

Enchiladas Placeras

Michoacán-Style Market Enchiladas — Traditional plaza-style enchiladas from Morelia, featuring corn tortillas dipped in guajillo chile sauce, lightly fried, filled with cheese and chicken, then topped with fried potatoes, carrots, and fresh garnishes. This is authentic street food at its finest.

Ingredients

Bone-in chicken thighs	3 lb.	Vegetable oil	3 Tbsp.
White onion, medium	2	Yukon gold potatoes	1 lb.
Garlic cloves	6 (divided)	Carrots	½ lb.
Bay leaf	1	Salt	to taste
Salt	1 tsp.	Vegetable oil	3 Tbsp.
Chicken stock	6 cups	Corn tortillas (GF)	12
Dried guajillo chiles	16	White onion, finely diced	½ cup
Dried ancho chiles	4	Queso fresco, crumbled	8 oz.
Chiles de árbol (optional)	2–4	Vegetable oil	1 cup
Reserved chicken broth	4–5 cups	Romaine lettuce or cabbage	1 small head
Ground cumin	2 tsp.	Mexican crema OR sour cream	½ cup
Mexican oregano	2 tsp.	Pickled jalapeños	¼ cup
White vinegar	2 Tbsp.	Queso fresco	¼ cup
Salt	2 tsp.		

Directions

Halve 1 medium **onion** — Peel and dice 1 lb. **potatoes** into ½-inch cubes; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Peel and dice ½ lb. **carrots** into ½-inch cubes; add to *Medium Bowl #1* — Quarter **onions** — Finely dice ½ cup **white onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Crumble 6 oz. **queso fresco** into *Small Bowl #1* with diced onion (filling) — Reserve 2 oz. **queso fresco** in *Small Bowl #2* (topping) — Finely shred **lettuce** or **cabbage**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2*

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1. Place 3 lb. **chicken thighs** in a large pot with a quartered **onion**, 4 **garlic cloves**, 1 **bay leaf**, and 1 tsp. **salt**. Add enough **water** to cover by 1 inch (approximately 6–8 cups). Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Skim any foam that rises to the surface.
2. Simmer for *35–40 minutes* until **chicken** is fully cooked and tender. Remove **chicken** to a plate and let cool. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl, discarding solids. Reserve approximately 5 cups of broth (you'll need 4 cups for the sauce).
3. Once **chicken** is cool enough to handle, remove and discard skin and bones. Shred meat with two forks into bite-sized pieces. Set aside in *Large Bowl #1*.
4. Using kitchen scissors, cut open each **guajillo chile**, **ancho chile**, and **chile de árbol** (if using) lengthwise. Shake out and discard most seeds. Remove stems.
5. Heat a dry cast-iron skillet or comal over medium heat. Toast the **chiles** in batches, pressing flat with a spatula, about *10–15 seconds per side* until fragrant and slightly darkened. Do not burn.
6. Transfer toasted **chiles** to a large heatproof bowl. Bring 4 cups of the reserved **chicken broth** to a boil and pour over the **chiles**. Weight **chiles** down with a small plate to keep submerged. Let soak for *15–20 minutes* until completely softened.
7. Working in two batches, transfer half of the softened **chiles** to a blender along with 1½ cups of the soaking liquid, half of the remaining **onion** (raw), 1 **garlic clove**, 1 tsp. **cumin**, 1 tsp. **oregano**, ½ Tbsp. **vinegar**, and 1 tsp. **salt**. Blend on high for *2–3 minutes* until completely smooth. Transfer to a large bowl. Repeat with remaining **chiles** and aromatics. Combine both batches. Add additional soaking liquid or reserved broth if needed to reach a pourable consistency like heavy cream.
8. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, pressing on solids with a spatula to extract maximum liquid. Discard solids.
9. Heat 3 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large skillet or saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully pour in all of the strained sauce (it will sputter and steam). Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for *10–12 minutes* until sauce darkens slightly, thickens to coat the back of a spoon, and loses its raw flavor. Taste and adjust salt. Transfer approximately 2 cups to a wide, shallow bowl for dipping tortillas. Reserve remaining sauce in a separate bowl for drizzling. Keep both warm.
10. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add diced **potatoes** and **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Boil for *5–8 minutes* until just tender but still firm (a knife should pierce with slight resistance). Drain well and pat dry with paper towels.
11. Heat 3 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the par-boiled **potatoes** and **carrots**. Fry, stirring occasionally, for *5–7 minutes* until golden brown on edges. Add 3 Tbsp. of the prepared **guajillo sauce** and toss to coat. Season with **salt** to taste. Remove from heat and keep warm in *Medium Bowl #3*.

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12. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **vegetable oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shredded **chicken** (*Large Bowl #1*) in a single layer. Fry without stirring for *3–4 minutes* until bottom is golden and crispy. Flip and fry another *2–3 minutes*. Season lightly with **salt**. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and keep warm.
13. Set up assembly station: Wide shallow bowl with warm **guajillo sauce** for dipping, large skillet with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch **vegetable oil** heated to 350°F (medium heat), stack of **corn tortillas**, bowl with **cheese-onion filling** (*Small Bowl #1*), platter for finished enchiladas.
14. Working one at a time: Dip a **tortilla** completely in the **sauce**, coating both sides (about 2–3 seconds total). Let excess drip off briefly.
15. Immediately place the sauce-coated **tortilla** in the hot oil. Fry for *10–15 seconds per side* — just until the sauce sets and edges firm slightly but tortilla remains pliable. Remove with tongs to a plate.
16. While still hot and pliable, place 2–3 Tbsp. of the **cheese-onion mixture** (*Small Bowl #1*) and a small handful of **fried chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) down the center of the tortilla. Roll tightly and place seam-side down on serving plate. Repeat with remaining tortillas, adding more oil to skillet as needed between batches.
17. Arrange 3 enchiladas per plate. Spoon **fried potatoes and carrots** (*Medium Bowl #3*) generously over the top of the enchiladas.
18. Optional: Drizzle additional warm **guajillo sauce** over the enchiladas before adding final toppings.
19. Drizzle with **Mexican crema**, scatter shredded **lettuce** or **cabbage** (*Medium Bowl #2*) over the top, and finish with crumbled **queso fresco** (*Small Bowl #2*) and **pickled jalapeños** to taste. Serve immediately.

Equipment Required

- Large stockpot (for poaching chicken)
- Large cast-iron skillet or comal
- 2–3 large skillets (for vegetables, chicken, and frying tortillas)
- High-powered blender
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Kitchen scissors
- Wide shallow bowl (for dipping tortillas)
- Tongs
- Instant-read thermometer
- Small prep bowls (2)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — filling: ½ cup finely diced **white onion** mixed with 6 oz. crumbled **queso fresco**
- Small Bowl #2 — 2 oz. crumbled **queso fresco** (topping)
- Medium Bowl #1 — raw diced **potatoes** and **carrots** (about 3 cups total)
- Medium Bowl #2 — shredded **lettuce** or **cabbage**
- Medium Bowl #3 — fried **potatoes** and **carrots** with sauce (after step 11)
- Large Bowl #1 — shredded poached **chicken** (after step 3, about 3–4 cups)
- Large Bowl #2 — fried **chicken** (after step 12)

Ingredient Tips

- **Chicken:** Bone-in thighs provide the richest broth; drumsticks also work well
- **Guajillo chiles:** Should be pliable, not brittle; look for glossy, deep red color
- **Ancho chiles:** Add depth and mild fruity notes; darker and wrinkled compared to guajillos
- **Chiles de árbol:** Optional for heat; add 1–2 to sauce if you want spicier enchiladas
- **Corn tortillas:** Certified gluten-free if needed; slightly day-old tortillas absorb less oil

- **Queso fresco:** Look for authentic Mexican queso fresco; feta can substitute in a pinch
- **Mexican oregano:** Has different flavor than Mediterranean oregano; worth seeking out
- **Potatoes:** Yukon gold hold their shape better than russets when fried

Preparation Tips

- Poaching **chicken** with aromatics creates flavorful broth that becomes the sauce base
- Reserve extra **chicken broth** for thinning sauce if needed
- Toast **chiles** briefly — burnt chiles create bitter sauce
- Blending in two batches prevents overloading blender and ensures smooth consistency
- Strain sauce well to remove tough chile skins for smooth texture
- Frying the blended sauce concentrates flavor and cooks out raw taste
- Recipe makes approximately 5–6 cups sauce; use 3 cups for dipping tortillas, reserve remainder for drizzling
- Parboil **potatoes** and **carrots** before frying to ensure they're cooked through
- Adding sauce to fried vegetables colors them and adds flavor
- Frying shredded **chicken** adds texture contrast and caramelized flavor
- Work quickly during tortilla assembly — they must stay hot to roll without breaking
- Keep oil temperature steady at 350°F — too hot burns sauce, too cool makes greasy enchiladas
- Tortilla should be pliable after frying, not crispy
- Assemble enchiladas immediately before serving for best texture
- Drizzling extra sauce over enchiladas before final toppings is optional but traditional

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chicken** can be poached and shredded 1 day ahead; store broth and chicken separately
- **Guajillo sauce** can be made 1–2 days ahead; refrigerate and reheat gently before using
- **Vegetables** can be parboiled 4 hours ahead; fry just before serving

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- Assembly must be done immediately before serving — tortillas become soggy if held
- Leftovers keep *2–3 days* refrigerated but texture will soften
- Reheat individual portions at *350°F* for *10–12 minutes*
- Not recommended for freezing — corn tortillas become mealy
- **Lime wedges** make an excellent garnish for brightness
- Presentation matters: layer components in proper order for visual appeal

Serving Suggestions

- Traditional serving is 3 enchiladas per person as a main course
- Serve immediately while enchiladas are hot and vegetables are crispy
- Provide extra **pickled jalapeños** and **crema** at the table for customization
- Can serve with refried beans on the side, though not traditional
- **Mild:** Use only **guajillo** and **ancho chiles** as written (remove all seeds)
- **Medium:** Add 2–3 **chiles de árbol** to the sauce blend
- **Spicy:** Add 4–6 **chiles de árbol** and include some seeds when blending
- **Very Spicy:** Add 8–10 **chiles de árbol** with seeds
- Heat comes from chiles in sauce, not the toppings
- **Chiles de árbol** add clean heat without changing the fundamental flavor profile

Heat Level Options