



Mexican Street Corn (Elote) as a Salad (Esquites)

This flavorful and vibrant dish is a deconstructed take on the classic Mexican street food, *elote*, a roasted corn cob slathered with mayonnaise, cheese, lime, and spices. Perfect for Cinco de Mayo, this salad celebrates the rich culinary traditions of Mexico with a modern twist.

Ingredients

(Serves 4-6)

- 4 ears of fresh corn, husked and charred (or 4 cups of frozen corn, thawed)
 - 3 tbsp mayonnaise
 - 3 tbsp sour cream or Mexican crema
 - 2 tbsp fresh lime juice (about 1 lime)
 - 1/2 tsp chili powder (or to taste)
 - 1/4 tsp smoked paprika (optional)
 - 1/4 tsp cumin (optional)
 - 1/2 cup Cotija cheese, crumbled (feta or parmesan as a substitute)
 - 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
 - 1 small jalapeño, finely diced (optional for heat)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - 1 tbsp olive oil (for cooking the corn)
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Instructions

1. Cook the Corn:

- Heat a large skillet or grill pan over medium-high heat and add olive oil.
- Cook the corn on cob preferably (if not, cut kernels off the cob first) until lightly charred, about 8-10 minutes. Stir occasionally for even browning. Let it cool slightly.

2. Prepare the Dressing:

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together mayonnaise, sour cream, lime juice, chili powder, smoked paprika, and cumin. Adjust seasonings to taste with salt and pepper.

3. Assemble the Salad:

- Add the charred corn to the bowl with the dressing. Toss to coat the kernels evenly.
- Fold in the Cotija cheese, cilantro, and jalapeño (if using).

4. Serve:

- Transfer the salad to a serving dish and garnish with additional Cotija cheese, a sprinkle of chili powder, and a few cilantro leaves. Serve warm, at room temperature, or chilled.
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History of Elote

Elote, derived from the Nahuatl word for "corn on the cob," is a beloved staple of Mexican street food. Known for its smoky, creamy, tangy, and spicy flavors, it embodies the vibrant culinary traditions of Mexico. Corn (*maíz*) has been a cornerstone of Mexican cuisine for thousands of years, dating back to the Mayan and Aztec civilizations.

As one of the "Three Sisters" crops (corn, beans, and squash), maize was revered as a gift from the gods and was central to daily life and sustenance.

As time went on, *elote* became a popular snack sold by street vendors, or *eloteros*, who push carts equipped with all the fixings, much like hot dog carts in the U.S.

The traditional preparation involves grilling or boiling corn, slathering it with mayonnaise, rolling it in Cotija cheese, and sprinkling it with chili powder and lime juice.

For a more portable and mess-free option, the salad version, *esquites*, was created. This dish offers the same bold and delicious flavors in a convenient form and has become a must-have for celebrations like Cinco de Mayo, which honors Mexican culture and pride.

A Deeper Connection to Corn

Corn has been deeply rooted in Mesoamerican culture and mythology, symbolizing life and prosperity. The Aztecs and Mayans cultivated and revered corn, integrating it into staples such as tortillas and tamales. When the Spanish colonized Mexico, they introduced new ingredients like cheese and mayonnaise, which blended seamlessly into the traditional flavors of *elote*.

Street vendors popularized both *elote* and *esquites* in urban areas, fostering a communal experience around this iconic dish. Today, it continues to celebrate Mexico's agricultural heritage and culinary creativity, bringing people together to share in its rich history.

Fun Fact:

Eloteros bring this treat directly to the community, embodying the festive spirit of Mexico. Add tortilla chips or serve it alongside tacos, and you have a crowd-pleaser perfect for Cinco de Mayo! 🌽🎉