

# Delicious, yet Nutritious

Can you believe it is already May!? Where on earth does the time go? It seems that only yesterday it was Christmas. I love this month because it is when the temperature mellows. Not too hot and not too cold. It's the calm before the summer's sizzling heat and the perfect time of year to plant a garden. The month of May means the end of a stressful school year for my kids and the beginning of summer fun! But before I rush us through another month too quickly, let's stop and savor the celebratory days this month has to offer. In chronological order, there is Cinco De Mayo, Mother's Day and of course Memorial Day. I am in the mood to celebrate as I write this article because our family has a lot of birthdays this time of year. So, let's talk about how to incorporate fun, nutrition, and a tasty cuisine into one of this month's most celebrated holiday events.

Cinco De Mayo, or the fifth of May, historically commemorates the Mexican Army's victory over the French Empire in 1862 at the battle of Puebla. But for most of us, it's become more like a "Hallmark" holiday that is often celebrated with parades, food, music, and even dancing and it's not exclusively celebrated by just the Mexican culture. This year at Senior Nutrition we're serving Chicken Taco Salad! According to Smithsonian online if you want to be truly authentic with your Cinco De Mayo cuisine you wouldn't serve something as simple as a "taco and margarita", but a chalupa instead! A what? To put it simply, a chalupa is a deep fried thick tortilla shell shaped like a taco and topped with salsa, shredded meat, chopped onion, and sometimes queso fresco (a Mexican inspired soft cheese). Sounds a little fattening and possibly not super heart healthy, right? What if I told you I could modify this traditional cuisine so that they not only taste good but are also fairly good for you?

Let me introduce you to a "healthy" version of this celebratory food so we can all indulge in the festivities of this holiday guilt-free. I know, I know,



## *Nutrition Notes by Natalie*

I take the fun out of everything! Surprisingly enough, if you make a few tweaks to most any recipe, it transforms high fat, high sugar dishes into healthy, savory delights.

Starting with the shell! Instead of deep frying a thick tortilla shell handmade with shortening and flour, just use a basic corn tortilla brushed with olive oil and top with fresh whole shredded chicken breast and a cheddar cheese blend. Place in an oven on broil and grill until shell is slightly crispy and cheese is melted. Add shredded cabbage, a little cilantro, onion and tomato (or just pico de gallo to make it simple) and Viola!

Now, no holiday menu is complete without incorporating beverages. Let's introduce you to some easy festive drinks that are pleasing to the palate and low in sugar. Believe it or not, mixing together simple ingredients like fresh juice and sparkling water can make an excellent punch for any occasion. Here's a spin on one for the festivities. A basic Mexican punch is typically full of sugar laden ingredients like soda and simple syrups, but it's actually easy to make it differently. Start with a homemade "grenadine" by combining a couple tablespoons of sugar and pomegranate juice in a skillet over medium heat. Stir to help dissolve the sugar. Bring to a rapid boil and cook for a few minutes until thick. Squeeze in some lemon juice to bring out the tartness and cool. Add ½ cup of this homemade grenadine, the juice of a couple of oranges, a 12 ounce container of limeade with two 2 liter bottles of sparkling water. Pour over ice and add a slice of lime.

Next, let's put a spin on the traditional Mexican hot chocolate. Try some cocoa powder, a dash of cayenne pepper mixed with warm coconut milk. Stir in a cinnamon stick and add a few marshmallows for flare. Now come and join the millions who celebrate Cinco De Mayo this month while introducing your friends to some delicious, yet nutritious Mexican inspired cuisine.

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