




# domino

## 8 Healthy Alternatives To Your Favorite Mexican Recipes

These healthier takes on crowd-pleasing Mexican munchies will be a hit at any Cinco de Mayo fiesta—or, well, any time.

   By: Melanie Rud Chadwick



We're all for indulging in bottomless baskets of tortilla chips and fishbowl-sized [margaritas](#) on May 5, but sipping and snacking on these Mexican favorites can leave you feeling less than stellar on May 6. Happily, you can still have your cake (er, margarita) and eat it too, so to speak. Ahead, eight healthier versions of all the staples—from guacamole to tacos to yes, even margs—perfect for serving at your Cinco de Mayo party.

### **Carrot Margarita**

Traditional margaritas—delicious, yes, but healthy...not so much, thanks to sugar-laden mixes and liqueurs. This take on the classic, served at [Clever Rabbit](#) in Chicago, uses only a small amount of agave for sweetness and adds vitamin-A rich carrot juice. Multiply this recipe and serve in a big pitcher so you can actually enjoy your party, and not spend all night making individual margaritas.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 oz. Piedra Azul Reposado Tequila
- 1/2 oz. Ancho Reyes Verde
- 1 oz. carrot juice (freshly juiced or store bought)
- 1/2 oz. lime juice
- 1/2 oz. agave syrup

#### Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients and shake over ice.

2. Garnish with lime and salt, if desired.

*Makes one margarita*

*Recipe courtesy of Nick Pagor, beverage director of Clever Rabbit (opening in May).*



### **Aztec Guacamole with Peas**

While the beloved avocado is most definitely a source of healthy fats, it's still a fat. And when you just can't stop dipping into that bowl of guac (hey, we're not judging), those calories start to add up. At [Rancho La Puerta](#), they use peas to cut the amount of avocado needed, cutting the fat without sacrificing any flavor.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 medium avocado
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 medium tomato
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1 jalapeño
- 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

#### **Directions:**

1. In a blender, process the peas until smooth.
2. Pit and mash the avocado in a bowl. Add peas and all other ingredients to the avocado and stir to combine.

*Serves 4*

*Recipe courtesy of Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Mexico*



### **Carrot & Chipotle Queso**

Typically made with processed cheese and loaded with fat and sodium, a bowl of queso is anything but health food. And while ‘vegan queso’ may sound like an oxymoron, using cashews in place of cheese makes this recipe creamy and velvety. Serve as a dip with crudité’s, or do as they do at [Beefsteak](#) in Los Angeles, and drizzle it over roasted potatoes for a fun twist on nachos.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 4 1/2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 large onions, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup grapeseed oil
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup raw cashews, soaked in water for at least 2 hours
- 1 1/4 cup water
- 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 8 tablespoons adobo sauce
- 1/4 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1/2 tablespoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

#### **Directions:**

1. Sauté carrot, onion and garlic in grapeseed oil until soft.
2. Add to blender or food processor, and puree. Add remaining ingredients and puree again until smooth.
3. Strain excess liquid and pour queso into bowl. Mix with a spoon once more to ensure everything is fully combined.

*Makes 3 cups*

*Recipe adapted from Marcel Vigneron*



### **Quinoa Tacos**

Quinoa: It's not just for grain bowls. At Chicago's [AceBounce](#), chef Rick Gresh makes it the star protein in tacos. Cook up a big batch, and serve with corn tortillas and a variety of toppings (think cheese, lettuce, cilantro) for a DIY taco bar.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup red quinoa
- 1 small Spanish onion, chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 ½ tablespoons cumin
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 cups vegetable stock
- Corn tortillas

#### **Directions:**

1. Add olive oil to a hot pan and sweat the onions and garlic until they turn translucent.
2. Add quinoa and spices to toast slightly (1-2 minutes).
3. Add tomato paste and vegetable stock, 2 cups at a time, creating a simmer each time you add more stock, until it is used up. Cook for 15 minutes.
4. Fill corn tortillas and add whatever toppings you wish.

*Makes 8 tacos*

*Recipe courtesy of Chef Rick Gresh of AceBounce*



### Salsa Verde

As a rule, salsa is always a pretty healthy bet, but store-bought options can be high in sodium. Making your own allows you to control the salt content and quality of the ingredients—and it never fails to impress guests. Try this recipe from Marcela Valladolid's new cookbook [Casa Marcela](#), which uses tomatillos (a good source of fiber and vitamins C and K) instead of tomatoes.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- ½ white onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 serrano chile, stemmed, halved lengthwise
- 2 teaspoons salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro
- Freshly ground black pepper

#### Directions:

1. Bring 8 cups of water to a boil in a heavy medium pot. Add the tomatillos, onion, garlic, serrano chile, and salt.
2. Cook until the tomatillos are dark green and the onion has softened, about 15 minutes.
3. Using a slotted spoon to drain, transfer the salsa ingredients to a blender.
4. Add the cilantro and process until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

*Makes 3 cups*

*Recipe from Casa Marcela*



## Mexican Black Beans

Refried beans are a Mexican staple, but they're traditionally cooked in lard. This alternative from cooking instructor [Pamela Salzman](#), author of [Kitchen Matters](#), is much healthier, but equally delicious, whether packed inside a burrito, served as a side, or spooned over rice.

### Ingredients:

- 3 15oz. cans of cooked black beans, undrained
- 2-3 tablespoons unrefined, cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeno chile, minced (take the seeds out if you want to cut the heat)
- 1 tablespoon sea salt or kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro
- Fresh lime juice \*optional

### Directions:

1. Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil in a medium saucepan until softened.
2. Add jalapeno and cook for 1 minute.
3. Add beans and liquid from the can (usually about  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup liquid per can) plus 2-3 teaspoons sea salt, 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes.
4. Serve the beans as is or mash them up a bit so they're nice and creamy. Squeeze a little lime on top if you like.

*Serves 6*

*Recipe courtesy of Pamela Salzman*



## Plantain Chips

There are few things in life more pleasing than a never-ending basket of warm tortilla chips, but all that grease and salt won't do your waistline any favors. Sure, you could dip veggies in guacamole and salsa instead, but to satisfy that craving for something super crispy, crunchy, and chip-y, try these plantain chips from Lucy Buffett, author of [Gumbo Love](#). Baked instead of fried, plantains also have lots of fiber, potassium, and vitamins C, A, and B (which sadly, tortillas do not). Serve alongside a colorful black bean and corn dip, as shown here, or eat them on their own.

#### Ingredients:

- 4 green plantains
- 2 tablespoons of LuLu's Creole Seasoning (or other creole seasoning)
- Zest of 2 limes or lemons
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- Pepper to taste

#### Directions:

1. Cut the ends off the plantains. Score the skin of each plantain lengthwise four to six times. Soak the plantains in a bowl of hot water for 5-10 minutes. This makes the skin easier to peel.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place thinly sliced plantains in a bowl and toss with a little olive oil, salt and pepper.
3. Transfer plantains, in a single layer, to a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for 8 minutes then turn the pan. Bake for another 5-8 minutes, or until the chips start to turn brown on the edges.
4. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly. Chips will easily slide off the parchment paper for serving. Sprinkle with the creole seasoning, lime zest, and salt and serve immediately.

*Serves 8*

*Recipe courtesy of Lucy Buffett*



#### **Veggie & Quinoa Quesadilla with Lime Slaw**

A few simple changes make this party (and late night) favorite surprisingly healthy with a few simple changes. For this recipe, dietitian [Natalie Rizzo](#) subs protein-packed quinoa in place of chicken and adds a variety of vegetables to up the nutrients (don't worry, there's still cheese). Triple this recipe and slice each quesadilla into small wedges to serve a crowd.

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small sweet potato, chopped into cubes
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup quinoa
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 small zucchini, chopped
- 1 small yellow squash, chopped

- 1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili seasoning
- 1 cup red cabbage, thinly sliced
- 1/2 lime
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 whole wheat tortillas
- 1/3 cup cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a bowl, combine 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil, sweet potato, 1 teaspoon of chili powder and salt. Stir to mix. Spread evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 20-25 minutes or until tender.
3. Meanwhile, combine the quinoa and water in a pot. Bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes or until all the water is absorbed.
4. While the quinoa is cooking, heat a frying pan over medium heat. When the pan is hot, add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil, zucchini and yellow squash. Sauté 5-7 minutes or until the zucchini is tender. Add 1 teaspoon of chili powder and chipotle chili and stir. If needed, season with salt.
5. In a bowl, combine the thinly sliced cabbage, olive oil and juice of 1/2 a lime. Stir to combine.
6. Lay the tortilla out flat. Layer one side with cheese, quinoa, zucchini mixture, sweet potatoes and an extra sprinkle of cheese. Fold the tortilla in half.
7. Heat a skillet over medium heat. Place the folded tortilla on the skillet and grill until the tortilla starts to get brown and crispy, about 5 minutes.
8. Once the tortilla is brown and crispy on each side, remove from the pan. Open up the tortilla and pile in the lime slaw.

*Makes two quesadillas*

*Recipe courtesy of dietitian Natalie Rizzo, MS, RD*