

Huevos Rancheros Recipes: Two Different, Delicious Takes

By
Sarah Karnasiewicz

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I'M NOT A churchgoer, but, come Sunday morning, there is a trinity I hold sacred: eggs, beans and chilies. A workaday sort of magic inhabits that melding of silky yolk and meaty bean, the soothing warmth punctuated by the eye-opening pop and burn of pepper. Scrambled or poached, refried or pinto, red or green, most any variation on the basic elements will do the trick. But add a foundation of warm corn tortillas and a flurry of crumbly cheese—in other words, make huevos rancheros—and that's when the hallelujahs really begin.

While these days the dish is ubiquitous on brunch menus from Seattle to Savannah, huevos rancheros is, as the name suggests, simply a codification of the hearty, humble country breakfast that has for generations fueled ranchers throughout Mexico and the American Southwest. My own devotion wasn't inherited (my family, all Connecticut Yankees, prefers their beans with rye bread and a touch of molasses) but rather adopted during my 20s, when I was a teacher living in Albuquerque, N.M.

More than sharpened pencils and new shoes, the smell of charred green chilies is what I associate with the end of summer. In New Mexico, late August and September is prime chili-roasting season, when practically every grocery store parking lot and major intersection holds a gas-fired roasting drum filled with bright green pods, blistering and filling the air with smoky, vegetal perfume. When I lived in Albuquerque, and my responsibilities began and ended with a stack of projects to grade, weekend mornings were for hiking with friends in the Sandia foothills or meandering, sleepy-eyed, under the cottonwoods along the Rio Grande. Afterward, we'd retire, ritually, to someone's poky kitchen and pile plates with chewy tortillas and fried eggs and spoonfuls of stewed beans, plus the obligatory and always welcome helping of green chilies. Warm and sunny, like the yawning blue skies above us, the meal was a kind of fortification, if not for a day in the fields, then against the week ahead.

Now, a decade later and a dozen states away, when late-summer mornings begin to take on a tinge of autumn, I still crave a bulwark of a breakfast. New Mexican green chilies are harder to come by on the avenues of Brooklyn, where I now live, though local Whole Foods markets have been known to carry them at this time of year, and they're available online at hatch-green-chile.com. When I do find myself back in the Land of Enchantment, I make a point to stock up.

I've also come around to another riff on the eggs-legumes-chilies troika: the mélange of curry-spiced lentils topped with yogurt and poached eggs that [chef April Bloomfield](#) sends out to grateful diners at the Breslin in Manhattan—a seriously comforting dish whose lineage winds back through London and Mumbai. Paired with soft naan or pita bread (perfect for sopping up those golden yolks) and brightened by the tang of yogurt and the green bite of cilantro, it becomes a sort of huevos rancheros in translation. Amen to that.

NEW MEXICAN HUEVOS RANCHEROS (half recipe)

Active Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 50 minutes

Serves: 2

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 yellow onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon Mexican oregano
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed then chopped

- 1 cup chopped roasted green chilies
- 1.5 cups chicken stock

- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 1 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- Canola oil
- 2 small corn tortillas
- 4 eggs
- 1 medium ripe tomato, chopped
- 1/2 cup cotija cheese (substitute Feta cheese, or Asiago)

RG NOTES 04/2022

- We tried frying the tortillas, but they came out too stiff / hard. Better instead to use microwave tortilla warmer (thanks, Rita)
- Using Trader Joe's Hatch Green Chile Salsa is MUCH simpler (1/3 cup per person), and it also provides the correct amount of heat

Instructions

1. Make chili sauce: Place olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions, oregano and garlic and saute until onions are soft and fragrant, about 8 minutes. Add stock and chilies and bring to a boil, then lower heat to a simmer and cook until reduced by about 1/3, about 10 minutes. In a small cup, combine cornstarch and 2 tablespoons water, stirring to form a smooth slurry. Add slurry to chili mixture, stir and let simmer until sauce is thick but pourable, about 15 minutes. Season generously with salt and pepper. Keep sauce warm over low heat until ready to serve.
2. Warm pinto beans in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Season generously with salt and pepper. Decrease heat and keep warm until ready to serve.
3. Fry tortillas: Heat 1/2 inch canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Use tongs to dip 1 tortilla into oil until it softens, about 3 seconds. Remove and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate. Repeat with remaining tortillas. Cover plate with a kitchen towel to keep tortillas warm.
4. Pour most of oil out of skillet, then place skillet back over medium heat. Fry eggs, two at a time, until over easy, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.
5. To serve: Divide warmed tortillas among 2 plates. Divide beans and eggs evenly among tortillas, then top with green chili sauce, tomatoes and cotija cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

—Adapted from "The Rancho de Chimayo Cookbook" by Cheryl and Bill Jamison

NEW MEXICAN HUEVOS RANCHEROS

Active Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 50 minutes

Serves: 4

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 teaspoons Mexican oregano
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed then chopped

- 2 cups chopped roasted green chilies
- 3 cups chicken stock

- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- Canola oil
- 4 corn tortillas
- 8 eggs
- 2 medium ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup cotija cheese (substitute Feta cheese, or Asiago)

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2. Warm pinto beans in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Season generously with salt and pepper. Decrease heat and keep warm until ready to serve.
3. Fry tortillas: Heat 1/2 inch canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Use tongs to dip 1 tortilla into oil until it softens, about 3 seconds. Remove and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate. Repeat with remaining tortillas. Cover plate with a kitchen towel to keep tortillas warm.
4. Pour most of oil out of skillet, then place skillet back over medium heat. Fry eggs, two at a time, until over easy, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and set aside. Repeat with remaining eggs.
5. To serve: Divide warmed tortillas among 4 plates. Divide beans and eggs evenly among tortillas, then top with green chili sauce, tomatoes and cotija cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

CURRIED LENTILS WITH EGGS AND NAAN

Active Time: 20 minutes **Total Time:** 50 minutes **Serves:** 4

- 8 black peppercorns
- 8 whole cloves
- 4 whole allspice
- 2 cardamom pods
- 1 star anise
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 serrano chili, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1½ teaspoons curry powder
- 1½ teaspoons ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ pound dried lentils
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 8 eggs
- 4 pieces toasted naan or pita bread
- Plain yogurt
- Cilantro

1. Make spice bundle: Place peppercorns, cloves, cardamom and star anise in the center of a small square of cheesecloth. Gather edges of cheesecloth so spices are enclosed, then tie securely with kitchen string. Set spice bundle aside.

2. Make curried lentils: Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Once hot, add garlic, chili, carrots, celery and onions to pan and cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Add reserved spice bundle, tomato paste, curry, coriander, allspice, nutmeg and cinnamon and continue to cook, stirring, until paste is slightly caramelized, about 3 minutes. Add lentils and 4½ cups water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until lentils are tender, about 30 minutes. Remove spice bundle and discard. Season lentils with salt and pepper and keep warm.

3. Fill a large sauté pan with water and bring to a simmer over high heat. Add vinegar and stir, then reduce heat to medium. When water is just barely simmering, crack half the eggs and poach until whites are firm but yolks are still soft, about 3 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer eggs to a warm, paper towel-lined plate. Repeat with remaining eggs. Divide naan among four plates, then top each with lentils and 2 eggs. Garnish with yogurt and cilantro.

—Adapted from *April Bloomfield of the Breslin, New York*

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