

Panama: A Lesson in Food from the Tropics

Patacones



Green plantains
Vegetable oil
Salt

1. Peel the plantains, the easiest way to peel a green plantain is to make the lengthwise cut on one of the angles, the cut should be skin deep without touching the actual flesh of the plantain, then use the knife to raise the skin and peel it off.
2. Cut the plantains into thick slices, you can make straight cuts or slightly diagonal cuts.
3. Heat the canola oil over medium high heat in a frying pan – use enough oil to almost cover the plantain slices - or a deep fryer, temperature should be about 350 F, fry the plantains until they start to get yellow, but not golden.
4. Remove the plantains and place on paper towels to drain the oil.
5. Use the bottom of a glass (or small bowl or a wood pestle) to smash and flatten the plantains, do this gently to keep the slices from breaking, a few cracks is ok as long as the whole slice remains in one piece. It is best to do this when they are still warm.
6. Place the smashed plantain back into the oil and let it fry for 1-2 minutes.
7. Remove from the oil, drain again on paper towels, and sprinkle the plantain slices with salt and other seasonings (if using the raw garlic rub it on the slices).
8. Serve warm as a side dish or as an appetizer with dipping sauces.

Recipe from: <https://www.laylita.com/recipes/patacones-or-tostones/>

Arroz de Guandu



2 cups of basmati rice
1 can (13.5 oz) coconut milk
1 can (15 oz) pigeon peas
½ cup water

1. Rinse the basmati rice
2. Combine everything and cook in a rice cooker until done.

Photo from: <http://www.panama24horas.com.pa/gastronomia/a-deleitarse-del-arroz-con-guandu-panameno/>

Fried Yucca



1 lb yucca
1½ cups water
1 tbsp of Water
1½ cups oil

1. Peel yucca, cut in pieces and wash thoroughly.
2. Boil until tender.
3. Let yucca cool.
4. Slice as thick as desired (lengthwise, like French fries).
5. Fry in hot oil until golden brown.
6. Salt and serve hot.

Photo from: <http://www.costaricacooking.com/garlic-fried-yucca.html>

Postre Frio



6 lemons
2 Condensed milk
2 Evaporated milk
3 packets of Maria cookies (Goya brand works well)
2 canned peaches

1. Freeze the evaporated milk
2. Blend the condensed milk, the evaporated milk and the juice of the lemons, until obtaining a creamy consistency.
3. In cups, pore a little but of the mixture then a cookie and create 2 layers with the cookie in between them and the peaches on top.
4. On the top, add a bit of fruit (such as a peaches).
5. Refrigerate or use the freezer based on how creamy the mixture it. Essentially the mixture needs to be spongy.

Panamanian Empanadas



Empanada shell:

2 cups cornmeal (P.A.N cornmeal)
5 cups water
1 ½ tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon sugar
Enough oil to fry

Filling:

2 tbs Olive Oil
6 olives
1 lb Lean Beef, coarsely ground
2 tsp Salt
1 tsp Pepper
1 1/2 cups Onions, finely chopped
2 tbs Garlic, minced
1 can tomato sauce

Directions for shell

1. In a bowl, place the corn flour, sugar and salt; add the water little by little, while mixing with the other hand
2. Knead well, until there is a firm, smooth, homogeneous mixture without lumps
3. Let stand for 4 to 5 minutes
4. Divide the dough into more or less small balls and then flatten
5. In the center of the dough, place 1 to 2 tablespoons of the filling
6. Fold the plastic together with the dough, so as to form a crescent that covers the filling
7. With the help of a fork press the end where the dough is joined to close it properly
8. Repeat the same operation with each of the dough balls
9. Heat enough oil in a pot over medium high heat
10. Fry the empanadas until browning; Remove from heat with a slotted spoon

Directions for Filling

1. Season the meat with the salt and pepper.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet and sauté onions garlic until soft.
3. Add the meat
4. Add the potatoes after the meat has browned.
5. Add the tomato sauce last with the pepper.
6. Add olives and simmer another 10 minutes.