



Trinidad, Cuba

Cuba Libre!

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Mojitos

Cheese and Beef Empanadas

Avocado Pineapple Salad

Roast Pork, Plantains, Rice and Beans

Dulce de Leche Cheesecake

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Beef Empanadas from America's Test Kitchen

Filling:

- 1 large slice hearty white sandwich bread, torn into quarters
- 2 tablespoons plus 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 pound 85 percent lean ground chuck
- Table salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped fine (about 2 cups)
- 4 medium garlic cloves, minced (about 4 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon Cayenne
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 cup packed cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, coarsely chopped
- 1/3 cup raisins, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup pitted green olives, coarsely chopped
- 4 teaspoons cider vinegar

Dough:

- 3 cups (15 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour, plus extra for work surface
- 1 cup (5 ounces) masa harina (found in int'l aisle or substitute with regular flour)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes and chilled
- 1/2 cup cold vodka or tequila (see note)
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 5 tablespoons olive oil (for baking empanadas)

FOR THE FILLING: Process bread and 2 tablespoons chicken broth in food processor until paste forms, about 5 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary. Add beef, 3/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper and pulse until mixture is well combined, six to eight 1-second pulses.

Cuban Watercress Avocado Pineapple Salad

2 bunches watercress (or arugula)

One 2 1/2-pound pineapple, peeled, cored, and cut into 1-inch-thick slices

Approx. 1 tablespoon sugar

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons cider vinegar or fresh lime juice

1/8 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 large Florida (West Indian) avocado or 2 Hass avocados

1 small red onion (5 ounces) thinly slivered lengthwise

Rinse watercress in a colander under cold running water to remove any grit or sand. Discard any yellowing leaves and remove the tough stems, leaving only the leaves and tender stems. Pat dry with paper towels and refrigerate.

Preheat broiler. Place the pineapple slices on a baking pan and sprinkle sugar evenly on top of them. Broil about 4 inches from the heat source, turning once, for 10 minutes per side, until lightly golden brown. Let cool, cut into 1-inch cubes. (Or grill the pineapple).

Place the garlic, olive oil, vinegar or lime juice, cumin, salt, and pepper in a small bowl and whisk to combine. Taste for seasoning.

Cut the avocado(s) lengthwise in half around the pit and remove the pit. Place the avocado halves cut side down on the work surface and slice lengthwise into 1-inch-wide wedges. Peel each segment by hand or with a paring knife, and cut into 1-inch cubes.

Place the watercress in a medium bowl and toss with half the dressing. Arrange on a large platter.

Add the pineapple and avocado to the same bowl and toss with the rest of the dressing. Mound the pineapple and avocado over the bed of watercress. Garnish with the slivers of red onion and serve immediately.

Cuban Roast Pork

2 quarts water
2 cups kosher salt, plus 2 T
1 cup sugar
Ice
10-12 pound bone-in pork shoulder
10-12 cloves garlic, peeled
½ cup dried oregano
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
1 tsp fresh ground black pepper

Heat the water in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add 2 cups of salt and the sugar. Whisk until the salt and sugar dissolve and remove from heat. Add enough ice to make 1 gallon of brine.

Trim excess fat off the pork shoulder if it is very thick, but leave some fat on the pork. Use a sharp paring knife to cut long, very shallow parallel lines across the surface of the skin, just deep enough to penetrate the skin and the fat, but not the meat. Then cut another series of lines across the surface perpendicular to the first set.

Line a stock pot with a 2.5 gallon resealable plastic food storage bag. Place the pork in the bag and carefully add enough brine to cover the meat. Remove any air from the bag and seal. Refrigerate for 12-18 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove the pork from the brine. Place the pork, skin-side up, on a rack inside a large roasting pan. Use a sharp paring knife to cut 10-12 slits, each about 2 inches deep, in the pork. Insert a clove of garlic into each slit.

Combine the oregano, oil, lime juice, pepper and 2 T salt in a medium bowl, then rub evenly all over the pork. Make sure to push the mixture down into the slits with the garlic. Cover the pork with foil and roast for 5-6 hours, about 30 minutes per pound. After 90 minutes, check to see how much liquid is in the pan. There should be about an inch. If there's less, add water. Check liquid level every 45 minutes and add water as necessary to maintain a 1-inch depth.

About 30 minutes before the end of roasting time, remove the foil. This will allow the skin to crisp. Remove the pork from the oven and let it rest for 20 minutes. The meat should register 175-180 degrees on a meat thermometer. Slice and serve with the pan juices.

Fried Sweet Plantains

4 T unsalted butter

2 T olive oil

6 very ripe (black) plantains, peeled and cut crosswise into 3 pieces of equal size

Salt

1 avocado, cut into slices for garnish

Fresh lime juice from 1-2 medium limes

Line a plate with several layers of paper towels.

Heat the butter and oil in a 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Working in batches if needed, add the plantains and cook for 4 minutes on each side, until they are browned and lightly caramelized. Transfer to the paper towels to drain, and season to taste with salt while hot.

Serve with the sliced avocado on the side, and sprinkle the lime juice over the avocado slices.

Moros Y Cristianos (Rice cooked in black beans)

This dish gets its name from the wars between the dark-skinned Moors (Moros) and the light-skinned Spaniards (Cristianos) that occurred during the eighth century in Spain. This popular Cuban dish can be made well in advance and be served at room temperature.

4 cloves garlic, peeled
3 tsp salt
1/4 pound bacon (about 6 strips) chopped
2 T olive oil
1 onion finely chopped (about 1 cup)
1 green pepper seeded and finely chopped (about 3/4 cup)
1 bay leaf
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp dried oregano
1 1/2 cup long grain white rice
1 (15 1/2 oz) cans black beans not drained
1 3/4 cups water
1 T red wine vinegar

Put the garlic on a cutting board and sprinkle 1 teaspoon of salt over the cloves, let it sit for a few minutes, and mince it into a paste with a knife. Set aside.

Place the bacon and olive oil in a large pot and set it over medium-high heat. Sauté the bacon until it renders its fat and turns a golden brown color, about 6 minutes. Move the bacon around as it's cooking to prevent it from sticking to the bottom of the pot.

Add the onion, green pepper, and garlic paste to the bacon and sauté until the vegetables are limp and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons of salt, the bay leaf, cumin, oregano, and rice and stir for 1 minute until well mixed and all the rice is coated in oil. (It's important to follow volume amounts of vegetables to ensure rice cooks properly due to water contributed by the vegetables.)

Add the beans and their liquid, along with the water and vinegar, to the pot. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook for 35 to 40 minutes, or until all the water has been absorbed by the rice. Allow the covered pot to sit off the heat for 5 minutes. Fluff the rice with a fork and serve.

Dulce de Leche Cheesecake

For the dulce de leche: 2 cans of sweetened condensed milk (you only need one can for the recipe, but you can use the second one for additional topping or a swirl on the serving plate), prepared in a crockpot as follows (see website for pressure cooker method):

- Remove the labels. Place the still sealed cans in a crockpot. Cover the cans with water so they are completely immersed. Cook on high for 5 hours. Remove from the crockpot and let them cool completely.

For the crust: (you can also use a ready-made graham cracker crust if desired)

- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 3 tbsp. butter, melted

Preheat oven to 400°. Mix crust ingredients together, and press into the bottom of a lightly buttered 9-inch springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and cool to room temperature.

Reset oven temperature to 325°

For the filling:

3 (8 oz.) packages cream cheese, softened

1 cup sugar

2 tbsp. all-purpose flour

2 tsp. vanilla extract

3 eggs

1/3 cup whole milk

1 can Homemade Dulce de Leche - reserve about 1/3 can to drizzle over finished cheesecake- or use your second can for this and put all of can 1 into the cheesecake

With an electric mixer beat cream cheese, sugar and flour together until well mixed and smooth. Add vanilla and beat until smooth. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat until smooth. Add milk and mix until well blended.

In a smaller bowl, stir up the Dulce de Leche quickly to soften up. Measure about 1/2 cup of the cheesecake batter and pour into the softened Dulce de Leche. Stir until well combined.

Pour plain batter over crust. Top with Dulce de Leche batter by placing rounded spoonfuls over the cheesecake batter and gently swirl into plain batter with the tip of knife or spatula. Bake in preheated 325°F oven for one hour or until center is almost set.

Remove from oven and gently run metal spatula around rim of pan to loosen cheesecake (this helps prevent cracking). Release the springform pan. Let cool 20-25 minutes before covering and placing in the refrigerator. Refrigerate 4 to 6 hours or overnight before serving.

Stir the reserved Dulce de Leche quickly to soften and drizzle over finished cheesecake.

(NOTE: you can heat the Dulce de Leche slightly if it's not soft enough, but don't OVERcook it!)

For more details on making this recipe go to:

<http://www.mybigfatcubanfamily.com/dulce-de-leche-cheesecake-recipe>



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