

## Tamales de Cambray

### Ingredients (for one dozen tamales)

- ½ lb (227 g) pork meat; cooked, fat and bones removed, and cubed finely
- ¼ lb (113 g) chicken meat; cooked, fat, bones and skin removed, and chopped
- 2-3 cups broth from cooking the meat
- 1 cup tomatoes; washed, stem spots removed and cut into chunks
- 1 *guajillo* pepper; wiped clean, stem and seeds removed
- ½ white onion; peeled, divided into two equal pieces
- 1/3 cup (30 g) blanched almond slices
- ¼ cup (36 g) raisins
- ¼ cup (36 g) capers
- 12 green olives, preferably pitted or stuffed
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt, or to taste
- ½ tsp ground black pepper, or to taste
- ½ tsp dry thyme
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 cups nixtamalized corn flour (masa harina, such as Bob's Red Mill™)
- ¼ cup pork lard; at room temperature
- Hot water, as needed
- 1 plantain; washed, peeled, sliced into rounds, fried in oil and chopped (optional)
- 1 cup cooked veggies (cubed carrots, potatoes and green beans, optional)
- 1 package banana leaves (fresh or thawed from frozen)

**For the sauce:** place clean *guajillo* pepper in a bowl, then add one cup of boiling water. Allow to soak for about ten minutes. Place tomato chunks and one piece of onion in a blender jar, then add soaked *guajillo* and its liquid. Process to obtain a smooth sauce; reserve. **Finish the filling:** chop the other piece of onion. In a large pan, warm up two tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. add chopped onions and sauté until translucent. Add chopped pork and chicken, stirring to coat with the oil and onions. Continue cooking for a couple of minutes, then add reserved sauce. Pour about half a cup of hot water in the blender jar, swirl to collect any sauce, and add to the pan. Bring to a boil, then add cinnamon, thyme, salt and pepper. Reduce to a simmer, cover, and allow to cook for ten minutes. Uncover pot and add capers and slivered almonds. Continue cooking uncovered, stirring occasionally, for about five to seven more minutes, until the sauce thickens and the bottom of the pan may be seen when scraped with the back of the spoon. Remove from heat and allow to cool down.

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**Meanwhile, prepare dough:** Place flour in a large mixing bowl, opening a well in the centre; add lard to the well, beating until creamy. Pour one cup of the reserved pork broth, and incorporate slowly with the lard and flour. Continue adding broth and mixing, around two and a half to three cups, to hydrate all the flour, until the mix may be kneaded with hands without sticking, to form a moist dough. Divide into twelve portions (approximately 60 g each). Cover the dough with a clean kitchen towel and allow to rest for a few minutes.

**Prepare banana leaves:** wash each banana leaf under running water. Trim ends and cut twelve squares, approximately 8 in (20 cm) per side. Save the trimmings and extra leaves. Bring a large pot of water to boil, and blanch the banana leaf squares for a couple of minutes. Transfer blanched leaves to a colander, allowing to drain.

**Assemble tamales:** set up the corn dough portions, blanched leaves, filling, green olives, raisins, and if using, veggies and fried plantain, around a clean working area. Working with one banana leaf square and one portion of dough, spread the dough into a thin layer on the centre of the leaf:



Top with about half a cup of filling, three or four raisins, and one green olive at the centre, on top of the filling. If using veggies and plantain, spread a little of everything along the filling. Fold banana leaf in half, covering the dough and filling. Roll the leaf into a cylinder. Finish by tying each end of the cylinder with thin trimmings of banana leaves. Continue with the rest to make more wraps.

**Cook tamales:** prepare a steamer basket by covering the bottom with strips of the leftover banana leaves, folding the ends over the edge of the basket. Place tamales horizontally in the prepared basket, in layers. Fold the ends of the banana leaves over the tamales, to cover. Top with more banana leaves, tucking in around the edge of the pot. Cover with a clean kitchen towel, then with the steamer lid. Pour water into steamer bottom, and bring to boil over high heat. Place prepared basket on top, then reduce heat to keep a regular rolling boil. For this small batch, steam for one hour, then take one tamal out to check for doneness. The banana leaf should peel easily, and the dough should be shiny and smooth outside. If needed, return the tamal to the basket, and steam in ten-minute intervals, until done. Remove steamer from heat. Transfer tamales to a serving plate.

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Serve hot with a cup of *atole*, hot chocolate or coffee from the pot (*café de olla*):

