

Published May 24th, 2023

## Fun and flavorful twist on classic quesadillas

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Tequila-Lime Chicken Thigh Quesadillas Photo  
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This is a fun and spicy recipe for quesadillas! Loaded with a trifecta of fresh and roasted chili peppers, diced grilled chicken thighs, grilled onions, Chipotle Ranch dressing, and mixed Mexican cheese, it's a flavorful proposition, for sure. My son Joel came up with this delicious recipe and we've been tweaking it ever since. This version is where we've landed lately. We really love having both fresh and roasted peppers in this dish for flavor and crunch. You can also add grilled corn if you have some extra from the last time you barbecued corn, and the grilled red onions really make the flavors come to life. (This was a last-minute addition, after we'd taken the photos.) These quesadillas are pretty filling, so we just eat one per person, but if you're feeling super hungry, count on one and a half to two per person. This recipe makes four quesadillas.

The secret sauce is the chipotle ranch dressing, which adds great flavor, but also binds the chicken and veggies together before making the quesadillas. Most markets carry some brand of chipotle ranch, (Marie's, Wishbone, Farmhouse, Hidden Valley, Walden Farms, to name a few), but if your store does not, you can either use plain ranch dressing or make your own by adding diced chipotle peppers or chipotle powder to the ranch dressing. If we make our own, we like to use Bolthouse Farms Classic Ranch as our base. We really like their yogurt-based dressings . super creamy, tasty and lower fat than most. Oh, and don't forget the guacamole. In my book, it's a must with Mexican food!

You can get most of the ingredients for this dish ready a day or two ahead of time. Marinate the chicken thighs for one to two hours before grilling them. Once they are cooked, cut them up and store them in the refrigerator until you're ready to assemble the filling. Grill the peppers and onions when you grill the chicken and you can also cut up the fresh peppers well ahead of time. Just before you are ready to serve dinner, heat up the skillet and make the quesadillas. We like to make them on cast iron skillets on the burner, but you could also make them on a griddle, or a baking sheet in the oven, or even on cast iron on the barbecue. Since the weather is finally getting nicer, it's fun to do your cooking outdoors!

### INGREDIENTS

(Serves 4)

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 recipe marinade (below)
- 8 flour tortillas
- 1 red onion, cut into 8 wedges
- 2 poblano peppers, seeded and stem removed
- 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and stem removed
- 2 Ortega chilies, seeded and stem removed
- 1 1/2 cup grated mixed Mexican cheese
- 3/4 cup Chipotle Ranch dressing (split - 1/2 cup for filling, 1/4 cup for garnish)

Marinade:

- 2 oz. tequila
- 2 oz. fresh squeezed lime juice
- 2 tbsp. of your favorite hot sauce
- 2 tbsp. of your favorite salsa

1/2 tsp. chili lime seasoning (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

Mix up the marinade and pour over chicken about one to two hours ahead of grilling.

Preheat the grill to medium-high.

Meanwhile prepare the peppers. Cut off the stem and cut the peppers in half lengthwise. Remove seeds and pith. Leave two halves of each kind of pepper intact, and finely dice the remaining peppers.

Preheat the grill to medium-high heat. (Every grill is slightly different, so you may have to adjust cooking times and temps.)

Place the pepper halves (cut side up) and the red onion wedges in an aluminum tray or on heavy duty foil, and drizzle with a little bit of olive oil. Sprinkle lemon pepper, (or just salt and pepper) over the tops.

Place the veggies on the upper rack and grill for about 15-20 minutes, or until blistered and slightly blackened, but not charred. Cook the chicken for 5 minutes per side right on the grill, or until cooked through.

Remove everything from the grill and cool enough to handle. Once, cooled, dice the chicken, peppers and onions and place into a mixing bowl. Add raw veggies and 1/2 cup of the dressing. Mix well.

Preheat 2 cast iron skillet or a griddle over medium heat on the stove (can use regular frying pans, too), and brush with olive oil. Working in batches, place the bottom tortillas on the skillet and sprinkle enough cheese to lightly cover the tortilla. Cook over medium heat until cheese is beginning to melt.

Spoon 1/4 of the filling mixture over the melted cheese. Sprinkle more cheese on top and place the top tortilla over the cheese. Continue to cook for another minute or two before flipping the quesadilla to brown the other side.

Once the cheese is good and melted and the tortillas are golden-brown, remove from skillet and start the next batch. If you want to keep them warm, place the finished quesadillas on a baking sheet in the oven, on low, to keep warm until all of the quesadillas are done.

Serve with guacamole, salsa and extra chipotle ranch. Garnish with fresh cilantro sprigs.



Photo Susie Iventosch



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