

Stuffed Chicken Breasts in Green Sauce –

Pechugas de pollo rellenas en salsa verde

Ingredients

For sauce:

- 1 lb (454 g) tomatillos; husks removed, washed
- ½ cup onion; peeled and chopped coarsely
- ½ cup cilantro; washed and chopped
- 1 hot green pepper, such as serrano or jalapeño (optional, or add more to taste); washed, stem and seeds removed
- ½ tsp salt, or to taste
- 1 tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice (optional)
- ½ cup water, or as needed (or reserved cooking liquid from chicken, see below)

For stuffed chicken:

- 4 pieces chicken breasts; skinless, boneless
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 cup corn kernels
- ½ onion; peeled and chopped finely
- 2 cups mushrooms; brushed clean and chopped
- ½ tsp salt, or to taste
- 1 sprig epazote (omit if not available); chopped
- Water, as needed, for cooking chicken
- 1 can cooked pickled cactus (*nopales*); rinsed and drained (or use cooked green beans, trimmed and sliced into one inch cylinders)
- 2 potatoes; cooked and cubed (peeling optional)

Prepare the filling for the chicken breasts: Warm up oil in a frying pan over medium heat; add onions and sauté until translucent. Add corn kernels and mushrooms and continue cooking, seasoning with salt and stirring to avoid burning, for about five minutes, until mushrooms are cooked. Incorporate epazote (if using). Remove from heat and set aside.

Open chicken breasts into tri-fold flat pieces: Working with one chicken breast at a time, place on a cutting board and, holding firmly with one hand, start slicing parallel to the working surface, about one third of the total thickness, measured from the top (photo right, top). Continue cutting and stop at the other end, being careful not to completely separate the layer. Turn around 180 degrees, flip open that layer, then start another horizontal cut in the middle of the remaining meat, to level thickness with the first layer (photo bottom). Open the second flap to obtain a flat piece, one third of the original thickness; set aside and repeat with the other chicken breasts.



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Stuff chicken pieces: Take one of the prepared chicken pieces and place a mound of reserved filling in the centre. Wrap chicken around the filling to form a package, by folding one of the long ends over the filling, then one short, then fold the other long end and finish by folding the last end. Secure junctions with toothpicks (photo, right). Repeat with the other pieces of chicken and the rest of the filling.



Cook chicken: Fill a pot with enough water to cover the chicken packets; bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Carefully lower the chicken packets into the water, using a large spoon. Bring back to boil, then reduce heat to keep a gentle rolling boil. Partially cover the pot, and cook for fifteen minutes. Turn off the heat and reserve.

Prepare sauce: Boil tomatillos in water until they may be pricked easily but without falling apart. Place in a blender jar, along with the rest of the ingredients for the sauce, except water. Process until smooth. Pour sauce into a pot; if too thick, add some water as needed (or liquid from cooking chicken) to have a good stew consistency. Cook over medium heat for five minutes, stirring occasionally.

Assemble dish: Remove and discard toothpicks from chicken packets; add packets to sauce. Cook for another five minutes, being careful not to break the packets while stirring the sauce. Add nopal strips (or green beans) and cubed potatoes. Cook for a few more minutes, until potatoes are hot.

Serve chicken packets with veggies on the side, and a generous scoop of sauce:



This dish goes equally well with tortillas or bread, so offer one or the other (or both) on the side, to taste.