

LEPE CELLARS

MONTEREY COUNTY

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Roasted Poblano, Onion, and Cheese Tamales with Avocado-Lime Crema



INTRO:

This recipe makes approximately 24 tamales, depending on the size of the corn husks and how much filling is used in each tamale. If you use smaller or larger husks, the yield may vary slightly.

INGREDIENTS

For the Filling:

- 3 large poblano peppers
- 1 large white onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 cup crumbled queso fresco or shredded Oaxaca cheese
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)

For the Masa Dough:

- 3¾ cups instant corn masa flour (such as Maseca)
- 2 cups warm vegetable broth
- 1½ cups vegetable shortening or softened unsalted butter (can also use lard if desired)
- 1 tbsp kosher salt
- 1½ tsp baking powder

For Assembly:

- 30 dried corn husks (soaked in warm water for at least 1 hour)



ROASTED POBLANO, ONION, AND CHEESE TAMALES WITH AVOCADO-LIME CREMA

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Roast the Poblanos

1. Preheat your broiler or grill.
2. Place the poblano peppers on a baking sheet or grill and roast, turning occasionally, until the skins are blackened and blistered, about 8–10 minutes.
3. Transfer the roasted peppers to a bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel. Let steam for 10 minutes to loosen the skins.
4. Peel off the charred skins, remove the stems and seeds, and slice the peppers into thin strips (rajás).

Step 2: Cook the Onions and Combine the Filling

1. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the sliced onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden and caramelized, about 12–15 minutes.
2. Add the sliced poblanos, salt, cumin, and smoked paprika to the skillet. Toss to combine and cook for 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool.
3. Stir the cheese into the cooled poblano-onion mixture. Add cilantro if desired. Set filling aside.

Step 3: Make the Masa Dough

1. In a large bowl, combine the masa flour, baking powder, and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, beat the vegetable shortening or butter until fluffy. Gradually mix in the masa flour mixture, alternating with warm vegetable broth, until the dough is soft, smooth, and slightly sticky.
3. Test the masa by dropping a small ball of dough into a cup of water. If it floats, it's ready. If not, continue mixing and add a bit more vegetable shortening.

Step 4: Assemble the Tamales

1. Drain and pat dry the soaked corn husks. Place a husk on a flat surface with the wide end closest to you.
2. Spread 2–3 tbsp of masa dough onto the center of the husk, creating a thin, even rectangle about 4 inches wide and 5 inches tall. Leave the narrow end of the husk clean.
3. Spoon about 1–2 tbsp of the poblano-onion-cheese filling into the center of the masa.

4. Fold one side of the husk over the filling, then fold the other side to overlap. Fold the narrow end up to seal and secure.

Step 5: Steam the Tamales

1. Line the bottom of a large steamer pot with extra corn husks. Arrange the tamales upright (open ends facing up) in the pot. Use a small ball of foil or a heatproof bowl to help them stay upright if needed.
2. Add enough water to the pot to just reach the bottom of the tamales without submerging them. Cover with additional corn husks and a damp kitchen towel.
3. Steam the tamales over medium heat for 1½–2 hours, checking occasionally to add more water as needed.
4. To check for doneness, remove a tamale and let it cool slightly. If the masa easily pulls away from the husk, they're ready.

Step 6: Make the Crema

1. Refer to next page for crema recipe



AVOCADO LIME CREMA WITH QUESO FRESCO AND POMEGRANATE SEEDS

INGREDIENTS

For the Crema:

- 2 ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
- ½ cup sour cream or Greek yogurt
- 1 lime, juiced (add zest for extra flavor, optional)
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp kosher salt (or to taste)
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped (optional for added flavor)
- 1-2 tbsp water (to adjust consistency)

Toppings:

- ½ cup fresh queso fresco, crumbled
- ⅓ cup pomegranate seeds
- Fresh cilantro leaves for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Make the Crema:

1. In a blender or food processor, combine the avocado, sour cream, lime juice, garlic, cumin, and salt.
2. Blend until smooth, adding water 1 tablespoon at a time to reach your desired consistency (it should be slightly thick but drizzle-able).
3. Taste and adjust salt or lime juice as needed.

Prepare the Toppings:

1. Crumble the queso fresco into small pieces.
2. Measure out the pomegranate seeds and set aside.

Assemble:

1. Spoon or drizzle the avocado lime crema generously over warm tamales
2. Sprinkle crumbled queso fresco over the crema.
3. Top with a scattering of pomegranate seeds for a burst of color and flavor.
4. Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves if desired.

