

Tortillas De Masa Harina!

Nothing beats the flavor of fresh, homemade tortillas for your Mexican dishes! It takes a little effort to get the masa to the right consistency; not too moist, not too crumbly...but once you've made a few, you'll get the feel of it.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup masa harina
- about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup lukewarm water

**NOTE: KEEP A SMALL BOWL OF
LUKEWARM WATER NEARBY TO MOISTEN
YOUR HANDS AS YOU WORK !**

PREPARATION

1. Place the masa harina in a medium sized mixing bowl and add the lukewarm water, mixing with your hands to incorporate the flour and form a ball. Cover with a cloth and let stand for 5-10 minutes.
2. Get out a comal or an UNGREASED iron skillet. Knead the dough for 2-3 minutes, then form into balls about the size of a walnut.
3. Cover a tortilla press – top and bottom - with a piece of plastic wrap and place the dough ball in the center.
4. Lower the top lid of the press and push down on the handle. The tortilla should be about 5” in diameter.
5. Open the tortilla press gently and, using the plastic wrap, gently place it onto a plastic wrap lined platter and replace the plastic wrap onto the tortilla press. After placing 3-4 tortillas in a single layer (litte overlap is ok) on the platter, cover with another piece of plastic or a piece of parchment or wax paper and continue until your tortillas are made. WHEN YOU ARE HALFWAY THROUGH MAKING THE TORTILLAS, heat the comal or skillet on a medium setting. Have a large plate and slightly damp towel or tortilla warmer ready.
6. When your tortillas are ready, turn the heat up higher on the skillet for a few minutes. Place the tortillas on the hot skillet. As soon as the edges start to dry out (about 20 seconds), gently turn it over, cook the second side for 15-20 seconds and turn it again to heat for 15 more seconds and carefully transfer to the plate or the warmer; keeping tortillas covered with the towel or warmer cover so that they don't dry out.

You should get 5 or 6 tortillas from this recipe.

HOMEMADE CHIPS

When you bake your own chips, you control the amount of oil, the type of oil and the amount and type of salt and other seasonings. In these recipes, you will see my favorite spice combinations, but feel free to experiment with your favorite flavors! Just remember to watch them carefully - individual oven temperatures may vary, so check chips at the early end of the time range and add time in small increments as needed.

TORTILLA CHIPS - Making your own is SOOOO easy, SOOOO inexpensive and SOOOO delicious! Play with the spices to find your favorite flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package corn tortillas
- about ½ cup canola oil
- coarse sea salt
- about ½ teaspoon of ancho chili powder
- about ¼ teaspoon chipotle chili powder
- just a pinch of cayenne pepper

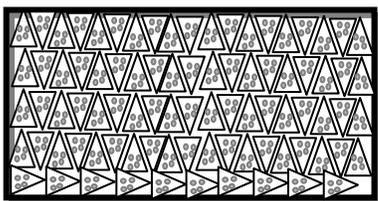
- about 1 teaspoon cumin

MATERIALS

- ½ SHEET PAN (w/sides)
- PASTRY BRUSH
- THIN, SLOTTED SPATULA
- PAPER TOWELS
- LARGE BOWL

PREPARATION

1. PREHEAT OVEN TO 400°.
2. Mix chili powders and cumin together thoroughly. Experiment with different chili powders, or try other spice combinations. For a sweet taste, use a little sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg --- and no salt.)
3. Stir oils together and brush a ½ sheet pan (the kind with about ½” high sides - no higher!) with enough oil to just cover surface and prevent sticking. Sprinkle lightly w/coarse sea salt and chili powder-cumin blend
4. Cut tortillas in half, then each half into thirds (triangles). Lay chips down flat onto the pan...if you alternate direction of pieces as you place them, you'll be able to fit more - the pan's surface should be completely covered.
5. Brush top of chips with oil - don't soak them - but try to cover as much of surface as possible. Sprinkle lightly with coarse sea salt and your spice mix.
6. Turn pan after 3 minutes, check after 2 more - baking until golden brown and hard to the touch - usually not much more than 6-8 minutes total.
7. Remove chips with slotted spatula, drain on paper towels and serve.



☺ Try to cover as much of the pan's surface as possible! You may have to fold or overlap a chip or two...

EASY, TASTY SALSA

Easy to store main ingredients (in the pantry or freezer) allow you to always have this salsa ready to “through together”. The fresh cilantro adds a wonderfully distinct flavor, but if you don’t have any on hand, add a pinch more cumin.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 SMALL (15OZ) CAN CHOPPED TOMATOES-SMALL DICE, PLAIN-W/GARLIC OR W/CHOPPED JALAPENOS)
- 1 SMALL (15OZ) CAN BLACK BEANS - THOROUGHLY RINSED AND DRAINED
- ABOUT 1½ CUPS GOOD QUALITY FROZEN CORN (BIRSEYE - SHOEPEG OR BABY GOLD & YELLOW)
- ½ MEDIUM RED ONION, FINELY CHOPPED
- ½ tsp EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- JUICE OF ½ LIME (YOU CAN SUB GOOD QUALITY BOTTLED LIME JUICE)
- FINE SEA SALT - TO TASTE
- ½ tsp ANCHO CHILI POWDER
- ½ tsp CHIPOTLE CHILI POWDER
- 2 tsps GROUND CUMIN
- ABOUT 1 TBSP CHOPPED FRESH CILANTRO
- ½ TSP FINE SEA SALT

PREPARATION

1. **DRAIN OFF ABOUT ½ OF THE LIQUID IN THE CAN OF CHOPPED TOMATOES. RINSE BLACK BEANS THOROUGHLY TO REMOVE SALT SOLUTION THAT IT’S PACKED IN - DRAIN.**
2. **MEASURE OUT ABOUT 1½ CUPS OF GOOD QUALITY FROZEN CORN (BIRSEYE - SHOEPEG OR BABY GOLD & YELLOW)**
3. **CHOP ONION (SMALL DICE).**
4. **COMBINE THESE INGREDIENTS IN A MEDIUM SIZED MIXING BOWL AND STIR IN THE SPICES, LIME JUICE AND CILANTRO.**
5. **TASTE --- THEN ADJUST SEASONINGS IF YOU NEED TO.**
6. **KEEP REFRIGERATED - GOOD FOR A WEEK - MAYBE A LITTLE MORE IF YOUR ‘FRIDGE IS NICE AND COLD.**

THIS SALSA IS GREAT SERVED WITH YOUR HOMEMADE TORTILLA CHIPS, ON TOP OF CHICKEN DISHES, TACOS, BURRITOS OR ENCHILADAS, EGGS, HOT DOGS AND MORE!

For the Taco Bar:

- 1 pound ground pork or turkey pan fried- medium heat/preheated pan - in 2 TBSPs juice from strained diced tomatoes or tomato sauce, 1 tsp chili powder, 2 tsps cumin and 1 tsp fresh lime juice. Crumble meat into tiny pieces as it cooks. Remove from heat when there is just a little bit of pink still showing and keep moving around in the pan until it's done. **Set Aside**
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs - big pieces of fat cut off and chopped into little bite-sized pieces (about ½") ... pan fried- medium heat/preheated pan - add about 1 -2 tsps canola or sunflower oil to hot pan...let it heat up...add chicken and sauté until chicken starts getting browned, then add in ¼ cup tomato sauce, 1 tsp chili powder, 2 tsps cumin and 1 tsp fresh lime juice. Cook until pieces of chicken feel firm...about 3-4 minutes. **Set Aside**
- Cut sweet onions into thin strips and cook, with olive oil on medium/high until caramelized (VERY golden brown) **Set Aside**
- Wash, dry and shred Romaine lettuce
- Wash, dry and chop Campari tomatoes (or tomatoes on the vine)
- Chop an onion (red or white/sweet) into a small dice
- Shred some extra sharp cheddar, Colby and/or whatever your favorite cheeses are...if you can get some Cotija or Queso Fresco, mix them in with the cheddar!
- **Guacamole:** rub a stoneware (or glass) bowl with 2 or three cut garlic cloves... grind with mortar & pestle- 1 tsp cumin seeds, ½ tsp coriander seeds, 5 or 6 large cilantro leaves and about a teaspoon of coarse salt (**if you do not have coarse salt to grind, use only ½ teaspoon of finer salt**), then mash 2 ripe, soft avocados, and the juice of ½ a lime until almost, but not totally smooth...mix ground seeds, cilantro and salt, 1 tsp cumin & 1 or 2 drops of hot sauce (optional) in well with the avocado-lime mixture and serve... IF you want to make it a salad, add chunks of tomatoes, about a TBSP of roughly chopped cilantro, chopped onion and a finely chopped chili pepper or two if you like it hot
- **Pico de Gallo:** 5-6 plum tomatoes, cored, halved, and seeded, 1 finely chopped small white onion, ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves, 1 TBSP +/- fresh lime juice, 1 minced, seeded (medium sized) jalapeno or serrano chile, 1 teaspoon finely minced garlic, a pinch or 2 of sea salt

WHEN EVERYTHING IS READY, WARM UP THE MEAT, CAMELIZED ONIONS AND TORTILLAS, PUT EVERYTHING OUT AND HAVE A TACO PARTY!

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Mexican Chicken Soup

Great flavors make this chicken soup a stand-out! Serve with a quesadilla or salad for a satisfying meal!

INGREDIENTS

- about 1 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breasts OR thighs, cut into bite-sized chunks
- 1 TBSP canola oil
- 1 TBSP lime juice
- 2 tablespoons Mexican spice blend
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped onions
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ of 1 small jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 1 ½ teaspoons ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup water
- 1 32 ounce box low sodium, fat free chicken broth
- 1 15ounce can diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1 TBSP lime juice
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup crushed tortilla chips
- 1 avocado - peeled, pitted and diced

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 375 °. Toss chicken with canola oil, 1 TBSP of the Mexican spice blend and 1 TBSP lime juice and bake in a small casserole dish OR glass pie plate for 15 minutes.
2. While the chicken is cooking, heat oil in a stockpot and cook the onions, celery and jalapeno until soft. Stir in the water and chicken broth. Season with cumin, black pepper and remaining spice blend. Simmer for 15 minutes for the flavors to mingle. ADD the tomatoes and chicken, simmer for 15 more minutes. STIR IN lime juice and cilantro.

Serve hot topped with avocado, shredded cheese and crispy tortilla chips or strips

Fajita Salad

I'm partial to fajitas as a salad, but feel free to roll up the goodies into a steamed corn tortilla. The important thing is to cook the meat, peppers and onions fast on a high heat to get them nicely caramelized. Serve sizzling hot and squeeze a wedge of lime over them just before eating.

INGREDIENTS

- about ½ lb skirt steak, cut into thin strips, marinated in juice of 1 lime, 1 TBSP olive oil, 1 tsp cumin
- about ½ lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into strips, marinated in juice of 1 lime, 1 TBSP olive oil, 1 tsp cumin and 1 tsp chipotle chili powder & 3 TBSPs tomato sauce
- 2 sweet red peppers, cut into thin strips
- 1 poblano pepper, cut into thin strips
- 2 large onions, cut in half, then into thin strips
- 1 or 2 chili peppers, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 bunch scallions, finely chopped (or snipped w/scissors)
- about ¾s cup shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese
- about 1 cup crumbled Mexican cotijo cheese (or queso fresco)
- 1 batch guacamole
- 1 batch pico de gallo
- about 4-6 cups baby lettuces, preferably romaine and arugula
- 3 large, juicy limes
- about ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro

PREPARATION

1. Marinate meat for 30 minutes minimum.
2. Fill a large (stoneware) bowl with lettuces, cilantro, scallions and chopped chili peppers if using and toss.
3. Pre heat a large, well seasoned cast iron skillet for about 3-4 minutes. Add about 1 TBSP canola or olive oil and let it heat up for another minute. Sauté the chicken for about a minute or two, then add the peppers and onions and sauté until well browned, but not mushy. Add steak and sauté for a minute.
4. Squeeze juice of 1 lime over everything and toss with the lettuce mixture and the cheeses. Top with a large scoop of guacamole and a large scoop of pico de gallo and serve immediately. Top with crumbled tortilla chips or strips if you'd like. Serves 4-6

Classic Sides

Serve with tacos, fajitas, enchiladas or just chips.

- **Guacamole:** rub a stoneware (or glass) bowl with 2 or three cut garlic cloves... grind with mortar & pestle- 1 tsp cumin seeds, ½ tsp coriander seeds, 5 or 6 large cilantro leaves and about a teaspoon of coarse salt (**if you do not have coarse salt to grind, use only ½ teaspoon of finer salt**), **then** mash 2 ripe, soft avocados, and the juice of ½ a lime until almost, but not totally smooth...mix ground seeds, cilantro and salt, 1 tsp cumin & 1 or 2 drops of hot sauce (optional) in well with the avocado-lime mixture and serve... IF you want to make it a salad, add chunks of tomatoes, about a TBSP of roughly chopped cilantro, chopped onion and a finely chopped chili pepper or two if you like it hot.
- **Pico de Gallo:** 5-6 plum tomatoes, cored, halved, and seeded, 1 finely chopped small white onion, ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves, 1 TBSP +/- fresh lime juice, 1 minced, seeded (medium sized) jalapeno or serrano chile, 1 teaspoon finely minced garlic, a pinch or 2 of sea salt.

Pork Tenderloin w/Orange-Chipotle Sauce

Lomo de Puerco con Salsa de Naranja y Chile Chipotle

INGREDIENTS

- 3 ½ pounds pork tenderloin
- 6 cups fresh squeezed or not-from-concentrate-orange juice
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsps Adobo spice blend (w/out pepper)
- 2 ¾s cup low salt chicken broth
- 2 TBSPs chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 TBSP chopped fresh chives
- 1 TBSP minced, canned chipotle chilies

FOR SAUCE

- 2 TBSPs butter
- 3 large shallots, finely chopped
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 tsps Mexican Spice Blend
- ½ tsp chipotle chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- ½ tsp salt
- vegetable oil for cooking

TIME TO COOK!

PREPARATION

1. Divide pork between 2 ziploc bags, put 1 cup oj, ½ tsp salt and 1 tsp Adobo in each bag --- marinate pork 3 hours – overnight.
2. Melt butter in large saucepan over medium/high heat. Add shallots and sauté until soft but NOT browned, about 2 minutes. Add wine and boil until reduced to glaze, about 10 minutes.
3. Add 4 cups orange juice and broth; boil until reduced to about 1¾ cups (about 45 minutes).
4. Drain the pork and pat dry. Preheat broiler. Position the rack so that the top surface of the meat will be about 4 to 5 inches from the heat source.
5. Rub tenderloin with oil and season with Mexican spice blend, cumin, salt & chipotle powder. Then place on a rack in a shallow pan. Broil pork for 10 minutes, turn over, and broil another 10 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest 5 minutes.
6. Bring sauce to simmer, add chives, cilantro and minced chipotles. Stir.
7. When tenderloin has rested, transfer to a board and cut into ¼ to ½ inch-thick slices. Arrange slices on platter, spoon some over the pork, and serve, with any extra sauce in a bowl on the side.

Turkey Mole

A mole is a rich stew, traditionally served on a festive occasion in Mexico. There are many different types of mole, including the famous mole poblano de guajalote. Toasted nuts, fruit and chocolate are among the classic ingredients. This version includes cocoa powder. from The Complete Mexican, South American & Caribbean Cookbook by Jane Milton, Jenni Fleetwood & Marina Filippelli

INGREDIENTS

- 4 boneless, skinless turkey breasts – or thighs (**OR 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, big pieces of fat trimmed**)
- 1 dried ancho chilli, seeded
- 1 dried guajillo chili, seeded
- ¾ cup sesame seeds
- ½ cup whole, blanched almonds
- ½ cup shelled, unsalted peanuts, skinned
- 1 small onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 4 TBSPs vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup canned tomatoes
- 1 ripe plantain
- 1/3 cup raisins
- ½ cup pitted prunes
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp crushed allspice berries
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup (unsweetened) cocoa powder

PREPARATION

1. Soak the dried chilli in a bowl of hot water for 30 minutes, then lift them out and chop them roughly. **SAVE** 1 cup of the soaking liquid.
2. Toast the sesame seeds over low/medium heat, shaking the pan lightly – do not let them burn! Set aside 3 TBSPs of the seeds for garnish and put the rest into a bowl. Toast the almonds and peanuts the same way and add to the bowl with the sesame seeds.
3. Chop the onion and garlic very finely. Heat half of the oil in a frying pan and cook the onion and garlic for 2-3 minutes, taking care not to burn the garlic! Add the chillies and tomatoes and cook gently for 10 minutes.
4. Peel the plantain and slice into **SHORT, DIAGONAL** slices. Add it to the onion mixture with the raisins, prunes, oregano, spices and cocoa. Stir in the 1 cup of reserved chilli water. Bring to a boil, stirring, then add the sesame seeds, almonds and peanuts. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently, then remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Use an immersion blender to puree the sauce. It should be fairly thick, but add a bit of water if it seems to need it.
5. Heat the remaining oil in a deep sauté pan, brown the turkey over medium heat. Cover with the sauce.
6. Cover the pan with foil and a tight fitting lid, then cook over gentle heat for about 20-25 minutes, until turkey has cooked through. Sprinkle with the reserved sesame seeds and oregano and serve with a rice dish and/or warm tortillas.

Arroz Mexicano

(Mexican style rice)

INGREDIENTS

- 12 ounces tomatoes, very ripe and cored (*OR EQUAL AMOUNT CANNED - ONION & TOMATO COMBINED SHOULD = 2 CUPS*)
- 1 medium white onion
- 1 large finely chopped carrot
- ½ cup fresh or frozen baby peas
- 1 medium jalapeno pepper
- 1 sm/med poblano pepper
- 2 cups long grain white rice
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 4 finely minced garlic cloves
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 ½ tsps salt, divided

- ½ cup fresh cilantro, minced
- 1 lime

PREPARATION

1. Adjust rack to middle position and preheat oven to 350.
2. Process tomato and onion in processor or blender until pureed and thoroughly smooth. Transfer mixture to measuring cup and reserve.
3. Remove ribs and seeds from the peppers and discard. Finely mince flesh and set aside.
4. Place rice in a fine mesh strainer and rinse under cold running water until water runs clear- about 1 ½ minutes. Shake rice vigorously to remove excess water. This step removes the starch from the rice so it will not stick. **IF YOU OMIT THIS STEP YOUR RICE WILL NOT BE DRY AND FLUFFY.**
5. Heat oil in heavy bottomed oven safe 12 inch straight sided sauté pan **or** Dutch oven with tight fitting lid over low-medium heat about 2 minutes. (The recipe is very specific about this but I used a 10 inch Dutch oven and it worked out fine.) Drop a few rice grains in and if they sizzle then it is ready. Add rice and fry, stirring until rice is light golden and translucent, about 6-8 minutes. Be careful that the oil doesn't get too hot too fast or the oil will splatter.
6. Reduce heat to medium, add garlic, minced peppers and carrot and cook, stirring constantly until fragrant, about 1½ minutes. Stir in broth, pureed mixture, tomato paste, and salt. Increase heat to medium high, and bring to a boil.
7. Cover pan and transfer to oven to bake until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender, 30-35 minutes. **Stir well after 15 minutes.**
8. Stir in cilantro and peas just before serving and serve with lime wedges.

Beverages & Sweets

Mexican Hot Chocolate (Chocolate Caliente)

The best early morning breakfast to be found on the street of any Mexican city is a nice hot cup of chocolate caliente with some churros, sweet tamales, or fresh-baked sweet goods from a bakery. Made from just chocolate and milk or water, it's a simple, rich drink.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups whole milk or water
- 2 tablets (3 oz. each) Mexican chocolate, broken into chunks- If you can't find Mexican chocolate, melt dark (60%-70%) chocolate until almost liquid, remove from heat and stir in 2 tsps cinnamon, 2 TBSPs sugar and ½ to 1 tsp chili powder (ancho or chipotle). Remove chocolate from heat and stir until it starts to harden again ... fill ring molds with it until it hardens into a disk to use later or use immediately.

PREPARATION

1. Combine milk or water and chocolate in a pot and place over medium heat.
2. Bring to a boil, about 10 minutes. Stir continuously to completely dissolve chocolate.
3. Remove from heat. Using a hand blender, mix liquid until foamy, about 2 minutes.
Serve hot.

- ***Mexican chocolate = Mexican style sweet chocolate*** ***Equivalents: 1 tablet = 3.1 ounces*** ***Notes: This grainy chocolate is flavored with sugar, almonds, and cinnamon, and used to make hot chocolate and mole sauce. You can buy boxes containing large tablets of this in the Mexican foods aisle of larger supermarkets. Ibarra is a well-respected brand. Substitutes: 1 ounce = 1 ounce semi-sweet chocolate + 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon OR (in mole sauces) cocoa powder (Substitute one tablespoon cocoa powder for every ounce of Mexican chocolate called for in the recipe.)***

Agua Fresca

The Mexican drink agua fresca is made with fruit, but it is much different than juice. Fruit juice is typically made by squeezing the liquid from the fruit. Agua fresca starts with fresh water, and the fruit is blended or squeezed into it, resulting in a much lighter and refreshing drink.

Agua fresca can be made from any of your favorite fruits as well as chia seeds, dried hibiscus flowers or tamarind. Homemade agua fresca is also made with fresh, seasonal fruit which is much healthier than store-bought. You can also use your preferred sweetener whether that's sugar, piloncillo, stevia, or artificial sweetener so it's easy to adjust for your own dietary needs. If you use a granulated sweetener (such as white granulated sugar or piloncillo) you might want to make a simple syrup (sugar syrup) first, otherwise you will be stirring the agua fresca for quite a while until the granulated sugar dissolves.

Agua Fresca made with Fresh Fruit

Agua fresca can be made with virtually any fruit and you can combine different fruits to make up your favorite flavor. Some fruits such as melon and apples can be blended into the water after you remove the skins, seeds and stems. Simply cut them into chunks and blend them together with the water. Berries can be blended in whole, but sometimes the larger seeds (such as those found in blackberries and raspberries) are a nuisance, so aqua fresca using berries may need to be strained before serving. Citrus fruits can be squeezed right into the water, making it quick and easy to whip up a batch.

Spiced Hibiscus Agua Fresca

The color and flavor of this refreshing drink is similar to tart cranberry with a subtle tea flavor in the background. When it is served ice cold, the tea flavor is almost imperceptible. It is also loaded with Vitamin C, so it's good for you too! This version adds spices to create a new taste.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup dried food grade hibiscus flower petals
- 3 cups boiling water
- 6 cups drinking water
- ¾ cup sugar (*or 8 oz piloncillo)
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- 1 pinch ground cloves
- 1-2 cups ice (if you need to serve it immediately)

Preparation:

1. Bring 3 cups of water to a boil and add the spices and whisk for 1-2 minutes until spices are incorporated. Pour the liquid over the hibiscus flowers. Let the flowers soak in the water for about 20 minutes. Pour the liquid and flowers through a strainer into a large pitcher. Add in the sugar and stir for 1-2 minutes or until sugar is dissolved.
2. Pour in remaining 6 cups of water and taste for sweetness. Add more sugar or water if necessary.
3. To serve immediately, only add in 5 cups of water and stir in the 1-2 cups of ice and stir until it is ice cold.
4. To use the piloncillo, chop it with a serrated knife into small pieces, then dissolve it in the simmering water with the spices (5-10 minutes) until it is dissolved. Follow rest of recipe **without adding additional sugar**.

Cucumber-Lime Agua Fresca

Wow; is this drink ever refreshing!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound cucumbers, cut into large chunks, PLUS some slices for garnish
- ½ cup freshly squeezed lime juice, plus some wedges for garnish
- 3 TBSPs organic sugar
- 1/8 tsp salt

PREPARATION

1. In a blender, combine cucumbers, lime juice, sugar, salt and 4 cups of cold water. Blend until smooth.
2. Pour mixture through a fine mesh strainer placed over a pitcher, pressing the pulp to release as much liquid as possible. Discard pulp. Add enough ice to fill the pitcher. Put a few cuke slices and lime wedges into the pitcher and use others to garnish glasses.

VARIATION: I love the flavor of mint, so I like to throw 4 or 5 mint leaves into the blender with the other ingredients and then garnish glasses with a little sprig of mint as well.

Chia Fresca con Lima y Menta

A lime drink with chia seeds and mint leaves

INGREDIENTS

- 48 oz cold, fresh drinking water
- 4 limes
- ¼ cup sugar or sweetener of choice (see below for details)
- three TBSPs fresh chia seeds

PREPARATION

- 3. Preparing the Lime and water:** Pour the water into a pitcher. Roll each lime while pressing firmly, on a sturdy surface such as a counter for about ten seconds. Slice the lime in half and squeeze the juice into the water. You want about one TBSP of lime juice for a single 12 oz. glass, but of course add more or less juice to taste. Stir in the sugar or add sweetener to taste.
- 4. Sweeteners:** If using granulated sugar or piloncillo, you may want to dissolve it in boiling water first to make a simple syrup otherwise it will take a while for it to dissolve in the cold water. I find that natural Stevia drops offer the best sweetening power without the extra calories. I use 7-10 drops for a single glass, or one dropper full for a pitcher.
- 5. Adding the Mint and Chia:** Once you have achieved the sweetness level you prefer, it's time to add the mint and chia. Roll up a single mint leaf and slice the roll across into 2 millimeter slices. Unravel the sliced mint leaf pieces and drop them into the lime water. Then add the chia seeds, stir it all up and let it sit for about 10 minutes. During this time, the mint oils will begin to flavor the water and the seeds will absorb the water and become gelatinous. You can stir it occasionally if the seeds seem to be floating or falling to the bottom. Fresh seeds will float throughout the liquid, while older ones tend to sink to the bottom. If they sink, that is fine, you will just need to stir them up a bit to keep them evenly dispersed.
- 6. Serving the Chia Fresca:** I like to add a slice or wedge of lime to my glass for garnish. You can also slice a lime and let the slices float on the Chia Fresca in the pitcher. You can also add ice to it to chill it, or keep it in the refrigerator to keep it cold. A sprig of mint can also be added to each glass for decoration, or a few mint leaves floating on the top is a nice touch as well.

Lemon Chia Fresca

Bubbles make this version extra refreshing!

INGREDIENTS

- 4 TBSPs chia seeds
- 2 cups water
- juice of 4 lemons
- 2 cups sugar (organic/raw)
- 4 quarts plain seltzer water or club soda
- Lemon wedges for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

1. Combine the chia seeds and water in a bowl and let soak overnight (preferably) or at least an hour.
2. Combine lemon juice and sugar in a saucepan and heat just until the sugar grains dissolve. Remove from heat and cool completely.
3. Whisk together with the water and chia seeds.
4. To make your fresca - fill cup about halfway with the chia-water mixture, then top off with seltzer (or club soada). Stir to combine, add an ice cube and enjoy!

Agua Fresca con Fruta

Agua fresca can be made with virtually any fruit and you can combine different fruits to make up your favorite flavor. Some fruits such as melon and apples can be blended into the water after you remove the skins, seeds and stems. Simply cut them into chunks and blend them together with the water. Berries can be blended in whole, but sometimes the larger seeds (such as those found in blackberries and raspberries) are a nuisance, so aqua fresca using berries may need to be strained before serving. Citrus fruits can be squeezed right into the water, making it quick and easy to whip up a batch.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups drinking water
- 2 cups fresh fruit
- ¼ cup all natural/organic sugar
- 2 tsps lemon or lime juice
- lime or lemon wedges for garnish

PREPARATION

1. In a blender combine water and fruit. Puree until smooth.
2. Pour mixture through a sieve into a pitcher or serving container. Stir in lemon or lime juice and sugar. Add additional sugar to taste.
3. Garnish with a lemon or lime wedge, chill and serve.

Mexican Wedding Cookies

This dough is pretty crumbly; don't give up. kep

INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks butter, softened
- ¼ cup sifted powdered sugar, for the dough
- about 1 ½ cups powdered sugar, sifted, to roll the warm cookies in when they are done
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup pecans, finely chopped

PREPARATION

Step 1

Place the softened butter, 1/4 cup of the sifted powdered sugar and the vanilla extract in a large mixing bowl, and cream together using an electric hand mixer. Add the rest of flour 1/2 cup at a time, continuing to mix until all the flour is incorporated. Add the chopped pecans, and mix well, about 1 minute. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a towel, and chill in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

Step 2

Heat your oven to 400°. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, and shape the dough into 1" diameter balls. Shapes for this cookie can be a ball, a pointed oval, or a crescent. Continue to shape all of the cookies, and place on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Step 3

Bake for 10-12 minutes until lightly golden, then remove from the oven, and immediately roll in the remaining powdered sugar while the cookies are still hot. Be careful, as the cookies are quite delicate. Cool the rolled cookies on a wire cookie rack. Once cooled, roll the cookies again in the powdered sugar. Store in an airtight container

Traditional Mexican Flan

Flan, a creamy custard topped with caramel sauce, dates back to the Roman empire and was often made to use up extra milk and eggs. It became popular all over Europe (including Spain) and when Columbus came to America it is said that he introduced the dish to the natives and it then became popular all over North America, even Mexico. Spain invaded Mexico in the 1500's and they had a major influence over the Mexican diet, and flan was surely a common dish. Flan is sometimes made in individual serving dishes, but this one is made in one dish, and you slice it into the desired portions sizes. Yield: 6-8

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup and ½ cup sugar
- 6 large eggs
- 1 14oz can sweetened condensed skim milk
- 2 13 oz cans evaporated skim milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 pinch salt

1. **Baking Dishes** Preheat oven to 325 degrees. You will need a 9 inch glass or metal pie plate (the kind you would bake a pie in) and a additional larger baking pan or dish that you can place the pie plate in for the water bath.
2. **Caramel Sauce** Start by pouring one cup of sugar into a warm pan over medium heat. Constantly stir the sugar. After a few minutes it will begin to melt and brown. When it is fully melted and sufficiently browned and gooey it becomes caramel. If you have a candy thermometer, this will be about 320-350 degrees. Once the caramel has reached it's golden brown color, quickly pour it into the pie plate, tilting it to swirl the caramel around the sides.
3. **Preparing the Custard** In a mixer or with a whisk, blend the eggs together for about a minute or until they are thoroughly combined and beginning to become frothy. While mixing the eggs, slowly pour in the condensed milk, followed by the evaporated milk then slowly mix in the ½ cup of sugar and the vanilla. Blend smooth after each ingredient is added.
4. **Baking the Flan** Pour the custard mixture into the caramel-lined pie plate. Place the pie plate in a large glass or ceramic baking dish and fill the baking dish (not inside the flan) with about one inch of hot water so that the pie plate is surrounded with water, but not floating. If you can work quickly, it is easiest to pull out an oven rack just far enough so you can put the baking dish in, add the pie plate and add the water, while it is already on the rack. Then you just need to push the rack in. If you have steady hands, you can assemble the water bath on the table or counter and carry it to the oven. Bake the flan for 45 minutes in the water bath and check with a knife just to the side of the center. If knife comes out clean, it's ready.
5. **Serving the Flan** Remove and let cool. Let the flan cool in refrigerator for at least one hour or overnight. When you are ready to serve it, place a serving dish over the flan and turn the whole thing over so that the Flan comes onto the serving dish. The caramel sauce will flow over the top of the custard, and you can scrape out more caramel if it sticks to the sides. Enjoy immediately. You can refrigerate the leftovers for up to 48 hours.

Roberto Santibañez's Simple Flan

Roberto Santibañez is the chef/owner of Fonda restaurants in Brooklyn and Manhattan, NY. He is the author of Rosa's New Mexican Table, nominated for a James Beard Award. His second book Truly Mexican was one of the Notable Cookbooks of 2011 by the New York Times.

INGREDIENTS

For the Caramel

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon fresh lime juice
- 1 pinch salt
- 5 ounces sugar, about ½ cup
- 3 strips lime zest
- 3 strips orange zest
- 1 3-inch piece Mexican cinnamon

For the Flan

- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 cup 1% milk
- 2 large eggs
- 4 large egg yolks
- 2 cups boiling water

PREPARATION

Step 1

Preheat oven to 300F. To make the caramel, bring sugar, ¼ cup water, lime juice, and salt to boil in small pot without stirring. Cool until syrup turns dark amber. Evenly pour into 6 ramekins.

Step 2

To make the custard bring the half-and-half, sugar, zest strips, and cinnamon to a boil.

Step 3

Whisk eggs and egg yolks in medium bowl until smooth. Whisk in boiling half-and-half in a thin slow stream. Strain into a clean bowl and skim foam from surface.

Step 4

Divide custard between caramel filled ramekins. Place in a deep baking dish or roasting pan and transfer to the middle oven rack. Pour in enough boiling water to come halfway up the ramekins. Bake for 45 minutes. Cool flans in water bath. Unmold and serve.

Mexican Crullers (Churros)

INGREDIENTS

Crullers:

- 1 cup water
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 to 5 eggs
- Canola oil, for frying
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

PREPARATION

1. To make the crullers: In a medium saucepan, heat 1 cup water, the butter, sugar, vanilla, and salt over medium-high heat until the edges of the liquid start to bubble. Add the flour all at once and stir briskly with a wooden spoon until well mixed and no lumps of flour remain.
2. Remove from the heat. Add 4 of the eggs, 1 at a time, beating well with a wooden spoon after each. The dough should look soft and glossy and keep a "hook" shape when the spoon is pulled from the dough. If not, beat in the last egg.
3. Scrape the dough into a pastry bag fitted with a star tip. Pour enough canola oil into a deep heavy skillet (cast iron is ideal) to fill 1-inch. Heat over medium heat until the tip of the handle of a wooden spoon gives off a slow steady stream of tiny bubbles. Carefully pipe the dough into the oil, forming 6-inch crullers. Pipe only as many crullers into the oil as fit comfortably. Overcrowding the pan will result in soggy crullers. Fry, turning once, until golden brown on each side. Drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining dough.
4. Put the sugar and the cinnamon in a paper bag. Crimp the top and shake well to mix. Drop a few crullers at a time into the bag and shake until coated. Best served as soon as possible.

Pan Dulce

is a delicious bread that is slightly sweet. The colored toppings are usually carved into a design which spreads out during cooking to create interesting patterns and cracks. Pan Dulce is often eaten for breakfast with coffee. Gather your ingredients before you begin.

INGREDIENTS

for the Dough

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup vegetable shortening
- 4 eggs, beaten and at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup lukewarm water
- one tablespoon or one package of dry yeast

- 4 cups flour

for the Topping

- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup flour
- 3 teaspoons vanilla extract
- various food colorings

PREPARATION

1. Add the shortening and sugar to a mixing bowl. Mix on medium to high speed until it becomes creamy
2. Add in the eggs, salt water and yeast. Mix on medium speed for about 10-20 seconds or until the ingredients are blended together. Place the flour in a large bowl and make a well in the middle. Pour the mixture into the flour. Slowly begin to mix the liquids into the flour until a dough forms.
3. After the dough forms, begin to knead it on a lightly floured work surface for fifteen minutes. Place it into a bowl and cover it with a damp towel. Place the covered bowl in a warm area and let it rise for one hour. I like to pre-heat my oven to 200 for 5 minutes then turn the heat off and place the dough in the warm oven to rise as I often have the windows open and it stays fairly cool in my kitchen.
4. After the dough has risen, divide it into 12 portions. Roll each portion into a round shape and place it on a lightly greased baking sheet or non-stick silicone pad and pat it down slightly. Cover them with a damp cloth and let them rise for an hour. After about 40 minutes of rising, see to the topping while the dough rises for the last 20 minutes.
5. Mix the topping ingredients together on medium-high speed for 1 minute. The mixture will appear crumbly. Remove the topping mixture divide it into however many colors you are going to use. If you are going to be using just one color, there is no need to divide it. Popular colors are yellow and pink, however you may use whatever colors you wish. I prefer gel colorings and I use a toothpick to scoop up just a bit of color and place it on the dough. If you are using liquid drops, start with 2-3 drops and add more as needed. After you add the coloring, knead it between your hands until the color is mixed in. The topping will be very soft and slightly crumbly.
6. After the color is thoroughly mixed into the topping, divide the topping into 12 portions. If you are using two colors, there will be six portions of each color, and if you are using three colors, there will be 4 portions of each color.

7. Press a portion of the topping between your palms until is flat. The topping is somewhat delicate because it is very soft, so you can also use your fingers to press it out. Place each portion of topping on one portion of dough. Pat it slightly so that it conforms to the round shape of the dough. Slowly slide a sharp knife through the topping to create designs. If you do not carve a design, the topping will create an interesting "cracked" design on it's own. Press a portion of the topping between your palms until is flat. The topping is somewhat delicate because it is very soft, so you can also use your fingers to press it out. Place each portion of topping on one portion of dough. Pat it slightly so that it conforms to the round shape of the dough. Slowly slide a sharp knife through the topping to create designs. If you do not carve a design, the topping will create an interesting "cracked" design on it's own.
8. Bake the Pan Dulce at 350 degrees for about fifteen minutes. Let them cool slightly and enjoy



Tres Leches Cake

"Pastel de Tres Leches" or "Tres Leches Cake" is named for the three milks in the soaking liquid (Leche means milk in Spanish.) The three milks in the soaking sauce for Tres Leches are sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk and heavy cream. The heavy cream is also whipped up to use as the topping. Due to the rich ingredients and that it is soaked in a creamy syrup, Tres Leches Cake is extremely dense and moist, almost like a custard. Tres Leches is sweet and delicious, but it is nothing like a traditional dry cake that is light and fluffy.

Ingredients

For the cake:

- Vegetable oil
- 6 ¾ ounces cake flour, plus extra for pan
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- 4 ounces unsalted butter, room temperature
- 8 ounces sugar
- 3 whole eggs, 3 egg whites
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

For the glaze:

- 1 (12-oz) can evaporated skim milk
- 1 (14-oz) can sweetened condensed low fat milk
- 1 cup half-and-half

For the topping:

- 2 cups light cream
- 6 ounces sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

For the cake:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly oil and flour a 13 by 9-inch metal pan and set aside.
2. Whisk together the cake flour, baking powder and salt in a medium mixing bowl and set aside.
3. Place the butter into the bowl of a stand mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat on medium speed until fluffy, approximately 1 minute. Decrease the speed to low and with the mixer still running, gradually add the sugar over 1 minute. Stop to scrape down the sides of the bowl, if necessary. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, and mix to thoroughly combine. Add the vanilla extract and mix to combine. Add the flour mixture to the batter in 3 batches and mix just until combined. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan and spread evenly. This will appear to be a very small amount of batter. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until the cake is lightly golden and reaches an internal temperature of 200 degrees F.
4. Remove the cake pan to a cooling rack and allow to cool for 30 minutes. Poke the top of the cake all over with a skewer or fork. Allow the cake to cool completely and then prepare the glaze.

For the glaze:

1. Whisk together the evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and the half-and-half in a 1-quart measuring cup. Once combined, pour the glaze over the cake and refrigerate the cake overnight.

Topping: Place the heavy cream, sugar and vanilla into the bowl of a stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, whisk together on low until stiff peaks are formed. Change to medium speed and whisk until thick. Spread the topping over the cake and allow to chill in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Paletas de Coco

Paletas, Mexican popsicles, are a deliciously refreshing treat on a hot summer day. They are lightly sweetened and made with fresh ingredients which makes them a much healthier alternative to popsicles that contain artificial colors, flavors and sweeteners. These creamy popsicles are flavored with coconut milk which freezes to a soft and creamy texture. Add some bits of tropical fruit if you wish.

INGREDIENTS

- 15 oz can of light coconut milk
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup ice cubes
- ½ cup light cream
- ½ cup 1% milk
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla
- Popsicle Mold
- Popsicle Sticks

PREPARATION

1. Bring the coconut milk to a slow simmer. Add the sugar and stir occasionally until sugar has melted into the milk.
2. Remove from heat and pour into large measuring cup, and add ice and stir until it is melted and the coconut milk is cooled.
3. Add in the milk, light cream and vanilla. Pour the coconut mixture into each mold to reach the top. Place the top on and add the sticks. Freeze for one hour or until solid.

Plantains

Plantains are a starchy fruit that can be used at various levels of ripeness. When they are green they are not very sweet and they can be use to make chips. As they blacken they become sweeter and are great for dessert dishes. For this dessert dish of Plantains Con Crema the plantains should be fairly sweet, but the skin should not be completely black. They are baked until softened and topped with cream and berries. It's a wonderfully fruity spring dessert or snack.

Cream-Plantains Con Crema

A simple and delicious way to end your meal. Try this rich dessert tonight.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 plantains, sliced lengthwise
- ·1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ·2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ·1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- ·1/8 cup brown sugar
- ·2 teaspoons water
- ·1/3 cup cream cheese, room temperature
- ·1/4 cup heavy cream
- ·3 teaspoons sugar
- ·1/2 cup raspberries or strawberries, fresh

PREPARATION

1. Oil the bottom of glass baking dish. Place plantains, flat side up, onto oiled dish. Mix vanilla, cinnamon, brown sugar and water in a small bowl. Drizzle over plantains. Bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes or until plantain is extremely soft.
2. Beat cream cheese, cream and sugar on low with an electric mixer, or use a wisk and mix by hand until smooth and well incorporated. Place 2 slices of a plantain on plate and drizzle with half of the cream topping and the fresh berries. Serve immediately!

Pan-Fried Plantains

A quick easy way to enjoy plantains. Plantains are widely used in Mexico, especially in the Yucatan area. This is just one of the many ways to prepare this starchy fruit.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 plantains, greenish-yellow
- oil for frying
- salt to taste

PREPARATION

1. Peel the plantains and then slice them as thin as possible. They should be less than 1/8 inch thick.
2. Fry in hot oil until golden brown. Drain on paper towels and salt to taste. Serve immediately