

Yucatan Style “Patted” Tamales – *Tamales Torteados*

Ingredients (for 8 tamales)

Roasted banana leaves, enough to get 8 pieces, each approximately a 10×10” (25×25 cm) square, plus more for covering pot

Filling:

2 cups shredded *cochinita pibil* (pork in annatto seasoning)
OR *pollo pibil* (chicken in annatto sauce)

Corn Paste:

3 cups nixtamalized corn flour (*masa harina*, such as Maseca™; not corn starch)
3-4 cups hot water or broth, as needed
1 cup + 3 tbsp lard, at room temperature; or vegetable oil
1 tsp salt

Topping:

Pickled red onions

Prepare corn paste: Place corn (*masa*) flour, salt, and lard in a large mixing bowl, then pour in three cups of hot liquid. Incorporate all ingredients with a spatula, or hands, adding more hot liquid, as needed, to obtain a firm – but still soft – smooth paste. **Assemble tamales:** Set one roasted banana leaf square on the table, with the shinier side down, then take one eighth of the corn paste and pat with hands on the centre, forming a thin square of dough, leaving a 2 inch (5cm) edge empty all around (photo below, left). Scoop one quarter cup of filling onto the centre of the corn paste square, leaving one inch from the edges of the paste without filling (in this case, chicken in annatto sauce, second photo below). Bring the upper and lower edges of the leaf together, pinching and folding flat (third photo below). Flip around so the fold is facing down, then tuck in the edges, to form a rectangular packet (photo below, right):



The packets may be tight up with kitchen twine or a thin strip of banana leaf to prevent them from opening, or keep folded edges facing down. Repeat with the rest of the ingredients to form eight packets. **Arrange for steaming:** Prepare a large steamer by heating up water in the bottom pot, and lining the steaming basket with a layer of leftover banana leaves (alternatively, use a large metal colander that fits on top of a large pot). Arrange packets in the prepared basket (or colander), in layers and with folds facing down, forming a pile. Cover with more leftover banana leaves. Cover with a clean kitchen towel, tucking over the banana leaves inside the edge of the steaming basket/colander, so the packets will not get wet with condensation during steaming. Transfer basket/colander and fit on top of pot with boiling water on the stove, making sure there is just enough water so the basket does not touch the water.

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Cook Tamales: Place lid on pot, completely closing the top. Cook over high heat to make sure the water is boiling, then reduce to a rolling boil, and let the tamales steam for at least one hour. Always check the bottom pot halfway through, to make sure it is not drying too fast; if needed, add boiling water. After one hour, carefully open the pot and move towel to the side. Remove one tamale, and check doneness by unwrapping; the tamale is ready when it separates easily from the leaf; if needed, close tamale, return to the pot and cook longer in ten minute intervals, until done.

Serve hot, opening the banana leaf, and garnishing with some topping:



When sliced, the fully cooked tamales reveal a porous texture, and a delicious melding of flavours of nixtamalized corn and filling:

