

05/23/10 - El Salvadorian Pastelitos with Chicken Filling

Barbeque and outdoor party season has arrived. On the long leisurely days of late spring and summer, I like to invite people over and serve a meal. Sometimes it is as humble as hamburgers with all the fixings or Teriyaki chicken with potato salad and corn on the cob. Other days I go all out with an absurd variety of hors de oeuvres, chimichurri steaks, and grilled vegetable along with a dessert buffet which might include fresh peach pie, fresh cherry crisp, and other finishes involving seasonal fruit. Along with the usual summer holidays like Memorial Day, Father's day, and Independence Day, in our family, we celebrate our anniversary, my son Mitchell's birthday, Grandpas birthday, Nona's birthday, visiting family and so on.

So, bottom line, its time to get a jump on filling the freezer with pastelitos, pastels de carne, pie dough discs, pureed raspberries and other things that are easily made ahead and make party preparation less stressful. In addition I write out menus, stock up on paper plates, or have you seen these new melamine reusable plates in great patterns for the outdoors?, plastic cutlery and the like. The barbeque man is coming this week to tune up the old barbeque and replace any totally rusted parts.

These pastelitos are so delicious you will want to add them to your menus. They have that irresistible corn crunch on the outside and the potatoes and vegetables meld to make a filling with the consistency of flavorful mashed potatoes with bits of melt in your mouth tender chicken. Dip them in a bit of Pico de gallo or smear on some salt and lime flavored guacamole and wow!!

I promise the recipes for pico de gallo and guacamole this week.

Serves 15 to 30

Filling:



2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Water

Salt and Pepper

2 to 3 tablespoons safflower oil

1/4 onion

1 Roma tomato

1/2 green pepper

6 ounces haricort vert (French green beans), finely diced

1 medium carrot peeled and finely diced

1 large Idaho potato (a baking potato), peeled and finely diced

1 cup chicken poaching liquid

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon fresh cracked pepper

1 teaspoon cumin powder

Dough:

6 cups of Masa



2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup of water

2 teaspoons of Achiote paste (a paste from ground Annatto beans)

2 tablespoons safflower oil

4 and 1/2 cups water

To make pastelitos, first, I assemble all of the filling ingredients, cook the filling, make the dough, and then fill the individual pastelitos. After I form the individual pastelitos, I freeze them in a single layer on sheet pans in the freezer for around one

half day. When they are frozen hard, I pack them away in airtight containers in the freezer until the day of the party. On the day of the party, they go straight from the freezer to the deep fryer, without defrosting, just like Syrian kibbeh or Moroccan cigars.



Place chicken breasts in a large sauté pan with a tight fitting lid. Season them with a little salt and pepper, pour in enough cold water to barely cover them. Turn heat on high, until chicken breasts and water come to a boil, then without removing the lid, turn off heat, and let breasts cool down in poaching liquid. This method yields perfectly poached chicken, cooked all the way through while retaining a moist texture. When





Preheat a very large sauté pan with a lid, you could use a dutch oven, and when it is hot add 3 tablespoons of oil. Next, toss diced onion, tomato, and green pepper into the pan. Sauté mix for a moment and season with salt and pepper. When vegetables are translucent toss in green beans, carrots, potatoes and give vegetables a stir. Adjust salt and pepper to your taste and add cumin. Continue to sauté for a few moments. Add shredded chicken breasts. Stir until the mixture is dry and starting to stick, and then add one cup of chicken poaching liquid. Cover and let filling steam for a few moments. Uncover filling and stir until all the liquid is evaporated or absorbed and the mix is starting to stick. Turn off the heat and let the mixture cool.



For dough: measure masa flour in a large bowl and add the salt and mix. Combine the Achiote paste with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water and mix to dissolve. Add Achiote liquid to Maseca. Pour the next 4 and $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water and oil into dough and begin to knead by hand. Work dough until it gathers together in a large ball pulling away from the sides of the bowl cleanly. It is very soft and easy to work with. Prepare a tortilla press (available at house ware stores, not expensive). Place a thick small

plastic on one side of the press and have another piece of plastic ready for the top. Prepare a bowl of water to moisten your hands as this makes working with the dough easier. Moisten your hands and make balls out of dough about walnut size. Place a ball in the center of the tortilla maker, cover with another sheet of plastic, then bring the top of press down and flatten to about 1/8 inch thick and three inch diameter.





Put about two teaspoons of filling in the middle of flattened dough disc. Fold in half and seal edges very well. Place on a clean cookie sheet, either to freeze or fry right

away. To cook Pastelitos, deep fry them in 325° F oil until deep golden brown. Drain and place them on paper towels. Eat them hot with salsa, pico de gallo, and or guacamole.

This recipe makes about 60 pieces. In my experience a guest will consume 2-4 pieces each. They keep in the freezer for about 3 months. One more thing, as you can see in the pictures I double the recipe, making the filling all at once and making the dough twice .



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