

Verde Chicken Enchiladas

Pressure-cooked chicken thighs are shredded and combined with Monterey Jack cheese, then rolled in corn tortillas that have been dipped in a vibrant verde sauce. The sauce is built from roasted jalapeños, onion, and garlic blended with tomatillos, then simmered with reserved chicken broth until concentrated. The enchiladas are topped with more sauce and a combination of Monterey Jack and queso fresco, then baked until bubbly and golden.

Ingredients

Chicken thighs, bone-in	2½ lb.	Mexican oregano	1 tsp.
Mexican spice blend	2 Tbsp.	Salt	1½ tsp. (divided)
Water	2 cups	Black pepper	½ tsp.
Better Than Bouillon, chicken . .	1 Tbsp.	Vegetable oil	3 Tbsp. (divided)
Tomatillos, canned	28 oz.	Corn tortillas (6-inch)	12–14
Jalapeños, medium	2	Monterey Jack cheese, shredded . .	16 oz.
White onion, medium	1	Queso fresco, crumbled	4 oz.
Garlic cloves	4	Reserved chicken broth	1½ cups
Fresh cilantro, chopped	½ cup	Chicken broth (if needed)	½ cup
Lime juice	2 Tbsp.		
Ground cumin	1 tsp.		

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.
2. 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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3. 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 *15-20 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.
4. When Instant Pot is ready, quick release remaining pressure. Transfer **chicken** to a plate and let rest for *5-10 minutes* until cool enough to handle. Strain the **cooking liquid** through a fine-mesh sieve and measure out $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups; reserve in *Medium Bowl #2* for the sauce. Discard any excess liquid.
5. Discard skin and bones from **chicken**, then shred into bite-sized pieces; set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
6. 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 *1-2 minutes* until completely smooth.
7. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of reserved **tomatillo liquid** or **chicken broth** if needed to reach a smooth, pourable consistency. Blend briefly to incorporate.
8. 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 *15-20 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.
9. Stir in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups reserved **chicken broth** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and simmer for *2-3 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).
10. Transfer approximately 2 cups of warm **sauce** to a wide, shallow bowl for dipping tortillas; keep remaining sauce warm in the saucepan.
11. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F .
12. 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 2-3 seconds total). Let excess drip off briefly.
13. Place sauce-coated **tortilla** on a plate. Spoon 2-3 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.
14. 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.

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15. Bake at $350^{\circ}F$ for *25-30 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.
16. Let rest for *5 minutes* before serving. Garnish with additional **cilantro** if desired. Serve hot.

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Yield

- Serves 4-6 as main course
- Makes 12-14 enchiladas in a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish

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** (½ 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** (1½ cups, after step 4)
- Large Bowl #1 — shredded **Monterey Jack cheese** (12 oz.)
- Large Bowl #2 — shredded **chicken** (after step 5, about 2½ 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 4-5 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