

Mexican Cuisine – A Kosher Guide

Tortillas, Beans, Salsa... and What to Watch For

Mexican food is built on fresh vegetables, beans, corn, and rice. Many classic dishes can be made kosher by sticking to vegetarian fillings and knowing what to ask about.

✅ **Basic Strategy: Order Vegetarian (and Ask)**

- Choose dishes that are naturally vegetarian, and ask to exclude meat, lard, and meat broth.
- Many taquerias and restaurants prepare food fresh, so you can ask to customize.
- Tortillas, beans, rice, salsa, and guacamole are often fine—but not always.

⚠️ **What to Ask About or Avoid**

- **Lard** – Still used in some traditional kitchens for refried beans and tortillas. Ask: *“Is it made with lard or vegetable oil?”*
- **Chicken broth** – Sometimes used in rice and beans. Ask for plain or vegetarian versions.
- **Cheese** – Most Mexican cheeses are vegetarian (no rennet), but ask or skip.
- **Frying oil** – Ask if the oil is vegetarian-only, especially for chips and chile rellenos.
- **Meat contamination** – Avoid shared platters or items cooked on a grill with meat.

✅ **Dishes You Can Usually Eat (If Vegetarian)**

- **Guacamole & Chips** – Ask if chips are fried in vegetarian oil.
- **Salsa, Pico de Gallo** – Always fine.
- **Tortillas** – Corn tortillas are usually just corn, lime, and water. Flour tortillas may have lard—ask.

- **Veggie Burrito or Tacos** – Ask for only beans, rice, grilled vegetables, salsa, and guacamole.
- **Quesadillas** – Ask for cheese only, on a corn tortilla.
- **Enchiladas (Vegetarian)** – Ask about sauce and fillings.
- **Chiles Rellenos (Stuffed Peppers)** – Can be vegetarian; ask how it's prepared.
- **Mexican Rice & Refried Beans** – Ask if made without chicken broth or lard.

✗ Avoid

- All meat dishes: carne asada, chorizo, carnitas, etc.
- Fish tacos unless the fish is kosher (rare)
- Beans and rice unless verified vegetarian
- **Mole sauce** unless verified—often contains **meat broth**

🍹 Drinks

- **Agua Fresca** (fruit drinks), **Horchata**, **Limeade**, **Jamaica (hibiscus)** – All fine
- **Soda, Water, Juice** – All fine
- **Mexican Beer & Tequila** – All fine; no hechsher needed
- **Wine-based drinks** – May not be kosher unless labeled

Note: Even if wine is cooked into a dish in small amounts, it is **batel** and not a halachic issue. Wine is batel in 6, not 60.

📖 Halachic Notes

- **Bishul Akum** – Not a concern for vegetables, beans, or tortillas prepared in **commercial restaurants and hotels**, as described in the general laws of Bishul Akum and throughout this guide.

- **Lard and broth** – These are the main issues to ask about.
 - **Toleh B’nemanim** – You can ask and rely on staff in civilized countries.
 - **Mar’it Ayin** – No concern when eating clearly vegetarian Mexican food in public.
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BON APPÉTIT, MEXICAN-STYLE:

The common Mexican way to say “enjoy your meal” is:

¡Buen provecho!

You'll often hear it said as someone passes your table or when food is served.