

TAMALES BY ZARELA MARTINEZ from her book FOOD FROM MY HEART

Basic Tamal Dough and Tamale Preparation

4 1/2 C masa harina
5 C warm broth or water
1 pound lard, non-hydrogenated, no preservatives -- preferably
2 1/2 T salt

Place masa harina in large bowl and reconstitute by adding 4 cups warm stock, to start with. Beat with a wooden spoon or mix with hands until you have a stiff, smooth dough, like medium-pliable bread dough. Use a little more stock if necessary, but the mixture should not be loose.

Beat lard (can use shortening) with an electric mixer for 3 minutes on medium speed until light and fluffy. May take longer.

Still mixing on medium speed, begin adding the masa a handful at a time. Stop to scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula as necessary. If mixture becomes too stiff to beat, add up to 1 C tepid chicken or pork stock a little at a time. When all the masa has been incorporated, the mixture should be very light and delicate, the texture of buttercream frosting. Beat in the salt.

Tamale Preparation:

Soak corn husks in boiling water for about 30 minutes. Drain and select larger husks. Pat husks dry.

With a spatula or sandwich spreader, spread 1/4 C to 1/2 C masa dough on each shuck across the wide end, extending to about half way to the narrow end. If there is a filling, place about 1-2 T. in the center of the masa. Fold right one third over, and then left third over and roll up so that filling is encased in masa. Fold up bottom of shuck and then mash top (open) end slightly to seal. Place tamales in a steamer with a basket with the open ends up.

Pour boiling water in bottom of steamer and place a dish towel on top of tamales. Cover with lid. Steam for about 1 hr., or longer if necessary or tightly packed. Remove basket and let stand 10 minutes before serving.

Note: The ratio of prepared masa to lard should be 3:1 by weight.