lime juice** (2 Tbsp.)
- Small Bowl #3 — crumbled **queso fresco** (4 oz.)
- Small Bowl #4 — sauce spices: 1 tsp. **cumin**, 1 tsp. **oregano**
- Medium Bowl #1 — drained **tomatillos** (reserve liquid)
- Medium Bowl #2 — reserved **chicken broth** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cups, after step 3)
- Large Bowl #1 — shredded **Monterey Jack cheese** (12 oz.)
- Large Bowl #2 — shredded **chicken** (after step 3, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups)
- Prepare **chicken broth** with Better Than Bouillon before starting
- Roast aromatics while **chicken** cooks in Instant Pot

Ingredient Tips

- **Chicken:** Bone-in thighs provide richer broth and more flavor; boneless work but reduce broth amount
- **Mexican spice blend:** Your prepared blend adds depth; adjust amount based on heat preference
- **Tomatillos, canned:** Look for firm tomatillos in water (not heavy brine); 28 oz. is standard can size
- **Jalapeños:** 2 medium jalapeños with seeds removed yields mild-medium heat; add seeds for more heat

- **Monterey Jack:** Melts beautifully and provides creamy texture; can substitute with Colby Jack
- **Queso fresco:** Adds texture contrast and mild saltiness; feta can substitute but is saltier
- **Corn tortillas:** Slightly day-old tortillas absorb sauce better; warm thoroughly before dipping
- **Cilantro:** Add at the end to preserve bright, fresh flavor
- **Lime juice:** Fresh is essential for brightness; bottled lacks complexity

Preparation Tips

- Roasting **jalapeños**, **onion**, and **garlic** creates depth and mellows raw flavors; blistered skin on peppers indicates proper roasting
- Blending sauce until completely smooth ensures even texture; no chunks should remain
- Frying the blended sauce concentrates flavor and cooks out raw taste; sauce darkens and thickens as it reduces
- Simmering with **chicken broth** integrates flavors and adds body; sauce should coat a spoon without being too thick
- Adding **cilantro** and **lime juice** at the end preserves brightness; adding too early causes them to lose vibrancy
- Dipping **tortillas** in warm sauce makes them pliable and prevents cracking during rolling
- Don't overfill **enchiladas**—2-3 Tbsp. **chicken** per tortilla prevents bursting
- Arranging **enchiladas** snugly in the pan prevents them from unrolling during baking
- Sauce should cover **enchiladas** completely but not pool excessively; adjust amount if needed
- Resting after baking allows sauce to set slightly and makes cutting easier
- Recipe makes approximately 5-6 cups sauce; use 2 cups for dipping, remainder for topping

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Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chicken** can be cooked and shredded *1 day* ahead; store separately from broth
- **Verde sauce** can be made *1-2 days* ahead; refrigerate and reheat gently before using
- Add **cilantro** and **lime juice** to sauce just before using if made ahead
- Assembled **enchiladas** can be refrigerated *4 hours* before baking; add *5 minutes* to baking time
- Leftovers keep *3-4 days* refrigerated; reheat individual portions at *350°F* for *10-15 minutes*
- Sauce can be frozen for *3 months*; thaw and reheat gently, adding fresh **cilantro** and **lime juice**
- **Enchiladas** don't freeze well—corn tortillas become mealy when frozen and thawed

Serving Suggestions

- Serve immediately while **cheese** is bubbly and **enchiladas** are hot
- Traditional serving is *2-3* **enchiladas** per person as a main course

- Pair with **Mexican rice** and **refried beans** for a complete meal
- Garnish with additional **cilantro**, **lime wedges**, and **diced white onion**
- **Sour cream** or **Mexican crema** adds richness and cools heat
- **Avocado** slices or **guacamole** complement the tangy sauce
- **Pickled jalapeños** add heat and acidity
- Serve with a crisp green salad with lime vinaigrette for contrast

Heat Level Options

- Mild: Use *2 jalapeños* with all seeds and ribs removed (as written)
- Medium: Use *2 jalapeños* with seeds from *1* pepper included
- Medium-Hot: Use *2 jalapeños* with all seeds included, or add *1 serrano pepper*
- Hot: Use *3 jalapeños* with seeds, or substitute *2 serrano peppers*
- Heat comes primarily from **jalapeños**; roasting mellows heat slightly
- Taste sauce after blending and add more heat if desired before simmering