

## GORDITAS DE CHAYA

### THICK MAIZE PANCAKES WITH SAUTÉED GREENS

*Gordita* is Spanish for "little fatty" or "little fat girl". *Gorditas* can be filled with anything – sausage, *picadillo* or *chicharra* – but these *chaya*-filled cakes are perfect for Lenten fasting, especially if you trade the lard for vegetable shortening. *Chaya* (*Cnidoscolus chayamansa*) is considered the "miracle food" of the Maya. The edible parts of this green, leafy plant, which taste something like spinach when cooked, are exceptionally high in protein, Vitamins A and

C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamine and carotene, as well as minerals such as calcium, iron, potassium and phosphorus.

In fact, its nutritional content is two to threefold greater than most edible leafy green vegetables such as spinach or chard. As a traditional remedy, *chaya* has been recommended for a number of ailments including diabetes, obesity, kidney stones, hemorrhoids, acne and eye problems. So no need to feel guilty when you eat these fat little cakes – just close your eyes and pretend it's a sin!

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10 SERVINGS

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- **3 Tbs. (45 ml) olive oil**
- **1 large red onion**
- **6 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped**
- **1 large red bell pepper, seeded and diced**
- **8 cups chaya leaves, thick stems removed and coarsely chopped**  
(Substitute: spinach, Swiss chard, kale)
- **Salt and pepper, to taste**

- **3/4 cup (175ml) solid lard** (Refrigerate first if it is liquid. Substitute: vegetable shortening)
- **2 lbs. (1 k) masa**
- **1<sup>3/4</sup> oz. (50 g) flour**
- **1 tsp. (5 ml) baking powder**
- **1 Tbs. (15 ml) powdered chicken bouillon, mixed with 2 Tbs.(30 ml) hot water**  
(Optional)
- **2 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **1 chile habanero, finely chopped**
- **2 tsp. (10ml) salt or to taste**

#### ☞ PREPARE THE CHAYA ☞

**STEP 1 IN A LARGE SKILLET**, heat olive oil until hot but not smoking. Add onion, garlic and bell pepper and cook until softened. Add *chaya* and cover. Cook 20-25 minutes or until *chaya* is tender, stirring occasionally. Check seasonings.

#### ☞ PREPARE THE MASA ☞

**STEP 2 PLACE LARD OR SHORTENING** in the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat at high speed for 5 minutes until aerated and lightened. Add remaining ingredients and beat at high speed another 5 minutes until thoroughly incorporated. Check seasonings.

#### ☞ SHAPE AND FRY GORDITAS ☞

**STEP 3 PREHEAT A DRY GRIDDLE, COMAL OR CAST IRON SKILLET** over highest heat for 10 minutes. (Alternatively you may fry the *gorditas* in vegetable oil.) Meanwhile, shape *masa* into 3.5-oz (100g) balls. Pat one ball into a thick *tortilla*, about 4" (10cm) in diameter and 3/8" (5mm) thick in the palm of your hand. Top the *tortilla* with 1 heaping tablespoon (15 ml) of the *chaya* mixture. Fold in half, sealing edges, then reshape into a thick round about the size you started with. Set aside and continue with remaining balls.

#### ☞ FRY & SERVE ☞

**STEP 4 FRY** *gorditas* either on the *comal* or in hot oil. If you will serve them later, keep warm in a 150°F (65°C) oven. Guests may eat *gorditas* with their fingers, or from plates with forks and the *salsa* of their choice.