

TAMAL COLADO

CREAMY STRAINED TAMAL WITH SMOKED MEAT

Colado is Spanish for “strained”. The Maya had and still have a penchant for the fineness of strained foods. Ancient earthenware pots peppered with small, evenly spaced holes bear witness to this historic taste for the refined. Our black beans (*frijol colado*) are strained to remove the skins so that they attain a delightful creaminess. And this *tamal* – unique to the Yucatán peninsula – features *masa* that has been strained then cooked to become a thick pudding before finally being steamed like most other *tamales*. The flavors of this traditional recipe have been enhanced with the addition of bacon to bring out the meatiness of the lard, and *chile chipotle* to provide the smoky flavor so beloved in Yucatán.

ABOUT 15 TAMALES

✧ PREPARE THE K'OL ROJO ✧

- **2 cups (500ml) rich chicken stock**
- **1 Tbs. (15ml) recado rojo (achiote paste)**
- **1/2 cup (125g) fresh masa**
- **1 chile chipotle en adobo, drained**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**

- **2 Tbs. (30ml) lard** (*Substitute: vegetable oil*)
- **1 small onion, finely chopped**
- **4 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **3 Roma tomatoes, coarsely chopped**
- **1 Tbs. (15ml) whole orégano Yucateco, toasted and ground** (*Substitute: 1/2 tsp. ground Mexican oregano*)
- **1 sprig epazote** (*If no fresh is available, use 1 tsp. dried crumbled*)

- **1/2 cup (125 ml) lard** (*Substitute: vegetable shortening*)
- **2 oz. (60g) slab bacon, cut into 1” (2cm) cubes**

- **5 whole cloves garlic, peeled**
- **4 cups (1 liter) rich chicken stock**
- **4 cups (1 kg) masa**
- **1 cup (250 ml) water**

STEP 1 PLACE THE STOCK, *recado*, *masa* and *chile* in a blender and process until the ingredients are thoroughly incorporated. Pass this liquid through a sieve lined with one layer of cheesecloth into a small bowl. Press with a spatula to squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Discard the residue in the cheesecloth and set the liquid aside.

STEP 2 HEAT FAT IN A LARGE SKILLET; add onions and garlic and cook until translucent. Add tomatoes and herbs and continue to cook another 5 minutes.

STEP 3 ADD THE RESERVED STRAINED RED STOCK to the vegetables in the skillet, and simmer until thickened, about 15 minutes. Check for seasonings. Discard *epazote* sprig and set sauce aside.

✧ PREPARE THE MASA ✧

STEP 4 IN A CAST IRON SKILLET, heat the lard until melted. Maintain over medium heat as you fry the bacon in the lard. Cook until the fat is rendered from the bacon and it is browned and crisp. Remove the bacon and save for another use; drain the fat through a sieve lined with one layer of cheesecloth into a heat proof measuring cup. Set aside.

STEP 5 SIMMER THE GARLIC IN THE STOCK until soft, about 15 minutes. Using a handheld immersion blender, liquefy until garlic is incorporated in the stock. Pour the chicken stock into a large heat proof bowl containing the *masa*. Working with a potato masher or your fingers, mix thoroughly to remove any lumps. Pass this mixture through a strainer lined with one layer of cheesecloth into a large kettle or Dutch oven. Using a rubber spatula, mash the remnants in the sieve to extract the liquid; press through as much of the liquid as you can. After you have pressed through about 1/2 of the liquid, add the additional cup of

TAMALES COLADOS (CONTINUED)

water to the mixture in the sieve and continue to press through. Once most of the liquid has passed through and you are left with a clump of paste, gather the ends of the cheesecloth and twist at the top. Squeeze as much of the liquid as you can into the Dutch oven. Discard anything that remains in the cheesecloth.

STEP 6 BRING LIQUID IN THE DUTCH OVEN TO A BOIL, stirring constantly. As it reaches the boil it will begin to thicken dramatically. Reduce heat to low. Using a hand-held beater, beat on highest speed as you continue with the following.

STEP 7 CONTINUE BEATING and gradually drizzle in the reserved melted lard. Continue cooking and beating another 5-10 minutes, or until mixture is stiff, thick, and satiny, resembling *polenta*. Check seasonings.

STEP 8 WHEN THICKENED, IMMEDIATELY POUR into a 9" x 13" (23cm x 33cm) ungreased baking dish. Tilt and shake the pan to distribute the masa mixture evenly; use a spatula if necessary to finish smoothing. Allow to cool and set, about 30 minutes.

✦ FINISH THE TAMALES ✦

STEP 8 STRIP CENTER RIB FROM BANANA LEAVES and reserve for ties for the *tamales*. Cut or tear the leaves into 8" x 8" (20cm x 20cm) squares.

STEP 9 CUT THE MASA INTO SQUARES approximately 3" x 3" (8cm x 8cm). Place one square onto the center of each banana leaf square. Center about 2 Tbs. (30ml) of the shredded meat on top of the masa, then spoon on 2 Tbs. (30ml) of the *k'ol rojo*. Garnish with one slice tomato, two or three rings of onion and one allspice leaf.

STEP 10 FOLD THE LEFT SIDE of the overhanging banana leaf onto the top of the *tamal*; repeat with the right side. Now do the same movements top and bottom. Using the reserved ribs, tie securely like a package. Set aside until you have completed all of the *tamales*. Place in a steamer and steam for 1 hour.

STEP 11 REMOVE TAMALES FROM STEAMER and allow to cool about 15 minutes before serving. Pass the remaining *K'ol Rojo* or *Salsa de Jitomate Yucateca* and *Chile Tamulado*.

• **Salt and white pepper, as needed**

• **1 package banana leaves**

• **1 recipe *Pollo Asado, Pollo Pibil* or *Cochinita Pibil*, finely shredded**

• **4 Roma tomatoes, thinly sliced**

• **1 large white onion, thinly sliced**

• **Allspice leaves** (*Substitute: epazote or bay leaves*)