



# Pork Tamales

John Gonzalez, Austin, TX

120 corn shucks

## Dough

3 pounds of masa  
1.5 pound of lard and/ or Crisco  
2 tablespoons of salt

## Pork filling

2 pounds lean pork from leg or loin  
3 quarts water  
5 whole garlic cloves  
1 large coarsely chopped onion  
5 cloves  
1 8-inch stick cinnamon  
Salt to taste

## Sauce for filling

1/2 cup lard and/or shortening  
1/2 onion, sliced thick  
6 chiles ancho  
6 chiles guajillo  
8 cloves garlic  
1 medium chopped onion  
1 teaspoon ground pepper  
1/2 teaspoon allspice  
5 bay leaves  
1 tablespoon cumin seeds  
2 cups beef broth  
salt to taste

## Preparation

### Shucks

Soak shucks in water at least 6 hours before use. Ideal size is about 6-8 inches wide at top. Some shucks may be wide enough to make two tamales. Trim excess width and save. With scissors, trim across bottoms if brittle after soaking.

### Pork for filling

Boil water; add pork with garlic, onion, cinnamon and salt and cook on low heat about 2.5 hours. It should crumble and shred between the thumb and forefinger

when done. Leave pork in broth to cool another 2 hours. Remove pork; place in large bowl and shred. If the meat is very thick cut, use a large knife to cut the pork into thick slices, no wider than 1 inch. Crumble and shred pork, removing any fat, gristle or bone. Pork should be in thin, mushy strands, not large chunks.

### Masa

Prepare in a large sturdy vessel like a turkey roasting pan, or on a tabletop covered with a clean plastic cover. By hand, combine masa, lard or shortening and salt. Work the dough a few minutes and add a splash of the chile soaking water. Work 10-15 minutes, adding small amounts of chile water to add color and flavor. Dough should be light and smooth.

### Sauce for filling

This can be done hours or days in advance of tamale assembly. Refrigerate or freeze if not used immediately. Lightly roast guajillo chiles on a skillet. Seed, devein and soak guajillo and unroasted ancho chiles in warm water for 30 minutes. Use food-handling gloves if sensitive to chiles. After soaking remove chiles and save water, which should be a rich dark color. In a Cuisinart or blender, puree chiles with garlic, onion, pepper, allspice, bayleaves, cumin and 1 cup of chile soaking water. Over medium heat, melt lard or Crisco in a large, heavy saucepan and sauté onion slices. Add blender contents and simmer until thick, about 45 minutes to an hour. Add shredded pork to the simmering chile mixture and continue cooking 30 minutes. Allow to cook before handling as filling.

### Assembling the tamales

Place a cornshuck, rough-side down on a flat surface. Using a spoon, place 2 tablespoons of dough on the smooth side of the shuck. Spread the dough into a rectangular shape in the center of the shuck. Leave a 1 inch border on the sides and 2 inches on the bottom. Dough should be 1/8th inch thick. Place one teaspoon of filling up and down the middle of the dough. Like folding a letter, fold sides over filling in center, and then fold the lower part upward. Depending on how supple the shuck is, the tamale may hold its shape or may try to unwrap. Careful stacking before cooking will help preserve the shapes and folds.

### Steaming the tamales

Use a large steamer with a wire rack or colander to keep the tamales off the bottom. Before stacking tamales, drop a penny into the water. The coin will gently rattle as long as there is boiling water. Keep a teapot steaming nearby and add boiling water as often as necessary by trickling the water down the sides of the steamer. Fashion a piece of aluminum foil into a 4-5 inch tall cone and place in the center of the colander. Use the shucks to cover the colander so tamales near the bottom don't get waterlogged. Stack tamales, open ends upward, around the cone. Drape shucks over the top of the stack to help shed steam to the sides. Cook 2-3 hours.

Makes approximately 10 dozen tamales.