



richard sandoval  
R E S T A U R A N T S

## ZENGO'S THAI CHICKEN EMPANADAS

Total time: About 4 hours, plus brining, cooling and chilling times

Yield: About 5 dozen empanadas

Note: Adapted from Zengo in Santa Monica. The restaurant serves the empanadas with mango chutney and red curry on the side. Sweet chili sauce (mae ploy) can be found at Thai and most Asian markets, as well as select well-stocked markets and cooking stores. Oaxaca cheese can be found at Latin markets and is generally available at well-stocked grocery stores.

Diced meat from 1 roast chicken (about 5 cups, or 2 pounds diced meat)

2 poblano chiles

4 teaspoons olive oil, divided

Salt and pepper

2 cups diced onions, small dice

1 bunch cilantro, minced

3/4 cup Thai sweet chile sauce (mae ploy)

4 pounds puff pastry

12 ounces Oaxaca cheese, shredded

All-purpose flour, for dusting

3 quarts frying oil

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Rub the peppers with the 2 teaspoons oil, and season each with a pinch of salt and pepper. Wrap the peppers in foil and roast in the oven until softened, about 30 minutes, checking every 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and set the foil-wrapped peppers aside until cool enough to handle. Peel and seed the peppers, and cut into a small dice.

2. Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 2 teaspoons oil and sauté the onions until translucent, stirring frequently, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat.

3. Assemble the filling: In a large bowl, combine the diced chicken, diced poblanos, onions, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, cilantro, Thai sweet chili sauce and Oaxaca cheese. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper if desired. You should have a generous 6 cups of filling. Cover and refrigerate the filling until chilled, at least 1 hour, up to overnight.

4. Roll out the puff pastry 1 sheet at a time (refrigerate the others until ready to use) on a lightly floured board. Cut out rounds using a 3 1/2-inch biscuit cutter. You should be able to cut 16 to 18 rounds from each pound of puff pastry.

5. Fill each round with about 1 1/2 tablespoons of the chilled filling. To fold the empanada, place the round in your hand. With the fingers of your other hand, press the filling down as you are clamping the pastry into a taco or moon shape. It may seem as if there is too much filling at first, but the dough will stretch as you press the filling down (this will give you a good ratio of filling to pastry). Seal the empanada by pressing the edges with your fingers; use a fork to crimp it and seal it completely. Refrigerate the empanadas until ready to fry.

6. To fry the empanadas, heat the frying oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot until a thermometer inserted reaches 350 degrees. Fry the empanadas a few at a time until golden-brown, about 3 minutes. Drain the empanadas on a rack or a paper-towel-lined baking sheet. Repeat until all of the empanadas are fried. Serve immediately.