



Well it's nearly time to wrestle your turkey into the oven and sit back for 6 to 8 hours... So this is the last in our series of alternative Christmas recipes. Today we have a traditional Christmas meal from Venezuela. For no better reason than to demonstrate the wide variety of customs and recipes throughout the world. You might struggle to get hold of some of these ingredients in the UK in winter, but large Asian super markets sell plantain leaves earlier in the year.

Hallacas are traditional Venezuelan Christmas Eve gifts. The filling usually starts with whole chicken, pork shoulder, bacon, and beef chuck all separately seasoned, stewed, and shredded or chopped. This lightened version uses leaner cuts of meat, skips the bacon, and stews all the meats together to save a little time. The measures are in the America style, as it's a South American dish.

Our previous alternative Christmas dishes can be [found here](#)

Ingredients:-

1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil

1 (8-ounce) skinless, boneless chicken breast half, chopped

6 ounces beef sirloin, chopped

6 ounces pork tenderloin, finely chopped

1 1/2 cups finely chopped leek

1 cup finely chopped onion

1/3 cup chopped Spring onions

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 2/3 cups chopped green or red bell pepper

1/2 cup chopped seeded Cubanelle or Anaheim chile

3/4 cup chopped seeded tomato

2 1/2 cups of Chicken stock

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 cup sliced shallots

1/2 cup sliced roasted red bell pepper

1/2 cup raisins

1/3 cup sliced pimiento-stuffed olives

1/2 cup finely chopped sweet pickles

1/2 cup capers

1/2 cup sliced almonds

1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1 tablespoon annatto (achiote) seeds

1 1/3 cups butternut squash puree

3 cups precooked white corn flour

Fresh Plantane leaves cut into 12" squares

3 hard boiled eggs, thinly sliced lengthwise

Reduced-fat sour cream,

Method:-

1. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon oil to pan; swirl to coat. Add chicken; cook 5 minutes or until done, stirring occasionally. Remove from skillet. Add 1 1/2 teaspoons oil to pan; add beef and pork, and cook 5 minutes or until done, stirring occasionally. Remove from skillet. Reduce heat to medium; add 1 1/2 teaspoons oil. Add leek, onion, green onions, and garlic; sauté 5 minutes. Add bell pepper and chile; sauté 5 minutes. Add tomato; cook 5 minutes or until tomato softens. Mash with a wooden spoon. Add 1 cup stock, vinegar, and next 5 ingredients above (through black pepper); bring to simmer over high heat. Return meats to pan; reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer 30 minutes or until liquid almost evaporates and mixture is thickening. Remove from heat; cool slightly, and stir in next 8 ingredients (shallots through to cilantro).
2. Combine 1/4 cup oil and annatto seeds in small saucepan; cook over low heat 4 minutes or until oil is deep orange in color and seeds just begin to darken. Remove from heat; let stand 10 minutes.
3. Place remaining 1 1/2 cups stock in a large glass measure and warm over a low heat.
4. Discard annatto seeds; reserve 1 tablespoon annatto oil. Scrape remaining annatto oil into a food processor using a rubber spatula. Add warm stock, squash puree, corn flour, and 1/2 teaspoon salt; process 2 minutes or until well blended and dough forms. Let the dough stand in the food processor, covered, 30 minutes.
5. Shape dough into 16 (2-inch) balls with moist hands; place on a cutting board lined with damp paper towels (cover with plastic wrap to prevent drying).
6. For each tamale, place 1 plantain square, shiny side up, on work surface; lightly brush annatto oil down center of square. Place 1 dough ball in center of square over oil; pat dough into a 6-inch circle with moist fingers. Spoon about 1/3 cup filling onto dough circle, leaving a 1/2-inch. Top

with an egg slice. Use the leaf to fold dough over filling, top to bottom then side to side, using moist fingers to seal the edges. Wrap the leaves over tamales top to bottom then side to side like a package and tie with string. Steam tamales, covered, 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until dough is firm. Unwrap and Garnish with sour cream and cilantro.

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