

Michoacán Style Fresh Corn Tamales – *Uchepos*

Ingredients

6 ears fresh corn, with husks
½ tsp salt
Milk, if needed



Place one ear of corn horizontal on a cutting board; hold the ear with one hand, and using a very sharp serrated knife, cut crosswise to remove the stem end (photo, right). Peel corn, careful not to break the husks. Remove and discard silk, along with stem ends. Continue with the rest of the ears. Wash husks, discarding damaged sections; drain, shake excess water, and reserve. Take one ear of corn, and securely hold it vertical in the centre of a wide bowl; carefully shave a few rows of kernels, by running a sharp knife close to the cob, from top to bottom, then rotate and continue, until all the kernels are collected in the bowl. Discard cob, and repeat with the rest of the corn (photo, right).



Transfer corn kernels to a blender jar, and add salt. Pulse a few times, scraping corn bits from the blender wall in between pulses. If the blender cannot handle the corn as it is, add a little bit of milk. Continue blending at medium to high speed, for about one minute, until corn has been reduced to a paste. If the paste is too runny, drain some liquid through a colander with fine mesh. **Assemble tamales:** Take a few husks, and wipe with a paper or kitchen towel, to remove excess moisture (photo below, left). Overlap husks to form a vessel for the corn. Scoop about one third of a cup of corn paste onto the prepared husks (second photo, below). Wrap husks around the corn paste (third photo, below). Press down with a flat finger, and push paste away from the husk tips (fourth photo, below). Fold the husk tips, to close the package (photo below, right):



Continue with more husks, until all the corn paste has been used. Prepare a large steamer, or a large pot with hot water and a metal colander fitted on top. Line the bottom with leftover husks, then arrange the corn packets vertically, with the folded end towards the bottom. Cover with more husks, then place a clean kitchen towel on top, and cover with lid. Place on stove over high heat; bring water in the steamer (or pot) to boil, then reduce heat to just maintain water boiling. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes, checking that the steamer/pot does not dry out, adding hot water if needed.

Uchepos are often served with a glass of milk, as a snack or a light meal (photo at the top). Other option is a savoury presentation, either topped with cream and salsa, or as a side with *minguiche*, a creamy dish with cheese and pepper strips.