



Nicaraguan Yuca and Cabbage Salad with Pork Cracklings (Vigoron)

Serves 8

Vigoron is a specialty of Granada. The story goes that when the city was hosting a group of athletes who were training for a baseball game an astute vendor touted the salad as *vigoron*, or “invigorating.” The salad caught on and the name stuck. Nowadays you will encounter street vendors serving up Vigorón in the plaza. It is a popular and filling Nicaraguan fast-food.

Ingredients

3 pounds yuca, about, to yield 2 pounds prepared, OR 2 pounds frozen prepared yuca, *see this link on how to prepare yuca--*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcS7XyRPDXg>

2 tsp. salt

4 cups finely shredded green cabbage (about ½ small head)

1 to 1 ½ cups diced tomatoes (about 8 ounces)

1 medium white onion (about 8 ounces), cut in half lengthwise and sliced thinly

1 medium carrot, cut into julienne strips, or shaved with a carrot peeler

1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced

½ bunch of cilantro, bottom stems removed, tender stems and leaves slivered

4 tbsp. lime juice (about 1-2 limes)

1 ½ tsp. kosher salt (or 1 tsp. regular table salt)

cabbage leaves for garnish

1 bag chicharrones (pork rinds) for garnish

avocado for garnish

Directions

After you’ve peeled the yuca, cut the root into 4-inch pieces, then cut the pieces in half lengthwise. The interior of the yuca should look white throughout, without any brown or gray streaks or veining. Drop pieces into a bowl of cold water until you are ready to proceed. (This can be done as much as one day ahead of time and stored in the fridge.)

Bring a large pot of water to a boil to cook the yuca. Add the salt to the water and add the yuca. After 30 minutes, check to see if it is done. You may have to remove some chunks as they are done and leave others in longer, this could take up to 45 minutes. When done, the yuca should pierce easily with a knife, and it should look opaque, with no firm white areas left. I found that on some pieces, although they were cooked on the inside, the outside where I had peeled them was still firm; I shaved off the firm exterior until I got to the tender interior.

After you've pulled the yuca from the water, place the pieces on a platter. You will see a spindly vein running through the center. Remove this hard vein and discard. Cut any larger chunks of yuca into smaller pieces, about 2 inches. (The cooked yuca can be stored for a day or two in the fridge before proceeding with the rest of the recipe.)

In the meantime, while the yuca is cooking, prepare the slaw. Combine the cabbage, tomatoes, onion, carrot, jalapeno, cilantro, lime juice and 1 ½ tsp. salt in a bowl.

To serve, place the yuca (it can be warm or cold) on a serving platter and top with the cabbage slaw and pork rinds.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



Three-Milks Cake (Tres Leches Cake)

Serves 12 to 16

This cake is typically a homemade sponge cake with the milks poured on top of it. Since I know how busy we all are and sometimes just need an easy recipe to make, I've taken the liberty of using a yellow box cake mix for this recipe. No shame in this at all. In fact, I

predict you won't need to confess to anyone; all you need to say is that you made the cake!

Ingredients

1 yellow cake box mix (preferably not pudding in the mix), prepared according to directions, baked in a 9x13 baking pan (make sure you have 3 eggs on hand for this)
1 can evaporated milk
1 can sweetened condensed milk
½ cup half and half (or whipping cream)
1 cup whipping cream for the frosting, lightly whipped
optional garnish: chocolate sauce, maraschino cherry, or other fruit

Directions

Let the yellow cake cool in the baking pan for 30 minutes. Poke all over with holes, using a fork, a toothpick or a skewer. Make sure that your poker goes all the way to the bottom of the pan. Pay particular attention to the corners and edges of the cake. You'll want at least 300 holes poked in the cake so that it can absorb all the liquid.

Stir together the three milks in a large measuring cup with spout. This will make it easier to pour onto the cake. Gradually pour all but one cup of the milk on top of the cake, letting it soak in between additions. Discard the final cup of milk. I found that the cake was just too wet if all the liquid is used. It is best to refrigerate overnight.

To serve: You can frost the entire cake the next day with lightly whipped cream, then cut and serve. Or you can cut the cake into squares and plate individually. This method allows you to drizzle chocolate sauce onto each square, dollop with whipped cream, and garnish with a cherry.

And if you'd like to try making this cake from scratch here is a link to my favorite blog, Smitten Kitchen. <http://smittenkitchen.com/blog/2015/12/tres-leches-cake-a-taco-party/>

Deb Perlman, the author, researches everything thoroughly, and she has a witty writing style to boot.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



Red Beans and Rice (Gallo Pinto)

Serves 6

If there is one meal that everyone in Nicaragua and Costa Rica eats, it's gallo pinto. This hearty, healthy, and filling dish is your basic rice and beans. The beans in this case are red, and the color of the beans on the rice gives gallo pinto, or "painted rooster," its name. It is often served with eggs for breakfast.

Ingredients

2 to 3 tbsp. oil

1 small onion, finely chopped

1 bell pepper, finely chopped

2 or 3 cloves garlic, minced

*2 cups cooked small red beans, drained, liquid reserved

Salt and pepper to taste

3 cups cooked white rice (can be prepared one day ahead of time)

* Note regarding the beans— $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dried small red beans will yield about 2 cups cooked. If you are using canned beans, 1 can of beans drained will yield about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups beans.

Directions

Heat the oil in a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high flame. Add the onions, bell pepper, and garlic, and sauté for about 2 or 3 minutes, or until cooked through. Stir in the drained beans, some of their reserved liquid, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and continue to simmer until heated through.

Add the cooked rice and stir into the beans and heat through. Adjust seasoning and add a little more bean liquid if necessary. Serve hot.

Variations:

- Use black beans or kidney beans instead of red beans.

- Stir in some chopped cilantro.
- Add a few dashes of bottled pepper sauce or Worcestershire sauce for added flavor.

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Nicaraguan Ground Beef (Carne Enchorizada) **Serves 8**

I stumbled across the blog “The Fork Ran Away with the Spoon,” (such a clever name) and found this Nicaraguan dish, Carne Enchorizada.

Jackie Larena-Lacayo, the author of the blog, has kindly given me permission to share her post and recipe with you. I have re-printed her recipe here, but if you go to her site you’ll see more detailed information and pictures about making the dish.

2 pounds 85% lean ground beef
Salt and pepper
4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 generous tsp. of yellow mustard
1 tbsp. olive oil
2 medium or 1 large onion, chopped

2-3 potatoes, peeled, 1/4" dice
2 carrots, peeled, 1/4" dice
*7 ears of baby corn, sliced, 1/4" coins
1 tsp. [achiote paste](#) (optional)
3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
1 tsp. ground cloves
1/4 cup beef stock

*Linda's note: Look for canned baby corn, my recommendation would be the 15 oz. size can of whole baby corn, cut into 1/2" chunks.

Combine beef with 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and mustard in a large bowl. Do not overwork beef.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add the onion and cook until it's softened and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Increase heat to medium-high; add the beef, stirring to break up any lumps, until the beef is no longer pink, and most of the juices have evaporated. Stir in the vinegar, potatoes, carrots, baby corn, achiote paste (if using) cloves, beef stock, sprinkling of salt and pepper over top and bring up to a high simmer for 1 minute. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer on low for 30 minutes.

This dish is typically served with white rice, Nicaraguan corn tortillas, boiled or fried plantains and/or "ensalada de repollo" (a vinegary [cabbage slaw](#)).

Recipe and photo credit:

<http://forkranawaywiththespoon.blogspot.com/2013/03/carne-enchorizada-nicaraguense-beef.html>

Nicaragua Customs and Cuisine

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America, with Honduras bordering it to the north and Costa Rica sharing a border to the south. It is also the poorest country in Central America, with more than 40 percent of its citizens living below the poverty level. Most of those who live below the poverty line are in rural areas, such as the Jalapa Valley, which is where our program is based this month.

Spanish is the official language of Nicaragua. Over 70 percent of the population speaks Spanish, while the others speak some English and other languages from their ancestors' tribes.

Nicaraguan cuisine has many similarities to Mexican cuisine, as well as Honduran and Guatemalan influences. Rice, corn and beans are staples in their diet, and corn tortillas are consumed at every meal, often used as an edible scoop instead of utensils. Meat is not generally on the menu, although they raise beef in great quantities and export it. Ordinary families simply can't afford it, but for a special occasion they will splurge and grill a steak, called "bistec al la parrilla" or "lomo."

"Gallo pinto" is practically a national dish, basically a dish of red beans and rice, often eaten for breakfast. "Nacatamales" are popular steamed corncakes from Nicaragua and Honduras. They are similar to Mexican tamales, but nacatamales are larger, and not only filled with meat but with many other optional add-ins, such as green bell peppers, tomato, potato, peas, raisins, capers and olives, and then steamed in banana leaves. Nacatamales are a special-occasion food since they are time consuming to make. The yuca root is the most consumed vegetable, containing many essential vitamins and nutrients. Nicaragua's most popular fruits are mangos and plantains.

The favorite nonalcoholic drink is coffee, and in fact coffee is one of the major exports. Beer is the choice for an alcoholic beverage, and rum is also a favorite for something stronger.

Source materials: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/Nicaragua.html#ixzz3yOOCTobM>