

SOPA DE CHICHARRÓN

CREAMY PORK CRACKLING SOUP

Christina Baker of Hacienda Xcanatún shared this recipe with me for a spectacular, creamy soup based on *chicharrón en salsa verde*. You may also follow this same formula using *chicharrón en salsa roja*. For best flavor, you should purchase both the lard and the cracklings from a Mexican *carnicería*: commercial lard will be flavorless, and packaged cracklings are likely to be rancid.

8 SERVINGS

🌀 PREPARE THE SALSA VERDE 🌀

PLACE TOMATILLOS in a medium saucepan; cover with water, bring to a boil and cook uncovered 8-10 minutes until barely tender. Remove the tomatillos; reserve the cooking liquid.

Place 1/3 cup (83ml) of the reserved cooking liquid in a blender; discard remaining liquid. Add next four ingredients and process until very smooth. Add tomatillos and puree until smooth. Add salt and check seasonings.

🌀 PREPARE THE SOUP 🌀

HEAT THE LARD in a large saucepan until shimmering; add the salsa verde; bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook uncovered 5-6 minutes, stirring frequently, until the sauce thickens and darkens slightly. Add the chicken stock and return to a simmer. Add the crumbled chicharrón to the sauce and stir to incorporate. Continue simmering about 5 minutes or until the cracklings are softened.

Using a food processor or handheld immersion blender, process the soup until the chicharrón is thoroughly puréed. Add the cream and process again until well blended; check seasonings and serve.

🌀 SERVE 🌀

SERVE IN SOUP BOWLS; place one piece of chicharrón in the center of the soup; drizzle on some of the cream, and garnish with cheese and cilantro.

- **6 medium tomatillos (1 1/3 lb. / 600g)**, husks removed and discarded, washed
- **1/2 medium white onion (5 oz. / 137.5g)**, coarsely chopped
- **2 medium chiles serranos (3/4 oz. / 20g)** charred, peeled, seeded and roughly chopped
- **4 medium cloves garlic (1 oz. / 24g)**, peeled and coarsely chopped
- **1/4 cup (15g) cilantro**, coarsely chopped
- **1/2 tsp. (3g) salt**

- **1 Tbs. (14 g) lard**
- **2 1/2 oz. (75g) chicharrón**, broken into bite-sized pieces, plus a few extra unbroken pieces for garnish
- **4 cups (1 L) chicken stock or bouillon**
- **1/2 cup (125ml) Mexican crema** (Substitute: *crème fraîche*, whipping cream or sour cream), plus additional to garnish

- **1 Tbs. (5g) cilantro**, finely chopped
- **8 oz. (250g) queso panela or cotija** (Substitute: fresh mozzarella or feta), cubed or crumbled