

HORCHATA

CHILLED ALMOND AND RICE BEVERAGE

According to Sophie Coe in her landmark book *America's First Cuisines*, *horchata* as drunk in Spain before the conquest was a cool, refreshing drink made from a particular melon seed, which was ground and soaked in water to extract the flavor. Lacking the specific melon variety in the New World, the Spanish substituted the more readily available squash seed, which the Maya and other Mesoamerican peoples had been using toasted and ground for millennia. Later, almonds and rice were introduced into the New World and *horchata* evolved to include those ingredients instead.

Horchata has long been a favorite beverage in steamy Yucatán, and chronicles of the early part of the 20th century report a popular mid-day snack: *horchata* with *panuchos*.

10 8-oz. (236ml) SERVINGS

☞ PREPARE THE FLAVORED WATER ☞

- 1 1/4 cups (295ml) long grain rice
- 1 1/4 cups (295ml) almonds, *blanched**
- 1 5-inch (13cm) stick *canela*
(Also known as "Mexican cinnamon".
Substitute: half the amount of standard
Cassia cinnamon.)
- 6 whole allspice berries
- 1/2 oz. (14g) lime peel (*green only*,
avoid the white pith)
- 4 cups (1 liter) water

- 1/4 tsp. (1.185 ml) almond or vanilla
extract

- 6 cups (1.5 liters) ice water
- 3/4 cup (177ml) sugar, *or to taste*

**NOTE: To blanch almonds, plunge whole almonds with skins into boiling water for 1 minute. Drain, allow to cool slightly, then press almonds out of skins. Pre-blanched almonds are also available commercially.*

STEP 1 GRIND THE RICE in a blender or clean coffee grinder. Place ground rice, almonds, *canela* or cinnamon stick, allspice and lime rind in a medium bowl; cover with hot (not boiling) water and cover. Allow to rest a minimum of 8 hours, or overnight. Remove cinnamon stick, allspice and rind.

STEP 2 PLACE RICE/ALMOND MIXTURE and extract in a blender jar and blend for about 5 minutes until mixture is very smooth. Check for any grittiness and blend more if necessary.

STEP 3 LINE A SIEVE with two layers of cheesecloth and place over a large bowl or pitcher. Pour in the rice/almond mixture, pressing and stirring with a spatula to pass through as much liquid as possible. Once most of the liquid has passed through, gather the ends of the cheesecloth, twist and squeeze to remove excess liquid. Discard solids. You should have approximately 4 cups (1 liter) of liquid.

☞ FINISH HORCHATA ☞

STEP 4 STIR ICE WATER into the almond/rice liquid, adding more water if mixture is too thick. Sweeten to taste and refrigerate until ready to serve.