

Quintana Roo Style Empanadas – *Empanadas estilo Quintana Roo*



Ingredients (for 16 patties)

- 1 lb (454g) *cazón* (shark), or other white meat, firm fish,
such as cod or haddock
- 2 tomatoes; washed, stem spots removed, and chopped
- 2 tbsp oil, such as olive or safflower
- 2 sprigs epazote; washed, stems discarded, and leaves chopped;
if not available, use parsley and a pinch of thyme
- ½ white onion; peeled and chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Dough:

- 3 cups nixtamalized corn flour (*masa harina*)
- ¼ cup all-purpose wheat flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 ½ to 3 cups warm water, plus more, as needed
- Oil, for frying, such as safflower

Condiment:

- 1 red onion; peeled and halved, and sliced finely
- Habanero peppers, to taste; washed, stem and seed removed, sliced
- ¼ cup lime juice, preferably freshly squeezed (approximately 2 limes)
- 1 tsp salt, or to taste.

For the dough, Mix corn flour, wheat flour, salt, and baking powder in a large bowl; add two and a half cups of warm water, and mix. Add more water, one tablespoon at a time, as needed, to form a soft dough. Cover and allow to rest while preparing topping and filling (first photo, right). **For the condiment**, mix sliced habanero peppers and red onion with lime juice and salt in a non-reactive container, and reserve until serving time (second photo). **For the filling**, place fish in a pot and add water, to cover; if using shark, add a quarter of a cup of vinegar to the water, to help remove ammonia smell. Bring to boil over high heat, then reduce to medium; cook just until the fish becomes opaque and starts to flake. For cod or haddock filets, it only takes about five minutes, but for shark, especially if in large pieces and with bone, it might take much longer. Transfer cooked fish to a colander to drain liquid (third photo). Allow fish to cool down, then remove bones and skin (if any) and shred meat into small pieces. Reserve. Warm up two tablespoons of oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add chopped onions, and sauté until translucent, then add tomatoes (fourth photo). Reduce heat to a simmer, and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes begin to fall apart, approximately ten minutes. Add reserved fish. Stir to incorporate, seasoning with salt and pepper, to taste. Add chopped herbs, and mix in (fifth photo); continue cooking for another two minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool down for a few minutes.



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To assemble the patties, divide dough into sixteen portions, forming balls (approximately 3 oz – 75g, each.) Working with one ball at a time, pat between hands to form a thick disc; place on a sheet of plastic (such as a food storage bag, cut open) on a flat surface or a tortilla press (first photo below). Fold plastic to cover dough, then close the press (or use a board or flat pan on top) and flatten into a thinner disc, about six inches (15 cm) in diameter; it should be slightly thicker than a tortilla. Place some filling on one half of the dough disc, making sure to leave a rim around the edge (second photo). Fold plastic over to close dough over filling, and press down with fingers along the rim to seal into a patty (third photo). Remove patty from plastic, set aside and continue forming patties with more dough balls. Pour oil for frying in a pot, to at least half an inch deep (use a pot just wide enough for one patty, to use less oil). Place pot on the stove at high heat; once the oil is hot but not smoking, reduce heat to medium-high, and fry patties in small batches without crowding (one patty at a time, for example). When placing patties in the oil, it should start foaming and the patty browning quickly, so do not leave unattended. Flip after a few seconds and continue cooking until golden brown on both sides. Transfer to a colander propped on a bowl, to remove excess oil, and continue frying more patties (fourth photo).



Serve hot, with prepared onion and pepper mix, either on the side, or as a topping.

