

SOPA DE JOROCH'

SQUASH SOUP WITH MAIZE DUMPLINGS

The comprehensive Mayan dictionary of UADY (Autonomous University of Yucatán) defines *joroch'* as a *masa* dumpling formed into a hollow cone shape, then simmered in a pot of beans. Indeed, all the recipes that I have ever encountered in Yucatán that go by that name fit UADY's description – except one. Doña Lina (Angelina Magaña) of Uman, a skilled and intelligent cook, insists that her *Sopa de Joroch'* – which features small, flattened *masa* cakes instead of the conical dumplings, simmered in a simple squash stock instead of beans – is the real thing. I am not one to argue when the results are so delicious! When Doña Lina taught me this recipe, I kept questioning her: “Doesn't it have any bouillon? No onion? No garlic?” I could not imagine that a soup with only squash, water, salt and *masa* (OK, and just a little bit of lard) could turn out to taste like much. In working to refine measurements and perfect this recipe for my classes, I toyed with the idea of adding a *soupeçon* of chicken bouillon. In the end, however, I decided to leave well enough alone since the soup is so deeply satisfying in its bare naked simplicity.

10 SERVINGS

🌀 PREPARE THE STOCK 🌀

- **8 cups (2 liters) water**
- **3 tsp. (15ml) salt**
- **10 squash blossoms, plus 10 more for garnish, washed, stalks and sepals removed**
- **3 lbs. (1.5 k) small patty pan or zucchini squash, stems removed, cut in half, seeded and cut into very rough dice (bite-size pieces)**
- **1/2 cup (115ml) lard (Optional enrichment: fry with 2 strips bacon then strain through cheesecloth)**

- **1 lb. (500g) masa**
- **1/2 tsp. (2.5ml) salt**

- **1 cup (118ml) grated Edam cheese**
- **1 recipe *Tomate Frito***
- **1 recipe *Salpicón de Cebolla***

STEP 1 BRING SALTED WATER TO A BOIL

in a medium stockpot. Coarsely chop 10 of the squash flowers. Add chopped flowers and squash to the pot; cover and simmer for about 8 minutes. Check squash for doneness; when soft, add lard, cover and return to a simmer as you proceed with the following.

🌀 MAKE THE JOROCHES 🌀

STEP 2 MEANWHILE, MIX MASA WITH SALT.

Divide *masa* into 50 balls about 1/3 oz (10g) each. Pat one ball out in the palm of your hand into a thin 2” (6cm) round cake. Continue; as you shape them, set each one aside until you have ten cakes. Gently add the first 10 cakes to the simmering stock. Use a wooden spoon to move them delicately in order to prevent their sticking together, taking care not to tear them. Simmer about 3 minutes as you flatten another 10 balls, then add those to the stock. Repeat until you have added all 50 cakes. Periodically move cakes, baste them with hot stock and cover them with squash in order to cook them. Simmer 1/2 hour more; off heat, cover and let stand until ready to serve. *NOTE: Invariably, some of the cakes will fall apart, which is unavoidable. This actually benefits the soup, since the broken pieces lightly thicken the stock.*

🌀 SERVE 🌀

STEP 3 TO SERVE, use a large spoon to delicately lift 4-5 of the *joroches* into an individual serving bowl, then add hot stock and squash on top. Garnish with the reserved squash blossoms, centering one in each bowl. Offer suggested condiments on the side so that diners can add them to taste.