



Chuchitos

Yield roughly 20 Chuchitos

1 lb corn flour
½ lb butter at room temperature
10 roma/plumb tomatoes
2 red bell peppers (chile pimiento)
2 chiles guaque (dried chilies are available online if not sold in your local area)
4 small or 2 medium tomatillos (aka husk tomato, miltomate, jamberry, ground cherry)
1 medium white onion
Salt to taste (typically 1 Tablespoon)
1 teaspoon chicken broth powder (bullion)
1 lb boneless chicken cut into 1 inch squares
Roughly 30 dried corn husk leaves (tuzas)

Chuchitos are similar to tamales but are smaller in size and easier to make. The finished meal is steamed corn pouches filled with meat and sauce. Salsa and cheese may also be served.

Rinse dried corn husk leaves in water to soften prior to assembling chuchitos.

The base of the sauce is roasted vegetables. In a deep sauté pan in roughly roughly ½ cup water simmer the following vegetables: roma tomatoes, cut in quarters, 4 small or 2 medium tomatillos cut in half. (A small tomatillo is roughly 1 inch in diameter). 2 red peppers roughly chopped, the 2 guaque chilies cut in half with seeds removed and one medium white onion roughly chopped. Stir occasionally.

By the time most of the water boils off, the tomatoes and peppers should be soft. Puree all the these vegetables in a blender and return the puree to the sauté pan. Stir in 3 tablespoons of butter. The butter gives the sauce a silky texture and will sweeten any tartness. If needed add additional butter to the sauce to enhance the flavor. Add 1 tablespoon salt and 1 teaspoon chicken broth powder, adjusting to taste. Let the sauce simmer over low heat while prepping other ingredients. When ready to begin assembling turn the heat off and let sauce cool.

Next prepare the corn flour. Put the corn flour in a large bowl and add water one cup at a time while mixing with your hands. The mixture comes together quickly. The water/flour mixture should be firm enough to hold together well when formed into a ball, while still feeling like soft dough. Add the remaining soft butter, mixing it into the corn flour. If the dough seems too soft, just add a little more corn flour.

Assembling the Chuchitos

Take roughly 3 oz of corn flour mixture and form it into a ball. It should fit nicely in the palm of your hand. The ball should be roughly 2.5 inches (7 cm) in diameter. From this shape use flattened fingers of the other hand against the palm holding the dough, going back and forth to a larger, more flattened, round shape. The dough will still be a bit thick. Cup this dough in your hand as if forming a little bowl. Fill it with sauce, a piece of chicken, and a touch more sauce. Fold the dough over to seal in the filling (like a meat pie or empanada). Put the filled dough in a corn husk with a little more sauce on top, fold the husk over and tie it. You are creating a little bag or pouch with the chuchito inside. This is to protect it from the water and keep it together. Set aside and continue to assemble until all ingredients are used.

Once all the pouches are assembled they will be steamed in a pressure cooker or a lidded stock pot with roughly 1 inch (3 cm) of water in the bottom. Lay some unused corn husk in the bottom of the pot to prevent the bottom layer of chuchitos from burning. It's okay if some of chuchitos are partially submerged in the water, but the intent is to mostly steam rather than boil to cook. Stack all of the chuchitos in the stock pot. Layer more corn leaves on top to assist with holding in the steam. Cover and cook at high heat to boil the water, creating steam.

Cooked in a pressure cooker chuchitos take roughly 20 minutes to finish. Cooked in a stock pot with a lid, allow 35 – 45 minutes. Serve in the corn husk pouches. The pouch is opened by the one enjoying the meal, not ahead of time.

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