

Time Out

New York

The obsessive guide to
January 25–Feb

EAT OUT

Mucho macho nachos

Feast on these fab chili-topped nachos, courtesy of Merchants, N.Y.

Recipe makes enough for 4 nacho plates

For the chili:

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 chopped Spanish onion
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 2 lbs ground beef

- 1.5 ½-oz can cooked red beans
- 1.5 ½-oz can cooked black beans
- 1 fresh plum tomato, chopped
- 3 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp red-pepper flakes
- ½ cup red wine
- ½ cup water
- ¼ tsp salt

For the guacamole:

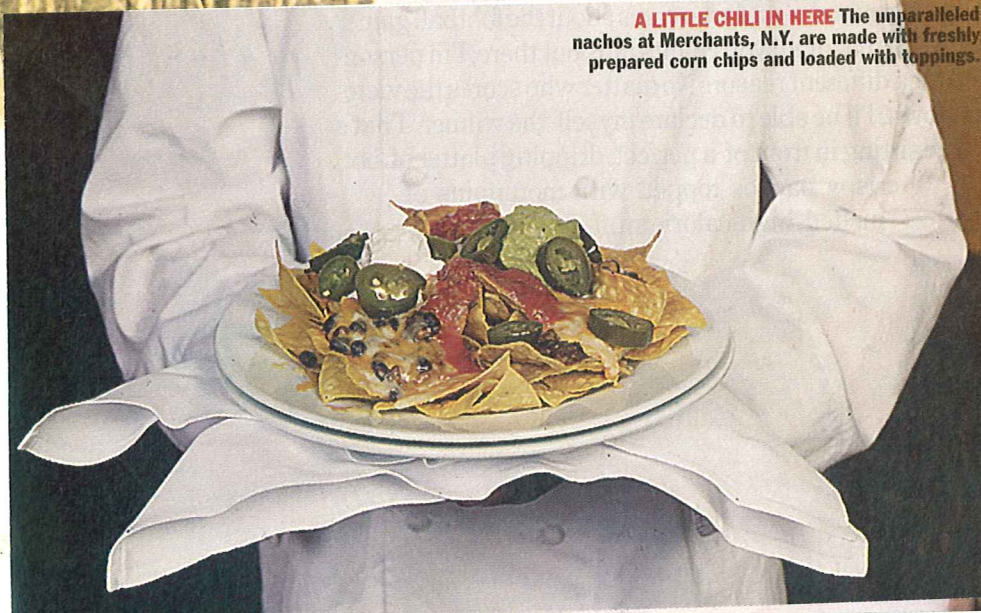
- 3 ripe avocados, peeled, pitted and chopped
- 1 tsp sour cream
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- juice of ½ medium lemon
- ¼ tsp Spanish paprika
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ large fresh tomato, chopped
- ½ red onion, diced
- 1 tsp fresh cilantro, chopped

For the nachos:

- Freshly prepared yellow corn tortilla chips (*Kitchen Market sells a 27oz bag for \$1.30; 212-243-4433*)
- 2 oz or more shredded yellow cheddar cheese
- 2 oz or more shredded pepper-Jack cheese
- large scoop of sour cream
- small jar of salsa (*Jaitch recommends Pace picante sauce, medium hot*)
- small can of sliced jalapeños

1. Preheat broiler.
2. In a 3-quart pot, sauté the onion and garlic in oil. Add ground beef, making sure to break up the meat and continuously stir until it is fully brown (about 10 minutes).
3. In a separate pot, combine the remaining chili ingredients. Cook over medium heat until boiling, then reduce heat and continue cooking for 10 minutes.
4. Add the bean combination to the ground beef mixture in the large pot, and cook over low flame until it boils. Reduce over low flame for about 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, make the guacamole. Combine the avocados, sour cream, cumin, lemon juice, Spanish paprika, salt and pepper. Mix until creamy. Add tomato, onion and cilantro, and mix well again.
6. When both the chili and the guacamole are ready, heap plenty of tortilla chips in a large, shallow casserole dish. Cover evenly with hot chili, followed by both cheeses, which will begin to melt. Broil for a few minutes, until the cheese is melted from the top (be careful not to burn the chips!). Add a sizable dollop of guacamole, sour cream and salsa, and sprinkle with jalapeños. Dig in!

A LITTLE CHILI IN HERE The unparalleled nachos at Merchants, N.Y. are made with freshly prepared corn chips and loaded with toppings.



The award for best nachos, however, goes to Merchants, N.Y. (112 Seventh Ave between 16th and 17th Sts, 212-366-7267; no delivery), a dimly lit, swanky meat-market bar with several branches around town. Talk about finding treasure in an unlikely place. Merchants' nachos (\$6.75) repeatedly wowed me, and apparently I'm not alone. "Every time we take it off the menu," says executive chef Gaida Jaitch, "people start asking for it." The homemade chips come hot and double-plated, topped with a meaty chili, shredded Jack and cheddar, guacamole, sour cream, salsa and jalapeños. It's truly a meal for two. After a series of visits to the restaurant, I came to terms with the fact that I simply couldn't live without these things. I called Jaitch to get the recipe. It's now resting safely with all my other low-tech, high-cal favorites: deviled eggs, artichoke dip, potato casserole. If you choose to enjoy Merchants' nachos in the comfort of your own home, take a tip from the restaurant's menu, which suggests pairing the dish with lager, pilsner or Sauvignon Blanc. That's what I call taking nachos seriously. But when you're dealing with such exquisitely perfect specimens, you don't want to mess around.

Winter getaw

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