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Posted on September 8, 2011

Chicken, Spinach & Ricotta Quesadillas

The zip in these hearty whole-grain covered feasts will fill you with health and goodness, while the protein and fiber content will satisfy and keep you hunger-pang free for hours. Now that's a meal.

By Joanne Lusted | Photo: Edward Pond

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Serves: 8
Hands-on time:
Total time:

CATEGORY:
Freezable

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INGREDIENTS:

- 8 oz boneless skinless chicken breast
- 2 1/2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Sea salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 medium white onion, finely diced
- 1 medium red bell pepper, diced
- 1 bag spinach (6 to 8 oz), stems removed
- 3/4 cup low-fat ricotta cheese
- 1 1/2 cup navy beans, drained and rinsed under cold water
- 3/4 cup low-fat mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1/4 cup fresh herbs (flat-leaf parsley and rosemary), chopped
- Juice 1/2 lemon
- Pinch nutmeg, freshly grated
- 8 small herb and whole-grain tortillas (6-inch diameter each)

INSTRUCTIONS:

TIP:

You can save even more time during your busy weeknight routine by removing your prepared quesadillas from the freezer in advance and defrosting them in the fridge. It will reduce your meal time to a mere 16 to 18 minutes!

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PREP & FREEZE

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Lightly coat chicken with 1/2 tsp oil and season with salt and black pepper. Place chicken and a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 14 to 16 minutes, or until fully cooked. Remove from oven and let cool.
3. Meanwhile, heat 1 tsp oil in a large nonstick sauté pan over medium-high heat. When oil is hot, add onion and red pepper, stirring frequently until softened, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add spinach to pan and stir to combine, until spinach is slightly wilted, about 1 minute. Remove mixture from pan and pour into a paper-towel-lined bowl. Set aside and allow to cool.
4. In a large mixing bowl, combine ricotta cheese and beans, mashing beans slightly. Add mozzarella cheese, herbs, lemon juice and nutmeg. Season with salt and black pepper, and stir well to combine. Set aside. When chicken is cool enough to handle, dice into 1/2-inch pieces and add to cheese mixture.
5. Working in small batches, squeeze excess moisture from spinach mixture with your hands. Discard any liquid, and then add spinach mixture to chicken-cheese mixture. Mix until thoroughly combined. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
6. On a flat surface, lay out tortillas and scoop about 1/3 cup mixture into center of each tortilla. Fold each tortilla in half, pressing gently to flatten filling evenly, until filling is about 1/4-inch from edge (you want to prevent the filling from leaking out during cooking). Lightly brush both sides of quesadilla with oil and season with salt and black pepper. Wrap quesadillas in plastic wrap or resealable plastic bags in packs of 2 and lay flat in freezer. Quesadillas may be kept frozen for 2 to 3 months.

DEFROST & HEAT

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove quesadillas from freezer and allow to defrost just enough so that quesadillas may be pulled apart from each other. Place frozen quesadillas on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake in oven for 24 to 26 minutes, or until filling is hot throughout and tortillas are golden brown and crisp. Allow filling to set for 3 minutes before cutting. Cut in half and serve immediately.

Nutrients per 1/2 quesadilla: Calories: 290, Total Fat: 7 g, Sat. Fat: 2.5 g, Monounsaturated: 1.5 g, Polyunsaturated: 0 g, Omega-3s: 40 mg, Omega 6s: 260 mg, Carbs: 36 g, Fiber: 6 g, Sugars: 4 g, Protein: 20 g, Sodium: 590 mg, Cholesterol: 25 mg

KEYWORDS: freezable, spinach, poultry, Mexican, entree, dinner, ricotta, quesadilla

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