

# Cooking with Julia: Quesadillas



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"Well, what's there to eat?"  
"Knock it off, Napoleon! Make yourself a dang quesadilla!"

I'm sure many of us remember this scene from the movie "Napoleon Dynamite" as one of the many scenes that was funny, awkward and rather pointless, but I think Napoleon's grandma has a good point. When there is nothing else to eat, make yourself a dang quesadilla! Realistically, to make a quesadilla

you only need cheese and a tortilla. Beyond that you just are adding extra ingredients that enhance and improve the taste. I always add onion, green pepper and chicken to my quesadilla, but other common ingredients include steak, tomatoes, beans and shrimp. For breakfast sometimes I even make a cheese and scrambled egg quesadilla. One helpful tip if you are not interested in cooking chicken is to buy a pre-cooked rotisserie chicken from your grocer. Buying a pre-cooked chicken is not much more expensive than an uncooked chicken and it saves a lot of time. I simply use as much chicken for the meal I am making, and the next day I am able to use the chicken again for another meal. Think of all the possibilities with a rotisserie chicken: salad topped with chicken, chicken noodle soup, shredded barbecue chicken sandwiches, chicken pot pie and chicken salad sandwiches. Another tip is to use a pizza cutter when you cut the quesadilla into slices. Using a pizza cutter makes slices more aesthetically pleasing and easier to eat. Don't forget to top it off with garnishes such as cilantro, sour cream or salsa. ¡Muy delicioso!

## Ingredients:

2 cups shredded Monterrey Jack cheese  
1 medium onion, roughly chopped  
1/2 green pepper, roughly chopped  
1 cup cooked and shredded chicken  
4 flour or corn tortillas 10 inches in diameter  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
Cooking spray (like Pam)

## Directions:

1. In a pan, sauté onion and green pepper in the two tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat until vegetables soften. Transfer vegetables temporarily to a bowl and set aside.
2. Spray same pan with cooking spray, and place one tortilla in pan over low to medium heat. Sprinkle one cup of cheese on tortilla, and cook about two minutes or until cheese is melted. Add half of the cooked vegetables on top of the cheese. Next add 1/2 cup of the chicken on top of the vegetables. Lastly, add another 1/2 cup of cheese on top of the chicken, and top the quesadilla with another tortilla.
3. Here comes the tricky part. Take a small salad plate, and place it on top of the quesadilla in the pan. Be careful! Flip the pan over placing the quesadilla on the plate. This allows you to spray the pan again with the cooking spray, and place the uncooked side of the tortilla in the pan to be cooked. Cook this side of the tortilla for another three minutes, then remove quesadilla from the pan, cut and enjoy! This recipe makes two full, 10-inch quesadillas.



## Love lasts longer than an iPod

If you're reading this, I love you. Don't start swooning, though. I'm using 'love' in the same kind of detached way I might use it when talking about Thai food, John Krasinski or Wilco (on second thought, Wilco might qualify for true love). Sorry, reader.

Real love — that's some heavy stuff. It's incomparable, inexplicable, unavoidable — I've certainly tried all three — and it's necessarily between two people, not between one person and her new iPod. Beyond the person-to-person qualification, love transcends relationships. It links mothers and sons, sisters, friends and couples equally. So despite this publication's proximity to Valentine's Day, try to stop equating love with red roses and passionate kisses.

The problem with love ...OK, one of the problems with love is that we just don't talk about it the way it's meant to be talked about. As a word, love has been burdened with so much symbolism that it's either tossed around carelessly to mitigate its effect or not tossed at all to avoid the taboo.

I think U.S. culture has a problem with expressing love. Messages from the media simultaneously are enthralled and repulsed by it. Television viewers sweat through entire seasons waiting for the final episode when character A declares his love for character B and seals it with a kiss — followed immediately by the cut to credits.

This dramatic, "aw"-inspiring love might feed consumers, but it's hardly a realistic portrayal of the depth of the emotion because it ignores most other incarnations.

For instance, why is it awkward to tell a friend, "I love you?" This phrase has been so co-opted by romantic love that in any other setting it's strange to hear. My mother's long-time best friend lives across the country, but each time they speak on the phone, whether this happens every other week or twice a year, they end the conversation with an "I love you."

I admire this in their relationship. Most strong friendships I've encountered exhibit this level of caring, but it's hardly ever expressed in such concrete terms.

"I never know when I'll see or hear from her again," my mom told me during my weekly phone call. "You've gotta let them know."

The same unspoken affection applies to familial relationships, and expressing love in these relationships, even though it's understood to be unconditional, is just as important. My mom and I ended our phone conversation with two sets of "I love you's" — before and after saying goodbye — which might be a bit much.

This isn't an advocacy campaign for inserting those three little words into a brief chit-chat with your BFF of 10 years, but at meaningful

moments it can affirm the relationship. Even without saying 'love,' it's important to express gratitude and appreciation for someone. All too often, love and care only are expressed between friends in times of tragedy or, conversely, inebriation. Try sobering up and telling someone how you really feel.

I've got the family love down — we often fill pauses in long-distance conversations with a careless "I love you," which is not the context I'm encouraging — but even with my oldest friends I can't move beyond written "I love you's" in birthday cards and, on reflection, have never actually been romantically in love.

This reluctance partially is the result of the cultural taboo — it just seems like too loaded a phrase to use casually — and also personal inhibitions — avoiding vulnerability at all costs.

Whether we're not saying it because we're too scared or because we don't feel it, it's the same Berlin Wall of emotion holding all that wonderful love back. Love is many things, as musicians and religious texts and philosophers continue to remind us. Love is a battlefield. Love is watching someone die. Love is patient, kind, etc. Love is all you need.

But more than any of those aphorisms, love is something to be embraced and expressed. So Mr. Gorbachev, you know what to do.

Peace  
of mind



Design by Antonette Bedessie/Index

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