Pastel Azteca
Serves 4

SAUCE (makes 4 cups)
1 can (28 ounces) whole, peeled tomatoes
2 garlic cloves, sliced
1/2 medium onion, coarsely chopped
2 teaspoons ancho chile powder, or to taste
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 cup water
1 tablespoon olive oil

1. In a blender, puree the tomatoes, garlic, onions, chili powder, oregano, salt and pepper until smooth. Add the water and blend to incorporate.

2. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the sauce and cook, stirring often, until it comes to a boil. Lower the heat and cook the sauce at a steady simmer for 10 minutes to tame the raw garlic and onion flavors. If the sauce starts to sputter, place a lid askew on top to keep it from splattering. Taste and adjust the seasoning. The sauce should have the consistency of heavy cream. Add more water to thin it if necessary.

PASTEL
6 10-inch flour tortillas
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
Salt and pepper, to taste
2/3 cup refried black beans, homemade or from a can
1 heaping cup grated Monterey jack cheese (about 5 ounces)
1 cup shredded cooked chicken
1 avocado, sliced (for garnish)
1 large handful of cilantro leaves (for garnish)
3 to 4 radishes, thinly sliced (for garnish)
10 cherry tomatoes, sliced (for garnish)

1. Set the oven at 400 degrees. Brush the tortillas on both sides with oil.

2. In a bowl, stir together the corn, oregano, salt and pepper.
3. Set a 10-inch ovenproof skillet such as cast iron, over medium heat. One at a time, cook each tortilla in the hot skillet for about 30 to 45 seconds on a side, or until it is firm and a little charred. Stack the cooked tortillas on plate.

4. Place 5 of the tortillas on a cutting board. Spread each of 2 tortillas with 1/3 cup refried beans. Sprinkle each with about 2 tablespoons grated cheese. Spread each of 2 more tortillas with 1/2 cup corn mixture. Sprinkle each with about 2 tablespoons grated cheese. Top the fifth tortilla with the chicken and sprinkle with cheese.

5. To assemble the pastel, spread the bottom of the skillet with 1/3 cup of the sauce. One at a time, stack the tortillas in the pan to make layers, spreading each with 1/3 cup of the sauce before adding the next. The order is not particularly important. When the tortillas are stacked and sauced, place the sixth tortilla on top. Cover it with more sauce and sprinkle it generously with the remaining cheese.

6. Bake the pastel in the oven for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the cheese melts and the sauce bubbles. Remove from the oven and let settle for 5 minutes. Top with the remaining corn, avocado slices, cilantro, radishes and sliced cherry tomatoes. Cut into 4 wedges and serve. If there is sauce leftover, refrigerate it for up to a week—drizzle it over eggs or on an avocado toast, or use it in a taco.

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