



En
Familia...

*A collection of
Tasty Treasures
and peculiar stories.*

LOPEZ
NEGRETE

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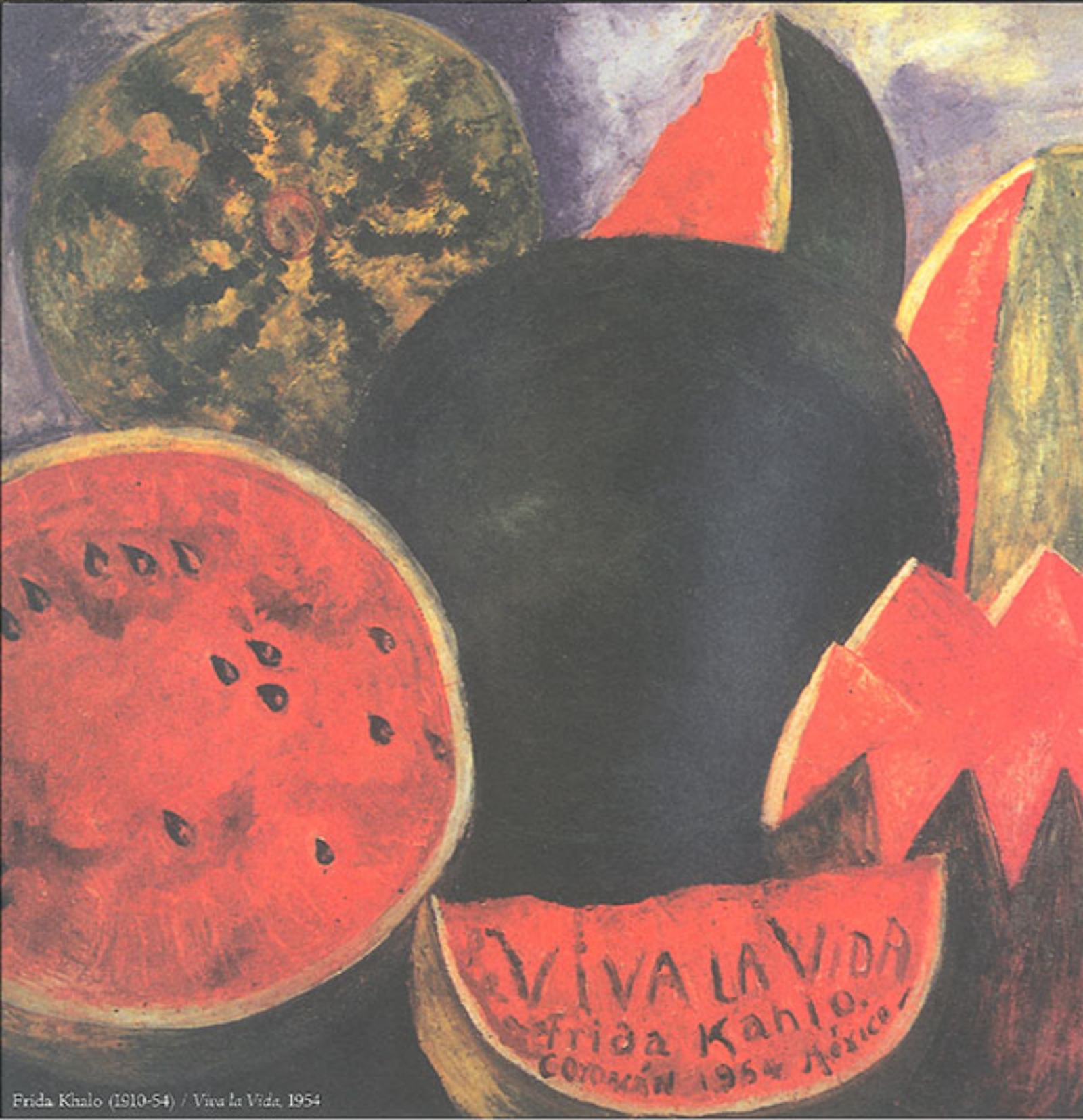
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Frida Kahlo (1910-54) / Viva la Vida, 1954



As we look towards the new millennium, it is inevitable that we take stock of where we've been, who we've become and of what we have achieved.

In our particular case, it is heartwarming to look back and realize that what has made the difference to us has been a strong sense of family, of unity and of common purpose.

We have always felt that the recipes, memories and stories in *Tasty Treasures* is one of the most sincere and personal ways of sharing ourselves with you. This year, however, we also want to pay homage and give thanks to the many friends, family members and associates who have so graciously touched us and given of themselves along the way over the past (and first) 15 years of the agency's life. We are what we are today thanks to each and every one of you.

On behalf of every member of the team (past and present), we invite you once again to share in our traditions, history, memories and recipes...and may these remind you that with us, you're always "En Familia."

¡Felicidades!

Alex López Negrete





Lo Mejor **de** lo Mejor

[THE BEST OF THE BEST]

*You could call this
the "Greatest Hits"
from previous editions
of Tasty Treasures.*



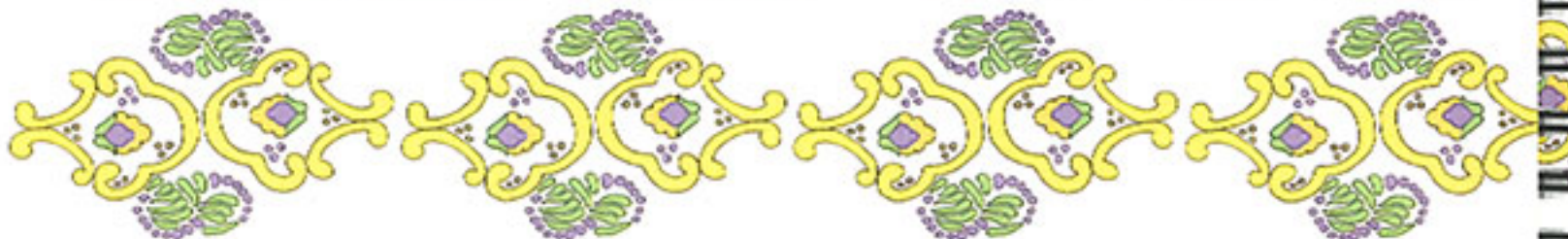
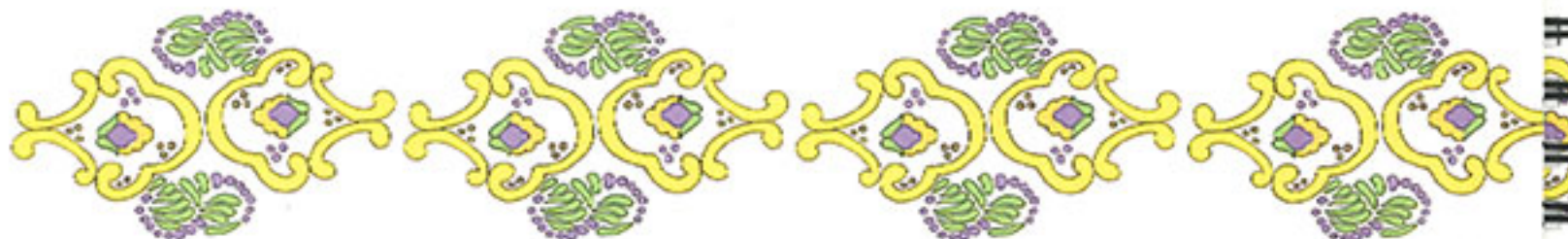


Imágenes

[IMAGES]

The family that works, plays, edits, writes, shoots, casts, flies, creates, produces, prints and presents together, stays together! A few images of the past and present that help tell the story of the Familia LNC through the years.









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This is a great everyday recipe. I remember when my grandmother passed it on to me when I rented my first apartment in college. She was a very wise woman and knew I was going to have to learn how to cook and what better way to do it than with delicious, yet simple recipes. I hope you enjoy this recipe as much as my family has and that you too begin passing it along to other generations. ¡Buen provecho!

Alejandro Amelio (México)





Pollo con Ajos en Vinagre

[Chicken in Vinegar and Garlic]

This recipe has been handed down from several generations in my family. We believe this recipe goes as far back as the early Spanish Colonial settlers in Mexico because its make-up is somewhat northern European with the combination of allspice, garlic and vinegar. This recipe is excellent for what my wife calls "sopping" which means to soak pieces of crusty bread in the remaining sauce on the plate.

Ingredients

- 2 POUNDS CHICKEN PIECES (HALF BREASTS WITH BONES, THIGHS, AND WINGS)
- 1 CUP (8 OUNCES) CIDER VINEGAR
- 2 HEADS OF GARLIC (2 OUNCES), CLOVES SEPARATED BUT UNPEELED
- 1/2 CUP (4 OUNCES) VEGETABLE OIL
- 1 ONION, QUARTERED
- 5 ALLSPICE BERRIES
- 5 BLACK PEPPERCORNS, FRESHLY GROUND
- 1-1/2 TEASPOONS SALT, OR TO TASTE

Preparation

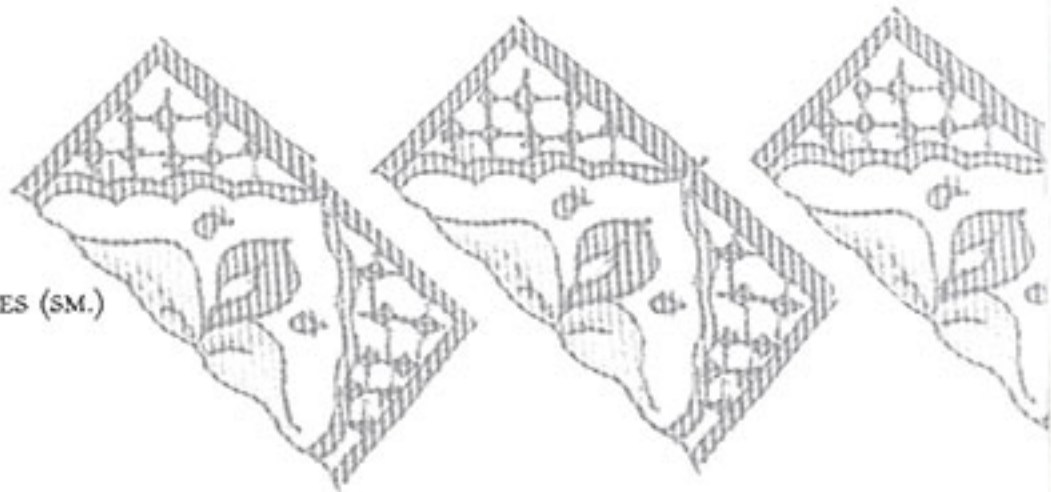
Place all the ingredients in a heavy saucepan over medium heat, cover and cook for one (1) hour, or until the chicken is tender. Serve the garlic cloves alongside the chicken or spread them on crusty bread.



El Caldo de Camarón de Juanita

Ingredients

POWDERED SHRIMP
3 EGG WHITES
GARLIC SALT
CUMIN
BLACK PEPPER
DICED POTATOES
DICED ONIONS
CAN WHOLE TOMATOES (SM.)
FRESH CACTUS
FRESH CILANTRO
COOKING OIL



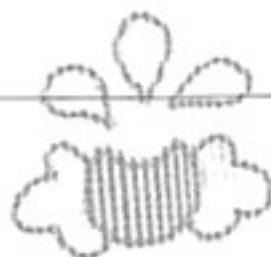
Preparation

Beat egg whites. Add powdered shrimp.

Form small patties (about 2 inches round) and fry in cooking oil. Put patties aside to drain oil. Boil water and add diced potatoes, diced onions, fresh cactus, tomatoes and seasoning to taste. When adding garlic salt, sprinkle in the form of a cross. When potatoes are tender, add shrimp patties (they will float). Remove from heat and add cilantro. To make this dish complete, our family beverage was grape Kool-Aid with freshly squeezed lemon. If your family is a Kool-Aid fan, we recommend mixing Cherry & Orange or Strawberry & Lemon flavors.



Pound Cake



Ingredients

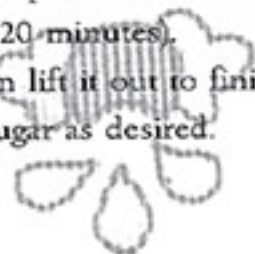
- 1 CUP BUTTER
- 1/4 TEASPOON ALMOND EXTRACT
- 1-2/3 CUPS SUGAR
- 2 CUPS CAKE FLOUR
- 5 LARGE EGGS
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT
- 1 1/2 TABLESPOONS LEMON JUICE
- CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR

Preparation

Cream butter and sugar well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Add lemon juice and almond extract; beat mixture. Sift in flour and salt. Beat mixture well and pour into a paper-lined loaf pan.

Bake in 325-degree oven until a toothpick inserted in the cake comes out clean (about 1 hour and 20 minutes).

Let cake cool in pan 5 minutes, then lift it out to finish cooling on cake rack. Sprinkle confectioners' sugar as desired.





Paella Valenciana ¡Olé!

Ingredients

1/2 POUND PORK MEAT (CUT IN 1/4" CUBES)
1 MEDIUM ONION (CHOPPED)
1/2 POUND CHICKEN (CUT IN QUARTERS)
1 MEDIUM GREEN PEPPER (CHOPPED)
1 POUND LOBSTER (CUT INTO CHUNKS)
3 GARLIC CLOVES (MINCED)
1/2 POUND SHRIMP (PEELED AND DEVEINED)
1 WHOLE BAY LEAF
8 WHOLE OYSTERS (SHUCKED)
1/2 CUP TOMATOES (CHOPPED)
8 WHOLE SCALLOPS, LARGE
1/2 CUP OLIVE OIL

8 WHOLE MUSSELS (SHELLS ON)
1-1/2 CUPS RICE (UNCOOKED)
4 WHOLE CLAMS (SHELLS ON)
1 TEASPOON SALT
4 WHOLE BLUE CRABS (SHELLS CRACKED)
PINCH SAFFRON THREADS
1 POUND RED SNAPPER (CUT INTO CHUNKS)
1/4 CUP WHITE WINE
3 CUPS CHICKEN BROTH
GARNISH WITH SMALL GREEN PEAS
(COOKED), SLICED PIMENTOS OR ROASTED
RED PEPPERS, AND ASPARAGUS SPEARS

Preparation

Pour oil in a heavy, shallow casserole. Add onion and green pepper and sauté until limp but not brown. Add tomatoes, garlic, and bay leaf. Cook for 5 minutes. Add pork and chicken pieces and sauté until tender, stirring to prevent sticking or burning. Add seafood and stock. When this mixture boils, add rice, salt, and saffron. Stir. Bring to a boil, cover, and bake in oven at 350° for 20 minutes. When ready to serve, sprinkle with wine and garnish with peas, asparagus, and pimentos.





Gringo's Grilled Shrimp

Ingredients

JUMBO SHRIMP PEELED - (QUANTITY TO BE DETERMINED DEPENDING ON
NUMBER OF PEOPLE PRESENT)

RED BELL PEPPERS

YELLOW BELL PEPPERS

ORANGE BELL PEPPERS

LEMON JUICE

LIME JUICE

ORANGE JUICE

1 POUND MONTEREY JACK CHEESE

1 POUND PEPPERED BACON

1 CUP OF BUTTER



Preparation

Slice the peppers into inch-long strips. Place the sliced peppers against the curve of the shrimp and secure the peppers with a wooden toothpick. Place a slice of the Monterey Jack cheese (about an inch and a half long and an inch wide) on top of the pepper that is secured to the shrimp by the toothpick. Wrap a strip of the peppered bacon around the shrimp tightly and secure it with the toothpick. Make sure the peppers and cheese are aligned within the contour of the shrimp. Place all shrimp combinations in a large bowl and marinate with the orange, lemon, and lime juices and chill for 24 hours. Prepare your grill for cooking. Mix together 1 cup of melted butter and spices in a moderate-size bowl. Before placing each shrimp on the grill, dip each one in the butter and spice mixture. Grill until the bacon is brown and crispy, the cheese has melted, and the shrimp is done to your preference.



Leche Quemada

Ingredients

14 OUNCE CAN OF CONDENSED MILK.

Preparation

Take the unopened can of condensed milk and put it in boiling water for about 2 hours. In México this is known as "baño María". After 2 hours take the unopened can and place it under cold water to cool, and then put it in the refrigerator. After a while, you may open the can and eat away with a spoon...or a knife, if you decide to spread it into a warm "tortilla". Enjoy!

Glossary

leche, f. milk

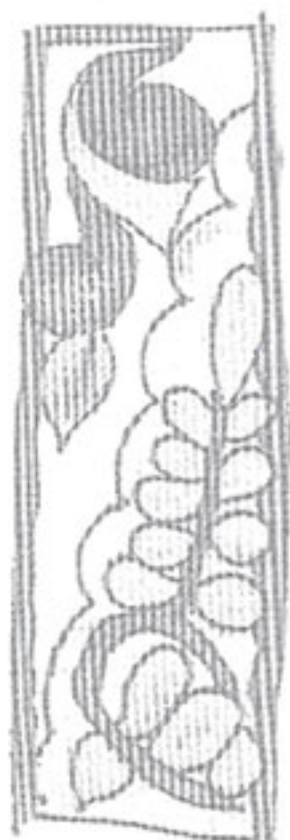
leche quemada, f. also known as "cajeta", caramel; candy

confite, m. candy, bonbon, sweet

lindo, da, a. pretty, lovely, beautiful; exquisite, elegant, neat;
marvelous, wonderful

baño María, m. double boiler, bain-marie

tortilla, f. thin unleavened cornmeal pancake





Mofongo

Ingredients

3 PLANTAINS - VERY GREEN

1/2 POUND PORK RINDS, GROUND (PACKAGED PORK RINDS CAN BE USED)

3 CLOVES OF GARLIC

1 TABLESPOON OLIVE OIL

VEGETABLE OIL FOR FRYING

SALT

Preparation

Peel the plantains and cut into 1-inch diagonal pieces.

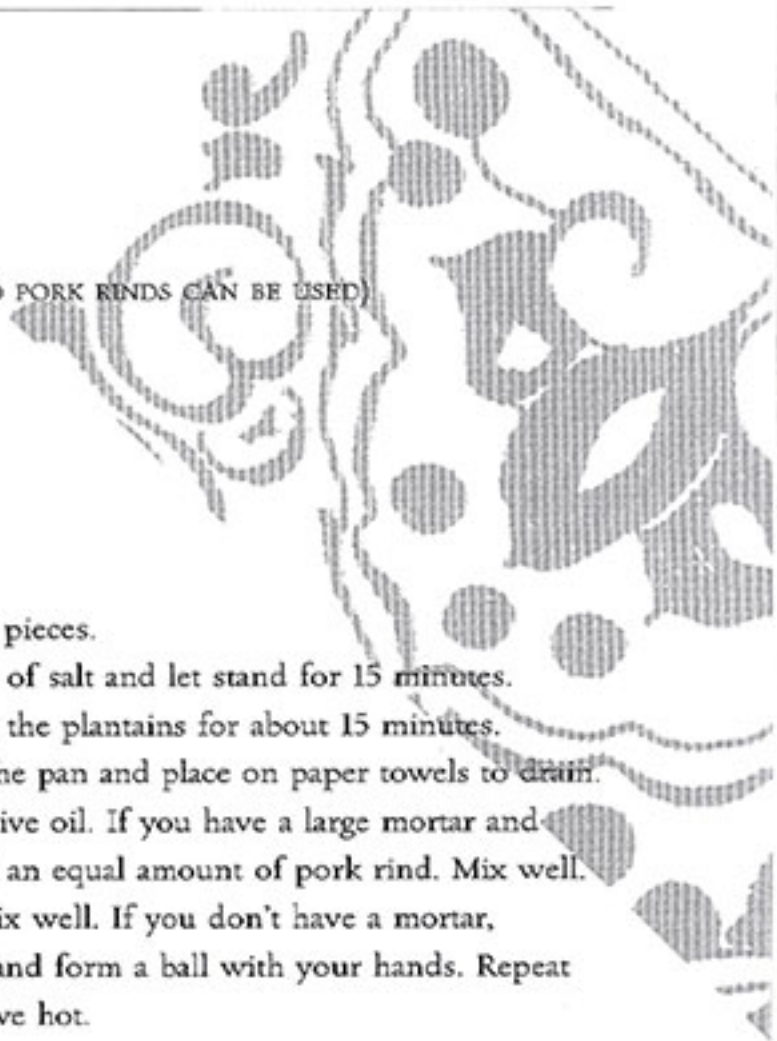
Place them in 4 cups of water with 1 teaspoon of salt and let stand for 15 minutes.

Drain well. Heat oil in a pan to 350° F and fry the plantains for about 15 minutes.

Do not overcook. Remove the plantains from the pan and place on paper towels to drain.

Mince garlic, then mash. Mix garlic with the olive oil. If you have a large 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 mixture and mix well. If you don't have a mortar, improvise. Take 3 tablespoons of the mixture and form a ball with your hands. Repeat until you have used up all the ingredients. Serve hot.





Natilla with Colombian Flavor

Ingredients

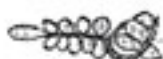
- 4 1/2 CUPS OF MILK
- 3/4 POUND OF SUGAR OR "PILONCILLO"
(MEXICAN BROWN SUGAR SHAPED LIKE A CONE)
- 1 CUP OF "NATILLA MIX OF COLOMBIAN FLAVOR"
(AVAILABLE AT FIESTA)
- 1 STICK OF CINNAMON
- GROUND CINNAMON
- SHREDDED SWEETENED COCONUT (OPTIONAL)

Preparation

In a 4-quart pan put 3 1/2 cups of milk with a stick of cinnamon and the sugar or "piloncillo" cut into small pieces, and bring it to boil at low heat until the sugar or "piloncillo" has dissolved completely. Set aside and let it cool for 5 minutes. In a separate bowl, put the natilla mix and the remaining cup of milk and stir until diluted. When the 5 minute cooling period has elapsed, add the natilla mixture in small portions, stirring constantly. Put this mixture back at low heat and cook, stirring constantly to prevent mixture from burning or sticking to the bottom of the pan. Use a wooden spatula for this operation. When the mixture is thick enough to allow you to see the bottom of the pan while stirring, add the coconut and fold gently.

The natilla is done when you put a small portion (1 tablespoon) of the natilla on a flat saucer, let it cool and try to lift it up. Repeat the operation until it comes unstuck. Pour the mixture on a large platter or mold, or on small plates. Garnish with ground cinnamon before serving.

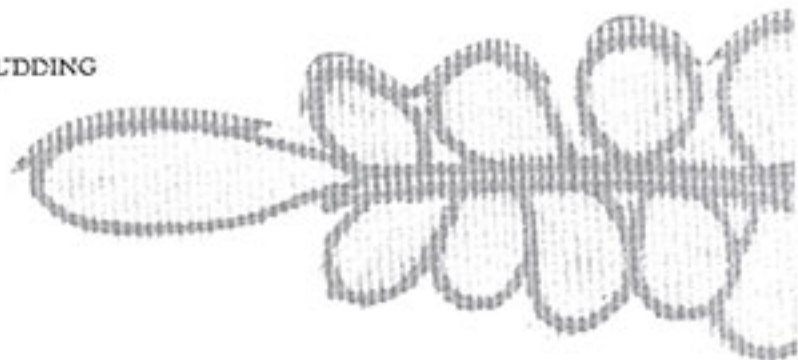




The Best Banana Pudding Ever!

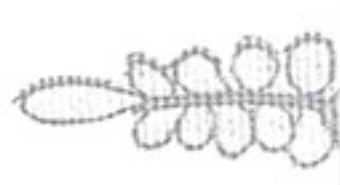
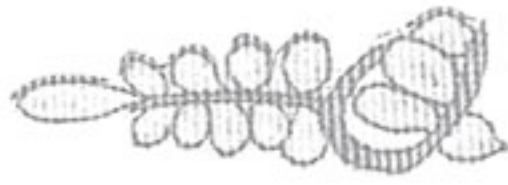
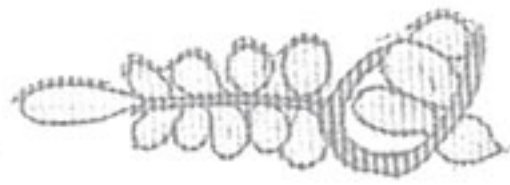
Ingredients

- 8 OUNCES CREAM CHEESE
- 1 CAN OF EAGLE BRAND CONDENSED MILK
- 3 CUPS OF MILK
- 1 LARGE PACKAGE OF VANILLA INSTANT PUDDING
- 5 TO 6 BANANAS SLICED/CHOPPED
- 8 OUNCE TUB OF COOL WHIP
- 1 TEASPOON OF VANILLA
- 1 BOX OF NILA WAFERS



Preparations

Mix on low speed the cream cheese and Eagle Brand Milk until smooth. Add vanilla. While mixing on low speed, add the milk and then the pudding mix until smooth. Gently stir in the sliced/chopped bananas. Fold in the Cool Whip until all mixed well. Layer pan with cookies, pour 1/2 the mixture on top. Layer cookies again, then pour remaining mixture. Top off with remaining cookies. It's always better if you make it the night before. ENJOY!





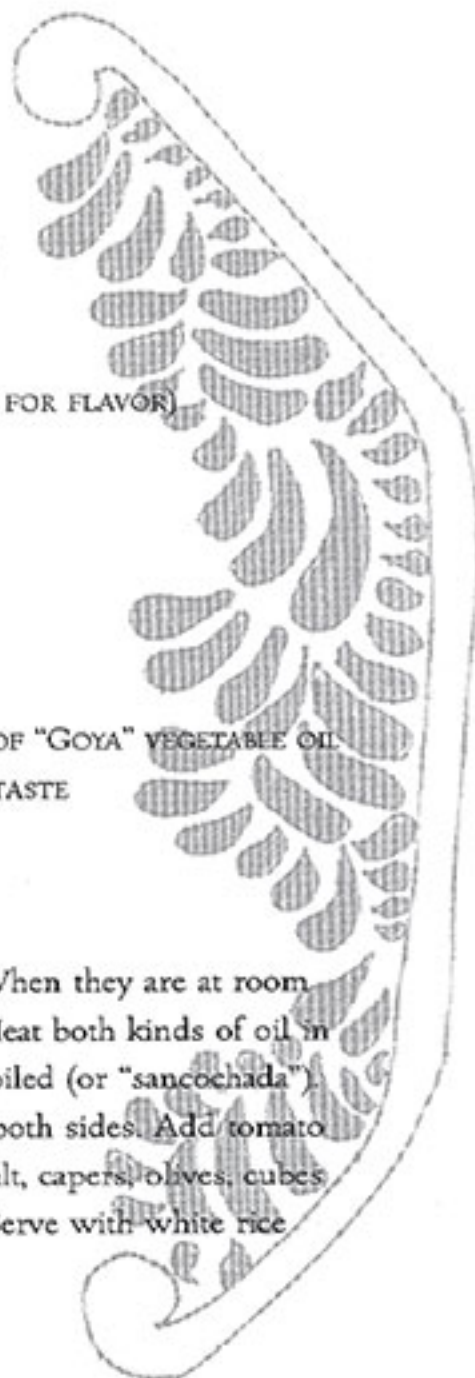
Huachinango a la Veracruz

Ingredients

- 2 WHITE ONIONS, 1/2 IN ONE PIECE, THE REST SLICED
- 4 CLOVES OF GARLIC, OR 2 TEASPOONS "GOYA" MINCED GARLIC
- 3 BAY LEAVES
- 8 MEDIUM-SIZE FRESH TOMATOES
- 10 JALAPEÑO PEPPERS (OR "CHILES LARGOS"; THESE PEPPERS ARE FOR FLAVOR)
- 2 TEASPOONS OF OREGANO
- 1 TEASPOON OF SALT
- 2 "GOYA" CHICKEN OR VEGETABLE FLAVOR CUBES
- 1/2 SMALL JAR OF "GOYA" CAPERS
- 1 SMALL JAR OF "GOYA" SEEDLESS OLIVES
- 5 CARROTS, PEELED AND CUT IN LONG PIECES (AROUND 1 1/2")
- 4 TABLESPOONS OF "GOYA" OLIVE OIL AND ALSO 4 TABLESPOONS OF "GOYA" VEGETABLE OIL
- 6 RED SNAPPER FILLETS, SEASONED WITH SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE
- 1/4 BUNCH OF PARSLEY

Preparation

Bring all the tomatoes to a boil. Let them cook for 7-8 minutes. When they are at room temperature, mix them in a blender with 1/2 onion. Let it stand. Heat both kinds of oil in a large skillet. Put the sliced onion to cook until it becomes parboiled (or "sancochada"). Add minced garlic and carrots. Add fish and let it cook a bit on both sides. Add tomato sauce and let it simmer for a while, adding bay leaves, oregano, salt, capers, olives, cubes and the peppers. Let it all cook throughout for 5 more minutes. Serve with white rice and sprinkle it with fresh chopped parsley. Enjoy!





Picadas

Ingredients

- 2 POUNDS OF CORN TORTILLA MIX
- 2 MEDIUM-SIZE TOMATOES
- 2 SMALL WHITE ONIONS
- 2 JALAPEÑO PEPPERS
- 4 OUNCES PORK LARD
- 1/2 POUND QUESO FRESCO (SHREDDED)
- SALT



Preparation

To the corn tortilla mix, add some salt and mix it well. If it is very dry, sprinkle some water. Get some mix and make it in the shape of a tortilla, a little bit smaller and thicker. Put it to cook in a comal (it is like a flat iron or metal dish) and turn it over several times to cook completely. Once it is cooked and still warm, make a border on the edge all around (this is what you call PICADAS). In the meantime, put the tomatoes, (1) onion and peppers to boil. When ready, blend all these ingredients and add some salt to taste. Spread a little bit of the lard in the PICADAS and put them once again in the comal. When they are warm, add the salsa, and top them with the cheese and some finely chopped onion. You can serve them with scrambled eggs or refried beans for a wonderful late breakfast.



Treebeard's Red Beans & Rice

Ingredients

1 POUND DRIED RED KIDNEY BEANS (CAMELIA BRAND ARE THE BEST)

6 CUPS OF WATER

2 MEDIUM ONIONS, CHOPPED

2 RIBS CELERY WITH LEAVES, CHOPPED

1/2 GREEN BELL PEPPER, CHOPPED

2 GARLIC CLOVES CRUSHED OR CHOPPED

HAM BONE OR BACON DRIPPINGS IF AVAILABLE

1 POUND OR MORE LARGE SMOKED LINK SAUSAGE, OR HAM STEAK, SLICED

OPTIONAL SEASONINGS:

SALT, FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER, FRESH GARLIC, CAYENNE PEPPER,

BAY LEAVES, THYME AND/OR OREGANO

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:

CHOPPED GREEN ONION, JALAPEÑO SLICES, GRATED SHARP CHEDDAR CHEESE AND

LIQUID HOT SAUCE

Preparation

Soak beans in water overnight or by the short soak method: cover beans with water, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer two minutes, turn off heat, cover and let stand one hour. When ready to cook, add onion, celery, green pepper, garlic and ham. Bring to a boil and simmer about two hours until beans are soft and start to thicken at the bottom of the pan. Add sausage and desired seasonings during the last 30 minutes. Serve with hot fluffy white rice. Top with chopped green onion, jalapeño peppers and grated sharp cheddar cheese, if desired. Fresh french bread on the side is a plus. Makes 6 servings.





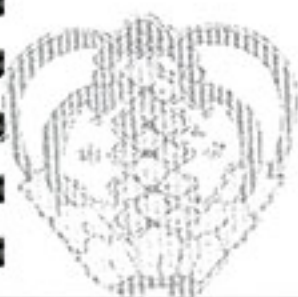
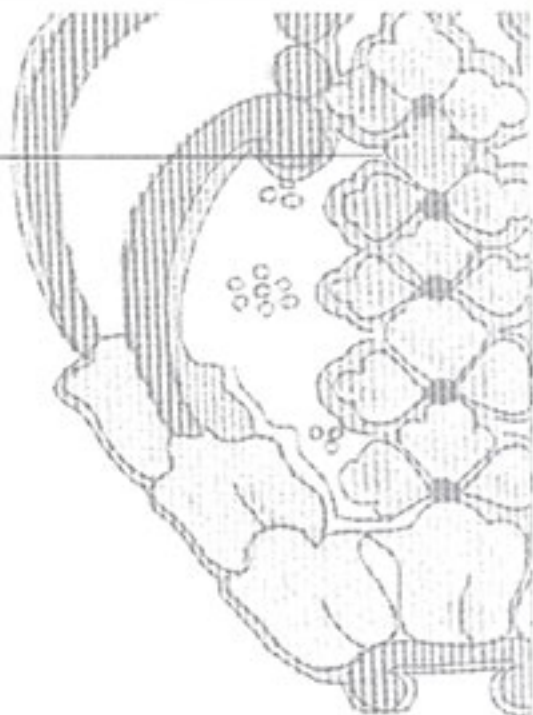
Stuffed Bell Peppers

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 TO 2 POUNDS OF HAMBURGER MEAT
- 6 BELL PEPPERS
- 1 DOZEN CRACKERS
- 1 CAN OF TOMATO SAUCE (6 OUNCES)
- 1/4 CUP OF CHOPPED MUSHROOMS
- 1/4 CUP OF CHOPPED ONIONS
- 1/4 CUP OF BELL PEPPER-FINELY CHOPPED
- 1 EGG
- 1/4 CUP MILK
- SALT AND PEPPER TO YOUR TASTE

Preparation

Combine milk, crackers, egg, salt and pepper in large mixing bowl. Beat until crackers are soft. Add hamburger meat, onions, tomato sauce, chopped bell pepper, rice and mushrooms. After all ingredients are combined, mix together thoroughly and spoon mixture into bell peppers, top the peppers with ketsup and cook at 350 degrees for one hour.





Christmas Salad

Ingredients

- 1 HEAD OF FAVORITE GREENS
- 8 COOKED RED BEETS, PEELED AND SLICED THIN
- 4 ORANGES, PEELED AND SLICED THIN
- 4 RED DELICIOUS APPLES, UNPEELED AND SLICED THIN
- 4 BANANAS, PEELED AND SLICED THIN
- 1 PINEAPPLE, PEELED AND CUT INTO CHUNKS (SAVE THE TOP FOR DECORATION)
- 1 LIME, SLICED THIN
- 1 CUP SUGAR
- 1 CUP PECANS, CHOPPED
- SEEDS OF 2 POMEGRANATES
- 1 CUP SALAD OIL
- 1 CUP RED-WINE VINEGAR

Preparation

Save 8 large outer lettuce leaves and shred the remaining greens. Line a large serving platter with large leaves and fill with shredded greens. Arrange beets, oranges, apples, bananas and pineapple in a decorative pattern atop the greens. Garnish with lime slices and sprinkle with sugar. Place pineapple top in the center, sprinkling pecans and pomegranate seeds over the leaves. Mix oil and vinegar until blended, pour over salad just before serving. Serves 8-10.

Note: Other fruit and vegetable combinations can be substituted for taste.





Traditional Chicken Fricassee

[Traditional Puerto Rican Chicken Stew]

Ingredients

- 1 4-POUND CHICKEN, CUT INTO PIECES
- 1 TABLESPOON SALT
- 1 TEASPOON BLACK PEPPER
- 1/2 TABLESPOON DRIED OREGANO
- 3 TABLESPOONS SAFFLOWER OIL
- 4 OUNCES SMOKED HAM, DICED
- 1/2 CUP BASIC "RECAÍTO"
- 1 ITALIAN FRYING PEPPER, SEEDED AND DICED
- 1/2 CUP "ALCAPARRADO"
- 1 TABLESPOON WHITE-WINE VINEGAR
- 2 CUPS TOMATO SAUCE
- 2 CUPS WATER
- 1/2 CUP GOLDEN RUM
- 3 BAY LEAVES

Preparation

Season the chicken with salt, pepper, and oregano. Set aside. Heat the oil in a large skillet and sauté the ham, recaíto, frying pepper, and alcaparrado over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the chicken and cook for 5 minutes more. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 25 minutes. Ready to serve. Serves 6.

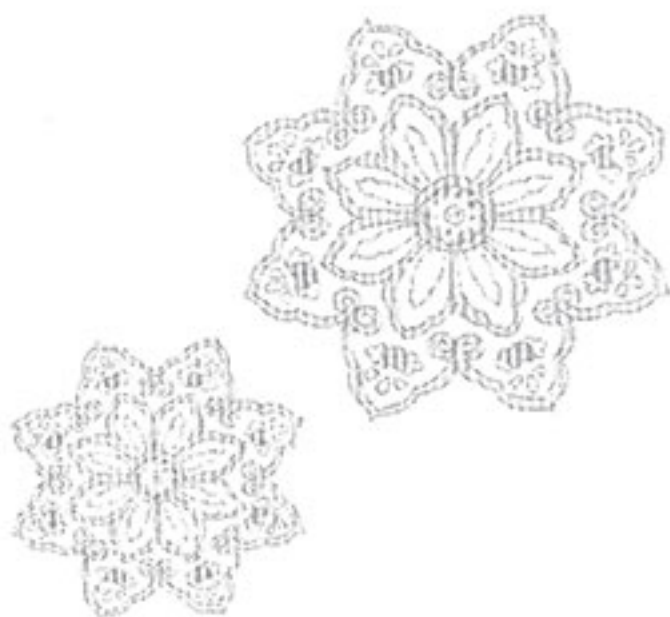




Flan de la Chata

Ingredients

- 1-1/4 CUPS OF SUGAR
- 4 CUPS OF MILK
- 1 TEASPOON OF VANILLA EXTRACT
- PINCH OF SALT
- 4 EGGS
- 3 EGG YOLKS
- 1/2 TABLESPOON OF CORNSTARCH
- 1 TABLESPOON OF COLD WATER



Preparation

Preheat oven to 350F°. Place 3/4 cup of sugar in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Swirl the pan constantly until the sugar melts and caramelizes, turning golden brown. Pour into 1-1/2-qt. ring mold, or round baking dish, and tilt mold so that caramel covers bottom and sides. Set aside.

In a separate saucepan, combine milk, remaining 1/2 cup of sugar, vanilla and salt. Bring to boil. Lower heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Cover to keep warm and set aside.

Lightly beat eggs and egg yolks in a large bowl. Stir cornstarch and water together and add to eggs. Slowly pour in warm milk, stirring constantly. Mix well, strain and pour into caramel-coated mold. Cover the mold with foil, set in a large pan and pour boiling water into the pan. Place in the oven and bake for 35-40 minutes.

Let the Flan cool for 30 minutes to room temperature and then refrigerate. To serve, invert the mold on a platter. Serve cold.



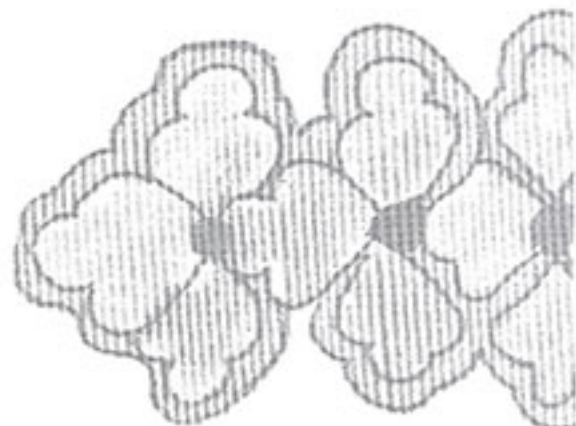
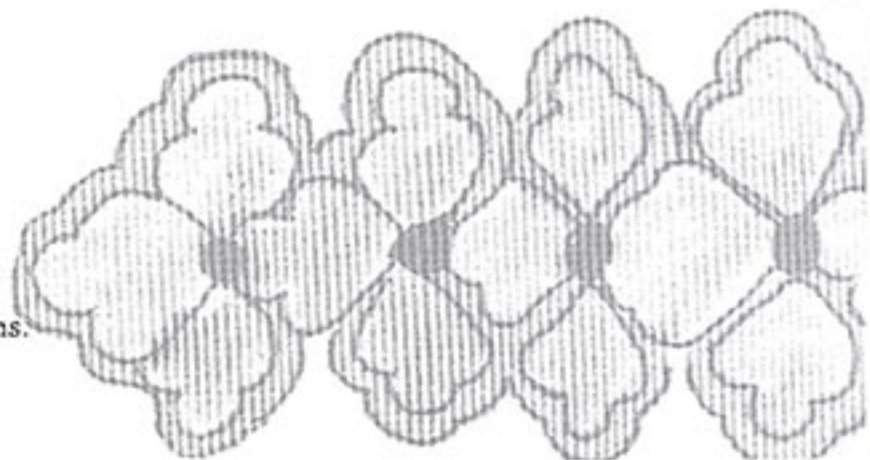
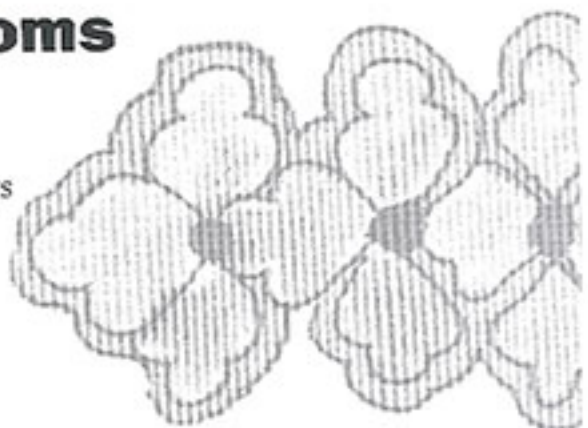
String Beans with Mushrooms

Ingredients

- 1 PACKAGE (10-OUNCE) FROZEN, FRENCH-CUT STRING BEANS
- 2 TEASPOONS ONIONS, MINCED
- 1/2 POUND FRESH MUSHROOMS, SLICED
- 1 TEASPOON OLIVE OIL
- 2 RED PIMENTOS, CUT INTO STRIPS
- 1 TEASPOON PARSLEY, CHOPPED
- 1 TEASPOON BUTTER
- SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

Preparation

Cook beans according to directions on package; drain well, sauté onions and mushrooms in hot oil. Add drained beans.





Galletas "Dulce Pasatiempo"

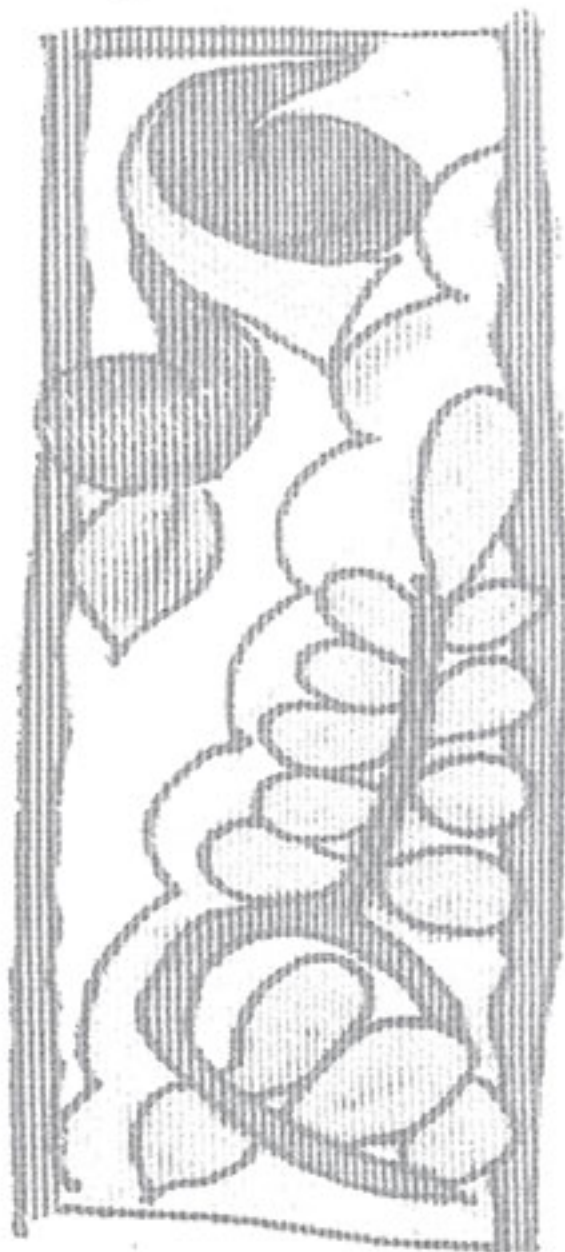
[Sweet Pastime Cookies]

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 CUPS REGULAR FLOUR
- 1/2 CUP POWDERED SUGAR
- 10 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
- POWDERED SUGAR TO TASTE

Preparation

Mix well the first three ingredients -do not knead- and refrigerate it for 2 hours. With a rolling pin, spread the cooled mixture (over a floured surface) to about 1/4-inch thickness. Cut them into whatever cookie shapes you have at hand (making sure you cut two each of the same kind). Cut out -on just one of each pair- a small circle in the center (about the size of a penny), place them on a baking sheet and bake them at 400° F for 8 to 10 minutes. Let them cool, then spread your favorite jam flavor on the cookies without the hole, top them with their matching cookie (with a hole) and sprinkle them with powdered sugar to taste.





Cuban Turkey

Ingredients

14 POUND TURKEY

1-2 HEADS OF GARLIC

SALT

BACON

GOYA MOJO

GOYA GARLIC POWDER

GOYA ADOBO (COMPLETE SEASONING)

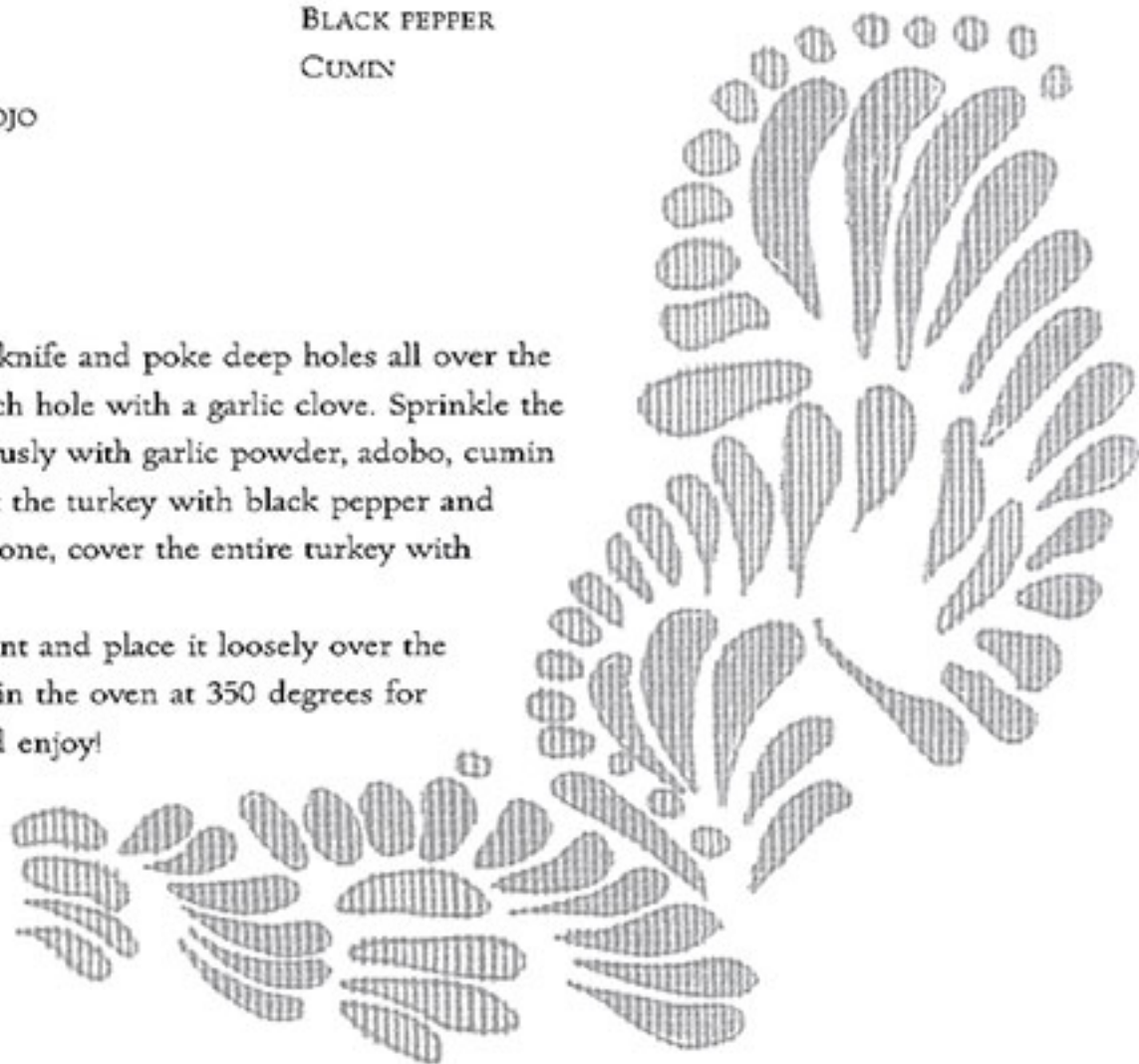
BLACK PEPPER

CUMIN

Preparation

Take a sharp knife and poke deep holes all over the turkey; fill each hole with a garlic clove. Sprinkle the turkey generously with garlic powder, adobo, cumin and salt. Dust the turkey with black pepper and once you're done, cover the entire turkey with bacon strips.

Make a foil tent and place it loosely over the turkey. Place in the oven at 350 degrees for 4-5 hours and enjoy!





Irish Fondue


Ingredients

- 8 TABLESPOONS (1 STICK) UNSALTED BUTTER AT ROOM TEMPERATURE
- 1/2 TEASPOON DRY MUSTARD
- 1/2 TEASPOON MINCED GARLIC
- 12 SLICES FIRM-TEXTURED WHITE BREAD, CRUSTS REMOVED
- 2 CUPS (8 OUNCES) SHREDDED KERRYGOLD BLARNEY OR OTHER SWISS CHEESE
- 3/4 TEASPOON CHOPPED FRESH CHIVES
- 1/2 TEASPOON WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE
- SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER TO TASTE
- 4 EGGS
- 1-1/2 CUPS MILK
- 2/3 CUP DRY WHITE WINE
- 2/3 CUP HEAVY (WHIPPING) CREAM

Preparation

In a small bowl, blend the butter, mustard, and garlic together. Spread an equal portion on each slice of bread. Fit 6 slices, buttered-side down, into the bottom of a 9-by-12 inch glass baking dish.

In a small bowl, stir the cheese, chives, Worcestershire sauce, salt, and pepper together. Sprinkle over the bread. Place the remaining bread, buttered-side up, on top of the cheese.





Arroz con Leche

[Rice Pudding]

Ingredients

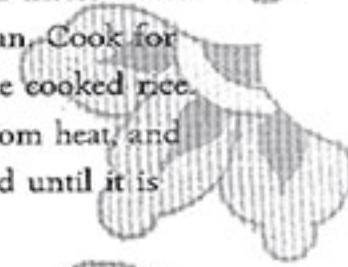
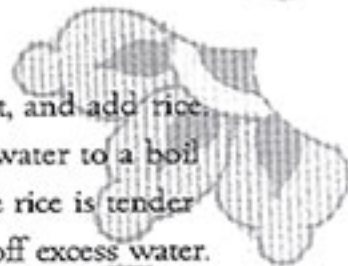
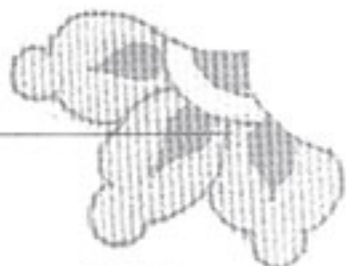
- 5 QUARTS OF WATER
- 1-3/4 CUPS OF UNCONVERTED LONG-GRAIN WHITE RICE
- 2 QUARTS OF SCALDED MILK
- 3 CUPS OF EVAPORATED MILK
- 3 CUPS OF SUGAR, OR TO TASTE
- 2 STICKS OF CINNAMON, EACH ABOUT 3 INCHES LONG
- 1-1/2 CUPS OF RAISINS, OR TO TASTE
- GROUND CINNAMON

Preparation

Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Remove from heat, and add rice. Let stand for 20 minutes. Rinse the rice well and drain. Bring 3 quarts of water to a boil in another saucepan, and add rice. Boil uncovered for 30 minutes or until the rice is tender (some rice takes considerably less time, so be careful not to overcook). Drain off excess water. Mix scalded and evaporated milk, sugar and cinnamon in a medium saucepan. Cook for 45 minutes or until mixture begins to thicken and changes color. Add all the cooked rice. Add the raisins. Cook for 40 minutes or until pudding thickens. Remove from heat, and stir occasionally until pudding cools thoroughly. The pudding can be cooked until it is very thick, if desired.

To serve, spoon rice pudding onto a platter and sprinkle with cinnamon.

NOTE: Once you serve it, you may want to have some honey on hand...adding a teaspoon of honey to your individual serving is delicious! Oh, you weren't on a diet, were you?





Ante de Galletas

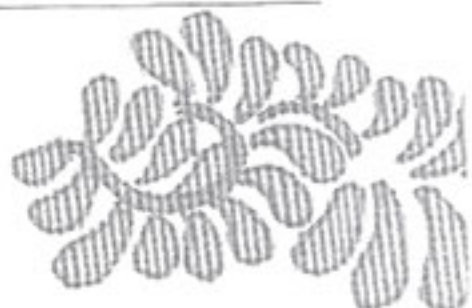
[Cookie Pudding]

Ingredients

- 3 CUPS OF GRATED GRAHAM CRACKERS (OR MARÍA COOKIES)
- 6 CUPS OF MILK
- 1 1/2 CUPS OF SUGAR
- 2 SMALL BOXES OF RAISINS
- 3 CINNAMON STICKS
- 1 1/2 TEASPOONS OF VANILLA
- 2 TABLESPOONS OF BUTTER

Preparation

Mix cookies, milk, sugar, raisins and cinnamon in saucepan over medium heat until thick. Remove from heat and add vanilla and butter. Mix well. Put in rectangular dish. Let it cool and sprinkle with ground cinnamon before serving.





Sopa de Frijoles Negros

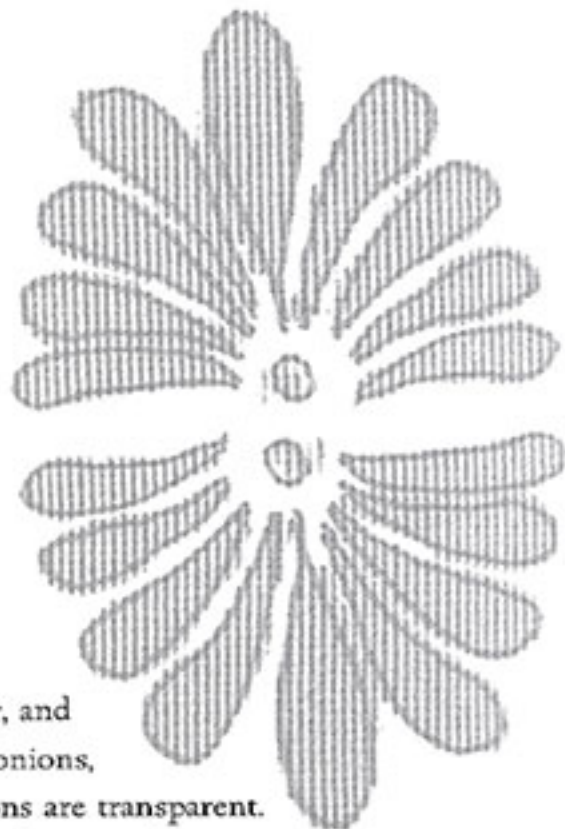
(Black Bean Soup)

Ingredients

- 1 CUP DRY BLACK BEANS
- 8 CUPS COLD WATER
- 2 TABLESPOONS OIL
- 1 ONION, CHOPPED
- 2 GARLIC CLOVES, MINCED
- 1/4 CHILE PIQUIN, CRUSHED
- 1 TOMATO, PEELED AND SEEDED
- 1/2 TEASPOON OREGANO
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT
- 1/8 TEASPOON PEPPER
- 2 TABLESPOONS SHERRY
- 1 PINT SOUR CREAM

Preparation

Wash beans; put them in a large saucepan, add water, cover, and cook slowly until almost tender - about 1 1/2 hours. Saute onions, garlic, and chile in hot oil. Add tomato and cook until onions are transparent. Add to beans in saucepan. Add oregano, salt and pepper, and stir well. Cover pan; simmer for 1 hour or until beans are tender. Puree the beans in a blender, then return the mixture to pan; simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the sherry. Float a large spoonful of sour cream in each bowl. Serve with garnish of tortillas, avocado slices, and chopped white onion.





I am the fourth child of a family of eight children. My father is an Orthodox priest, so our house during the holidays was not only filled with my large family, but with anyone from the church that did not have anywhere to go. I loved having a house full of people. My five sisters and I would all help with the cooking. We would start preparing things two to three days before Christmas. The following is an Arabic recipe for turkey stuffing. It is fantastic!

Ramia Webb (Syria)

Rice Giblets Dressing [Hashwa Roz]

Ingredients:

- 1 CUP RICE
- 1 TEASPOON SALT
- 3 TABLESPOONS RENDERED BUTTER
- 1/2 POUND GIBLETS OR 1/2 POUND LAMB, CHOPPED
- 1/2 CUP FINE NUTS
- 2 CUPS CHICKEN BROTH
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT
- GROUND PEPPER

Preparation:

Soak rice in warm water with a teaspoon of salt for 1 hour. Rinse rice thoroughly in water and drain. Melt butter in pan and add chopped giblets or lamb meat. Sauté meat, then add pine nuts stirring until golden. Add rice, stirring gently about 2 minutes. Add boiling chicken broth, salt and pepper. Cover pan and cook on low heat for 25 minutes. This recipe can be used to stuff the cavity of a four pound bird.





Pastel Venezolano de Queso

[Venezuelan Cheese Cake]

Ingredients:

- 1 CUP SUGAR
- 1 TEASPOON BAKING POWDER
- 3 CUPS (ABOUT 1/2 POUND) GRATED WHITE "LLANERO" CHEESE
- 8 EGGS, SEPARATED

Preparation:

Beat yolks and egg whites separately, then add yolks to whites. Add sugar and cheese and beat well. Fold in baking powder. Bake in a buttered mold in a hot oven at 400° F for 45 minutes or until cake is browned and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cut into squares to serve.

The Holidays are coming, so it's time to forget diets and to enjoy all those succulent Christmas dishes we usually reject to "stay in good shape." My grandma and my mom have cultivated the art of cooking as one of the most appreciated treasures we have in Venezuela.

I cannot wait to be with all my loved ones so I can enjoy all those delicious, huge, juicy dishes that bring all my family together for our traditional Christmas dinner, which can satisfy the most refined taste.

I have to confess that my mother's cuisine is almost impossible to copy. But, I can share one of my little culinary secrets with you, this desert recipe.

Carolina Clark (Venezuela)





I was born in a Northern town in Mexico, a town overpopulated with "comadres" and old maids. Among the second group there was Milena and Angélica who took pride in being "Señoritas y de las de antes." One day Milena met a gentleman who was a traveler passing through our town from Nayarit, Mexico and it was love at first site. Perhaps he was captivated by her eyes, her mouth...her mustache. The fact of the matter is that they were madly in love. My mom was so happy for Milena and so were we... and so was the whole town. From that day on, the traveler visited our town very frequently and every time he did, he would bring us Pulpa de Tamarindo (Pulp of Tamarind) from Nayarit — that's the traditional candy in that part of Mexico. Man, we used to devour them!

Unfortunately this did not last long. Milena died before she could say "I do" and that was that. My mom was so sad and so were we... and so was the whole town. As time passed, my mother and her other "comadres" tried to help the traveler's heartbreak by setting him up with Angélica. Why not? She was as single and as hairy as her sister. But he could not love another woman...not then, not ever. Now you know why we had to learn to make our own pulpa de tamarindo...

Javier González-Herba (Mexico)

Pulpa de Tamarindo *[Pulp of Tamarind]*

Ingredients:

- 2 POUNDS TAMARINDS (1 KILOGRAM)
- 8 CUPS SUGAR (2 KILOGRAMS)
- 2 CUPS WATER (1/2 LITER)

Preparation:

First, peel the tamarinds and soak them in water for eight hours.

Second, strain the tamarinds through a cheese cloth or wire mesh strainer in order to remove the seeds and the fibers. Mix this pulp with the sugar to make a mess...I mean a mass.

Third, extend the mass on a surface sprinkled with sugar. Take a portion and roll it through sugar so it will not stick all over the place. Make them into balls of whatever size you prefer. They can be as small as a ping pong ball or as large as a baseball.

Note: This candy can be kept for several months without losing its delicious taste.





Tamales Dulces

[Sweetened Tamales]

Ingredients:

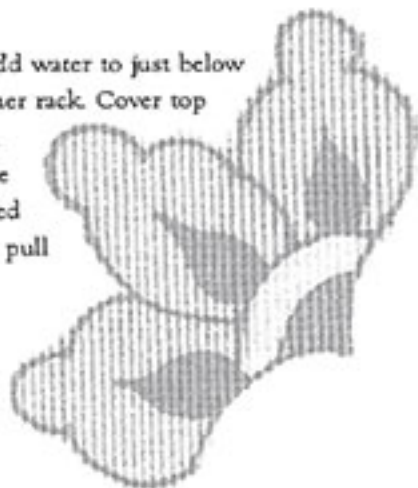
- 1 PACKAGE (8 OUNCES) DRY CORN HUSKS
- 1 CUP LARD OR SHORTENING, DIVIDED
- 4 CUPS CORN FLOUR
- 2 TEASPOONS SALT
- 2 1/2 CUPS WATER
- 1 14 OUNCE CAN CONDENSED SWEETENED MILK
- 2 TEASPOONS VANILLA EXTRACT
- 1 CUP RAISINS
- 1 1/2 CUP CHOPPED WALNUTS

Preparation:

Soak husks in warm water for at least 1 hour or until softened and easy to fold. Sort husks, setting aside any torn ones. Beat 2/3 cup lard in large bowl until creamy. Combine flour and salt in medium bowl. Alternately, add flour mixture, water, sweetened condensed milk and vanilla, mixing well after each addition. Melt remaining lard; gradually stir into dough mixture, mixing until reaching consistency of thick cake batter. Stir in raisins and nuts. Spread 1/4 cup of cake batter, using back of spoon, to form a square in the center of the husk.

Place vegetable steamer in pot with lid; add water to just below steamer. Arrange tamales upright in steamer rack. Cover top of tamales with reserved dry husks and a damp towel; cover. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Steam, adding water as needed for about 1 1/2 hours or until the tamales pull away from husks.

(Makes about 24 tamales.)



Mmmmmm, tamales! Christmas means tradition, tradition means family, family means union, and all these are the perfect ingredients for the perfect recipe. Christmas in Mexico is a mixture of traditions, color and delicious food. One of my favorite dishes on Christmas Eve was my grandmother's sweetened tamales. It was like a ritual, getting together and helping her with the preparation, right before our Christmas Eve party.

It was so exciting to be waiting for the midnight event. Rocking The Baby Jesus, singing to him and opening the presents next to the Christmas tree were the prelude to the great dinner, which didn't matter how big it was, there was always a little space in my tummy for those delicious sweetened tamales.

Mónica Easton (Mexico)



This recipe has been handed down over the years from Italian immigrants in Chile. I was lucky enough to try this tasty yuletide treat two years ago when I spent Christmas in Chile with my fiancée and her family. When you remove this bread from the oven to cool, it creates a wonderful holiday scent in the home. ¡Feliz Navidad!

Hal Means (United States)

Pan Chileno de Pascua *[Chilean Christmas Bread]*

Ingredients:

- 5 1/2 CUPS SIFTED FLOUR
- 1/4 KILOGRAM BUTTER (APPROX. 1/2 POUND)
- 1 TABLESPOON GRANULATED YEAST
- 1 CUP POWDERED SUGAR
- 4 TABLESPOONS COGNAC
- 1 TABLESPOON BEER
- 6 EGGS
- 1/2 CUP CHOPPED ALMONDS
- 1/2 CUP CHOPPED WALNUTS
- 1/2 CUP RAISINS
- 1 CUP DICED CRYSTALLIZED FRUIT
- 1/2 CUP UNSALTED PEANUTS
- 2 TABLESPOONS ANISE SEEDS
- 1/2 CUP WARM WATER
- 1 TEASPOON NUTMEG
- 1 TEASPOON CINNAMON
- 1/2 TEASPOON SUGAR

Preparation:

Dissolve yeast in warm water with 1/2 teaspoon of sugar. Add 1 cup flour, mix well and let it rest at room temperature for about half an hour. Add the flour, sugar, butter, 5 eggs, cognac and beer. Mix well until you have a soft dough. Add the remaining ingredients, kneading well so as to distribute the ingredients evenly. Coat your hands with flour and shape the bread. Place in a greased bread pan. Let it rest at room temperature for about 15 minutes. Cut a triangle in the center of the bread and paint it with the remaining egg. Bake at 375° F until the bread is golden brown and fully cooked (about one hour). Remove from oven and let cool. Enjoy!





Rabo Encendido [Oxtail]

Ingredients:

- 3 OXTAILS
- 1/4 CUP GARLIC POWDER
- 6 GARLIC CLOVES
- 2 LARGE ONIONS
- 2 COMPLETE SAZÓN GOYA PACKETS
- 2 CUPS RED WINE (TINTO)
- 1 CUP DRY WHITE WINE
- 1/2 CUP STUFFED OLIVES WITH CAPERS
- 2 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL
- SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

Preparation:

Clean and rinse the oxtails under running water, removing as much fat as possible. In a pressure cooker, place the olive oil, the garlic cloves and onions finely chopped and cook over low heat until onions turn translucent. Place the oxtails in the cooker and fill it half way with water. Add the garlic powder, the complete seasoning packets, red wine, the stuffed olives and salt and pepper to taste. Close the lid tightly and pressure cook it for 30 minutes. Open the pressure cooker and allow it to simmer over low heat for approximately one more hour. About 10 minutes before turning the heat off, add the white wine, stir and let it simmer. Serve it over white rice.

Among the many treasured memories my father left me, the one that seems to stand out the most, is seeing him busily putting in the kitchen, making his all-time favorite "Rabo Encendido." It truly became a family tradition whenever we had something to celebrate. And what better way to celebrate his positive presence in my life than to now offer you the recipe for his favorite dish. May you enjoy it as much as we did. Have a great holiday season!

Marta Noa (Cuba)





I usually spend Christmas with my dog and friends, wherever I go on that day my dog goes with me, whatever I eat my dog eats. But one Christmas, she stood on the counter and ate the left over potato salad. I was not happy with her, but it was Christmas after all. She still got her stocking full of goodies. **HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

Peter Rivera (Puerto Rico)

Yellow Rice with Crab *[Arroz con jueyes, a taste of Puerto Rico]*

Ingredients:

- 4 TABLESPOONS ANNATTO OIL
- 12 CRABS, COOKED OR 1 POUND LUMP CRAB MEAT
- 1/2 CUP BASIC RECAIÑO (A KIND OF SEASONING HERB)
- 1/2 CUP MANZANILLA OLIVES, CHOPPED
- 1 CUP TOMATO SAUCE
- 3 CUPS PARBOILED LONG-GRAIN RICE
- 4 TO 4 1/2 CUPS BOILING WATER (YOU CAN USE SAME WATER USED TO COOK THE CRABS)

Preparation:

Heat the oil in a large pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add the crabs or crabmeat, recaíño, olives, and tomato sauce. Sauté over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the rice and water, bring to boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the rice is cooked.





Agglassatu

[Onion Glazed Pot Roast]

Ingredients:

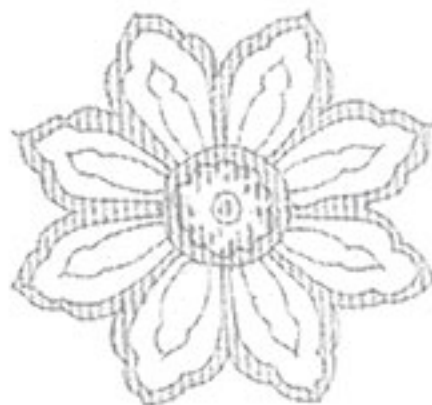
- 1 (2 1/2-3 POUND) BONELESS BEEF CHUCK ROAST, TIED
- 3 TEASPOONS BLACK PEPPER
- 2 TABLESPOONS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 4 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL
- 3 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
- 3 POUNDS ONIONS, PEELED AND SLICED
- 3 TEASPOONS SALT
- 3 BAY LEAVES
- 6 GARLIC CLOVES, SLICED
- 1/4 TEASPOON RED PEPPER FLAKES
- 1/4 TEASPOON DRIED THYME
- 2 1/2 CUPS WHITE WINE
- 3/4 CUP MARSALA WINE
- 6 1/4 CUPS CHICKEN STOCK

Preparation:

Sprinkle the roast with 1 teaspoon of the salt, the pepper and the flour, shaking off the excess flour. In a large nonstick sauté pan set at medium heat, heat 1 1/2 tablespoons of the olive oil until very hot, about 2 minutes. When the oil is hot, brown the meat on all sides, about 3 minutes. Transfer the browned roast to a large bowl and set aside. In a large stockpot or Dutch oven set at medium heat, cook the remaining olive oil and butter until the butter melts and the oil is hot, about 2 minutes. Add the onions, bay leaves, garlic, red pepper flakes, thyme and 1 teaspoon of the salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft, about 5 minutes. Add the white wine and Marsala, increase the heat and bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Cook until reduced by half, about 5-8 minutes. Add the browned meat and the juices that may have accumulated in the bowl, the chicken stock, and the remaining salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 3 hours, turning the meat once every 1/2 hour. Take out the meat and cut it in slices. Simmer the sauce for another 30 minutes or until it reaches a thick consistency. Serve the meat and pour over the sauce. This recipe is delicious with a side order of garlic mashed potatoes! Serves 4 to 6.

As you know, when you just get married, you don't have a lot of choices for the menu. So, one night, my wife invited a couple of friends for a formal dinner at our house. As you can figure out, we're not great chefs. Therefore, I started looking for recipes in order to cook a formal dinner. On the TV Show "Cucina Amore" I saw this Italian guy preparing a simple dinner, but extremely delicious... The name of the dish is "Agglassatu" or Onion Glazed Pot Roast. I was sold when he said these magic words: "Agglassatu is a remarkable example of how a common cut of meat, when combined with a few other common, uncomplicated ingredients, reaches a level of uncommon distinction." I said 'Bingo!', this is what I was looking for! I tried the recipe, and it turned out so good that everybody was licking their fingers. Mm, mm! Since then, when a formal dinner or a special occasion is coming, the 'Agglassatu' is our best choice for the menu. Best regards and enjoy it!

Francisco Vargas (Mexico)





Christmas at our house is cookie time. We have always baked lots of cookies to give to our friends when they come calling at Christmas. As children, my sisters and I would get to help my mother in the kitchen. I dare say that all we did was have fun eating the dough. This is a tradition that I have kept with my children and now with my granddaughters.

Maria Saenz (United States)

Panecitos *[Round Short Breads]*

Ingredients:

- 4 CUPS FLOUR
- 2 CUPS SHORTENING
- 1 COOKING SPOON SUGAR
- 1 SMALL BOTTLE COCA COLA
- *SUGAR AND CINNAMON MIXTURE

Preparation:

Mix all ingredients together in the order given. Knead dough until it is easy to handle. Make small balls and press to form a round circle about the size of a half dollar.

Bake on non-stick cookie sheets for about 15 minutes or until golden brown. While short breads are still hot dip in sugar and cinnamon mixture. Yields about 3 dozen.

*Mix 1 cooking spoon of sugar with 1 teaspoon of cinnamon to your liking.



Pierna de Puerco Asada a la Criolla

[Creole Pork Leg]

Ingredients:

- 1 PORK SHANK (APPROX. 6 POUNDS)
- 1 WHOLE HEAD GARLIC
- 3/4-CUP LEMON OR LIME JUICE
- 1 TABLESPOON CRUSHED OREGANO
- 2 TEASPONS COMINO (CUMIN)
- 1/2-TEASPOON PEPPER
- 1 TABLESPOON SALT
- 1 LB. ONIONS (PREFERABLY SWEET)

Preparation:

Rinse the pork shank under cool running water. Using a sharp knife, open holes in several places in the shank, at random. Peel the cloves on half the head of garlic and stuff each hole with one or two cloves as deeply as possible. In a mortar, mash the remaining garlic cloves (peeled) together with the lime or lemon juice, the oregano, cumin, pepper, and salt. Place the shank in a medium baking pan and pour the mixture carefully over it, making sure it coats all of the shank. Peel the onions, cut them in rings and place all over the pork shank. Cover the shank with aluminum foil and let it stand in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours. Place it in the oven (making a loose tent with the aluminum foil over it) and bake 4 hours at 350° F. If using a thermometer, insert it in the middle and keep checking it until it registers 185° F. Serves 8 to 10.



Nostalgia is a word that has only one meaning for me: my country of birth, Cuba, and losing it much too soon in my life. However, I did gather lots and lots of great memories and they always resurface accompanied by a smile. Like the great smells at Christmas. My immediate family came from Havana, but it was a tradition to travel to Cardenas in the province of Matanzas to gather with our numerous family members and celebrate the holidays together. I can still see it... the great table in the dining room festively dressed for the occasion... and the mouth-watering smells wafting from the kitchen. To celebrate my memories, I'd now like to share with you one of our most traditional Christmas dishes... and — trust me — a delicious one too. So here for your enjoyment... *Pierna de Puerco Asada a la Criolla*. Truly a feast for your tastebuds. Happy holidays!

Charito Liera (Cuba)





One of my fond memories of Christmas is in the early 70's, when my oldest daughter was 2 1/2 years old. Our neighbor dressed up as Santa and visited our home. When he knocked on the door, we told her to open the door for us. When she did so, her eyes became very big and she was very surprised. Then she slammed the door shut and said to us, "It's Santa!" We replied, "Well, open the door again and let Santa in!"

Debbie LaRoche (United States)

Quick & Easy Fruit Cobbler

Ingredients:

- 2 CANS FRUIT PIE FILLING (CHERRY, BLUEBERRY, APPLE, STRAWBERRY, OR PEACH)
- 1 BOX OF WHITE OR YELLOW CAKE MIX
- 1 CUP MELTED BUTTER
- CINNAMON

Preparation:

Spread pie filling on the bottom of a single layer cake pan. Pour dry cake mix on top of pie filling. Spread evenly. Drizzle melted butter on top of cake mix. Top with sprinkled cinnamon (optional) depending on pie filling. Bake according to directions on cake mix box.

Serve with ice cream or whipped cream if desired.



Helado de Limón

[Lemon Slush]

Ingredients:

- 1 CUP FLOUR
- 1 STICK BUTTER
- 1 TABLESPOON SUGAR
- 1 LARGE CONTAINER COOL WHIP
- 2 CUPS POWDERED SUGAR
- 28 OUNCES CREAM CHEESE
- 2 SMALL BOXES INSTANT PUDDING MIX
- 3 3/4 CUPS MILK
- JUICE OF 6 LEMONS

Preparation:

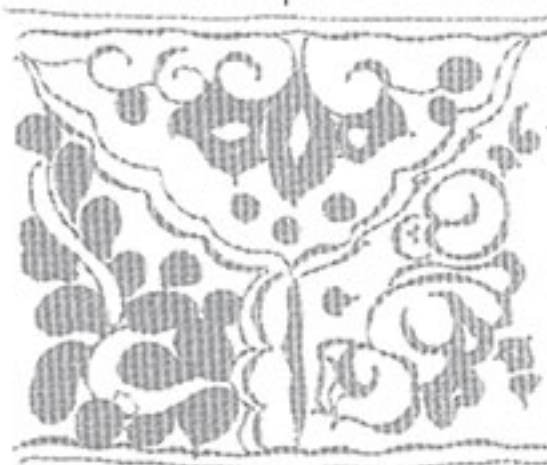
Mix flour, sugar and butter together. Press into a lightly greased 13x9 pan. Bake crust for 15 minutes. Let cool completely. Blend sugar, lemon juice, cream cheese and 2 cups of Cool Whip together. Spread onto cooled crust. Mix together pudding mix and milk. Pour over cream cheese mixture. Top with the remaining Cool Whip. Refrigerate before serving.



Last year I shared the story of Christmas at my house when I was a little girl. This year I am going to share with you Christmas with my husband's family. When Christmas Eve arrives at the León house, we all gather at the "Big" house, (which is my mother-in-law's house). We start by praying "El Rosario" in front of the small "nacimiento", and singing carols. After all the singing and praying, we are starving, so we all run to the kitchen where Gaby (mom-in-law) has a huge baked ham for us to eat, along with rice and stuffing. After we finish eating, we all gather around the Christmas tree and we tell stories and watch videos of when we were all little. A couple of hours later, we are anxious for the Lemon Slush to be brought out which is just "sabrosísimo". This is my favorite part, eating the Lemon Slush. After all the eating we have done, we go to our sleeping stations, which is wherever we happen to fall asleep. Around 5:00 a.m. we start to jump up, in pajamas, to get our gifts from under the Christmas tree. There we tear everything apart and we all have to take pictures of our gifts. This is Christmas at the León house; hope your

Christmas is just as fun.
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Yvette León (Mexico)





Christmas is really special for me, my family and people in Mexico. A lot of traditions come together this season to help celebrate this wonderful day, which I usually spend with my family. I like Christmas so much. We always celebrate it together at my grandmother's house. There are many of us (60 at least). At 8:00 p.m., Santa Claus comes home and gives presents to the children. We take pictures, sing and thank God for allowing us to be with the people we love.

This day is really special. We have presents, games, songs, etc. One important part of this celebration is the food. We usually cook traditional and different dishes for this party. One of the most traditional dishes is the Bacalao. It's delicious and everybody enjoys it.

For as long as I can remember, we always eat Bacalao on Christmas Day. Other dishes that we prepare are the traditional turkey with apple sauce, romeritos, apple salad and, of course, delicious desserts.

For me, the most important thing on this day is that I can be with God and my family. Merry Christmas!

Alicia Roldán (Mexico)

Bacalao [Cod Fish]

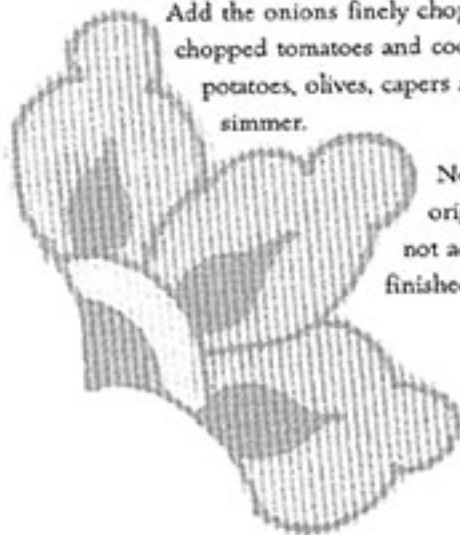
Ingredients:

- 2 POUNDS DRIED COD FISH
- 2 POUNDS TOMATOES, CHOPPED
- 1 1/2 CUPS OLIVE OIL
- 1 POUND ONIONS, CHOPPED
- 1 POUND SMALL POTATOES, COOKED
- OLIVES TO TASTE
- CAPERS TO TASTE
- RED SWEET PEPPER TO TASTE
- 5 CLOVES GARLIC, PEELED

Preparation:

In a large container, soak the cod in cold water as long as necessary to make it soft, and to remove the excess salt. Once softened, remove the skin and crumble it until there are no more large pieces.

In a large pot, heat the oil and fry the garlic until dark brown; remove garlic. Add the onions finely chopped and sauté until tender; add chopped tomatoes and cook at low heat for 20 minutes. Add potatoes, olives, capers and sweet red pepper. Mix well and simmer.



Note: Don't forget the fish comes originally cured with salt; therefore, do not add any extra salt until the cooking is finished and you have tasted it.

Grilled Rosemary Chicken


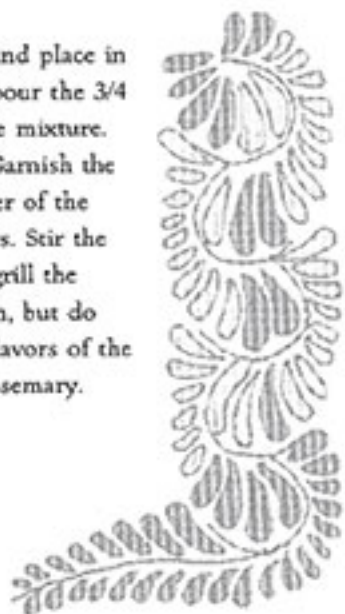
Ingredients:

- 3-4 POUNDS SKINLESS, BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST
- 3/4 CUP OF EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- 5 WHOLE LEMONS
- 5 WHOLE LIMES
- 2 TABLESPOONS OF ROSEMARY
- 1 WHOLE GREEN BELL PEPPER
- 1 WHOLE YELLOW BELL PEPPER
- 1 WHOLE RED BELL PEPPER
- 1/2 TEASPOON FRESH THYME, MINCED

Preparation:

Place the chicken breast evenly in a large bowl. Slice the lemons and the limes in half, then squeeze the juice and the pulp of the fruit out over the top of the chicken evenly.

Next, slice all three peppers evenly into quarters and place in the bowl evenly among the chicken breast. Now pour the 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil over the top of the entire mixture. Garnish with a little rosemary, then mix evenly. Garnish the top of the contents in the bowl with the remainder of the rosemary and place in the refrigerator for 24 hours. Stir the mixture before grilling the chicken breast. Either grill the peppers lightly or sauté them in an uncovered pan, but do not overcook, or you could lose all the natural flavors of the peppers mixed with the lemons, limes, and the rosemary.



Christmas means many different things to many people. Christmas is present in the love a family shares, or in a celebration among good friends. To many, it is also time to celebrate that Jesus was born long ago to bring salvation to mankind. To bring the love and grace of Heaven to earth and the insight that the needs of the world as a whole are more important than the needs or desires of one, even if he were the Son of God.

These are the memories my parents instilled in me, God bless their souls. These memories make me thankful for being a part of the world, not just on Christmas, but everyday of the year. To me the true test of happiness is being able to be thankful not for what you have gotten for someone, or what has been given to you, but to be content with just the fact that you are alive and healthy. If you are fortunate enough to have been given a chance to make a difference in this world, then it is your duty to find that place for yourself and do what needs to be done. Now, there are no signs telling you where to go and what to do. That comes from within, but we all have a reason for being and something to accomplish from which everyone else in the world can benefit.

Much like life itself, nothing worthwhile comes without hard work—and this is no different. But it's what makes me smile when I think of Christmas. It is what makes me smile all year long. I hope it will make you smile too!

Dennis Bryan (United States)



From the beautiful Colombia, my country of origin, and more specifically from the region I was born, the state of Antioquia, comes the recipe of this delicious cake. It has been transmitted by generations, from mothers to daughters, and up to this date, perhaps with some slight modifications, keeps a privileged place on our table and particularly two very special occasions, namely Christmas dinner and wedding receptions. What makes the difference between these two occasions is the way the cakes are decorated. Wedding cakes must be baked with plenty of time in advance in order to be saturated little by little with a good amount of liqueur.

The legend says that the original recipe was invented by a humble black girl, who was the cook in the mansion of a rich family. The daughter of the family was to be married, and the servant, not having any means of giving her master a gift for the occasion, decided to prepare something very special for the enjoyment of the bride, groom and all their guests. Ever since, this custom has been carried on up to this day. A wedding reception, modest or sumptuous, is inconceivable without the traditional bizcocho negro (black cake).



Bizcocho Negro (Black cake)

Ingredients:

- 1 POUND OF THE FOLLOWING CANDIED FRUITS, CUT INTO SMALL PIECES: PAPAYA SLICES - KALAMIRNA FIGS - PINEAPPLE - RAISINS - PRUNES
- 1/4 POUND CHOPPED PECANS
- GRATED RIND OF ONE MEDIUM SIZE ORANGE AND ONE LEMON
- 1/2 CUP ORANGE JUICE
- 1 POUND BUTTER OR MARGARINE
- 1 POUND SUGAR
- 10 EGG YOLKS SEPARATED FROM WHITES
- 1 POUND ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR, SIFTED
- 2 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER
- 1/2 CUP CARAMEL COLOR OR YOU MAY PREPARE YOUR OWN (RECIPE FOLLOWS)
- 1 CUP PORT WINE OR ANOTHER SWEET WINE OF YOUR CHOICE
- 4 TABLESPOONS HONEY

Preparation:

Marinate all of the finely chopped fruits in the orange juice. Cream the sugar and butter or margarine. With the mixer set at medium speed, add the yolks in small portions to the mixture of sugar and butter. In a separate bowl, beat the whites until stiff. Fold in the egg whites. Add the marinated fruits, caramel color, sifted flour and baking powder. Beat at low speed just enough to make the mixture even. Pour the batter into a 10 inch spring mold previously greased and floured. Bake in preheated oven at 275° F for about 2 1/2 hours or until the testing knife comes out clean. Let it cool on a rack; remove the mold and sprinkle with the mixture of wine and honey.

Tips:

1. To prevent the chopped fruits from sinking to the bottom of the batter, powder them with flour before putting them into the mixture.
2. You can use fruit cake mix instead of candied fruits, or make your own combination.

Caramel Color:

In a shallow pan put 1/2 pound of brown sugar, melt it at low heat until it acquires a deep dark brown color. At this point add one cup of water. Let it reach the boiling point and stir the mixture until the caramel dissolves completely. This mixture can be used for coloring cakes, gravies, pastry, etc.



Miniature Chocolate Eclairs

Ingredients:

Filling and pastry

- 1 PACKAGE (ABOUT 3 1/2 OZ.) CHOCOLATE PUDDING AND PIE FILLING
- 2 CUPS MILK
- 1 CUP WATER
- 1/2 CUP (1 STICK) BUTTER
- 1/8 TEASPOON SALT
- 1 CUP ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 4 MEDIUM EGGS

Frosting:

- 2 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
- 2 OUNCES (2 SQUARES) SEMISWEET CHOCOLATE
- 1 CUP CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR
- 2 TABLESPOONS MILK
- 1 TABLESPOON VANILLA EXTRACT

Preparation:

To prepare filling, cook pudding according to package directions. Chill for 1 hour. To prepare pastry, in a heavy saucepan, heat butter, water, and salt over medium high heat until mixture boils and butter melts. Reduce heat to low. Vigorously stir in flour all at once until mixture forms a ball. Transfer pastry to a bowl; cool for 5 minutes. Stir in eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Preheat oven to 400° F. Grease a baking sheet. Drop dough into 12 mounds, about 5 inches apart, on prepared baking sheet. Spread each mound into a 4x1/2 inch rectangle, piling dough on top and slightly rounding sides. Bake until golden, 35 minutes. Remove from oven; make a 1-inch-long slit on side of each eclair. Reduce oven temperature to 375° F. Bake for 10 minutes. Transfer to wire rack to cool. To prepare frosting, heat butter and chocolate over low heat, stirring until melted. Remove from heat. Stir in sugar, milk, and vanilla until smooth. Slice eclairs in half. Spoon about 1 tbsp. of filling onto each bottom half and replace tops. Spread tops with frosting. Baking tip: A wire rack allows air to circulate below and around the food so it cools without becoming soggy.

Makes 12 eclairs.

As a child growing up in Ridgewood, N.Y., my parents lived in a 6-family apartment building. The other 5 apartments in the building were occupied by relatives. You would think it would be nice to all live together with aunts and uncles and grandparents, etc. Well, I have a different story to tell. Unfortunately, my relatives disliked each other and did not speak. So, Christmas was spent completely separate from each other. The only happy memory I have is exchanging desserts with my cousins. We did this without anyone knowing. I remember using what we called a dumb-waiter. This was a freight "box" that was fastened by a rope. I would put desserts into the freight box and lower the rope until my cousin received the dessert. My cousin would then send me up my favorite dessert my aunt made every Christmas Day, miniature chocolate eclairs.

Joe Genova
(United States)





Christmas was a very special and happy time in my family. I come from a large family. I am the youngest of 10 sisters and 1 brother. We grew up in a very warm and loving home.

I would have to say that my favorite part of the Christmas Holidays was when my mother would make us our favorite holiday treat: "buñuelos" and hot chocolate. We would sit by the Christmas tree and quietly whisper to one another. I will never forget watching my mother stuff the turkey for Christmas dinner. This is a tradition that I now enjoy with my husband and 3 children.

Lillian Delgado (United States).

Buñuelos

[Mexican Sweet Bread]

Ingredients:

- 2 CUPS FLOUR
- 1/2 TEASPOON CALUMET BAKING POWDER
- 1/2 CUP SUGAR
- 3 TEASPOONS OF CRISCO SHORTENING
- 1 EGG
- WATER

Topping:

Hot water as needed. Mix 1/2 cup of sugar with 3 tsp. of cinnamon for topping.

Preparation:

In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, sugar and shortening. Add 1 egg and hot water as needed. After kneading all ingredients together, separate into regular size balls. Roll each one and cut into 4 pieces. Then fry in a pan with a little oil. Take out when lightly browned. Place on paper towels to soak up oil. While still hot, sprinkle sugar and cinnamon all over.





The Fuzzy Red Hooter

Ingredients:

- 1 OUNCE TEQUILA
- 3/4 OUNCE AMARETTO
- PINEAPPLE JUICE
- 7-UP
- SPLASH OF ORANGE JUICE
- 1 OUNCE GRENADINE

Preparation:

Pour tequila and Amaretto over ice into Collins type glass. Fill with pineapple juice, 7-Up and add a splash of orange juice to taste. Top with grenadine. Garnish with a cherry and serve with a beer.

I don't cook much but I do know how to make a great drink. Here is a drink that I feel captures the essence of me...

Sean Crowell (United States)





The name Vampiro given to this drink comes from the deep red, bloody-like color of the mixture. Although it has tequila and is somewhat spicy, it's a drink that is really refreshing and not that strong. Some people like it stronger than others and change the amount of Tequila. But believe me the more the Tequila, the more the fun. Usually it is served as an appetizer or cocktail, but it's so good that you want to have one after the other, during the meal, and after the meal. That's why I recommend preparing a whole pitcher.

Christmas time is a perfect season for this drink. Its Santa Claus Red color will surely combine with your decorations. If you do not celebrate Christmas, I'm sure it will combine with your New Year's party decorations. If you are not celebrating either, get a life! Get a Vampiro!

Jaime Belden (Mexico)

Vampiro

[A spicy drink to handle with care]

Ingredients:

- 1 PART OF TEQUILA (WHITE TEQUILAS ARE MOST COMMON FOR THIS DRINK, BUT YOU CAN USE ANY KIND)
- 2 PARTS OF SANGRITA (SPECIAL READY-TO-USE RED MIXTURE PRODUCED IN MEXICO THAT YOU CAN FIND IN LIQUOR STORES WHICH CARRY GOOD VARIETY OF TEQUILAS OR STORES WHICH CARRY HISPANIC PRODUCTS. RECOMMENDED BRAND: SANGRITA VERDA DE SANCHEZ)
- 1/2 PART OF ORANGE JUICE (FRESH ORANGES WORK BETTER)
- JUICE OF ONE LIME PER GLASS
- SALT



Preparation:

Salt the rim of an Old Fashion glass (this size is recommended but you can use any size) To salt the rim you pour salt on a small plate. Rub a lime half all around the glass rim and place the glass upside down on the salt.

You can prepare a glass or a whole pitcher with this recipe (I recommend you do a whole pitcher.) The number of glasses you are making the recipe for is the number of limes you are going to need. Mix the Tequila with the lime juice, orange juice and Sangrita. Stir and serve in salted rim glasses with lots of ice.

Chilaquiles con Chorizo y Pollo, Estilo Metepec

[Chilaquiles with Chicken, Sausage and Cheese]

Ingredients:

- 3 CUPS VEGETABLE OIL
- 40 SMALL TORTILLAS, CUT INTO WEDGES
- 3 CHICKEN BREASTS, BOILED FOR 20 MINUTES WITH ONION, GARLIC, CELERY, CARROTS, BAY LEAF, OREGANO AND SALT, THEN SHRED
- 1 CUP SOUR CREAM
- SALT AND PEPPER
- 1 CUP GRATED CHEDDAR CHEESE
- 3 CUPS QUESADA, MONTEREY JACK OR MOZZARELLA OR OTHER MILD CHEESE, GRATED
- 1 1/2 CUPS CRÈME FRAÎCHE

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 4 CUPS WATER
- 20 TOMATILLOS, HUSKED
- 1 1/2 MEDIUM WHITE ONIONS, PEELED
- 6 LARGE RIPE TOMATOES (2 1/2 POUNDS, APPROXIMATELY)
- 4 CHILES CHIPOTLES, LIGHTLY ROASTED AND SOAKED IN HOT WATER 5-10 MINUTES, OR FRESH SERRANOS, WASHED AND STEMMED, WHOLE
- 6 GARLIC CLOVES, PEELED AND PURÉED
- 1/2 CUP VEGETABLE OIL
- 1 1/2 MEDIUM WHITE ONION, GRATED
- SALT TO TASTE

Preparation:

To prepare the sauce, bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add the tomatillos and onion, and boil for about 25 minutes. Then place in a blender or food processor with 1-2 tablespoons water and add tomatoes, chiles, and garlic. Purée, then strain and set aside. Heat the oil in a medium frying pan. Sauté the grated onion, then add the strained tomatillo sauce. Simmer the mixture for about 35 minutes or until it thickens. Season to taste with salt. Prepare the chilaquiles, heat the oil in a medium frying pan. Fry the tortilla wedges until crisp, then remove from oil and drain on paper towels. Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter a deep baking dish. Place a layer of fried tortillas on the bottom. Cover with a layer of shredded chicken, fried chorizo sausage, cheese and cream. Repeat with a second layer of tortillas, sauce, chicken, chorizo, cheese and cream. Bake the dish for about 40-45 minutes or until hot. Serve immediately, accompanied with refried beans. You may also prepare as individual servings by layering into individual baking dishes. If you prefer, you may reserve some of the sauce and serve individually in molded casseroles on a bed of sauce, topped with melted cheese. Serves 8



Chilaquiles (*chee-la-kee-leez*) is a favorite Mexican dish prepared with tortilla wedges or strips that are lightly fried until crisp, then bathed with a sauce. Sauces and additional ingredients vary, but this recipe calls for chorizo (typical Toluca sausage) and chicken. Other versions include eggs, cream, cheese or red sauce instead of green.

Chilaquiles are an excellent dish for breakfast, dinner or ending a long night of partying (the Mexican way.) Even though Chilaquiles are served on many occasions (family gatherings, weddings, Christmas, etc.), I remember having them every other Saturday at my grandparents' house.

You see, my grandfather bought a large piece of land on the south side of Mexico City and split it among his children. As time passed, my parents built a house next to my grandparents; next to us my aunt and uncle built theirs; and next to them my other uncle and aunt built theirs. Then it became a family tradition to have breakfast at my grandparents' home every other Saturday. Since we all lived on the same side of the street, and in Mexico the front yard is enclosed by a tall "barde" (wall), we all walked across each other's yards in our pajamas and slippers to my grandparents' home. It was in the garden that the "family breakfast" started with the smell of "huevos con chorizo, bocoles, quesadillas con queso, frijoles" and, of course, the "chilaquiles," as we approached the house. By the time we got inside we had almost forgotten to greet our grandparents. All we wanted to do was sit down and eat. The breakfast was always noisy with everyone talking and spoons clinking as everyone tried to get more chilaquiles. Did I mention they were delicious? Besides the chilaquiles, the most memorable part of these breakfasts was the end. Before anyone got up from the table, my grandfather would recite a new tongue twister or poem which all the grandchildren had to memorize by the next Saturday. Then we, the grandchildren, all recited the tongue twister/poem we learned the week before and any others from school. As my grandfather smiled with pride, he would excuse himself by saying, "I have an important meeting with my pillow," and we would all get up to play in the garden.

Alejandro Amelio (Mexico)



Christmas Stollen

Ingredients:

- 1 CUP BUTTER
- 1/2 CUP SUGAR
- 3 EGGS
- 4 1/2 CUPS FLOUR
- 1 LARGE ORANGE RIND
- 1 PACKAGE RAPID YEAST
- 1 1/4 CUP LUKEWARM MILK
- 2 TEASPOONS SALT

Frosting:

- 6 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
- 1 ONE-POUND PACKAGE CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR
- 1/4 CUP LIGHT CREAM
- 1 1/2 TSP. VANILLA

Nut Filling:

- 1 TEN-OUNCE JAR OF MARASCHINO CHERRIES
- 1 TEN-OUNCE PACKAGE OF PECANS
- 1 CUP OF BUTTER
- 3/4 CUP SUGAR

Preparation:

In mixing bowl combine flour, sugar, salt, dissolved yeast. In sauce pan heat butter, orange rind and milk. Make sure the mixture is warm not hot, heat kills yeast! Add to dry mixture. Mix on slow, add eggs (one at a time). When mixed, form into bowl and throw on floured board. Knead for 5-7 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes. Roll out into large oblong. Melt 4 tablespoons butter, pour on dough, spread with nut filling. Fold in half and form into a rectangle with your hands-pinch edges. Let rise 3 hours. Bake at 350° for 30-40 minutes until brown all over. Frost and decorate with cherries and nuts.

For frosting: mix, butter and sugar and beat in cream and vanilla. Gradually add remaining sugar and add more cream until mixture becomes like frosting.

For nut filling: grind cherries (without liquid). Add pecans and mix with melted butter and sugar. Add more orange rind if you like.

My grandma is a very beautiful, sweet, kind little German lady of 96 years. She remembers all her special Holidays with her family in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they lived above her mother's candy store. There were many special scents that went with her memories, including the candle lit tree, Christmas stews, special breads, butter cookies and scrumptious candies. She always kept these special traditions alive with her family and then with ours as she sent us our Christmas package each year. We always waited for her box filled with presents, cookies (about 6 kinds) and the Christmas Stollen! How pretty she decorated it with cherries, nuts and frosting. We would slowly unwrap the saran wrap, our mouths watering and "dam," every time Mom would catch our little fingers going into the frosting and say, "Not until Christmas morning."

Oh well, it was always worth the wait. This year, for the first time, I'm going to try to make the Stollen for Grandma...I promised her and I hope it's good. Here's her recipe, why don't you try it and start your own tradition?

Cathy López Negrete (United States)





Roche's Chili Corn

Ingredients:

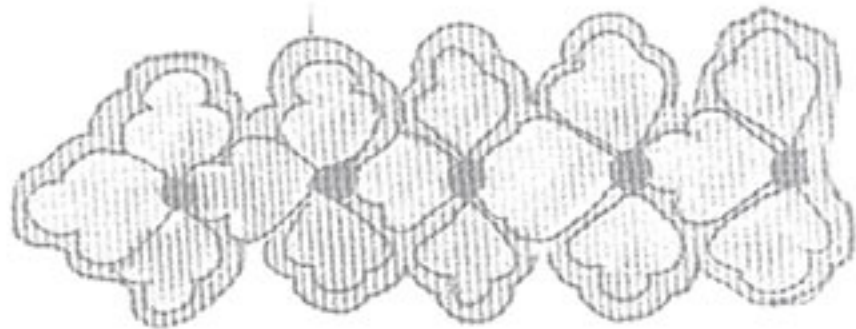
- 1 CUP CORN
- 1 TABLESPOON CHILI POWDER
- 2 TABLESPOONS BUTTER (NOT MARGARINE)
- 2 PINCHES OF SALT
- 1/2 PINCH BLACK PEPPER
- 1 CUP ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1/2 TEASPOON PARSLEY
- 1 PINCH REAL BACON BITS (OPTIONAL)

Preparation:

Combine ingredients in a bowl and microwave on high for 1 minute and 40 seconds. Let cool for 37 seconds.

*M*y best friend, and old roommate Eric, created this recipe one night when he was bored and hungry. It didn't sound so great at first, but it really is good. Sometimes I eat it when I miss him. Isn't it funny how silly little things can remind you of great friends? Recipe by Eric Casa, submitted by:

Sasa Najdanovic (Serbia)





Since my Dad was in the military, we traveled all over the world for years and years. I have two sisters born in Germany, a brother from Puerto Rico, a brother from Kansas, and I was born in Oklahoma. So much for being Puerto Rican! But I have very fond memories of Christmases spent in big-time snowstorms in Germany, Kansas, and New Jersey or without snow in Virginia and Florida, and certainly, those spent in the warmth of Puerto Rico.

Christmas in Puerto Rico is truly special and the celebration begins with the first day of December and ends eight days "Las Octavias" after Three King's Day (January 6). It's party after party and everyone gets into the spirit, joined by all the Stateside executives that annually find that they must go to Puerto Rico to check "operations" there. Can't say I blame them.

Anyway, food is plentiful, and you are sure to put on a few pounds. I'm including some "quickie" things that can be served to munch on.

Adalis Arroyo (Puerto Rico)

Surullitos de Maíz [Cornmeal Sticks]

Ingredients:

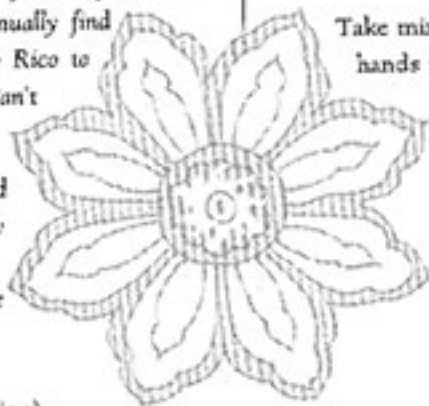
- 2 CUPS WATER
- 1 1/4 TEASPOONS SALT
- 1 1/2 CUPS YELLOW CORNMEAL
- 1 CUP EDAM CHEESE
- VEGETABLE OIL (FOR DEEP FRYING)

Preparation:

Combine water and salt in a saucepan, heat to boiling. Remove from heat. Add cornmeal, mixing thoroughly. Cook over moderate heat until mixture separates from bottom and sides of pan. Remove from heat, add grated cheese and mix well.

Take mixture by teaspoonfuls and shape into balls. In the palm of your hands roll balls to 1/2 inch thickness, in the shape of small cigars. Deep fry until golden brown. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

Note: Serve as an appetizer or with a main dish.



Quesillo

Ingredients:

- 4 EGGS
- 2 CUPS HOT MILK
- 8 TABLESPOONS SUGAR
- 4 TABLESPOONS WATER FOR CARAMEL
- PINCH OF SALT

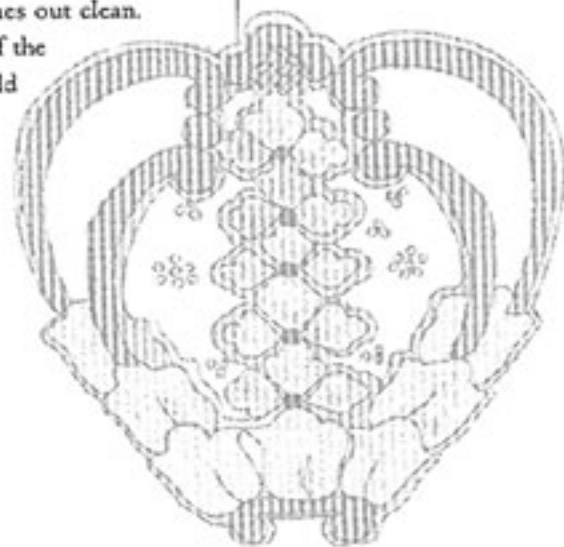
Preparation:

Caramelize 8 tablespoons of the sugar in the metal pan in which the quesillo is to be cooked. When it is brown, add water and mix well, removing from the fire to prevent further cooking. Beat eggs separately and add yolk to white; add milk, sugar and salt. Turn into caramelized mold. Bake in oven (325° F) in a pan of water about 3/4 hour or until a silver knife inserted comes out clean. (May also be cooked in a tightly covered double boiler on top of the stove; in either case the water in which the mold is placed should not boil it. Regulate heat or add cold water from time to time. Cool before turning out of mold. Serves 6.



“Borracho no come dulce” (drunks don’t eat sweets) is the friendly advice grandmas give parties who’s mouths water for this delicious light dessert, popular in Venezuelan Christmas dinners and at children’s “piñata” parties. Of course, you have to take this with the characteristic Venezuelan sense of humor, meaning if you’ve had at least one drink, anything with sugar won’t sit well with you. This cheese look-alike makes for a great dessert to top off any holiday dish.

Sally Folsmann (Venezuela)





If you're ready to embark on a true taste-bud journey... follow me to the Italian Riviera: to an Italian port called Genova. Genova is regarded as the birthplace of pesto among Italians, and every true Italian knows that if you want authentic pesto you can't get it better than the one you get in Genova. I was fortunate to have an Italian grandmother that immigrated to the United States at the end of WWII. After many years of carefully observing the natural and aromatic ingredients that bring out the

true taste in pesto, I will share with you the secrets of the Genovese people, the secret of Genovese Pesto.

Chris Campos
(Mexico)



Pesto alla Genovese

[A recipe from the heartland of Pesto]

Ingredients:

FRESH, FRESH AND I EMPHASIZE FRESH BASIL - ABOUT 4 FULL SPRIGS
1 HANDFUL OF PINE NUTS
PINCH OF SALT
1/2 CUP FRESHLY GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE (NOT THE KRAFT KIND...)
1/2 CUP OF EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
500GR. PASTA - PREFERABLY PENNE, FUSSILI OR SOME TEXTURED PASTA THAT WILL HOLD THE PESTO...

Preparation:

In a food processor, combine the basil leaves (no stems), pine nuts, salt, Parmesan cheese and olive oil and blend together, set aside. Meanwhile have 500gr. of pasta boiling (enough to feed four)... and make sure you don't overcook it. Italians eat their pasta 'al dente' which means that it is somewhat hard, not soft. A fool proof way of making sure your pasta is 'al dente' is by tasting the pasta periodically while it is cooking. You will know the pasta is about ready when you bite into it and you can see a tiny dot of uncooked pasta...then it is time to remove it from the heat, drain it, combine it with the pesto mixture and serve it steaming hot! You can garnish it with a couple of basil leaves on top and some extra Parmesan cheese. As a variation to this recipe, Genovese people also have Creamy Pesto, which in essence is the same recipe as above, but while the mixture is in the food processor, add about 4 or 5 heaping tablespoons of Ricotta cheese. Ricotta is a good substitute to the cheese that they use in Genova...but unfortunately we can't get it here in Texas.

Well, there it is, a simple, tasty and truly Italian dish. As my grandma used to say, "Mamma mia, non puoi dire che hai assaggiato Pesto, se non hai mai assaggiato il Pesto Genovese" -which translates to "Golly, you can't say you've tasted Pesto, without having tasted Genovese Pesto!" -Now you can say you have...so ENJOY!



Refresco de Jamaica

[Natural, refreshing, easy to do, burns fat...]

Ingredients:

- 50 GRAMS JAMAICA
- 2 LITERS WATER
- 1 CINNAMON STICK
- 50 GRAMS PRUNES
- 50 GRAMS PECANS
- RUM (AS MUCH AS YOU WANT!!!)

Preparation:

Wash the jamaica in running water. Boil it together with the cinnamon, prunes and sugar. Remove it from the stove when water turns to a 'red wine' color. Add rum to taste. Serve cold or hot, and add chopped nuts.

Crema de Aguacate

Ingredients

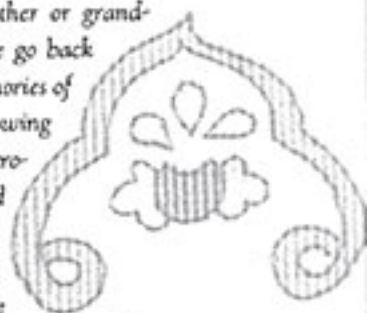
- 3 CUPS UNGREASED CHICKEN BROTH
- 5 TABLESPOONS GRATED CHEESE
- 3 RIPE AVOCADOS
- CREAM
- CORRIANDER
- TORTILLAS

Preparation:

Mix the avocado pulp and a cup of the chicken broth in blender. Cut strips of tortillas and deep fry them. Set aside and let the grease drip off. Add the mixture from the blender to the rest of the already hot chicken soup. Serve immediately, add a teaspoon of cream, sprinkle grated cheese and add the fried tortilla strips with a touch of corriander.

Christmas is a very important season in Mexico. It is a time to thank God for everything you have, like love, affection, health, family, and success; time to celebrate, to be spiritual, and happy. One of the most important elements in Mexican life is food. That is because it comes from within the culture to celebrate special dates and seasons enjoying Mexican food and dishes. We celebrate the birth of a baby, the Day of the Dead, and Christmas as well.

That is why I wanted to share some of the traditional recipes of my family so you can enjoy the flavors and colors of these dishes. When we try something our mother or grandmother cooked, we go back in time to our memories of when we were growing up! I hope these aromas bring good memories to your heart. And that you enjoy the taste of these wonderful Mexican dishes.



By the way if you have not seen the movie "Como Agua Para Chocolate", ("Like Water for Chocolate") you might want to see it, so you understand the dichotomy between the culture and the food.

Liliana Fisher (Mexico)



You can't go long past a week in Mexico without eating beans in one form or another. Whether in the morning with eggs and pan dulce, at lunch paired with rice as a side dish, or at night with tamales and a cup of hot chocolate, they are an essential staple in our diet. It took my wife Pam, who is a "gringa", about six years to perfect this bean recipe to the point where my dad really liked it. Not that he's extremely demanding or anything, but I guess it became a matter of personal pride for her, in fact, a challenge. She consulted with several of her Hispanic acquaintances, and experimented with their recipes, combining them until she was able to get a result that was both tasty and relatively easy to make. Of course I like them as well, but I guess, at least as far as Pam's concerned, the definitive judge is her father-in-law!

Luis Gonzalez (Mexico)

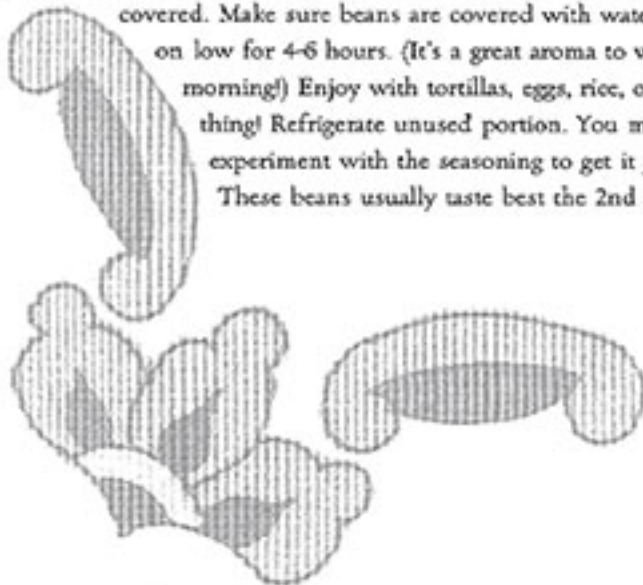
Pam's Father-In-Law Pinto Beans

Ingredients:

- 3 POUNDS PINTO BEANS
- 8 OUNCES CAN ROTEL® TOMATOES (DICED)
- 1 MEDIUM ONION (CHOPPED)
- 1/2 SLAB BACON (CHOPPED)
- 1 BUNCH CELERY (CHOPPED)
- 1/2 BUNCH CILANTRO - TO TASTE
- SALT - TO TASTE
- PEPPER - TO TASTE
- GARLIC - TO TASTE
- 1 BOTTLE OF BEER (OPTIONAL) (MEXICAN BRANDS DON'T SEEM TO MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE)

Preparation:

Rinse beans well and soak for 8-10 hrs. in salt water. Put beans and all ingredients in slow cooker (Crock Pot) on low. Add water until all beans are covered. Make sure beans are covered with water at all times. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. (It's a great aroma to wake up to in the morning!) Enjoy with tortillas, eggs, rice, or just about any thing! Refrigerate unused portion. You may have to experiment with the seasoning to get it just right for you. These beans usually taste best the 2nd day.



Dorothy's Nuclear Eggnog

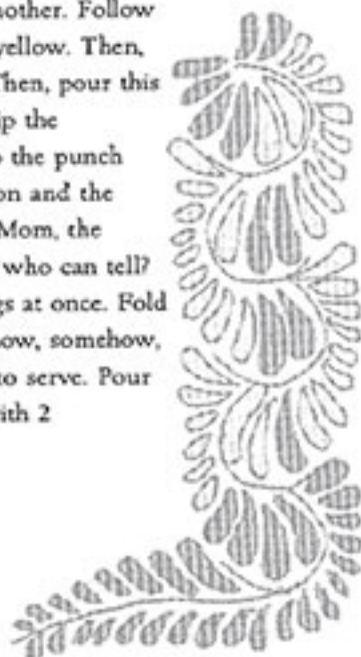
Ingredients:

- 12 EGGS
- 1-1/2 CUPS OF VERY FINE GRANULATED SUGAR
- 1 QUART OF MILK
- 1 QUART OF WHIPPING CREAM
- 1 QUART OF BOURBON (*)
- 1/2 PINT OF COGNAC (*)
- 1 CUP OF DARK RUM
- NUTMEG
- GOOD INSURANCE

(*): ORIGINAL RECIPE CALLS FOR 1-1/2 QUARTS OF BOURBON AND 1 PINT OF COGNAC...THE CHOICE IS YOURS. I USUALLY HAVE TO WORK THE NEXT DAY.

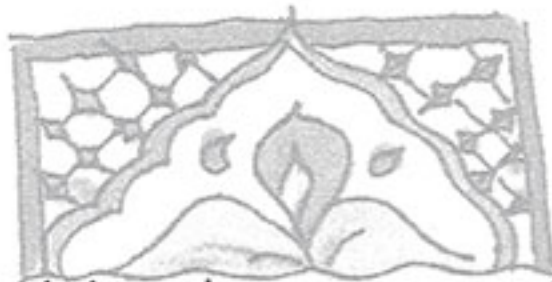
Preparation:

Separate the eggs. Yolks in one dish, whites in another. Follow me here. Beat the 12 egg yolks until a very light yellow. Then, beat in the sugar until thick and straw-colored. Then, pour this into a chilled punch bowl set in ice. Slightly whip the whipping cream. Gently mix it and the milk into the punch bowl mixture. Then, very slowly, add the bourbon and the cognac. This is important, because, according to Mom, the liquor will cook the eggs. With stuff this potent, who can tell? OK. Here's the tricky part. Time to do two things at once. Fold in the 12 stiff egg whites (which means that by now, somehow, you should have beat them). Now, you're ready to serve. Pour the eggnog into the cups, and sprinkle the top with 2 tablespoons of dark rum and nutmeg.



Having been raised in a completely bicultural household in Mexico City, my sister Victoria and I had the fortune of enjoying the holidays from both sides of the border...a classic Thanksgiving (even though Thanksgiving dinner in the evening after school as it was never an "official" holiday); a colorful Día De Muerto accented by the wonderful breads, atole and Chocolate De Metate and, of course, the sugar skulls; or Christmases that had endless celebrations, colors and tastes. Our Christmas started on December 12 on Día De Guadalupe. On or around this date we would hop in the car and look at all the nice light displays that colored the streets of our huge city at night. Then, the Posadas, the Pastorelas and other heartwarming traditions and rituals ensued, all making for unforgettable memories. My Mother's Noche Buena (Christmas Eve) or, on occasion, her Christmas Day parties were another dearly held tradition. A good reason for this is probably her tremendously potent Eggnog. Definitely not kid's fare, but makes children of us all still today. Not a Mexican recipe, but an export that quickly became a tradition in my home town. ¡Salud y Feliz Navidad!

Alex López Negrete (Mexico)



Our Grandmother would make this special soup during major holidays, especially at Easter time. During the Lenten Season, our Catholic family would each give up a food item we enjoyed the most for 40 days and we could not eat meat on Fridays. Our family loves to eat, so the entire family (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) would gather at Grandma's house every Friday to celebrate Lent and for a family feast. Each Friday was different. One Friday, Grandma would prepare her famous soup. Next, we would have a fish fry, followed by a cold seafood feast. We would rotate these Friday meals until Easter Sunday. After Easter Mass, the family would get together again and prepare a huge Bar-B-Que. We would have lots of food, Easter egg hunts and enjoy the



food item we gave up for 40 days. I remember one year giving up Coca-Cola soft drinks. The day before Easter Sunday, my mother and I went to Fiesta Mart and purchased a dozen Coca-Cola bottles from Mexico; they taste better than the U.S. cans or plastic bottles. I placed them in our refrigerator and at midnight, Easter Sunday, I carefully popped off the bottle cap and enjoyed one of the best-tasting Cokes ever. Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas are the major holidays when our family comes together to celebrate and eat. Our family secret to make our food go farther and feed our big family is to serve our food with love and a smile. Finally, when we sprinkle salt on our food, we do it in the form of a cross.

Frances Castañeda (United States)

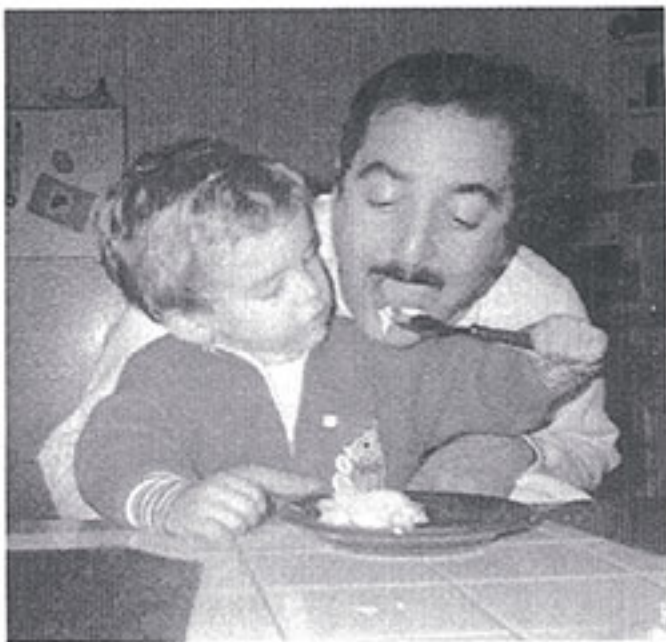


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Frances Castañeda (United States)



I remember sitting around with my family on cold winter nights eating pound cake and drinking hot chocolate. I

remember as a kid those cold nights when our cheap stubborn landlord would keep the thermostat at 62 degrees. The only thing we could do was cuddle together, wearing heavy sweaters, wondering why our landlord was so cheap. All in all, I'd love to have those cold nights back. Thinking of those nights reminded me of this recipe.

Joe Genova (United States)



When you're talking about Spain, you're talking about Paella. Even though I'm not a Spaniard, my wife Elena is from Málaga. I know Málaga and Valencia are miles apart, but they do have something in common... they both are in Spain! Anyway, she gave me her mother's secret recipe and let me tell you...it's really good. However, the real magic behind making paella is that you do it with your family and friends around you and get them involved in the preparation. It makes for great conversation! So, because you've invited your whole family and friends for dinner, this recipe has to be done for a lot of people. Hey, everybody eats...no?...enjoy it!

Francisco Vargas (México)



Once again I come to reflect at Christmas time the wonder of this beautiful world which we all share. Joined together as one human race regardless of ethnicity, gender, or beliefs. All living among the vast beauty of our oceans and our forest lands. The world is truly a beautiful place and should be cherished as should life itself. However, as we push forward to the dawning of a new millennium, the world faces new challenges for its people, animals, forests and oceans. Essentially our planet's own existence. Human history on the earth has been unique in our progression as a species.

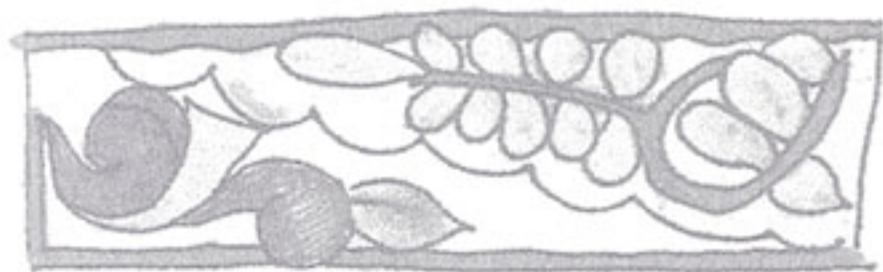


We have been able to establish and elevate our societies, cultivate resources and industry, and continue to strive forward by sending a human being to the heavens and beyond to explore what the average person may not even be able to conceive. Despite all our advances, there still lies some poison in our history as a species that must not ever be forgotten or forsaken. Man has abused each other, abused the animals, and abused the Earth. Some of this abuse has been so fierce that the abused are no longer among us. Species of animals, races and cultures of people, and the environmental resources and treasures that have been extracted from the earth, have been made extinct forever by the greed of man in the name of civilization. Thousands of acres of rain forests are cut down every day while chemical spills and waste pollute our rivers and oceans.

This year for Christmas I just want there to be peace among people regardless of our differences. I want people to look at this world and be thankful for all those who have come before us to make the world what it is, but let us not forget the poison that runs and let's pay a little tribute to what has been lost and let us never forget so we will never allow it to happen in the future.

God Bless You & Merry Christmas

Dennis Bryan (United States)



Got Leche?

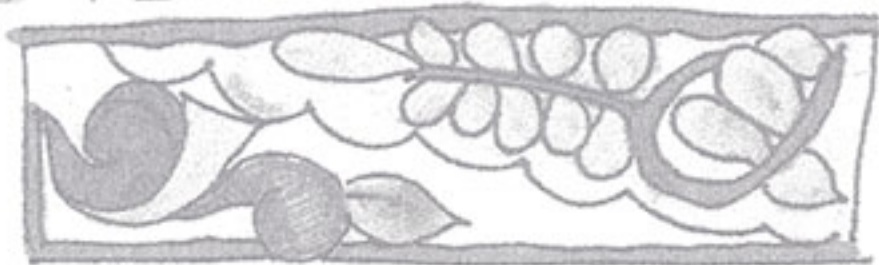
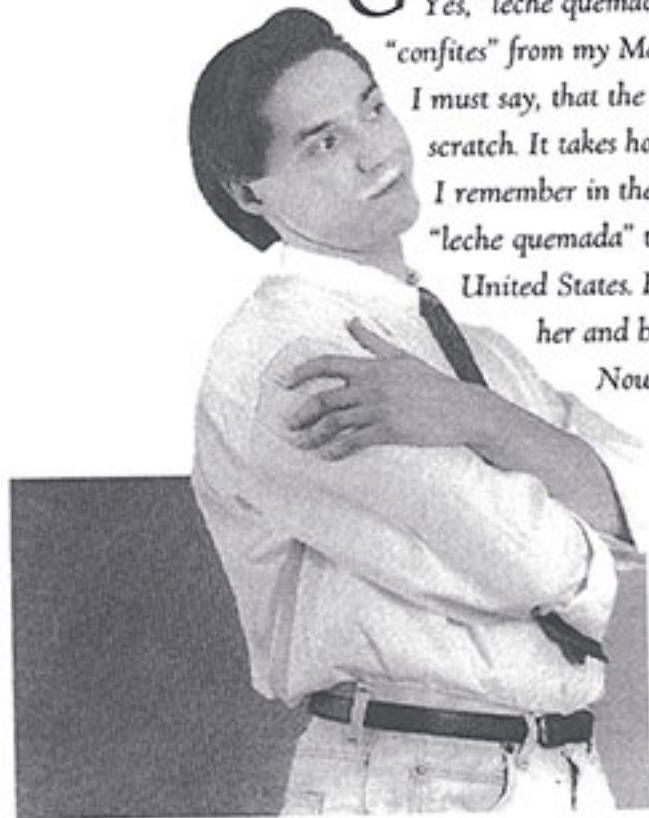
Yes, "leche quemada..." one of the most delicious and traditional "confites" from my México lindo.

I must say, that the authentic "leche quemada" is very hard to make from scratch. It takes hours and hours of mixing and stirring. Ask Mom. I remember in the 60's, she would sit in the kitchen all day making "leche quemada" to send it to my brother who was away at school in the United States. For me, it was fun to just hang out with her and help her and be her little taste tester...immmmm!

Now that I am... well, older, I still enjoy the taste of a good "leche quemada" even though I don't have the skill nor the time to make it.

So, for those who are like me, here you have an easy short cut to make "leche quemada" without too much effort.

Javier González-Herba (México)



Sorry, I am all out of Christmas stories, but the following recipe should be something you'll like. Everyone who has tried it at our little (4-table), local Puerto Rican restaurant seems to love it, and goes back for more.

Adalis Arroyo
(Puerto Rico)





Christmas Eve is a little different in Colombia than in other countries; it is not the spirit of relaxing but of cheering and rejoicing.

People, normally family, friends and neighbors, reunite to dance and eat. Among the traditional Colombian foods for this day, the "Natilla" is the most favorite dessert, without which the Christmas dinner wouldn't



be complete. There are some variations in the "Natilla", for example: "Arequipe Natilla" made from a milk-derived product very popular in Colombia, called "Arequipe", and the "Coconut Natilla" because a good amount of coconut is included.

The exact time when the "Natilla" was introduced into the menu of our holidays gets lost in the memory of people of the state of Antioquia, where I come from, and where the custom of serving it along with

"Buñuelos" (a kind of dough made from cornmeal and shaped like ping-pong balls) started.



The preparation of the "Natilla" has changed over the years. The one-day meticulous process from the past has turned into a 30 minute operation, at the most, which is the recipe I present to you at this time. Anyhow, it has always been a great time for family gatherings and fun.

Try it, you will love it. ¡FELIZ NAVIDAD PARA TODOS!

Myriam Brena (Colombia)



One of the nicest memories I have of Christmas is of my granddaughters and their ever-developing personalities.

They are ages 5, 2 and 1 respectively, so they are quite a handful. Their names are Jesslyn, Jordan and Jillian, also known as the triplets.

I made Banana Pudding for dessert last holiday season and my little "girls" loved it.

My middle granddaughter, Jordan, misunderstood me when

I asked her if she liked my Banana Pudding. She replied, "I like Nana's Pudding." So from that day forward my Banana Pudding is now referred to as Nana's Pudding. Memories like this last you a lifetime.

Maria Saenz (United States)





This is a recipe my family and I used to enjoy quite a bit when we were growing older, and were all living together. Now, my father has passed away, and three of five kids do not live in Mexico City anymore. We used to love eating this very "veracruzano" dish every time we had a family reunion, although my roots actually come from the State of Mexico and not from Veracruz. My father loved fish and my mother was a wonderful cook all her life. The moment my father passed away, my mom decided to quit cooking. I am the one that took over this family custom and, now that I have my own kids, I have decided to make it a point to cook this dish every time we all get together, whether it is in Mexico or in Houston. Sometimes, though, I cook it just for the fun of it and to feel closer to Mexico.

You know how we Latin Americans like to be close to our families. I hope you fish lovers like it and will enjoy cooking it. It is really, really "delicioso"!

Rebeca Jewett (Mexico)



On a beautiful dawn in Alvarado, Veracruz, I felt the emotion of reliving old memories next to my very loved ones. This is why I decided to ask my grandmother Mamía to relive those wonderful memories together.

When I was a little girl visiting her at her home, I used to see that she kept stuff in an old beautiful wood trunk in her bedroom. She used to



keep letters, mementos from her youth, papers, and perhaps love letters from my grandpa. While I was growing old, I asked her, on many occasions, when was she going to show me everything in that special trunk. She used to answer that she would show me everything when I became a woman.

That day arrived and among the wonderful things she used to treasure was this great recipe which she used to captivate my grandfather. Her soft words

remembering her old love moved me...it was such a sweet and funny story at the same time...

For this very reason, every time I eat "Mamía's Picadas", I think about the forty years of love they professed to each other and what this little but delicious recipe did for them.

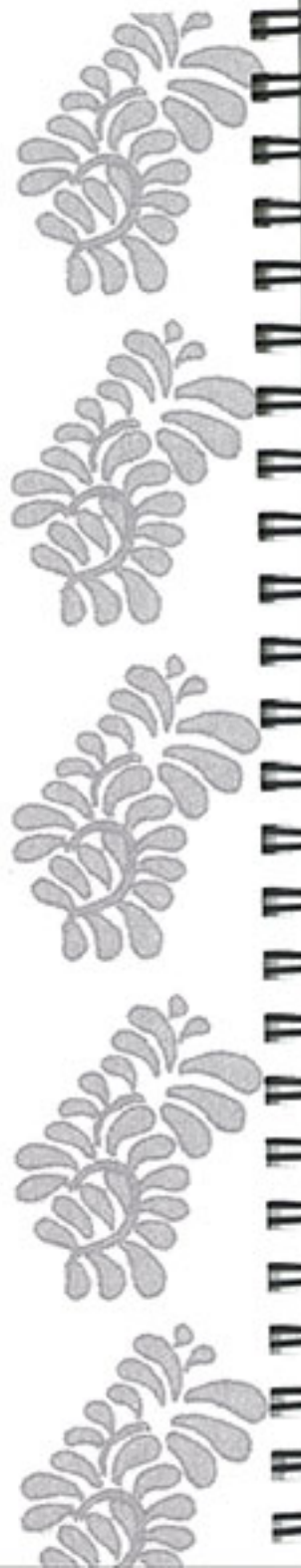
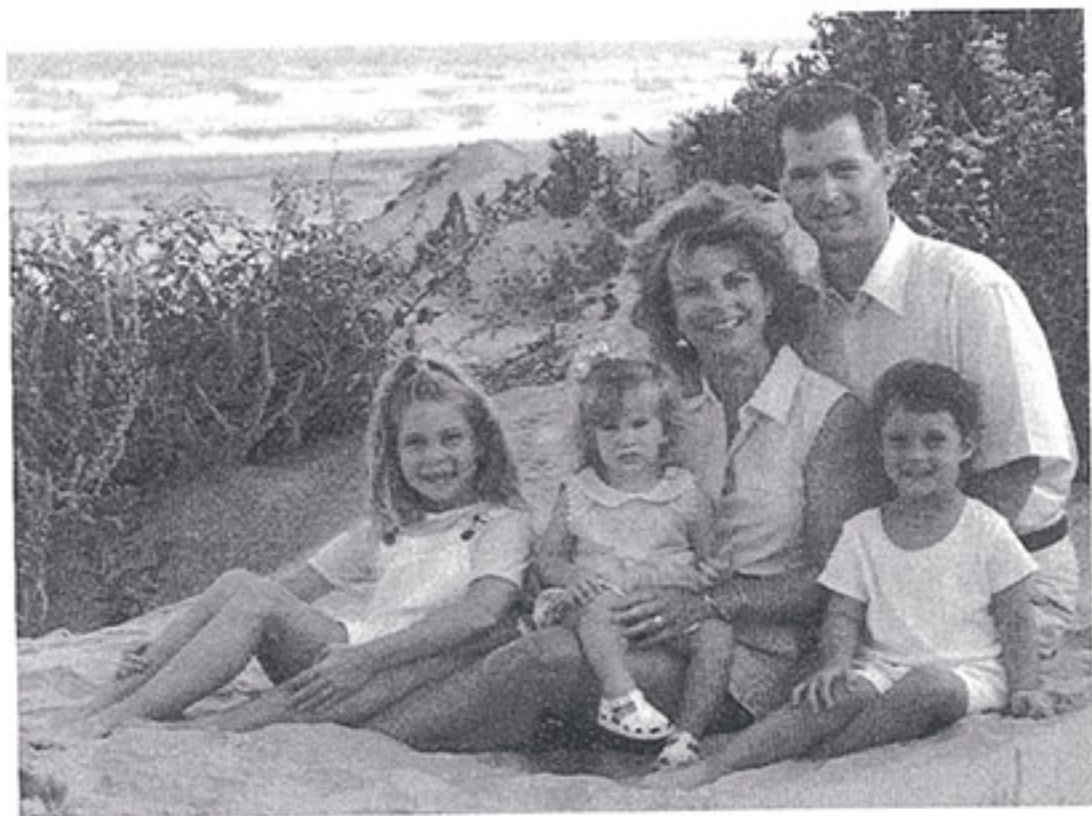
Olga Zamudio (México)

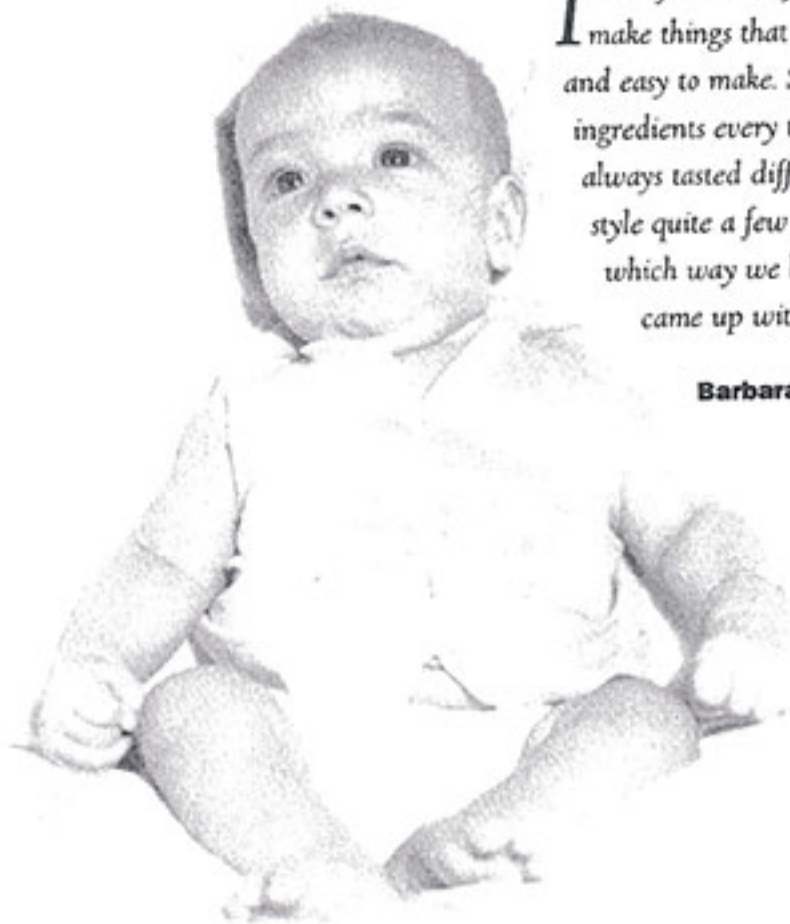


*F*rom Treebeard's restaurant on Old Market Square. Copied from the Houston Chronicle food section.

This is an easy dish to prepare, especially on a Saturday or Sunday while you are working around the house. The recipe requires minimal preparation and attention.

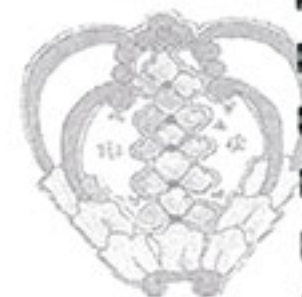
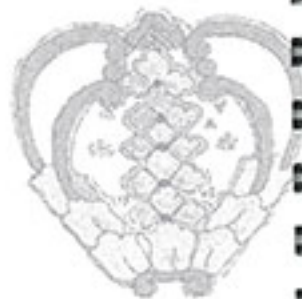
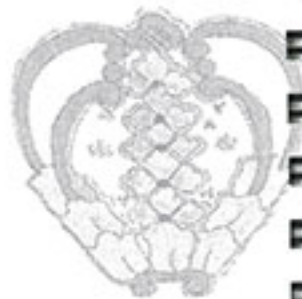
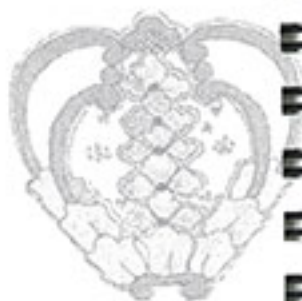
Patrick Smith (United States)





I came from a very large family, so my mother would make things that were cost-efficient but very tasty and easy to make. She would include a variety of ingredients every time she made bell peppers, so it always tasted different. When she had changed the style quite a few times, she would then determine which way we liked it best and this is how she came up with this recipe (kid's choice).

Barbara Broedeker (United States)



In a family as large as ours, living in close proximity to each other caused tempers to flare all the time. Christmas was a time for forgiveness for all the little injustices we committed against each other during the previous year.

One way to get on somebody's good side in our family was to prepare a wonderful dish and present it for their approval at the dinner table in front of everybody.



Everyone would enjoy it, but the person it was being presented to always got the first serving. It was kind of an act of contrition with witnesses, you know?

One year, my sister and I just weren't getting along. I wanted to "bury the hatchet"

and start the upcoming year on a good note. Not really knowing how to cook at the time, and respecting my teenage sister's wishes for a light and healthy meal, I came up with the following recipe.

So did it work, you ask? Well, my sister and I still argued from time to time, but when things got really bad, one or the other of us would blurt out "Your gonna wind up making a salad!!" and the situation would quickly diffuse into our laughter. So yeah, I think it did.

Rob Spallone (United States)

This is a traditional dish in Puerto Rico and a good excuse for families and friends to get together around the table and enjoy it.

Peter Rivera-Cortez (Puerto Rico)





I should say it is my husband's favorite dessert. We call it "the favorite." He fell in love with it while in Mexico, and when we came to the United States to live he thought he'd never have it again, but we are in Houston, and here, everything is possible. On the other hand, we can always bake it ourselves. So, let's try it! By the way, the little boys in the picture are my nephews from Florida; they tried this cake when they visited us here in Houston and they loved it too!

Monica Easton (México)

I was born in an adobe house, in a small village in Northern Lebanon. My grandparents on my mother's side were farmers, with the land being their second religion. My grandfather on my dad's side had emigrated to Mexico, "Land of the Riches" in 1923 and took half the family with him.

Ever since I can remember, Mexico was part of our daily thoughts and prayers. My grandparent's house and ours was filled with pictures of the other "half". (Those who

dared to cross the sea looking for a better life). Pictures of my Grandpa with my uncles and aunts. Pictures of my Grandpa with my cousins.



We would anxiously wait for the summer to welcome a visiting uncle or aunt, or even a distant relative. They brought with them gifts, memories, stories and, yes, more pictures. Lots of stories about Mexico. Its beauty. Its varied cultures. And its magnificent cuisine.

La Chata is my aunt from Puebla, a beautiful city that kept its Spanish character more than any other city in Mexico. She would visit Lebanon every other summer,

and her cooking was, and still is, regarded as the finest in the family. Of all the things she cooked, my favorite one was her Flan.

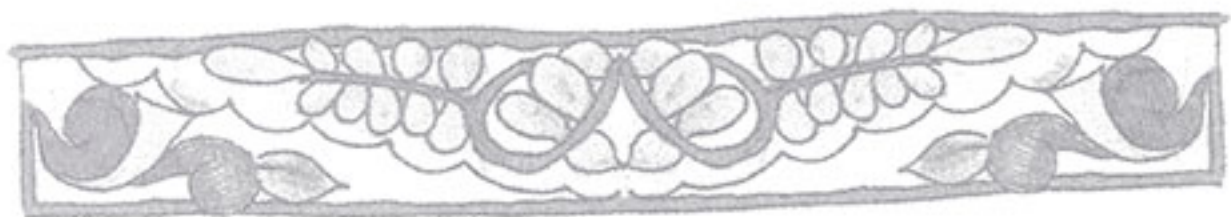
Although the Flan is universally known as a Spanish Dessert, it is a big favorite in Mexico tracing its origin to the days of the conquest when milk and eggs were introduced by the Spaniards.

Simon El Hago (Lebanon)



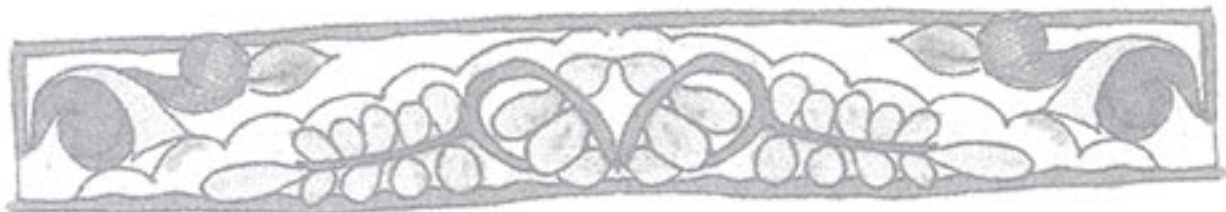
Through the years I have made my own traditions with my children. I love the holidays because it is a time when my children and I really get together and have quality time baking and enjoying each other's company.

Lillian Delgado (United States)



I must have been 8 or 9 years old. I still remember the aroma... the feeling of being oh-so-grown-up that I could bake my own cookies. Of course, this was a pleasure usually shared with my cousins. It was also a creative way for our paternal grandmother to keep us entertained and out of mischief for a while. Whatever the occasion, we baked a batch, with Christmas being perhaps the most magical of all. So for the children in your household these holidays, I bring you a simple recipe with delicious results... one of them being treasured memories!

Charito Liera (Cuba)





When my parents came to this country from Cuba in 1960, they came with a dream in their hearts and fifty American dollars hidden in my Dad's belt. Like many others before them, their American dream was to be a part of mainstream America...own their own home, provide a good education for their children, and have plenty of good Cuban food on the table!

Well, thanks to my parent's hard work, they provided us with a great home, we all received educations, and good Cuban food was always abundant at our table. But, having come to America, we had to celebrate holidays that were not a part of the culture in our homeland. One of those holidays was Thanksgiving.

My father, the wonder chef that he was, found a way of blending the 'American' turkey with a 'Cuban' flair. Although we served turkey during Thanksgiving, that's as far as the similarities went with a mainstream Thanksgiving dinner...you see, our feast included white rice, black beans, yuca, cuban bread, and a great wine. We always said we were going to include yams and mashed potatoes, but we still haven't! So I hope you enjoy my father's 'Cuban' Turkey recipe. Lifting my wine glass I say to him... "Here's to you Dad...thanks for the memories!"

Marta Noa (Cuba)



Those old enough to remember when fondue was fashionable and everyone sat around the coffee table with forks in hand dipping bread cubes into a pot of bubbling cheese, will also remember trying to cover the distance from the pot to your mouth without dripping cheese all over yourself. Leave it to the Irish to figure out a way to avoid all the mess by baking the cheese with the bread and serving it in finger-sized strips. It's a perfect Irish hors d'oeuvre.

Cathy López Negrete (United States)

Times sure have changed since I first arrived in the United States back in 1978. Back then, "authentic" (really authentic) foods from my country were hard to find: Mexican restaurants offered only the more known dishes (yes, tacos, enchiladas and something I'd never heard of before called "sopapillas" - what was that?), but served none of the wonderful regional dishes I'd grown up with; most supermarkets (with the exception of Fiesta) simply didn't carry any of the ingredients needed to concoct the dishes up at home...and Goya hadn't made its way down to Texas yet. Today, as America and Americans continue to "Hispanify", virtually every thing that is and was available "back home" is now relatively easy to find: specialty restaurants, specialty foods and ingredients...everything! But, every now and then, a little something comes to mind...a snack, a dessert, a candy or a pastry that I haven't had since I was a kid and can't readily find anywhere. Why do these things come

to mind? Well, who knows...but what I will tell you is that it's those things that occasionally remind me in the most gentle and loving of ways that I came from a very special place and time

where people worked to live, but didn't live to work...a place and time where seemingly insignificant everyday occurrences (such as the three meals I had with my family) became the cornerstone rituals which gave me the constancy and comfort that any child would envy.

So, I would like to share one of these "little somethings" with you. It is a simple recipe for "Arroz Con Leche" - a dessert that can be found on the menu of most restaurants and

served in millions upon millions of homes in Mexico...but one which I have rarely found in the U.S. And, while it may not evoke the memories and feeling of comfort for you that it does to me...may you enjoy its simplicity in good health with your family. Con cariño,

Alex Lopez Negrete (México)



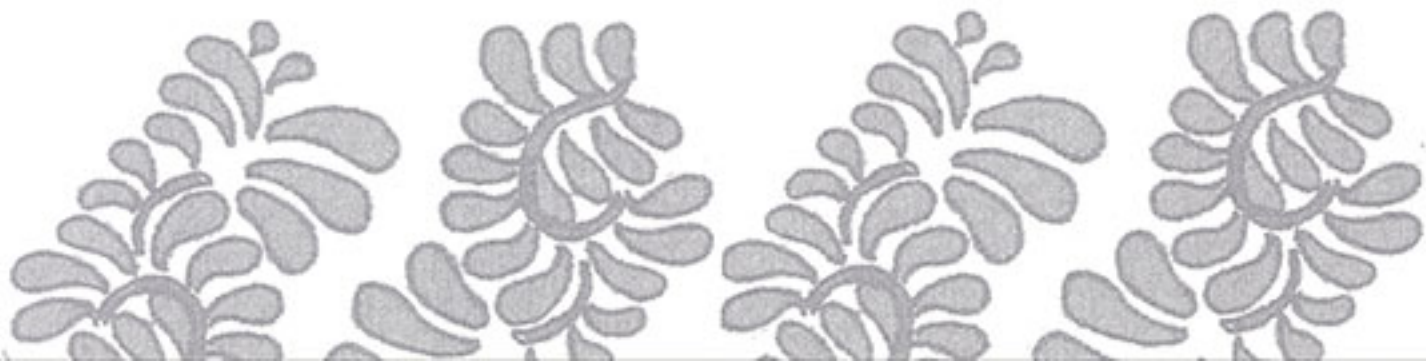
The looks and smiles on children's faces at Christmas time are so endearing they make me vulnerable to do anything they want. During this time of the year, I can't seem to say "no" to anything that my nieces and nephews want from me. My husband and I usually spend weekends with them. They love going to the movies and the stores, not to mention seeing the beautifully decorated houses in the city.


We also do many things in the house: make ornaments for the tree, decorate the house, wrap presents, etc. However, one of their favorite pastimes is to cook. Once we get in the kitchen with them, it's hard to get them out. They make cakes, cupcakes, brownies and sugar cookies, etc. However, this old Nicaraguan recipe is one of their favorites. My mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, etc. used to make this recipe all the time. Later on I saw it in a recipe book that my mother-in-law wrote for her daughters and me. She told me that her grandmother used to love this recipe. It's definitely an old Nicaraguan favorite.

Enjoy with a cup of hot chocolate loaded with whipped cream...just the way my husband and I enjoy it, accompanied by our nieces and nephews.



María A. Callojas (Nicaragua)





*B*eans have always been one of my favorite dishes. They were on my mother's every day menu. People sometimes think that there are few ways to prepare them. Not in my house! We had them in every imaginable form: Natural, refried, "charros", in salads, in hot dogs, cold, hot, big, small, pintos, black; you name it. However, everyone knows about their side effects. But many recipes take this fact into account and provide certain spices or herbs (for example: "epazote") that minimize such effects. We had this herb in our refrigerator all the time, as you can imagine. One of my favorite bean dishes is the Black Bean Soup. I hope you enjoy it!

Jaime Belden (México)

