



Recipes for Day of the Dead

Food and drink play very important roles in Day of the Dead festivities. They are *ofrendas*, or offerings, placed on the altars to persuade loved ones to come back and visit the land of the living. To further honor our ancestors, we eat along with them, joyously celebrating and commemorating the lives they lived.

We've collected recipes of some of the most popular dishes and beverages that are prepared for Day of the Dead. We hope you enjoy sharing them with your loved ones!



Horchata



Prep time: 15 minutes



Servings: 6-8 glasses

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp long-grain white rice
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 6 cups of water
- 3 tablespoons of sugar
- ½ cup milk



Horchata, or agua de horchata, is a traditional beverage made with rice and water. It is sweetened and served chilled.

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine rice, cinnamon sticks, and milk.
2. Heat the mix until just before it boils
3. Transfer the mix to a blender. Process until smooth.
4. Pour the mix into a large jar. Add sugar and water.
5. Serve over ice or chill until serving time.



Champurrado



Prep + cook time: 35 minutes



Servings: 12

Ingredients

- 1½ cups water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4-6 whole cloves
- 1 pod star anise
- 4¼ cups milk
- 2 bars of Mexican chocolate (Abuelita brand is available at most grocery stores)
- ¾ cup coarse ground maize flour (Maseca brand can be found at most grocery stores)
- 1 pinch crushed piloncillo or more to taste. (Piloncillo is brown sugar cone available at most Mexican grocery stores)



Champurrado is a warm, thick, Mexican chocolate drink.

Instructions

1. Bring water, cinnamon stick, clove, and star anise to a boil in a saucepan; remove from heat and allow spices to steep, about 10 minutes. Strain.
2. Heat milk, chocolate, and maize flour in another saucepan over medium heat, whisking until chocolate is dissolved and liquid is thickened, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and add piloncillo; let rest until sugar is dissolved, about 5 minutes more. Pour cinnamon water into chocolate mixture and stir to combine.



Easy Chicken Mole



Prep + cook time: 1-2 hours



Servings: 8

Ingredients

To cook the chicken

- 1 whole chicken, 5-6 lbs, cut into eight pieces
- 3 garlic cloves
- ¼ white onion
- 1 stick of celery
- 8 cups of water
- Salt to taste

To create the mole sauce

- 1 red tomato
- 1 thick slice of white onion
- 1 small garlic clove
- 1 bottle 235 grams of mole sauce. (Doña María mole sauce is available at most grocery stores)
- 4-5 cups chicken broth (you can use the cooking water from preparing your chicken)
- ½ Mexican chocolate tablet (Abuelita brand is available at most grocery stores)
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground anise seed
- salt to taste
- 1 tbsp of toasted sesame seeds to sprinkle the mole before serving



Mole is a rich and spicy sauce that comes in many varieties. This recipe relies on an off-the-shelf red mole or mole poblano spice paste cooked with a few extra ingredients, served with shredded chicken and sesame seeds.

Instructions

Cooking the chicken

1. Place the chicken in a pot with the garlic, onion, and celery. Add the water.
2. Place the pot on the stove over medium-high heat. When it begins to boil, reduce the heat and cook for 35-45 minutes until the chicken meat is cooked and tender. Season with salt and remove from the stove.
3. Reserve the broth to use when preparing the sauce.
4. When the chicken is cool enough to touch you can chop it into chunks or shred it with your fingers.

Preparing the sauce

1. Coarsely chop the tomato, onion, and garlic.
2. Place the tomato, onion, and garlic in a skillet. Cover with water and increase the heat to medium-high. When it starts to boil, reduce the heat and cook for 8 minutes or until the tomatoes are cooked.
3. Once cooked, drain the water and place the tomatoes, onion, and garlic in the blender. Blend until smooth.



Easy Chicken Mole

Instructions

4. Place a large skillet over low heat and add the contents of the mole jar and a cup of chicken broth to begin dissolving the mole paste.
5. Add another cup of the chicken broth along with the tomato puree, chocolate, ground cinnamon, and ground anise. Mix well until the mole paste dissolves completely. Add more chicken broth as required, as the sauce will thicken as it continues to cook. Some people prefer a thicker consistency, so regulate the amount of chicken broth to achieve your preferred consistency and thickness. Traditional mole sauce has the consistency of a thick gravy.
6. Add the chicken pieces to the mole sauce, season with salt to taste, and cook over low heat for another 5 minutes to mix the flavors well.
7. Serve with white or red rice and warm corn tortillas. Enjoy your meal!

Variations

- If you prefer the sweetest mole, you can add more chocolate. If you prefer a nuttier sauce add a few scoops of peanut butter.
- Doña María Mole is not a hot paste, but if you prefer a slightly spicier flavor, you can add a chipotle chili in adobo. First rinse the chili to remove the flavor of the vinegar, and then add it to the blender with the cooked tomatoes.



Pan de los Muertos



Prep + cook time: 1 hour 20 minutes
Stand time: 4 hours
Total time: 5 hours 20 minutes



Servings: 4 loaves

Ingredients

- ¼ cup warm water
- 1 tbsp yeast
- 1 pinch sugar to ferment the yeast
- 5 cups all-purpose wheat flour
- 4 eggs at room temperature
- ⅔ cup condensed milk (or ½ can)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp. Mexican vanilla
- 2 tbsp orange zest (Optional)
- ¾ cup white sugar and extra
- 1 cup minus 1 tbsp butter at room temperature

Glaze - method 1 (before baking)

- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- sugar to taste

Glaze - method 2 (after baking)

- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons water
- ½ lemon (only the juice)
- sugar to taste



Pan de los Muertos (Bread of the Dead) is a Mexican sweet bread that comes in many regional varieties with different flavors, shapes, and sizes. Little bits of dough are shaped into balls and rolls and placed on top of the bread to represent bones. This recipe is baked in the weeks leading up to Día de los Muertos. It can be eaten as a treat or placed on an altar for your departed loved ones to enjoy.

Instructions

1. Dissolve the yeast with the pinch of sugar in the warm water and let it rest for 5 minutes or until it ferments.
2. In a mixer, with the hook attachment, place the flour, eggs, condensed milk, salt, vanilla, orange zest (optional) and yeast. Begin to beat at low speed until the mixture takes shape. If you do it by hand, simply make a bowl with the flour and add the rest of the ingredients there little by little and start mixing.
3. With the mixer still going, add the butter in small pieces alternating with the sugar. Beat the mixture for 10 to 15 minutes, until the butter is completely incorporated. The dough looks sticky, but if you put the dough into a ball it should hold its shape without spilling to the sides.
4. Grease a large bowl and let the dough rest there, covered with plastic or cloth, for 3 to 4 hours or until doubled in size.
5. Once the dough has doubled in size, knead lightly and divide the dough into 5 equal parts.



Pan de los Muertos

Instructions

6. Separate one of the dough balls and stiffen it a little by adding more flour and reserve.
7. With the other 4 parts, form compact bread balls and place them on greased trays, let them rest for 30 more minutes. You will notice that they expand a bit and lose their smoothness.
8. While you let the balls rest, with the fifth part of the dough that you reserved, form the “bones” and balls that will go into each loaf. Let them sit for about 10-15 minutes.
9. Once the balls of dough and the bones have rested enough, glaze the loaves with a little water to serve as glue and form the loaves by placing the bones and balls on each ball of dough. Let stand for 2 more hours or until they double in size again.
10. Brush the bread with the beaten egg using a small brush and sprinkle with sugar to taste. This only if you want to use varnish method 1, otherwise bake them.
11. Bake at 180° C (350° F) for 18-20 minutes and the bread turns golden.

To glaze after baking (method 2)

1. Prepare a syrup by boiling the water with the sugar. When it boils, remove from the heat and add the lemon juice, let it cool and reserve for when the bread is baked.
2. When the bread comes out of the oven, let it cool for about 10 minutes.
3. Using a small brush, coat the bread with the syrup and sprinkle with sugar to taste.

Notes

When you finish preparing the dough, it will have a somewhat sticky consistency, do not be alarmed, this is how it should be. After the dough sits the first time, it will become more consistent and you will have no problem kneading it again.



Dulce de Calabaza



Prep time: 2 hours



Servings: 36 wedges

Ingredients

- 1 medium pumpkin, about 4-5 pounds
- 2 small piloncillo cones – about 16 ounces (Piloncillo is a brown sugar cone available at most Mexican grocery stores)
- 3 Mexican cinnamon sticks whole or cut in half
- 1 orange sliced (optional)
- 4 cups of water



Fall is the season of the pumpkin, and dulce de calabaza is traditional pumpkin candy. While it can be made with the orange pumpkin so common in North America, it is more typically made with squash, particularly winter squash or Castilla squash. You can use whichever you prefer with this recipe.

Instructions

1. Cut the pumpkin in 3-inch sections. Remove seeds and strings if you prefer to use the seeds separately, or you can cook them with the syrup. Place piloncillo cones, cinnamon sticks, and orange slices in a large and heavy pot.
2. Add four cups of water and turn heat to medium-high until it starts boiling. The piloncillo cones will start to dissolve. Stir occasionally. Once the piloncillo has dissolved, place half the pumpkin pieces with the skin side down and the rest with the skin side up. If you see that the pieces aren't covered with the liquid from the piloncillo, don't worry, the pumpkin will release some of its own juices, and steam will also help with the cooking.
3. Lower heat, cover pot, and simmer. Cook for about 40 minutes, until the pumpkin is tender, and it has soaked some of the syrup.



Dulce de Calabaza

Instructions

4. Once the pumpkin is cooked, removed from the pot using a large slotted spoon and transfer to a tray. Cover with aluminum foil to keep warm while the syrup keeps cooking and reduces.
5. Return syrup to boil, turning heat to medium-high. Keep cooking, stirring occasionally until it becomes thick. Return pumpkin pieces to pot and spoon syrup all over the pumpkin pieces.
6. Serve pumpkin warm or at room temperature with a drizzle of syrup or in a warm bowl of milk. The pumpkin flavors will be better the next day, so save some for later.

Notes

Other spices, like clove and anise, can also be added.



Sugar Skulls



Prep time: 1 hour
Drying time: 1 day



Servings: 4 skulls

Ingredients

Sugar Skulls

- ¼ cup meringue powder
- 6 cups granulated sugar
- ½ cup water
- Sugar skull mold (available at the Museum gift shop or at MexicanSugarSkull.com)

Royal icing (2 options)

Option 1

- 7½ tspn meringue powder
- 6 teaspoons water
- 1 pound powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon almond extract (optional)
- food coloring (your choice)

Option 2

- Buy store icing and avoid extra work, it's up to you!



Sugar skulls are a decorative candy art in Mexico. You can buy them in Mexican markets and bakeries in late October. They are given as sweet treats for friends or used to decorate altars and graves. This recipe is provided courtesy of the Front Range Community College Latinx Club.

Instructions

1. Sugar Skulls
2. Mix the sugar, meringue powder, and water together until the sugar holds together when squeezed. If the sugar is too loose add a bit more water.
3. Fill the skull mold with the wet sugar, pressing to compact it tightly so that there are no air holes or cracks. Scrape off the excess so that the tops are flat and smooth.
4. Cut some parchment paper and cardboard so that they are a bit bigger than the skull mold. Set the parchment paper over the top of the mold then set the cardboard on top of the parchment paper. Grab onto the mold and cardboard, and carefully flip them upside down and set on the counter. Carefully wiggle and lift the mold up off the sugar skulls. The mold should come right off. If the sugar sticks, it's too wet, or your mold has too much sugar stuck to it and needs a wash.
5. If your sugar mixture is too wet: scrape it out of the mold, clean the mold, and add some more dry sugar to the mixture and try molding it again.



Sugar Skulls

Instructions

6. If your sugar skulls do not hold together you will need to add a bit more water to your mixture.
7. Let them dry a minimum of 12 hours.

Royal Icing

1. Make royal icing by whisking the water and meringue powder then adding the powdered sugar and almond extract and beating until it begins to lose its shine.
2. Color the royal icing using food coloring, then spoon into pastry bags fitted with small round tips.
3. Pipe royal icing onto the skulls creating any designs you like.
4. Allow the icing to dry for several hours before using them to decorate your Day of the Dead altar.
5. You can also decorate your sugar skulls with colorful foil and sequins “glued” on with royal icing.

Notes

The entire process from start to finish will take approximately 24 hours due to all the drying time. While these skulls can be eaten, they are supposed to be used as decoration, not as a dessert.



Capirotada



Prep time: 60 minutes
Chilling time: 30 minutes - 4 hours



Servings: 8

Ingredients

- 2 piloncillos (Piloncillo is a brown sugar cone available at most Mexican grocery stores)
- 1¼ cups water
- 2 (3-inch) cinnamon sticks
- 4½ cups (½-inch) cubed French bread (about 8 ounces)
- ¼ cup golden raisins (you can add prunes, or apples, or bananas)
- ¼ cup slivered almonds, toasted (could substitute with pecans)
- 2 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces
- cooking spray
- ¾ cup (3 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese



Capirotada is a Mexican bread pudding. This recipe features layers of nuts, cheese, dried fruit, and bread drizzled with cinnamon-infused sugar syrup.

Instructions

1. Combine first 3 ingredients in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer for 10 minutes. Discard cinnamon sticks.
2. Combine bread, raisins, almonds, and butter in a large bowl. Drizzle with warm sugar syrup, tossing gently to coat. Spoon mixture into an 8-inch square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Top with cheese. Cover with foil; chill 30 minutes or up to 4 hours.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°.
4. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes or until the cheese is golden brown. Serve warm.



Thanks to everyone who made our Day of the Dead celebrations possible:



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