

TAMALES

1. Prepare the meat filling:

- 4 pounds meat (chicken, beef or pork)
- 2 to 5 Garlic cloves (your preference)
- 1 teaspoon dried, crushed oregano (optional)

Place meat, garlic and oregano in a pot, cover with water and cook meat until tender. Cool slightly, discard bones, fat and garlic cloves. Finely shred meat to mix with prepared red or green chile (recipes follows). Reserve broth for use in preparation of tamales.

2. Prepare red or green chile for tamales:

Red Chile Tamales:

Place 1 lb dried red chili pods (rinsed in cold water to remove dirt) in a stock pot with water to cover. Bring to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Drain pods and discard cooking liquid. Remove stems and seeds from chile pods.

In a blender, working in small batches, place the pods, 1 clove of garlic and salt to taste, and then add cold water to cover. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes. Continue process until all chile pods are processed. The one lb. package of dried pods will make about 12 to 15 cups of red chile sauce.

Use 10-12 cups of red chile sauce with the prepared (cooked and shredded) meat for the 5 lbs. of masa in this recipe. Red chile is often used with pork or beef for making tamales.

Green Chile Tamales:

Use 3 to 5 cups of roasted, peeled and chopped green chile and mix with the prepared (cooked and shredded) meat. The chile can be fresh prepared or purchased frozen and ready to use. Green chile is often used with chicken. The mixture should be moist; add some of the reserved meat broth if it is too dry.

3. Prepare the corn husks:

- 1 pound hojas (dried corn husks – can be purchased at most local markets)

Soak husks in hot tap water (about 15 minutes) and remove any corn silk or other matter. Leave husks submerged in water until ready to use.

4. Prepare the corn masa:

5 pounds prepared fresh masa, plain, without added ingredients (labeled “sin preparada” or without preparation, can be purchased at most local grocery stores or local specialty markets)

OR- use tamale masa mix

1 tablespoons baking powder

2 tablespoons salt

1 cup Canola or Olive Oil

Additional chicken or beef broth (from reserved) if more moisture is needed.

Place the first four ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Add broth if necessary. Masa should be a thin enough consistency to stick to and spread easily onto corn husks.

5. Assemble the tamales:

Take large corn husk, shake off excess water, place the open husk in your open hand, smooth side up. Using a rubber spatula or other spreader, wipe on about 2-3 tablespoons of prepared masa, covering the husk in the center and leaving the edges clean. Top with a generous 1-2 tablespoons of meat and chile mixture. Fold sides of the husk toward center and the bottom of the husk up. Secure with a torn strip of husk.

Tamales must be cooked by steam. Use a tamale steamer, a pressure cooker or any steam pan. Steamers typically cook for 60-90 minutes whereas pressure cookers take 15minutes. Tamales are done when corn masa is “set” (appears dry) and when the husk peels away from tamale easily, maintain the tamale shape.

Recipe makes about 6 dozen medium tamales.

Other filling options:

- Add a small amount of cheddar cheese on top of meat before folding tamales.
- Black beans, corn, zucchini and chili.
- Turkey and green chile
- Calabacitas (corn, green chili, onion and zucchini) and cheese
- Strips of sautéed potato, chili peppers and onion.
- Sweet fillings – such as dried raisins or other dried fruit, ground nuts and brown sugar with cinnamon.

Be creative! Experiment with your own fillings!

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