Yucatec Chicken Tamales

By Leydi Lavadores & Santiago Navarrete
Yields 25-30 Tamales

Ingredients

1 whole chicken
1 block of achiote/annatto paste (3 oz)
8 large Roma tomatoes
1 white onion
1 head of garlic
1 small epazote sprig
4 pounds corn flour or masa fina (finely ground, corn flour and lime-based dough)
1/2 cup oil
3 teaspoons salt
1 pinch pepper
1 bunch banana leaves

Directions

Cut the chicken into 8 pieces. Remove the skin and cook in a pot on medium heat with 2 liters of water. Add a teaspoon of salt and a pinch

of pepper. When it boils add the head of garlic, epazote sprig, sliced onion and 2 sliced tomatoes.

Dissolve the achiote paste in half cup of water and add it to the chicken broth. Boil for around 15 minutes. Remove the chicken from the broth to allow to cool.

Dissolve 2 cups of corn flour into 1 cup of water and add to the broth. Let it simmer and stir with a spatula until the broth is thick and turns into a creamy sauce, which will be the tamal filling. Shred the chicken.

Prepare the flour masa (dough) for the tamales with two tablespoons of salt, 1/2 cup of oil and 2 cups of water. Mix thoroughly until a smooth texture is obtained, as if making tortillas.

Fill a bowl with small masa balls; these will

be used to make the tortillas with a press, or manually. Each tortilla is placed on a previously cleaned banana leaf.

Once the tortillas are ready it's time to assemble the tamales: add two tablespoons of the chicken broth sauce to the tortilla; add the shredded chicken on top of the sauce; fold the tamal slowly and place in a steamer or tamalera (tamale steamer) previously filled with water. When all the tamales are in the steamer, boil for 1 hour.

Prepare a sauce to go with the tamales with 6 tomatoes. First, rinse the tomatoes, cut into pieces; and blend with onion slices and 1/2 cup of water. Add the sauce to a skillet with a teaspoon of olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper to taste. Cook for 10 minutes. Add chili if you want a spicier sauce.