

Tamale ingredients

Before you make tamales there is a lot you need to know. Those of us from NOB (well some of us) have only had tamales made with Maseca the corn flour we think of as traditional Mexican. Well the best tamales are made from masa de maiz or put simply the raw corn dough that is a result of grinding the nixtamaled corn before it is dried into flour known as maseca. Most Mexicans would not be caught using maseca for their tamales as it is just not the right consistency. masa de maiz (pura) can be purchased here in Mexico in any tortilleria as this is the dough they use to make tortillas. In North America some specialized Latin American shops might carry the dough fresh or frozen, or see if you can find a tortilla producer locally to purchase the dough from. If this is not available to you there is a way to make the dough yourself from dried corn but that is a



whole other blog post.

The dough itself is quite tough and dry and needs some working and additions to make it pliable enough to use either for tamales or for tortillas. Added to the dough is a variety of ingredients that should include a source of moisture (either water or stock), fat (preferably manteca or pork fat) in addition you can add a recado (spice mixture or blend), chaya or X'pelóns.



X'pelóns are a traditional Mayan fresh bean. The beans can be purchased in Mexico between the months of November to April and are sold fresh. The beans should be cooked in boiling water for around 2 minutes (parboiling) they will turn a sort of grayish black colour. X'pelóns are similar to a fresh black eyed pea, raw they taste kind of like grass and cooked they are a little sweeter and tender.

Chaya is spinach like green that goes back thousands of years in Maya cuisine. You have to be very careful with Chaya as it has a milky substance when the leaves and stems are squeezed that can sting if you get it in your eyes. The plant also has a hair thin layer and cannot be eaten raw it must be cooked for at least 20 minutes before eating. The plant itself is very high in vitamins and protein in fact it is almost three times greater than other leafy vegetables. Here in Mexico you can ask for your chaya to be cleaned before purchasing.



Chile X'katic (Sh-kah- teek) This Chile is long and narrow and sort of a triangular shape and will be a light yellow or light green it can be as spicy as a jalapeno. Used in many Yucatecan Mayan dishes it can also be called a guero chile. It is apparently related to



the banana or yellow wax chile.

Chile Dulce/Sweet Pepper This appears to be a very small green pepper, it is sweet not hot and used exactly as the bell pepper.

Epazote (eh-pah-SOH-teh) Is a well loved Mexican herb, preferably used fresh in North America it can be purchased dried in some Latin American stores. It has quite a strong smell and it gives a distinct flavour to Mexican dishes. It is also known as a digestive type of herb and used to cook many bean dishes and is said to relieve the gastro intestinal effects of beans. It has a distinct perfume smell but the taste is quite difference and very herbaceous.



Recados are considered the backbone of Yucatecan cuisine and there are three different kinds; Recado Rojo, Recado Negro and Recado Blanco.

Recado Rojo's base are annatto or achiote seeds that are ground and mixed with garlic, oregano, cumin, cloves and coriander, black pepper, all spice and salt. The combined are formed into a brick so to speak that is wrapped and then used in various dishes by adding liquids. You take a chunk of the paste and mix it with sour orange, or

white vinegar to form the paste used for Maya dishes such as conchinita pibil or Chicken Rojo. In the case of the tamales we used a chunk of the achiote recado and mixed it with water until it formed a thin paste and this was used both in the tamale dough and in the meat mixture to flavour the chicken and pork for the tamale filling.

Chilemole /Recado Negro – it is made with blackened Ancho chiles, vinegar, a few annatto seeds, all spice, cinnamon, black pepper, cloves, garlic, onion, oregano, epazote and salt. Mix with white vinegar or sour orange. You can find this Recado negro paste in any supermarket in Mexico or freshly made by the kilo at Central Market Merida Yucatan if you wish. Found at any Hispanic market in the United States. There are different brands available in different places.

Recado Blanco/de bistec This peppery blend is not only used for beefsteak but for pork, chicken and seafood as well. Grind coriander seeds, all spice, cinnamon, black pepper, cloves, cumin, garlic, oregano, epazote and salt. Mix with white vinegar or sour orange. Same as with the other recados, buy at any supermarket in Mexico or at Central Market in Merida Yucatan, freshly made by the kilo.



Recado para papadzules / Pumpkin seed paste – Papadzules (pah-pahd-ZOO-lehs) is a traditional Mayan dish that resembles enchiladas but it is covered with a sauce made with pumpkin seeds, and the tortillas are filled with mashed hard boiled eggs. On top of that it has a special tomato sauce usually made with habanero chili if you like spicy food. Of course you can omit the habanero if you wish.

Pepita Molida these are toasted and ground pumpkin seeds. Used to make a traditional Mayan dip or sauce when mixed with roasted tomatoes and cilantro called Sikil Pak.

http://www.los-dos.com/yucatecan_cuisine/ingredients.php

<http://tamaledigest.blogspot.mx/2015/03/return-to-americas-part-2-david.html>