

# Chicken tamale casserole is Tex-Mex made easy

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Tex-Mex is a favorite in my household, and so are dishes that can be made and served in one pan. This easy and filling recipe for tamale casserole fits the bill for both, and earns bonus points because it has the ultimate time-saving ingredient: rotisserie chicken from the supermarket.

While it's far from authentic (no corn husks), it offers all the flavors of a really great chicken tamale without the work. There's a sweet cornbread crust on the bottom, spicy chicken filling in the middle and plenty of cheese on top — three great tastes in one sumptuous bite.

I use a homemade enchilada sauce but you could substitute canned red enchilada sauce or jarred salsa verde (green sauce). You also could add black beans or canned corn to the filling, spice it up with chili peppers, or swap shredded pork or beef for the chicken. It's best served warm, with a dollop or two of sour cream on top.

Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for 3-5 days or frozen for up to six months. (When ready to eat, let the casserole thaw in the fridge overnight before reheating.)

## CHICKEN TAMALES CASSEROLE

### For enchilada sauce

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1/3 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 16 ounces tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

- 1/4 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

### For cornbread

- 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Large pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/3 cup buttermilk or whole milk
- 1 cup creamed corn
- 1 large or 2 small ears fresh corn, shucked (about 1 cup)
- 1 4.5-ounce can diced green chiles or 1 large jalapeno, seeded and chopped

### For casserole

- 2-3 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 cup shredded taco or 4-cheese Mexican cheese
- Chopped cilantro, sliced jalapeno, sliced avocado and/or chopped tomato for garnish, optional
- Sour cream for serving, optional

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Prepare enchilada sauce: Heat oil over low heat in large saucepan. Add onion and garlic and cook until soft, about 2 minutes. Add hot water, bouillon cube, tomato sauce, chili powder, sugar, salt and cumin and simmer for 10 minutes. Mix cold water with cornstarch, then add slurry to the sauce, and simmer for a few more minutes until it thickens. Add more chili powder to taste.

Prepare cornmeal crust: In medium bowl, whisk together cornmeal, sugar, salt and baking powder. Stir in egg, butter and buttermilk and whisk well. Stir in creamed corn, fresh corn and the green chiles. Pour cornbread mixture into a 12-inch oven-safe skillet or a 9-by-9-inch baking pan. (I used a cast-iron pan.)

Bake cornbread for about 20-25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of pan comes out clean. Remove from oven, and poke holes into



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/TNS

Chicken tamale casserole is an easy weeknight meal that's full of cheesy, Tex-Mex flavor.

the surface with a fork.

Mix half of the enchilada sauce with the shredded chicken. Pour the other half of the enchilada sauce over the top the cornbread, and smooth with a

spoon or offset spatula. Top with shredded chicken and all the cheese.

Bake casserole for about 15 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and has started to brown on top.

Remove from oven, allow to cool for about 5 minutes and then top with optional toppings and a dollop of sour cream before serving warm. Serves 6-8.

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