

Puerto Rico



Pasteles

Ingredients:

Seasoned Oil

3/4 cup of achiote (annato)

1 1/2 cups of vegetable oil (corn oil or olive oil)

Meat

15 pounds of boneless pork meat

1 1/4 cup of sofrito

1 8 ounce can of tomato sauce

6 medium potatoes

2 7 ounce cans of diced pimento

3 tablespoons of salt

1 cup of water

Green Banana Mix

4 pounds of "yautia" (taro roots)

35 pounds of green bananas

5 green plantains

3 tablespoons of salt

2 cups milk

1/2 cup of sauce from cooked meat

8 packs of banana leaves

String to tie the pasteles

Procedure:

1. Pour the 1 1/2 cups of vegetable oil and the achiote in a 1 quart sauce pan and heat at moderate temperature for approximately 15 - 20 minutes. The vegetable oil should turn red from the achiote. Do not overcook the achiote because this will give the oil a bitter taste. Strain the oil and discard the achiote seeds. Set the oil aside and allow sufficient time for cooling.
2. Wash and cut the pork into chunks no larger than 1/2" cube.
Peel and cut the potatoes into 1/4" chunks
3. In a large pot add 1/2 cup of the seasoned oil, meat, sofrito, potatoes, tomato sauce, diced pimento, salt, and the water. Mix all the items well and cook at moderate heat for 45 minutes. Set aside.
4. While the meat is cooking, peel the bananas, yautia, and plantains and put them in salt water. This will help to prevent them from staining. Also, it will help if you use some vegetable oil on your hand (very small amount) or use rubber kitchen gloves

while peeling the bananas and plantains. This will help reduce the amount of stain that will stick to your hands.

5. Grind the bananas, plantains and yautia. Do not grind too fine since this will ruin the mix. As the mix is being ground, place the already ground portions into a large (3 to 5 gallon) container. Once all items have been ground and added to the large container, add in the milk, 1 cup of seasoned oil, salt, and 1/2 cup of the sauce from the cooked meat. Mix well until all items are distributed evenly.
6. Clean all the banana leaves. You will need to divide the leaves into pieces of 12" and pieces of 5 x 8"
7. On the table where you will be assembling the pasteles, place one of the 12" pieces of banana leaf and then in the center of that place one of the pieces that measure 5 x 8". On top of this place 4 tablespoons of the banana mix and spread forming a spread to form a rectangle making a thin layer out of the mix.
8. Put 2 tablespoons of the cooked meat on top of the banana mix spreading it down the center lengthwise.
9. Fold in half widthwise. Fold in half once again. Fold in the end taking care that by folding you do not apply too much pressure to the pastel so that the mix doesn't ooze out.
10. Tie the pastel so that the extremities are tied. Again take care not to apply too much pressure. Cook the pasteles in enough water to completely cover them and add salt to taste. Cook at moderate high heat. Once the water starts to boil lower the heat to moderate and cover. Cook for another 45 minutes. Once they are cooked, remove promptly from the water. Remove the pasteles from the banana leaves to serve.
11. Makes approximately 80 pasteles.

Arroz con gandules

Ingredients:

- 3/4 lbs green pigeon peas
 - 3 cups of water (used to precook the green pigeon peas)
 - 2 cups of white rice
 - 2 ounces of smoked ham, diced (makes approx. 2/3 cup)
 - 2 tablespoons of corn oil or olive oil
 - 1/2 cup of sofrito
 - 1/4 cup tomato sauce
 - 1 tsp of salt
- For soaking the green pigeon peas:
- 1 quart of water
 - 2 teaspoons of salt

Procedure:

1. Rinse the rice and set aside.
2. Soak the green pigeon peas in 1 quart of water and 2 teaspoons of salt for 15 minutes. Then rinse them and cook them in 4 cups of water until they have softened. Test by picking up one pea in a spoon and squeezing with between two fingers. You should be able to squeeze it without much effort. Take care to not over cook them to point where they break apart.
3. When they are cooked, set aside 3 cups of water used to cook them in. Rinse the peas and set aside.
4. In a 4 quart cooking pan, add the 2 tablespoons of oil, smoked ham and simmer over moderate heat for 3 minutes. Then add the sofrito and the tomato sauce and simmer for another 3 minutes as you mix the items.
5. Raise the heat to moderate-high and add two table spoons of the water that was set aside and the green pigeon peas. Simmer for 3 minutes as you mix the items.
6. Raise the heat to high and add the water that was set aside. Once the water begins to boil, add the rice. Mix all the items well. Once the water starts to boil again, reduce the heat to moderate high and cook uncovered until most (but not all) the water has evaporated.
7. Reduce the heat to low. Mix the rice again then put the lid on the pan and cook for 15 minutes.
8. Mix the rice once more and continue to cook until the rice is fully cooked. You can sample the rice to see if it is fully cooked. It should be soft to chew.
9. Makes approximately 6 servings.

Sofrito

Ingredients:

3 large green bell peppers
2 medium red bell peppers
40 - 60 stems of culantro
20 - 30 stems of recaó
5 medium onions
4 heads of garlic
1 tbsp of salt

Procedure:

1. Get all the garlic cloves separated from each other.
Put into a container and fill with water until the garlic cloves are fully covered.
Set aside. This will help peel the garlic easier later on.
2. Wash the peppers, culantro, and recaó.
Open the bell peppers and remove the stems and the seed from inside.
Cut the peppers into strips along the length about 1/4" wide.
Set these items aside.
3. Peel the onions and cut into 4 to 8 pieces each.
At this time remove the garlic from the water and peel the garlic.
4. Mix all the items in a blender or a food processor, starting with the onions and the garlic, then adding peppers and the culantro and recaó.
You might have to fill the blender more than once.
Mix until everything is pureed.
5. Pour the contents of the mixture into a large container and add the salt.
Mix by hand until the salt is more or less evenly distributed.
6. Put a small amount of this mixture in a container in the refrigerator for everyday use and store the rest in the freezer.
7. Some people will add a small amount of vegetable oil (corn oil or olive oil) with **achoite** (annato) for coloring and flavor.
There are other things that can be added, such as oregano.

Baked Sweet Plantains

Ingredients:

4 medium plantains -- very ripe
1/2 cup dry white wine -- or light rum
1/4 cup dry sherry
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
4 tablespoons butter -- salted
ground cinnamon -- to taste
ground nutmeg -- to taste

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°.

Arrange the plantains in an ovenproof casserole, pour the wine, sherry, and sugar over them, and sprinkle with butter and cinnamon.

Cover the plantains and bake 20 to 25 minutes.

Uncover, turn the plantains over, baste, and bake, uncovered, until golden brown on top, another 15 minutes.

Serve hot.

Tostones

Tostones are twice fried green plantains or green bananas that make a great appetizer or side dish. I first experimented with green banana tostones when I lived in Japan; plantains were not to be found in Japan. Green banana tostones have a different flavor and texture. I suggest trying both. In Puerto Rico, "Tostones" are usually served in restaurants to accompany seafood dishes, but they go well with any Puerto Rican dish. This recipe calls for salt or Goya Adobo. Adobo is a seasoning that is found in Puerto Rico's supermarkets, and can be found in most Hispanic specialty stores. If you can't find "Adobo" use a bit of salt and granulated garlic to season the tostones.

Ingredients:

3 Green Plantains or Green Bananas
Vegetable Oil
Salt or Goya Adobo

Directions:

Peel the plantains or bananas under running water --this is to prevent staining your hands. Green plantains will not peel as easily as ripe ones. The water will also help the peeling process. At a 45 degree angle to the plantain, cut into 1 inch slices. Place in a bowl of water to prevent them from turning brown. In a deep fryer or frying pan, heat 1 1/2 inches of vegetable oil to approximately 325 degrees (F). Remove the plantains from water, placing them in a bowl with paper towel. Remove as much water from them before placing them in the hot oil. If you don't dry them off well, the oil will splatter. Use caution during this step! Cook in oil until they are firm. Approximately 3 minutes. Remove from oil and let cool off. Now you must flatten them. In Puerto Rico we use a "Tostonera" to flatten them, however a 10x5 inch piece of aluminium paper works fine. Placing the firmed plantains in the middle of the aluminium paper, press down with the palm of your hand to flatten. Place on plate and season with salt or adobo. Now you're ready to fry until golden brown. Serve as snack or side dish.

Mofongo

Ingredients:

3 Plantains -- very green
1/2 Pound Pork rinds -- ground
3 Cloves of garlic
1 Tablespoon Olive oil
Veg. oil for frying

Directions:

Peel the plantains and cut into 1-inch diagonal pieces.
Place them in 4 cups of water with 1 tsp. of salt and let stand for 15 minutes.
Drain well.
Heat oil in a pan to 350 degrees and fry the plantains for about 15 minutes.
Do not over-cook.
Remove the plantains from the pan and place on paper towels to drain.
Place the garlic in a food processor and mince well.
Remove garlic from the processor and mix with the olive oil well.
If you have a large, wooden mortar and pestle; place 3 or 4 pieces of plantain in it and an equal amount of pork rind.
Mix well.
Add a little bit of the garlic oil and mix well.
(If you don't have a mortar; improvise)
Take 3 Tablespoons of the mixture and with your hands form a ball with it.
Repeat until you have used up all of the ingredients.
Serve hot!

Flan

Ingredients:

- 3 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 3/4 cups of sugar
- 2 cups of milk
- 1 cup condensed milk
- 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla extract

Procedure:

1. Heat the oven to 350°F.
2. Mix the yolks and the eggs and add 3/4 cup of sugar.
Mix until the mixture thickens.
In a pan mix the milk and condensed milk and warm up on low heat.
Add the milk slowly to the egg mix.
Mix as you add the two together.
3. In another pan, warm up on low heat the rest of the sugar until it is completely melted.
Mix as the sugar melts and continue to mix after it has melted.
The sugar will start to change color to a brownish color.
When this happens remove from the heat.
Pour the melted sugar (caramel) into an oven resistant container (pyrex or corningware).
4. The caramel should become hard almost immediately.
Once it is hard, all the mixture of eggs and milk.
Cover with aluminum foil and place the container in the oven in another container with water.
Keep it in the oven for 45 - 50 minutes.
5. The flan will be ready when you can insert a sharp knife into the center of the flan and it comes out clean.
6. Allow it to cool for a couple of hours.
Run a knife along all the edges and then turn the container upside down onto a large plate to get the flan out.