

Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad

If you love the smoky, creamy flavor of Mexican street corn, you'll fall in love with this Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad. It takes all the best parts of elote — charred corn, tangy lime, creamy dressing, and a little chili spice — and mixes them with tender pasta for a fresh, hearty dish that's perfect for any occasion. Every bite bursts with flavor, combining sweet corn, zesty lime, Cotija cheese, and a touch of heat.

Why You'll Love This Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad

Creamy, Tangy, and Full of Flavor

This pasta salad hits every note: sweet corn, smoky char, rich crema, and fresh cilantro. The lime juice and zest brighten the dressing, while the chili powder adds just enough heat to make it exciting.

Great for Every Gathering

Whether it's a barbecue, picnic, or weeknight dinner, this salad fits the occasion. It's easy to make, travels well, and can be served cold or at room temperature. The flavor deepens as it chills, making it an ideal make-ahead dish.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [35 minutes](#)
- Yield: [8 servings](#)
- Diet: [Vegetarian](#)

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Description

Creamy and zesty Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad with roasted corn, Cotija cheese, lime dressing, and a hint of chili spice. Perfect for summer gatherings or as a make-ahead meal.

Ingredients

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- ☐ Kosher salt – 2 tsp, plus more for pasta water
 - ☐ Ditalini pasta – 1 lb
 - ☐ Vegetable oil – 1 Tbsp
 - ☐ Corn kernels (from 6 ears) – 4 to 5 cups
 - ☐ Poblano pepper (diced) – 1
 - ☐ Green onions (thinly sliced, whites and greens separated) – 6
 - ☐ Black pepper – 1 tsp
 - ☐ Garlic cloves (finely chopped) – 2
 - ☐ Mayonnaise – 1 cup
 - ☐ Crema or sour cream – 1 cup
 - ☐ Lime zest and juice – from 3 limes
 - ☐ Cotija cheese (crumbled) – 1 cup
 - ☐ Cilantro (chopped) – 1 cup, plus more for garnish
 - ☐ Chili powder – 2 tsp
 - ☐ Hot sauce (optional) – to taste
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook pasta 1 minute longer than package directions. Drain and rinse with cold water.
2. In a large skillet, heat vegetable oil over medium-high heat. Add corn, poblano, green onion whites, 1 tsp salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper. Cook 5–7 minutes until corn begins to char. Stir in garlic and cook for another minute.

3. In a bowl, combine mayonnaise, crema, lime zest, lime juice, remaining salt, and pepper. Mix well.
4. Fold in roasted corn mixture, Cotija cheese, cilantro, chili powder, and green onion greens.
5. Add cooked pasta and toss gently until coated evenly.
6. Chill for at least 1 hour before serving.
7. Garnish with extra Cotija, cilantro, and a squeeze of lime. Serve with hot sauce if desired.

Notes

Use fresh corn for the best flavor and char.

Adjust chili powder and lime juice to taste.

Substitute Greek yogurt for crema for a lighter version.

Store in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

- Prep Time: 20 minutes
- Cook Time: 15 minutes
- Category: Salad
- Method: Mixing
- Cuisine: Mexican-Inspired

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 cup
- **Calories:** 420
- **Sugar:** 6g
- **Sodium:** 380mg
- **Fat:** 23g
- **Saturated Fat:** 6g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 14g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 42g
- **Fiber:** 3g
- **Protein:** 10g
- **Cholesterol:** 35mg

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Choosing the Best Ingredients

Fresh Corn for the Best Texture

Fresh corn is the star of this dish. When roasted, it takes on a smoky sweetness that gives the salad its signature flavor. You can use frozen corn if needed, but roasting it lightly in a skillet helps mimic that authentic elote flavor.

Cotija Cheese and Crema

Cotija cheese adds a salty, crumbly texture that pairs beautifully with the creamy dressing. Crema or sour cream keeps the sauce rich and smooth, while mayonnaise adds the classic street corn creaminess you love.

How to Make the Creamy Dressing

The Essential Base

The dressing brings everything together. It's made with mayonnaise, Mexican crema (or sour cream), lime juice, lime zest, and chili powder. This combination creates a balanced flavor that's both creamy and tangy with a hint of spice.

Perfecting the Balance

Taste as you go. Add more lime for brightness or more chili powder for heat. If you like your dressing lighter, substitute part of the mayonnaise with Greek yogurt for a healthier option without sacrificing creaminess.

Preparing the Pasta and Corn

Cooking the Pasta

Cook ditalini pasta in salted boiling water for one minute longer than the package instructions. This gives it a slightly softer texture that holds onto the creamy dressing perfectly. Rinse under cold water and drain well before mixing.

Charring the Corn

Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add fresh corn kernels, diced poblano pepper, and green onion whites. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then cook for about 5 to 7 minutes until the corn begins to char. Stir in the garlic for the final minute to deepen the flavor.

Assembling the Salad

Mixing the Ingredients

In a large mixing bowl, combine the roasted corn mixture with the mayonnaise, crema, lime zest, lime juice, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Stir until well blended.

Bringing Everything Together

Fold in the cooked pasta, Cotija cheese, cilantro, and the green parts of the green onions. Mix gently until every piece is evenly coated with dressing. The salad should look creamy, colorful, and full of flavor.

Serving and Storing

Serving Suggestions

Serve this salad cold or at room temperature, topped with extra Cotija and cilantro. It's the perfect side dish for grilled meats, tacos, or summer cookouts. Add a squeeze of lime or a few drops of hot sauce for a flavor boost.

How to Store Leftovers

Keep leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to four days. Stir before serving to redistribute the dressing. The flavors continue to blend and improve over time.

Tips for Perfect Street Corn Pasta Salad

Adjust the Spice

Customize the heat to your liking. Use mild chili powder for subtle warmth or add jalapeños for extra kick. A dash of smoked paprika can give the salad a deeper flavor profile.

Make It Your Own

For a vegetarian twist, skip the bacon and add black beans for protein. You can also add diced bell peppers or cherry tomatoes for extra color and crunch.

FAQs About Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad

Can I use frozen corn instead of fresh?

Yes, frozen corn works well. Just thaw it completely and pat dry before roasting to achieve a light char.

Can I make this salad ahead of time?

Absolutely. This salad tastes even better after chilling for a few hours. Add an extra squeeze of lime juice before serving to refresh the flavor.

What can I use instead of Cotija cheese?

If Cotija isn't available, try feta or Parmesan cheese for a similar salty texture.

How can I make this salad lighter?

Use Greek yogurt instead of crema or swap half the mayonnaise for yogurt to reduce calories while keeping it creamy.

Conclusion

This Mexican Street Corn Pasta Salad is a delicious twist on a beloved classic. It combines smoky corn, creamy dressing, and zesty lime for a dish that's bold and satisfying. Every bite captures the spirit of Mexican street food in a form that's perfect for picnics, potlucks, and family dinners. Serve it once, and it'll quickly become a favorite in your rotation. For another easy and flavorful option, try our [Broccoli Pasta Salad Recipe](#) — it's a perfect complement to this creamy and colorful pasta salad.

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