

Red Chile Pork Tamales

Serves 8 – 12 (makes about 24 tamales)

Recipe adapted from Rick Bayless' Mexico One Plate at a Time

For the batter

- 10 oz pork lard or vegetable shortening
- 1.5 tsp baking powder
- 2 lbs fresh masa for tamales or 3.5 cups dried masa harina for tamales mixed with 2.25 cups hot water
- 1.5 cups chicken broth

For the filling

- 16 medium dried guajillo chiles, stems and seeds removed
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp cumin
- 1.5 lbs boneless pork shoulder
- Salt

Prepare the corn husks – cover the husks with hot water, placing a plate on top to keep them submerged. Let stand for a couple of hours. When ready to form the tamales, select some of the largest. Pat dry with a towel.

Prepare the filling – Add the chiles, garlic, pepper, cumin, and 3 cups water to a food processor and blend until smooth. Strain the mixture into a pan. Add the meat, 3 cups water, and 1 tsp salt. Bring to a simmer and simmer – uncovered – for about 1 hour. Allow to cool to room temperature. Use a fork to shred the pork in the sauce. Add salt if necessary.

Prepare the batter – using an electric mixer, beat the lard with 2 tsp of salt and the baking powder for about 1 minute. Continue mixing while adding the masa harina (in three separate batches). Reduce the speed of the mixer to medium-low and add the broth. Continue beating for another minute or two. Beat in the remaining ½ cup of broth. Refrigerate the batter for an hour, then rebeat (adding a little more broth to achieve the same consistency as before refrigerating).

Form the tamales – cut 24 pieces of string (or long pieces of corn husk) and prepare 24 large corn husks. One at a time, lay a husk on the work surface with the tapered end pointing toward you. Spread ¼ cup of the batter into a 4 inch square, leaving 1.5 inches of border at the bottom and at least 1 inch on each side. Add 1.5 Tbsp of the filling in a line down the center of the batter. Use your hands to pull the two sides together, causing the batter to completely surround the filling. Fold the bottom up but leave the top open. Use a string to tie the tamal closed.

Prepare a steamer – Add water to the base of a steamer. Add the rack, then line the rack with corn husks or banana leaves, leaving spaces between so water can drain. Add all of the tamales loosely, with the open tops pointed upward. Cover the tamales with more leftover corn husks, then put the lid tightly on the steamer.

Steam over medium heat for about 75 minutes, adding more *boiling* water if needed. The tamales are finished when the husk easily peels away from the masa.