

Tamales

(tah-MAHL-tees)

Nothing says holidays to many New Mexicans like a warm tamale. Unwrapping the tamale is like unwrapping a little present. Tamales consist of a cornmeal dough made from hominy (called masa) and are usually filled with sweet or savory filling, wrapped in corn husks and steamed until firm. Tamales were one of the staples found by the Spanish when they first arrived in Mexico. Tamales are very time intensive and often made in large batches for special occasions with many people in a family or community participating in the tradition.

These pork and red chile tamales from ABQ Cuisine Expert Gwyneth Doland's cookbook "Tantalizing Tamales" are some of the most common tamales in the Southwest. They can be found in restaurants, cafés, and in coolers toted by strolling vendors. Everybody loves them, so make a bunch and freeze any leftovers. This recipe makes enough pork filling to make another batch of tamales, but you can always just use the extra pork for burritos or freeze it for later use.

Ingredients:

2½ pounds boneless pork shoulder, trimmed of excess fat
6 cloves garlic, peeled
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon salt
Water
4 cups red chile sauce
About 2 pounds of masa
At least 36 softened corn husks, plus 36 strips for tying



Directions:

Arrange the pork shoulder in a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed stockpot. Add the garlic, peppercorns, bay leaves, and salt. Add enough cold water to cover by several inches. Bring the liquid to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, partially covered, for about 2 hours.

Transfer the pork to a cutting board and allow it to rest 20 minutes. Using two forks, shred the meat. In a bowl, combine 2 cups of the shredded pork with enough New Mexico red chile sauce to thoroughly moisten the meat. To assemble the tamales, spread about ½ cup masa onto the center of each corn husk. Spoon some of the shredded pork filling down the center of the dough. Fold and tie the tamale; repeat with the remaining ingredients and husks.

Steam the tamales for 1 hour and serve slathered with the remaining New Mexico red chile sauce.

Makes about 24 tamales.

Recipe courtesy of ABQ Cuisine Expert: Gwyneth Doland, www.itsatrip.org/ABQExperts/cuisine