

Loaded Black Bean Nachos with Chipotle Cashew Queso



Nachos were long overdue for a brain-healthy upgrade. These start with good-quality chips, topped with a rainbow of brain-healthy foods—beans, tomatoes, radishes, avocado, chiles, cilantro—all smothered in an uncommonly good nut-based 3-minute blender queso sauce. Want to turn nachos into supper? Sure! Nestle ccooked chicken, shrimp, or your favorite plant-based protein amongst the beans.

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients:

Two 6-ounce bags sturdy good-quality sweet potato, blue corn, or grain-free chips, about 8 cups, (see Tips)

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 small yellow onion, finely chopped

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans, drained (1½ cups)

3 cups cherry tomatoes

½ cup diced green chiles (such as Hatch), from 1 (4-ounce) can

1½ cups Chipotle Cashew Queso (recipe follows)

2 avocados, cubed

4 to 5 radishes, sliced

½ cup loosely packed cilantro, tender stems and leaves coarsely chopped

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 400°F with a rack set in the center position. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper then top with the chips in an even layer; set aside.

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and ¼ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring often, until golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the black beans and tomatoes and cook until the beans are warm and the tomatoes start to collapse, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the green chiles.

Spoon the black bean mixture evenly over the chips. Bake until the beans and tomatoes are hot and bubbling, 8 to 10 minutes.

BRAIN HEALTH KITCHEN by Annie Fenn, M.D.

While the nachos bake, warm the queso sauce in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds until warm but not boiling. Or, warm in a small saucepan over low heat (being careful not to bring it to a simmer) until warm, 5 to 7 minutes.

Just before serving, drizzle the nachos with the queso and top with radishes, avocado, and cilantro. If you have extra queso, place in a small bowl on the side.

Chipotle Cashew Queso

Makes 1½ cups

1 cup raw cashews

½ cup fresh water, plus enough water to cover the cashews

2 tablespoons nutritional yeast

1 medium chipotle pepper canned in adobo + 1 teaspoon adobo sauce

1 large garlic clove

½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste

Place the cashews in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, cover, and set aside from the heat for 15 minutes. Strain, discarding the water.

Combine the drained cashews, ½ cup fresh water, nutritional yeast, chipotle pepper, adobo sauce, garlic, and salt in a blender. Blend on high until very smooth and creamy, about 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the blender, and adjust salt to taste.

Tips:

- When shopping for chips, look for sturdy rounds or triangles with no trans fats and no added sugar. The ingredient list should be short. A few of my favorites are: Terra Sweet Potato Chips, Siete Grain Free Tortilla Chips, Late July Multigrain Sea Salt and Lime, Late July Organic Blue Corn, and Garden of Eatin' Blue Chips.
- Make the Chipotle Cashew Queso ahead of time; I recommend a double batch! Or, if you want to pour it warm from the blender (no reheating required), boil and set aside the cashews before making the nachos. Once drained, blend the queso while the nachos bake.
- Adjust the spiciness. Canned chipotles in adobo are very spicy. One medium pepper (about 1 teaspoon finely chopped) makes the sauce mildly spicy. For more heat, use an additional half-pepper, or an additional teaspoon of the adobo sauce they come in.
- Leftover Chipotle Cashew Queso sauce is also good on its own as a dip for crudité or chips. Think of it as your new all-purpose queso. Drizzle on tacos, quesadillas, grain bowls, Southwestern-style chopped salads, or scrambled eggs.