

Cuban Tamales



INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 pounds pork in chunks
- 2 cloves garlic, whole, peeled
- 1 tablespoon **La Fe vinegar water** to cover meat
- 3 cups ground fresh yellow corn (may substitute frozen)
- 3/4 cup lard, butter, or shortening
- 2 1/2 cups masa harina
- 2 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1/4 teaspoon bijol (annato seed powder)
- 1/4 cup **La Fe olive oil** for frying
- 1 large onion, chopped fine
- 1 large green pepper, chopped fine
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 ounces **La Fe tomato paste (1/2 can)**
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup **La Fe cooking wine (red or white)**
- 1 large lemon (juice only)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon **La Fe black pepper (fresh ground)**
- 24-32 dried corn husks (Soak dried cornhusks in hot water before using)

DIRECTIONS

STEP ONE

For meat, you need pork with plenty of fat -- either well marbled or with a fat layer or both. We've had good luck with de-boned country style pork ribs. Or have the butcher cut something to order.

STEP TWO

Whichever meat you use, cut it up into smaller pieces -- no more than two inches thick or three inches long. Add a little salt with a shaker and place in a large sauce pan. Add water to just barely cover the meat. Add two peeled garlic cloves and one tablespoon La Fe vinegar. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered until all of the water has boiled away. Fry the pork pieces in the rendered fat just until brown, but NOT crispy! The meat should be tender and stringy. Remove the meat. Trim off any excess fat (there shouldn't be any) and with a knife or meat hammer; break up the meat into small pieces.

STEP THREE

Slice the corn kernels off the cob (or use La Fe frozen corn). Quickly grind the corn in a food processor with your choice of fat (lard, or butter, or shortening) until you get a very coarse mixture with visible corn kernels. Don't over process! Remove

from the processor and blend in 2 1/2 cups warm chicken broth and two cups masa harina to the ground corn. Add a dash of Bijol powder to give it a nice yellow color.

STEP FOUR

Fry the onion and green pepper in La Fe olive oil at medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft. Add garlic and continue to fry for two to three minutes. Do not drain off excess oil! Mix La Fe tomato paste in 1/2 cup warm water and add it and the La Fe cooking wine to the vegetables. Simmer for about 10 minutes.

STEP FIVE

Place the pork, vegetables, and the ground corn/masa mixture in a large cooking pot. Add La Fe lemon juice to the mixture and blend. Add salt and La Fe black pepper and stir. Cook the mixture on low heat, stirring frequently (don't let it burn!) until it thickens -- about 20 minutes.

STEP SIX

Add more masa or more broth as necessary so that you have a stiff, but pliable paste. Taste and add salt if needed. Remove from heat and let cool.

CONTINUED...

To make the tamales

STEP ONE

Take two corn husks and overlap them flat on the table. Put some of the corn mixture in the center of the cornhusks. Fold the cornhusks, first over the filling the short way, and then folding up the long way from the ends. Tie with a string.

STEP TWO

Tamales are best cooked in a large pot with about two inches of water in the bottom. (If you have the little insert that keeps the food off the bottom, great!) Add the tamales, standing them on end and cover the pot. Bring the water to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer/steam about 90 minutes to two hours.

IMPORTANT

Be sure to check the water level occasionally so that the pot doesn't run dry!

