

Cleo Coyle's (gluten-free) Frito Shepherd's Pie

Text & photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi, who writes the [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini

Our readers may recognize this pie from our 13th culinary mystery, [Billionaire Blend](#). In the book, Detective Mike Quinn tells the story of solving a homicide with the help of the NYPD Bomb Squad. At the close of the case, the squad takes Quinn to a pub for a night of Frito Shepherd's Pies. Below, with our compliments, is the pie that Quinn enjoyed. Like a cross between a tasty taco and a pan of loaded potato skins, this recipe is our own unique cross between a Tex-Mex Frito Pie and a Shepherd's Pie. And here's the trick to keeping the flavors balanced and avoiding a big mouth full of potatoes: We make our potato layer very thin and mix it with a secret ingredient—sour cream. Sour cream is a classic topping for Mexican dishes, but it's also fantastic with potatoes, so it adds the perfect note of flavor to this recipe. You can cook everything up fresh or use leftovers. And the best part: It's nutritious! We make ours with lean ground meat and (the super-food) black beans, and we whip up our mashed potatoes with the skins on. What about those Fritos? Aren't they junk food? Actually, Fritos have exactly three ingredients: corn, corn oil, and salt. That's it. No preservatives, gluten, and zero trans-fat. May you eat (and read) with joy! ~ Cleo Coyle

Serves 6 to 8 (depending on portion size)

Ingredients:

1-1/2 cups mashed potatoes (*see recipe at end or use leftovers)

1/2 cup sour cream

1-3/4 cups whole Fritos Corn Chips

+ 1/4 cup crushed Fritos chips for garnish

1 to 1-1/2 pounds ground meat made into chili or

taco meat filling (optional – add fiber and more nutrition by replacing some meat with black beans or kidney beans)

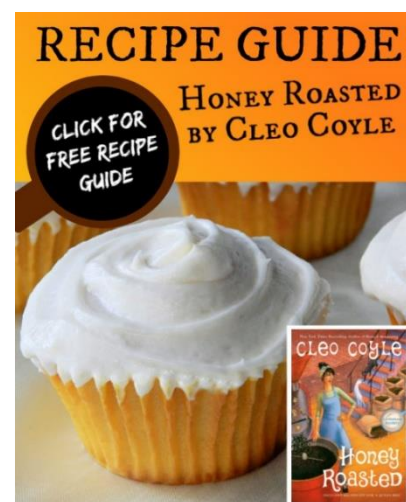
8 ounces Monterey Jack, Cheddar, or taco cheese mix, shredded

1 jalapeno pepper, cut into rings (optional)

Prep Step—Make your mash: Re-warm leftover mashed potatoes in a microwave or on stovetop. Whisk in sour cream. To make mashed potatoes from scratch, [see the directions at the end of this recipe](#). Set aside finished mashed potatoes.



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Build Pie with...

Layer 1—Fritos: Line the bottom of a 10-inch oven-proof skillet or cast iron pan (or casserole dish or deep dish pie pan) with a single layer of whole Fritos corn chips (about 1-3/4 cups).

Layer 2—Meat: Heat your chili or taco meat until it's nice and hot, and then evenly spoon it over the layer of corn chips in the pan, covering the chips completely.

Layer 3—Cheese: Sprinkle a little over half of the shredded cheese on top of the meat.

Layer 4—Taters: Now dollop the warm mashed potatoes and sour cream from *Prep Step* over the meat and cheese. Use the back of the spoon to carefully smooth it into an even layer. This is a thin layer of crust so take your time and spread it gently.

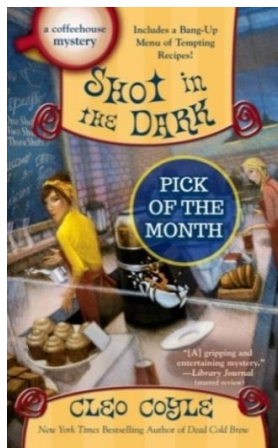
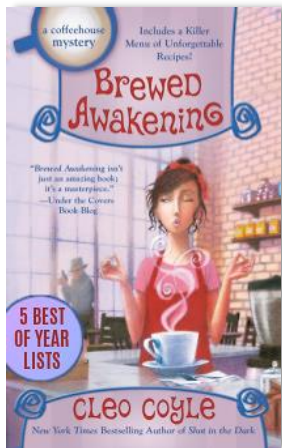
Layer 5—Garnish: Sprinkle the top of the pie with the rest of the shredded cheese and the final 1/4 cup of crushed Fritos corn chips.

Broil: Finish the pie for a few minutes under a preheated broiler. Watch for the cheese to melt and the potatoes to become lightly browned on their edges. This will take anywhere from 3 to 8 minutes, depending on your broiler. (Check often because broilers can burn things very easily!) Cut into slices and serve immediately. You can further garnish with jalapeno rings, salsa, guacamole, hot sauce, olives, or other favorite toppings you might use for tacos or nachos.



Leftovers: This pie reheats like a dream. A slice of it also makes a great instant taco salad. Warm up a slice in the microwave and break it up over a fresh bowl of lettuce. Throw on some slices of avocado and olives or a fresh dollop of guacamole, and you're set for a quick, healthy lunch.

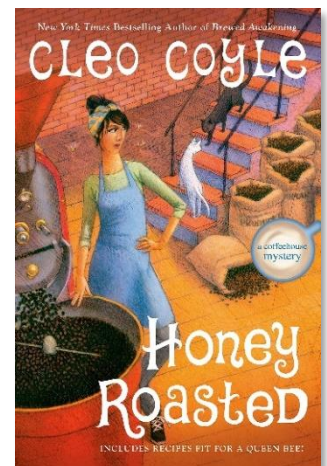
TO MAKE FRESH MASHED POTATOES: Start with 3 large (or 6 small) white potatoes, about 1-1/2 pounds. Wash and cut into thick slices, leaving skins on for better nutrition, and boil for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are soft when fork tested. Drain well. Use a fork to mash and whisk vigorously until smooth. Follow recipe as directed and...eat with joy!



Eat with joy! ~ Cleo

The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeehouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes.

To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo Coyle's online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com



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