

Gourmet Group Winter Menu 2021

A Taste of Spain

Happy New Year 2021!! I pray that this new year will be kinder to all of us. Despite the fact that we still cannot travel far, we can still enjoy some culinary dishes from other countries. This winter season, let's explore how to cook some delectable dishes from Spain. The recipes I am about to share with you are all family friendly.

Soups

Lentil and Ham Soup

Chicken and Chorizo Soup

Vegetarian Dishes

Spinach and Chickpeas

Spanish Rice with Mushrooms and Manchego

Empanadas

Baked Tuna Empanada

Beef Empanada -Vegetarian Alternative included.

Stews

Braised Iberian Pork Shoulder with Port Wine and Honey

Catalan Fish Stew - Suquet de Peix

Dessert

Arroz con Leche

Spanish Olive Oil Cake with Almonds

Soups

Recipe by Lauren Aloise

Serves 8

Lentejas con Jamón- Lentil and Ham Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 cups brown or green dried lentils rinsed
- 12 cups of chicken/vegetable stock
- 1 stalk of celery cut into inch long pieces
- Aromatics of choice rosemary, thyme, bay leaf, black peppercorn
- 1 ham bone
- 1 large link of chorizo about 160g
- Olive oil
- 4 medium onions finely diced
- 3 large carrots small dice
- 4 cloves of garlic minced
- 2 teaspoons tomato paste
- 1 roasted red pepper cut into small pieces
- 3 cups of crushed tomatoes drained

Directions:

Rinse your lentils and look them over carefully for pebbles or debris.

Since cooking the lentils is what takes the longest, start by covering them with cold water or stock and bringing to a simmer.

Add the celery, aromatics, and ham bone and simmer as you prepare the sofrito (the lentils should take about 40 minutes to cook, though this depends on the variety - taste them often so that they don't overcook and become mushy).

Cut 3/4 of the chorizo into rounds, place them in a heavy frying pan and turn up the heat. Sear the chorizo on each side, allowing the fat to render.

Remove the chorizo from the pan and reserve for later. Mince the uncooked 1/4 of the chorizo for later use as well.

In the pan with the chorizo grease, add 1/4 cup of olive oil over a medium heat

Add the onions and cook slowly until starting to brown (about 7 minutes)

Add the carrots and cook for another 5 minutes or so, until everything is cooked through and golden.

Add the garlic for another couple of minutes.

Add the tomatoes, minced chorizo, tomato paste and roasted red peppers.

Cook over medium heat, stirring, until completely reduced to a paste (sofrito)

Add this sofrito mixture to the lentils, and simmer together until all of the flavors are well combined. Taste the lentils often to make sure you don't overcook them.

Once cooked through, remove the aromatics and the celery from the pot and let the soup sit, uncovered, for as long as you can wait (the longer, the better combined the flavors will be).

Serve hot and top with the seared chorizo and some pickled peppers if you can get them!

Enjoy your homemade lentejas con chorizo!

Tip: if you like a thicker version, remove a couple of ladles of lentils before adding the sofrito (make sure they're cooked through) and run this through the blender until smooth. Add back to the soup for a thicker version.

Chicken and Chorizo soup

Recipe from Spanish Sabores

Ingredients:

- 6 bone-in chicken thighs
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 lb semi-cured chorizo, sliced into roughly 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 large yellow onion thinly sliced
- 2 red bell peppers seeds removed and thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cup dry sherry or any other dry white wine
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 cans of tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1/2 cup green olives pits removed

Directions:

Season the chicken thighs liberally with salt and pepper.

Place a large dutch oven (or heavy pan) over medium-high heat and add the olive oil.

When the oil is hot, sear the chicken on all sides until brown (in batches if necessary), about 7-8 minutes total. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

Return the dutch oven to medium-high heat and add the chorizo. Sear for about 2-3 minutes, until the chorizo is brown and releasing its fat to the pan. Add the onion and bell peppers and saute until softened and translucent (about 5 minutes). Stir frequently to avoid burning.

Next, add the garlic, thyme, paprika, cumin, and bay leaves. When aromatic (about a minute), add the dry wine and stir to remove anything stuck to the bottom of the pan.

When the wine has reduced by half, add the chicken stock, tomatoes, and tomato paste to the pan. Stir to combine and then return the chicken to the pan.

Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cover the dutch oven and leave to cook for 50 minutes and until the chicken is cooked through.

If the sauce is still thin after this time, remove the chicken and increase the heat to medium-high so that the sauce can further reduce.

Add in the sliced olives, along with the chicken and chorizo (if you removed it). Make sure everything is heated through and serve with rice, potatoes, bread, or salad.

Vegetarian Dishes

Espinacas con garbanzos - Spinach and Chickpeas

Recipe from Spanish Sabores

Serves 2 as a main course or 4 as a side dish

Ingredients:

- 1 jar around 500g or 18 ounces of garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- 1 large bag around 300 grams/10 ounces fresh spinach, washed
- 2 thick slices of day old bread sourdough with crusts removed and cut into cubes
- 15 blanched unsalted Marcona almonds
- 1/4 cup tomato sauce
- 3 garlic cloves chopped
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons Sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Ground cayenne pepper to taste
- Salt
- Black pepper to taste
- Smoked Spanish paprika

Directions:

Coat a large saucepan with extra virgin olive oil (approx. 2 T) and heat to medium high

Before the oil gets too hot, add the spinach (in batches if necessary)

Sauté the spinach until just wilted and remove to strain in a colander

Re-coat the pan with olive oil and add in the bread cubes and raw almonds. Fry until the bread and almonds are browned and crispy on each side

Add the chopped garlic, cumin, cayenne and black pepper and sauté for a couple of minutes, until the garlic is fragrant and turning brown

Transfer the ingredients to a blender/food processor and add the sherry vinegar

Blend the ingredients together until you have a thick paste (you can add a few tablespoons of water if needed to blend easier, but don't over blend and make it gooey)

Return the paste to the saucepan and add your garbanzo beans and tomato sauce

Stir gently until the chickpeas are fully coated by the sauce and add a bit of water to thin things out

Add the spinach and stir gently until it is evenly incorporated and hot

Season with salt and pepper

Once plated, drizzle a swirl of extra virgin olive oil on top of each dish, then sprinkle a small amount of smoked Spanish paprika on top

Spanish Rice with Mushrooms and Manchego

I like to serve this dish as a main course with a hearty baguette on the side. But it could also be a first course (and often is in Spain) before a roasted fish or meat dish.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups Spanish rice Such as Bomba or Calasparra (Arborio works too)
- 1/2 cup dry Spanish sherry (You can substitute any white wine if you prefer, or simply omit and add more broth.)
- 4 cups vegetable broth.
- 1 cup grated Manchego cheese
- 4 cups sliced button mushrooms raw
- 1 onion small dice
- 4 garlic cloves minced
- 1 handful fresh parsley minced
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp butter

Directions:

Start by preparing the garlic mushrooms. Add 2 tbsp of the olive oil to a frying pan on medium high heat, and sauté the minced garlic for one minute, until fragrant.

Add the sliced mushrooms and sauté to coat in the oil and garlic. Cook for a few minutes, until soft. Season with a pinch of salt and the minced parsley. Reserve.

While cooking the rice in the steps ahead, heat all of the broth you will use in a small saucepan and keep warm until needed.

In a large pot, add the remaining 2 tbsp of olive oil and the 2 tbsp of butter over a medium heat. Once the butter is melted, add the diced onion and sauté for about 7 minutes, until totally translucent and cooked through.

Add the rice to the pot and turn up the heat to medium high. Sauté the rice for one minute to fully coat in the oil and butter and toast it a bit.

Add the sherry wine and let it reduce for about one minute.

Next, lower the heat to medium-low and add the broth about 1/2 cup at a time. Stir frequently and add more broth each time the rice is almost dry. Keep going until you've added 2/3 of the broth. Then add in the cooked mushrooms and any juices they've released.

Keep adding broth until all is incorporated. The total cooking time should match the rice's instructions (usually 17-22 minutes). When in doubt, taste the rice to make sure it isn't too hard, or starting to overcook.

As soon as it's finished cooking, stir in the grated Manchego cheese. Taste and adjust for salt. Serve immediately with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil on top if you'd like.

Empanadas

Baked Tuna Empanada

Recipe from Spanish Sabores

Serves 4 as a main dish

Try this authentic baked tuna empanada recipe for a delicious and homemade Galician empanada.

Empanada Dough

- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup Spanish hard cider a dry cider or a dry white wine
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/4 cups of flour you may need more to roll the dough later
- 1 egg separated
-

Empanada Filling

- 1 large onion chopped
- 1 cup of roasted red peppers drained and roughly chopped
- 1.5 cups of tomate frito a homemade tomato sauce made with sautéed tomato, garlic, onion and pepper that is pureed with a bit of sugar -- you can substitute diced tomatoes and one tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 14 ounces of canned tuna drained
- 24 chopped green olives the manzanilla variety if buying in Spain
- 2 hard boiled eggs chopped
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce or anchovy paste you can always mash up a cured anchovy here
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Salt to taste

Directions:

To make the pastry dough, beat the egg in a large bowl and add in the baking soda, olive oil, wine or cider and salt.

Add in the flour, little by little, and when it gets too difficult to continue mixing with a fork, use your hands. It should be a soft dough (but not sticky). Make it into a ball and cover in plastic wrap for one hour at room temperature.

To make the filling, heat about two tablespoons of olive oil in a heavy frying pan and cook the onions until soft and starting to caramelize. Add in the roasted red peppers and fry for another two minutes or so, and then add the tomato sauce.

Lower the heat to a slow simmer and cook for about 15 minutes, stirring often.

Add in the tuna, chopped olives, chopped eggs, Worcestershire sauce (or anchovy paste), honey and paprika. Taste and adjust the salt.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C) and divide the dough in half, with one half slightly bigger than the other. Grease an 11 inch pan with oil and roll out the larger half of the dough so that will completely cover the bottom of the pan and the edges.

Using your rolling pin, transfer the dough to the pan and gently mold it to fit the pan without stretching the dough. Trim the edges if necessary.

Beat the egg white and brush over the dough.

Bake the base for 10 minutes and then remove and let cool.

Once cool enough (10 to 15 minutes) cover with the tuna filling.

Roll the other half of the dough large enough to cover the top of the empanada and make sure the edges meet.

Brush the empanada with the beaten egg yolk mixed with one teaspoon of water.

Bake in the oven for 40 minutes and serve hot or cold.

Beef Empanadas

Recipe from New York Times

I made a vegetarian batch of these empanadas using Impossible burger meat, soyrizo and vegetable broth and omitted the eggs. They were equally delicious.

For the dough

- 4 ounces butter, plus more for brushing tops
- 1 ½ teaspoons fine sea salt
- 750 grams all-purpose flour, about 6 cups, more as needed

For the filling

- 1 pound beef chuck, in 1/8-inch dice (or very coarsely ground)
- Salt and pepper
- Olive oil, for sautéing
- 1 cup diced onion
- 2 ounces diced chorizo
- ½ pound potatoes, peeled and diced
- 4 garlic cloves, mashed to a paste
- 2 teaspoons chopped thyme
- 2 teaspoons chopped marjoram or 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon pimentón dulce or paprika
- Large pinch cayenne
- Beef or chicken broth, as necessary, or use water
- ½ cup chopped scallions, white and green parts
- ¼ cup chopped pitted green olives
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, sliced

Directions:

Make the dough: Put 2 cups of boiling water, 4 ounces butter and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir to melt butter and dissolve salt. Cool to room temperature. Gradually stir in flour with a wooden spoon until dough comes together. Knead for a minute or two on a floured board, until firm and smooth. Add more flour if sticky. Wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Make the filling: Season chopped beef generously with salt and pepper and set aside for 10 minutes. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a wide heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef and fry until nicely browned, stirring throughout to keep pieces separate, about 5 minutes.

Turn heat down to medium and add onion and chorizo. Keep turning the mixture with a spatula, as if cooking hash, until onion is softened and browned, about 10 minutes. Add potatoes, garlic, thyme and marjoram and stir well to incorporate. (Add a little more fat to the pan if the mixture seems dry.) Season again with salt and pepper and let the mixture fry for 2 more minutes. Stir in tomato paste, pimentón and cayenne, then a cup of broth or water. Turn heat to simmer, stirring well to incorporate any caramelized bits. Cook for about 10 more minutes, until both meat and potatoes are tender and the sauce just coats them — juicy but not saucy is what you want. Taste and adjust seasoning for full flavor (intensity will diminish upon cooling). Stir in scallions and cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Divide chilled dough into 1-ounce pieces and form into 2-inch diameter balls. Roll each piece into a 4 1/2-inch circle. Lay circles on a baking sheet lightly dusted with flour.

Moisten the outer edge of each round with water. Put about 2 tablespoons filling in the center of each round, adding a little chopped green olive and some hard-cooked egg to each. Wrap dough around filling to form empanada, pressing edges together. Fold edge back and finish by pinching little pleats or crimping with a fork.

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Place empanadas on a parchment-lined or oiled baking sheet, about 1 inch apart. Brush tops lightly with butter and bake on the top shelf of the oven until golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Serve warm.

Stews

Braised Iberian Pork Shoulder with Port Wine and Honey

Recipe from Lauren Aloise

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 2lb pork shoulder
- 1 onion
- 6 shallots
- 1 green apple
- 2 carrots
- 1 red pepper
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 cups of Ruby Port wine
- 24 fingerling potatoes or 4-5 normal potatoes
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 Tablespoons of honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon thyme
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon parsley fresh if possible
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tablespoons of flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cups of beef stock

Directions:

Smash the garlic in a mortar and pestle and add in the thyme, honey, parsley and a tablespoon of water. Continue to smash some more until you achieve a nice paste.

Pat the pork shoulder completely dry with paper towels and then cover the pork shoulder with the paste and season with kosher salt and pepper. Let them marinate for at least an hour before cooking.

After allowing them to absorb the flavors for about an hour, quickly dredge the pork shoulder in flour (they shouldn't be coated in flour, just a hint should remain).

Heat the olive oil in a heavy pan on a medium high heat.

Sear the pork shoulder (about 30 seconds per each of its 3-4 sides) until all sides are browned.

After the meat is seared, remove from the pan and reserve.

Dice the onion and red pepper to a small dice.

Peel the shallots and cut each one in half.

Cut the carrots into thin round slices.

Transfer the oil used to sear the meat into a large, heavy pot. Add a little more oil if necessary to completely cover the bottom about 1 cm.

On a low heat, sauté the onions, peppers, shallots and carrots for 15 minutes.

When the vegetables are golden, add the pork shoulder and the 2 cups of port wine.

Add the bay leaf and, over a medium heat, allow everything to reduce 50%, about 15 minutes. Make sure to stir while it is reducing or it will stick.

Peel the potatoes (if using large potatoes cut them into bite size chunks).

Peel the apple and dice it to a medium dice.

Add the beef stock to the pot and cook over a low heat for about 1.5 hours, until the meat is completely tender. Twenty minutes before taking it off the heat add the potatoes and apple to the pot.

When everything is fork tender, take off the heat and serve.

Catalan Fish Stew - Suquet de Peix

Recipe by Claudia Roden

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- Extra virgin olive oil
- 6 cloves of garlic minced
- 2 tomatoes peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- 1 pound waxy potatoes washed well (peeled if you wish) and cut into 1/3 inch thick slices
- 1/2 cup dry white wine or sherry like fino or manzanilla
- 1.5 cups fish stock
- A pinch of saffron threads
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 pound firm white fish fillets such as hake, cod, halibut, cut into chunks
- 8 medium or large raw shrimp I prefer whole shrimp but peeled will also work

To Prepare the Picada

- 10 raw almonds
 - 2 large cloves of garlic peeled
 - Extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 tablespoon chopped flat leaf parsley
-
- Heat the olive oil in a wide and heavy pan (I used a cast iron pan) over a medium heat.
 - Add the garlic, tomatoes and tomato paste, and sauté for about 10 minutes, until the sauce is reduced.
 - Add the potatoes, wine and stock (make sure the potatoes are covered with liquid-- add more stock if necessary). Then add the salt, saffron and sugar.
 - Cover and simmer on a low heat for 20 minutes.
 - To prepare the Picada, coat a small skillet in olive oil and heat to medium high (but not smoking). Add the raw almonds and garlic, and brown on all sides. Remove and dry on paper towels. Once cool, pulse to a crumbly paste in your food processor or in a mortar and pestle. Add a bit of the stew's liquid if necessary to blend.
 - Finally, add the fish chunks to the stew and cook for about four minutes (uncovered). Then add the shrimp and cook until just pink. If you plan to keep the stew simmering a bit longer, remove the shrimp so that they don't overcook and just add back to serve.

Dessert

A creamy rice pudding recipe from my late mother-in-law. Her arroz con leche recipe is the perfect blend of cinnamon, sugar, and silky Spanish rice. You'll try it once and be a fan for life!

Arroz con leche - Rice Pudding

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of short grain rice Arroz Bomba / Arborio
- 1-2 wide slices of lemon rind
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch of salt
- 4 ¼ cups of whole milk you can substitute non-dairy milks if desired. I find extra creamy original Oat Milk works the best.
- Sugar to taste

Directions:

- Rinse the rice under cold water and then put it in a saucepan over a medium heat, just barely covered with water (you could also cover it with milk for even creamier arroz con leche).
- Add the cinnamon stick and lemon rind. Stir continually until all of the water is absorbed.
- Add milk about ½ cup at a time, stirring each time until all is absorbed. Continue adding up to the whole liter of milk, stirring continuously.
- When it seems creamy enough, taste to make sure the texture of the rice is correct. Some prefer it al dente and others like it very cooked (almost mushy).
- When it is to your liking, turn off the heat and add a pinch of salt and dash of cinnamon. Then, add the sugar a few tablespoons at a time until it is sweet enough for you. Enjoy warm or let cool.
- Sprinkle a bit more cinnamon on top to decorate!

Spanish Lemon Olive Oil Cake with Almonds

Ingredients:

- 1.5 cups/ 180g of cake flour
- 1/4 cup /30g of finely ground almonds (you can pulse raw almonds in the food processor until a powder but not a paste)
- 1/4 teaspoon/ 1g of salt
- 2 teaspoons /10g of baking powder
- 1 cup /200g of granulated sugar
- Zest from two lemons
- 3 large eggs
- 1/4 cup/ 60ml of freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Scant 1 cup approx. 220ml of full fat unsweetened Greek yogurt
- 2/3 cup/ 160ml of extra virgin olive oil
- Powdered sugar to top the cake

Directions:

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C) and then grease and flour a 9 1/2 inch cake pan.

In a medium sized bowl mix together the flour, ground almonds, salt and baking powder.

Massage the lemon zest into the sugar by rubbing it with your fingers, allowing the sugar to become infused with the zest's flavor.

In a separate bowl, beat the sugar and eggs on medium high (I use a hand mixer) for about two minutes (the mixture should have doubled in size and lightened in color).

Now, whisk in the lemon juice and Greek yogurt on a low speed.

Finally, add the olive oil by slowly drizzling it in while mixing on low.

When combined, fold in the flour mixture by hand using a rubber spatula. Stop mixing as soon as everything is combined-- you don't want to over mix.

Pour the batter into the greased and floured cake pan and bake about 50 minutes in a preheated (375°F) oven (or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out with only a few crumbs).

Take your cake out of the oven and let cool for at least 20 minutes before removing from the cake pan. Right before serving dust with powdered sugar.

¡Buen Provecho!