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5 de Mayo Nachos

Reprinted with permission from Chef Rene Valenzuela, founder of Rene's Mexican Kitchen, Tampa, Florida

"As kid we lived in Coahuila for a number of years, where one of my sisters and my brother were born. In that region, seems everyone knows the history of Nachos, but a just a bit further, the history is largely unknown. So I share it with you.

While world war two was going on, one day in 1943, Ms. Mamie Sinan and her friends, some wives of military men who were stationed in Eagle Pass Texas, crossed the border to Piedras Negras, Coahuila Mexico. They went to enjoy the food at the popular Victoria Club. Iganico Anaya (Nacho Anaya) was the kitchen boss. Cough off guard that day for an appetizer, he put together some crispy tortillas, drizzled with melting cheese and topped with some sliced jalapeños. The new appetizer was an immediate hit. Without a name, Mamie would order the dish as Nacho's plate. The rest ... as they say... is history. Now every year during the month of October there is the Nacho Festival, in Piedras Negras, that is celebrated with a parade, Nacho beauty queen, music, dances, art craft sale, and of course, plenty of nachos and lots of other delicious food.

Nachos are so popular I think, not only because they delicious, but because it's such a social meal. Is great finger food for any party, specially 5 de Mayo party! I love to top mine with some diced grilled skirt steak, or as in the picture diced grilled boneless chicken. It also goes great with cooked crumbled chorizo or picadillo. The way I like my nachos are layered, that means that one layer of tortilla chips is topped with toppings, queso and salsa, on top of another layer, to form a small heap, this way there is a good chance for every tortilla chip to have toppings, not just the ones on top."

INGREDIENTS

Nachos:

Corn tortilla chips,

2 cups of queso (recipe follows)

½ cup of pico de gallo (diced tomatoes, onion, cilantro, lime juice and salt)

¼ cup of your favorite salsa, green or red

1 cup of diced grilled steak or chicken (can sub with crumbled cooked chorizo or beef picadillo)

2 avocados, pitted, peeled, and cut into small dice

¼ cup of whole black beans, cooked and drained from broth

1 jalapeño sliced thin, pickled or fresh

PREPARATION

On a plate, arrange a layer of tortilla chips. Sprinkle a bit of all of the ingredients, and drizzle some salsa and some of the queso. Top with another layer of tortilla chips and repeat three or four times until you have a nice heap of nachos, layered with all the toppings. Serve immediately (otherwise tortilla chips will get soggy).

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INGREDIENTS

Queso:

- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 cup Velveeta, chopped
- ¼ cup finely grated smoked Gouda Cheese
- ¼ cup finely grated Monterrey Jack Cheese
- ¼ cup finely grated Cheddar Cheese
- 1 cup of water, or as needed

PREPARATION

In a medium saucepan, heat the half-and-half over medium-low heat until hot (do not boil). Add the rest of the cheeses, melting each one before adding the next and stirring constantly. Add water as needed to get to the right consistency, not too thick not too runny.

Serve queso immediately with tortilla chips or Nachos, or quickly chill and store in a container with a lid in refrigeration, up to 3 days. Rewarm in a Baño-Maria (baine-marie) before serving.