

# EnnisNOW

M A G A Z I N E

MAY 2026

## Keeping Traditions and Memories Alive

The Sokol Ennis Museum continues to teach interesting Czech history

## Sixty Years of Polka

Willie Joe Salik encourages participation

## Cinco de Mayo Recipes

2026 Cinco de Mayo Shopping Guide

Also inside ...

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business  
**Dakota Haney Natural Horsemanship**

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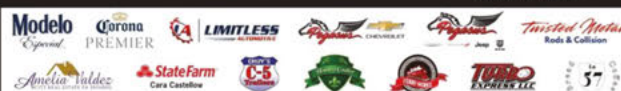
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May 2026  
Volume 23, Issue 5



**Bill Smith**  
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## ON THE COVER

A doll dressed in a traditional Czech kroj invites you to the museum.



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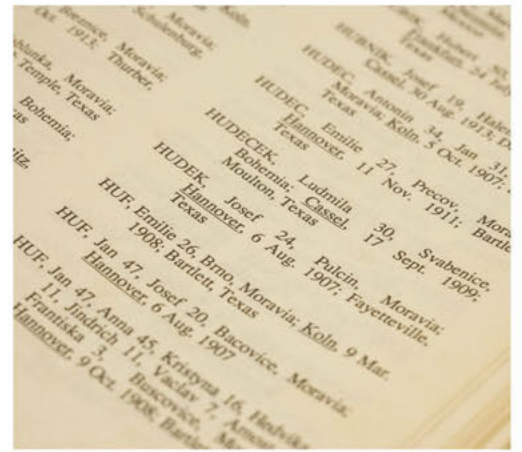
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# KEEPING TRADITIONS AND MEMORIES ALIVE

— By Bill Smith

*Liz Moucka Krajca is uniquely prepared to serve as education director and museum curator for the Czech Heritage Museum and Library located at the Sokol Hall. She majored in English and history and is obviously proud of her heritage and the time she has dedicated to Sokol from her youth. “The gateway to our future is to look through the window of our past,” Liz recently wrote in a grant application for the museum.*

“Sokol means ‘falcon,’” Liz explained as she discussed the history and unique nature of the organization. “Whereas some other Czech organizations are known by an acronym that represents their affiliation, Sokol was started in the 1860s in Bohemia (later Czechoslovakia) as a fitness organization by Miroslav Tyrš.” Photos in the library show many years of athletes honing their gymnastics skills with dedicated Sokol instructors.

“Tyrš experienced physical weakness as a child similar to the stories we have heard in biographies of Theodore Roosevelt being a sickly child afflicted with asthma,” Liz continued. While Roosevelt sought fitness through activities such as boxing and hiking, Tyrš was inspired to start Sokol. The falcon represents strength, swiftness and an active life.

There are a number of artifacts in the museum related exclusively to Sokol, such as wooden dumbbells, gymnastics rings and juggling pins or clubs. However, many of the items exhibited are interesting to any visitor interested in Czech history and the stories of their families’ immigration and ancestry in the United States.

Liz mentioned the curators who preceded her at the Sokol, including Vlasta Laznovsky and Georgie Vrla Morales. “The building burned in 1990, so what we have acquired has only been here since 1991. They did a wonderful job. I became the curator in 2021, and the museum continues to grow through donations from Czech families. My big project is researching and describing as many of the exhibits as I can to help visitors understand, rather than just say, ‘That’s nice.’”

Michelle Slovak, current president of the Ennis Sokol, agreed that there is a steady stream of items being donated to the museum from local families. “The museum was not this large in the prior building. American



Sokol (the parent organization in the United States) has recently started offering grants, and there are a few of them that we can apply for," she said. "We are one of the few Czech museums in Texas. Ennis and Fort Worth Sokols have small museums, but Temple, Houston and La Grange have larger Czech heritage museums that have no affiliation with Sokol."

There are many popular items in the local museum, including the books of immigration records. "Most people find them fascinating," Liz said. "Some of them have records from New York and Boston, others include Galveston and New Orleans. You can look up your family name, as they are in alphabetical order. We also have books showing the different *croj* (Czech costume) styles that indicate what regions they are from."

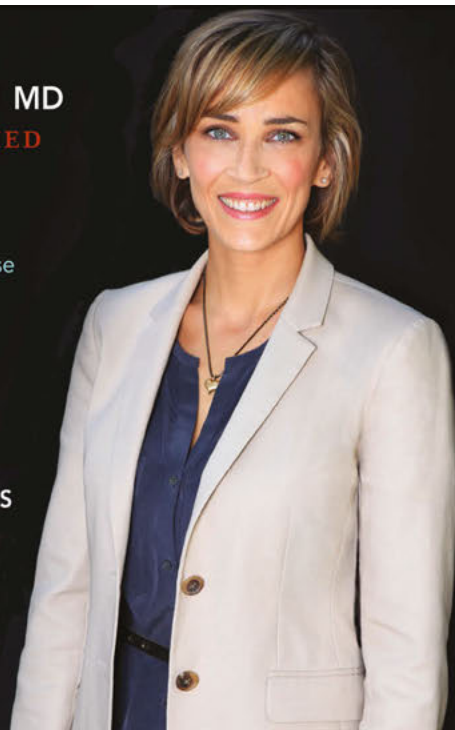
The museum displays dolls dressed in various *croje*, and



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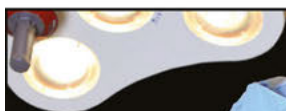


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there are four life-size female mannequins with full costumes. The collection also includes a couple of male mannequins. One is dressed in a soldier's uniform from the Korean War that was donated to the museum by an American veteran's Sokol family. The other is dressed in a Sokol marching costume that was brought over from Moravia during the early 1900s. Learning to march is part of the fitness programs that Sokol offers, and Liz shared how it benefited her as a teenager. "I wanted to be in the Ennis marching band in high school, so I transferred from St. John High to Ennis High. Since I already knew how to march, I was given a lead position in the band."

The museum is replete with interesting artifacts of Czech culture. One such item is a beautiful blue fish made of glass. The Czech "Legend of the Fish" means there is always hope, even when all seems hopeless. The legend is still

known in the Czech Republic, and many homes still display a fish. The museum houses many examples of *kraslice* (ornately decorated eggs), which are part of the Czech traditions that were brought to America. Liz wrote in one of her education director's reports, "Painting and decorating eggs for Easter is a worldwide tradition, but the Slavs take it to a whole other level. Their intricate designs used to decorate eggs have made Czech *kraslice* famous around the world." Liz and Michelle each indicated that they have tried making the eggs, and both agreed it is a very delicate process requiring a lot of practice. Be sure to see these when you visit the museum, and ask about the dozen *kraslice* on display that were intricately carved by a dental technician.

Examples of Czech art and posters decorate the museum walls and are stored in racks because there are too many to have displayed at the same time. One of

the posters is of Jan Žižka, known as One-Eyed Žižka, a Czech military leader and knight who died in 1424. Don't miss the patriotic painting of the American flag toward the back of the room. There are photographs and a brief history of John and Anna Cvach Haskovec, who brought their family to Ellis County in the latter 1800s and encouraged others to settle here, offering to let them stay on their land along Village Creek and FM 660 while they planned their futures.

The museum is open during festivals such as the Czech Music Festival and the National Polka Festival. Michelle mentioned that visitors to the Ennis Welcome Center will inquire about it and bring a group by. Liz has started opening during the Ellis County Toy Run. "People who came to set up tables asked about it, so we opened for them to enjoy before the bikers arrived," she said. The Czech Heritage Museum is a local treasure. Put it on your bucket list! **NOW**

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One of Dakota's clients has been taking riding lessons with Dakota for over four years. The mother wrote, "It has been an amazing experience for Meghan. In addition to learning all aspects of natural horsemanship, our daughter has made great strides in both English and Western disciplines. We highly recommend Dakota to anyone (young or old) who wants to learn how to ride and take care of horses. Additionally, Dakota worked with one of our horses who had not been handled in 10 years. Within a year, she had Meghan safely competing at the local, regional and state levels."

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Operating from her facility on Old Gin Road in Bristol, Dakota offers horseback riding lessons, therapeutic horseback riding and horse training, including problem-solving and colt starting. The certified PATH International instructor has owned the business for 11 years, building on experience that stretches back more than two decades. While Dakota wants to highlight her horse training services, she said riding lessons remain central to her mission. The combination allows her to work with both ends of the partnership, creating better outcomes for horses and riders alike.

What sets Dakota Haney Natural Horsemanship apart is its emphasis on natural methods that prioritize the horse's perspective. Rather than forcing compliance, Dakota's approach builds understanding and trust, creating partnerships that last beyond the arena. The business serves the Ellis County community through its specialized approach to equine education. **NOW**

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**Admission:**  
One daily admission includes all participating halls: KJT, SPJST and Sokol. (William Clark Green Country Concert admission is additional.)

**Children 12 and under are FREE**

**Friday, May 22: \$10**

**Saturday, May 23: \$15**

**Saturday, May 23: William Clark Green \$45 Early Bird G/A or \$60 G/A**

**Sunday, May 24: \$11**

**3-Day: \$30**

**Downtown Activities: FREE**

# NATIONAL POLKA FESTIVAL® SCHEDULE



## FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2026




**Sokol** (2622 E. Hwy. 34, Ennis)

DOORS OPEN 5:00 P.M.  
5:30 P.M. - 6:45 P.M.  
**Pardubická Muzika**

7:00 P.M.  
**Beseda Dancers**

7:30 P.M. - 11:00 P.M.  
**Mark Vyhlidal**

9:00 P.M.  
 **King & Queen  
Polka Dance Contest**



## SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2026



**Downtown Ennis**  
(201 NW Main St., Ennis)

**KJT Auditorium**  
(1216 S. Paris St., Ennis)

**Sokol**  
(2622 E. Hwy. 34, Ennis)

**SPJST Lodge #25**  
(1901 E. Ennis Ave., Ennis)

7:00 A.M.  
**PolkaFest Run**  
9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
**Shopping & Food  
Vendors**  
10:00 A.M.  
**Polka Parade**  
12:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.  
**AlpenMusikanten**


DOORS OPEN 11:00 A.M.  
11:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.  
**Ennis Czech Boys**  
2:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.  
**Czech Slovak Dancers  
of CHS**  
2:30 P.M. - 3:45 P.M.  
**Texas Sound Check**  
4:15 P.M. - 5:45 P.M.  
**Mark Vyhlidal**  
5:50 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.  
**Texas Sound Check**  
7:05 P.M. - 8:15 P.M.  
**Mark Vyhlidal**  
9:30 P.M. - 12:00 A.M.  
**Brave Combo**

DOORS OPEN 10:30 A.M.  
11:00 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.  
**Czechaholics**  
12:45 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.  
**Vaneks of West**  
2:10 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.  
**Czechaholics**  
3:40 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.  
**Vaneks of West**

COUNTRY CONCERT TICKET  
REQUIRED. DOORS REOPEN AT 8:30 P.M.

9:00 P.M.  
**Opening Band,  
Alex Meixner**  
10:30 P.M.  
**Country Headliner,  
William Clark Green**

DOORS OPEN 11:00 A.M.  
11:30 A.M. - 1:45 P.M.  
**Praha Brothers**  
2:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
**Dujka Brothers**  
4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.  
**Lone Star Legends**  
6:15 P.M. - 7:15 P.M.  
**Dujka Brothers**  
7:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.  
**Lone Star Legends**  
9:00 P.M. - 12:00 A.M.  
**The Moravians**

1:30 P.M.  
 **KJT Kolache  
Eating Contest**



Shuttle Service Available  
To & From Downtown  
(Corner of NW Main St &  
Ennis Ave), & the Czech  
Dance Halls -  
KJT, Sokol, & SPJST



## SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2026




**Downtown Ennis**  
(201 NW Main St., Ennis)

**KJT Auditorium**  
(1216 S. Paris St., Ennis)

**Sokol**  
(2622 E. Hwy. 34, Ennis)

**St. John Church**  
(401 E Lampasas St.)

11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
**Shopping & Food  
Vendors**  
12:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.  
**AlpenMusikanten**

DOORS OPEN 11:00 A.M.  
11:30 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.  
**Pardubická Muzika**  
1:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.  
**Czech & Then Some**  
 3:00 P.M.  
**Beer Stein Hoist Contest**  
(držení tupláků)  
3:30 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.  
**Alex Meixner**  
5:15 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.  
**Czech & Then Some**  
6:45 P.M. - 8:15 P.M.  
**Alex Meixner**  
9:00 P.M. - 11:00 P.M.  
**Brave Combo**

DOORS OPEN 9:30 A.M.  
10:00 A.M. - 1:30 P.M.  
**Jodie Mikula  
Orchestra**  
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.  
**Live Remote  
Broadcast  
KBEC  
Polka  
Party**

9:00 A.M.  
**Polka Mass**



Shuttle Service Available  
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(Corner of NW Main St &  
Ennis Ave), & the Czech  
Dance Halls - KJT & Sokol



\*SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE



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## William Clark Green

Saturday, May 23, 2026  
 Country Concert  
 Time: 8:30 p.m.-midnight  
 Location: Sokol Hall  
 2622 E. Hwy. 34,  
 Ennis, TX 75119  
 Cost: \$45 Early Bird G/A;  
 \$60 G/A

Texas country artist William Clark Green has spent more than 15 years packing venues with his distinctive mix of rebellious joy and nostalgic heart. He built his career on coast-to-coast live touring and Friday night singalongs, racking up multiple trips to the top of the Texas Country Radio and iTunes Country Album charts with his gritty, fuzzed out country-rock style and wry vocal rasp.

Green's journey began as a Texas Tech student at Lubbock's famous Blue Light, where he became a bedrock part of the Red Dirt revolution. His discography reads like the soundtrack to an era. *Dangerous Man* (2008) was followed by *Misunderstood* (2010). Then came *Rose Queen* (2013) and its opposites-attract anthem, "She Likes the Beatles," which has streamed over 40 million times. *Ringling Road* cracked the Billboard 200 while reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Heat Seekers chart in 2015. *Hebert Island* (2018) and *Baker Hotel* (2022) tightened an embrace of the underground Texas spirit, while earning mainstream acclaim from *Rolling Stone* and the Grand Ole Opry.

In 2018, Green launched the popular Lubbock music festival, Cotton Fest. He also launched the High Cotton Relief Fund to support West Texas farm families in times of need. It has now raised over \$2 million. In 2019, he co-founded the Texas supergroup The Panhandlers, joining Josh Abbott, Cleto Cordero (of Flatland Cavalry) and John Baumann in celebration of the community spirit they helped build.

Now a husband and father, Green is working on the "most meaningful" songs of his career. He remains forever on the road as a bigger picture comes into view.

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 (Saturday & Sunday)  
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\*PAID ADMISSION TICKET REQUIRED TO EAT INSIDE THE SPJST, KJT, & SOKOL HALLS. TO GO OPTIONS AVAILABLE. CONTACT HALLS FOR DETAILS.



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# Sixty Years of Polka

— By Bill Smith

*Willie Joe Salik was born in Ennis, and it was long enough ago that he has done a great variety of the work required to keep the National Polka Festival thriving for all of its 60 years. His children and grandchildren still live in the Ennis area and share memories of Polka Festival and KJT also.*

Enter the KJT through the main entrance facing Paris Street, and there is a display case with all of the past presidents of the organization, of which Willie Joe is one. All these men have given a part of themselves to the organization, and all of those who have served during the tenure of the National Polka Festival understand how much work takes place, both visible and behind the scenes to make it what it is today.

"There are some pretty menial chores that have to be done, such as taking out the trash and covering all of the tables in the hall with paper. I have had both of those jobs over the years," Willie Joe recalled. "I was just entering my teens when the festival got started. Later jobs included helping the bartenders by loading the coolers.

"My father, Willie John Salik, and some of his

buddies became pitmasters and were responsible for cooking the barbecue. Of course, before we could cook, one of our members would volunteer some of the trees on their land for us to cut to fuel the pits. We would ride out in pickup trucks to cut and load the wood."

Willie Joe referred to a lot of the behind-the-scenes work as "grunt work," like cleaning the pans and utensils used in cooking and serving. "You paid your dues," he said. "There are so many jobs to do, like collecting money for the meals and bar tickets, preparing additional food that is served with the barbecue, men and ladies serving guests from the kitchen. At the KJT we prepare and serve 1,200 to 1,500 plates during the festival. Of course, similar work is taking place at all of the other halls, too.

"We make sure the bands have what they need, so they can get started on time. As the bands are changing, we are also changing the paper on the tables again."

Willie Joe has seen the evolution of the downtown events, including the parade and the food and vendor booths over the years. "In some of the early years, I rode a horse in the parade. After the parade was over, we might ride up the alley behind Liska's meat market for a six-pack, then continue to ride our horses around downtown. It was all OK as long as we did not have glass containers!



"Downtown has grown so much that I'm afraid people don't see as much of the Czech heritage on display like it was in the early years, and I miss that," Willie Joe said. "It is what we are celebrating, and we want to keep it on display." Willie recalled when more people spoke Czech, including a story about his little brother failing first grade because he needed to learn more English.

Willie Joe eventually "graduated" from some of his earlier jobs to being pitmaster — responsible for cooking the barbecue. "Of course, I had lots of help. Then later I remember Ned Pleiner was pitmaster, and I helped him. We were the host hall, and we cooked 2,500 pounds of meat that year." The host hall rotates annually, and Willie Joe shared that they are responsible for providing the barbecue that is sold downtown.

"I remember so many of the great bands we have had over the years, like Johnny Mensik, the bands from Nebraska, Ennis Czech Boys, Jodie Mikula, Czech and Then Some, the Vrazels, just to name a few of them. Of course, the younger generation enjoys Brave Combo every year." To Willie Joe, "dancing is when you have your partner in your arms, not halfway across the room!" But he has also enjoyed the traditional Cotton-Eyed Joe, Schottische and the Chicken Dance. He commented, "I used to enjoy dancing, but today, I enjoy watching others dance, especially in their traditional Czech costumes." **NOW**

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## KING & QUEEN POLKA DANCE CONTEST

2025 King and Queen: Corey and Samantha Mikula



Sponsored by the SPJST Home Office

**Friday, May 22, 2026 • KJT Auditorium**

Doors Open: 5:00 p.m.

Dance Contest Registration Ends: 8:30 p.m.

Dance Contest Starts: 9:00 p.m.

Dance contestants must be 15 years old or older.

A Czech costume or "fancy" dancing is not a requirement to compete, but a Czech costume is required for the winners who will participate in the weekend festivities. In addition, contestants ages 6 to 10 years are eligible to participate in the Polka Prince and Princess Contest. Contestants must have their parent's or guardian's consent. Winner must have a costume.



## PARADE IN DOWNTOWN ENNIS



**Saturday, May 23, 2026**

Start Time: 10:00 a.m.

Floats, bands and colorful costumes will kick off the downtown festivities. The parade traditionally includes something for visitors of all ages. Enjoy the music of our polka bands riding on decorated floats or the sounds of our award-winning Ennis High School Marching Band. The Shriners make their annual appearance, as well as celebrities, public officials, motorcycles, horseback riders, clowns, kids and seniors! This giant parade twists through historic downtown Ennis and is sure to please. This year's theme is "60 Years, Where the Czech Roots Run Deep!"

## KOLACHE EATING CONTEST



Sponsored by the KJT Home Office

**Saturday, May 23, 2026**

Start Time: 1:30 p.m. • Downtown Stage

Don't miss the annual Kolache Eating Contest! Prizes will be awarded for Men's, Women's, Youth Boy and Youth Girl Individual Champion. Registration Ends: Noon on Friday at the Chamber of Commerce, or noon on Saturday at the Downtown Stage.

## BEER STEIN HOIST CONTEST



Sponsored by the Corona Premier

**Sunday, May 24, 2026 • KJT Auditorium**

Start Time: 3:00 p.m.

In the Czech Republic, the Beer Stein Hoist is known as the držení tupláků. Competitors hold a full, one-liter beer stein straight out in front of them, parallel to the ground for as long as possible. The person who can maintain the correct posture and hold the stein for the longest duration wins. Prizes awarded for Men's and Women's Individual Champion. Registration is limited. Register at the KJT Admission Entry Table starting at noon on Sunday.

# Polka Festival

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## Zoomed In: Amanda Wilds

By Bill Smith

Amanda Wilds and her husband, Ed, moved to North Texas after they graduated from Texas A&M University. “We did not want to live in Dallas, so our first stop was in Frisco. We moved to Rowlett and stayed there for about 20 years, where our children grew up. Now we also have a grandson and are expecting another soon,” Amanda related.

“We wanted to downsize, so we moved to the Ennis area. We enjoy being part of a smaller community,” she said.

Amanda is a teacher and coach. “I taught English for many years, and now I teach elementary P.E., and I coach volleyball and softball. I also have been playing the piano at Baylor Baptist Church for about six months.



Geoffery Williams and Jennifer Wilson host the Greater Ennis Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting.



Harley Whatley and Presleigh Row get engaged.



Natalie Williamson relaxes in the bluebonnets.



Lummus Elementary students, Jackson Taylor and Carter Brooks, enjoy field day.



Raymond and Jeanette Lawrence visit with Lisa Henson of Vital Caring at the Highway to Health Community Health Fair.

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**Jan Wilson**

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Stephanie Sanders, winner of \$50 cash, said, "I've played before and was very happy to win this time!"



While Cinco de Mayo (the commemoration of Mexico's victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla in 1862) is a relatively minor holiday in Mexico, it has become a vibrant celebration of Mexican culture and cuisine in the United States. These authentic recipes showcase the bold flavors that make Mexican food so beloved around the world. **NOW**

## Homemade Guacamole

- 4 ripe avocados
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 3 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

1. Cut the avocados in half. Remove the pits; scoop the flesh into a mixing bowl. Mash with a fork until the desired consistency is reached, leaving some chunks for texture.
2. Immediately add the lime juice and salt, stirring to prevent browning.
3. Fold in the onions and cilantro; mix well.
4. Add the tomatoes, garlic and jalapeños; stir gently to combine.
5. Season with black pepper; adjust the salt to taste. Serve immediately with warm tortilla chips.

## Chicken Tacos With Fresh Salsa

- 2 lbs. boneless chicken breasts
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil

- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 4 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup white onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 cup lettuce, shredded
- 1 cup queso fresco, crumbled

1. Brush the chicken breasts with the olive oil on both sides.
2. In a small bowl, combine the spices; rub the spice mixture generously over the chicken.
3. Grill or pan-sear the chicken over medium-high heat for 6-7 minutes per side until cooked through.
4. While the chicken cooks, prepare the salsa by combining the tomatoes, onions, cilantro and jalapeños in a bowl.
5. Stir in the lime juice and salt; mix well.
6. Once the chicken is done, let it rest for 5 minutes before slicing into thin strips.
7. Warm the corn tortillas in a dry skillet or over an open flame until pliable and slightly charred.

8. Assemble the tacos by layering sliced chicken onto each tortilla and topping with fresh salsa, shredded lettuce and queso fresco.

## Mexican Cinnamon Ice Cream

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

1. In a saucepan, heat the cream, milk, sugar and cinnamon sticks over medium heat until steaming.
2. Remove from heat; let steep for 30 minutes, then remove the cinnamon sticks.
3. Whisk the egg yolks in a bowl. Slowly add the warm cream mixture while whisking constantly.
4. Return to the saucepan; cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened.
5. Stir in the vanilla extract and ground cinnamon; chill completely.
6. Churn in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. Freeze until firm.

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