

Stuffed Arepas (Arepas Rellenas)

Recipe adapted from *The South American Table*, by Maria Baez Kajic

PREP: 30 MINS (plus frying time)

YIELD: 10-12 arepas

Ingredients for the arepa dough:

2 cups Arepa flour (masarepa)*

1 teaspoon Salt

3 cups Hot water

Ingredients for the stuffed arepas:

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

1 teaspoon Anna to or sweet paprika

1 medium-size onion, minced (about 1 cup)

*1 small green bell pepper, seeded and
minced*

1 clove Garlic, minced

*2 large Tomatoes (about 1 pound), peeled,
seeded and chopped*

1/2 teaspoon Ground cumin

1/4 teaspoon Thyme, dried

1 teaspoon Salt

1/4 teaspoon Ground black pepper

*1-pound Ground meat (any combination of
beef, pork, poultry)*

8 Pimento-stuffed Spanish olives, minced

1 Tablespoon Capers, drained

Arepa Dough Instructions:

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the arepa flour and salt.
2. Add water and mix with a wooden spoon or hands to make a soft dough.
3. Cover with plastic wrap, let stand for 5 minutes, and then knead for about 3 minutes, until smooth. If the dough is too dry, wet your hands and continue kneading and wetting your hands until the dough is soft.
4. Cover with plastic until needed.

Stuffed Arepas Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add the annatto, onion, bell pepper, garlic, tomatoes, cumin, thyme, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have formed a thick sauce, about 20 minutes.
3. Add the ground meat and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, until the liquid has been reduced to a glaze.
4. Stir in the olives and capers and set aside.

5. Lightly oil or wet your hands and shape the arepa dough into disks measuring 3 inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, pressing each disc between pieces of plastic, parchment or waxed paper to flatten and shape the edges. Keep discs covered in plastic.
6. Heat a lightly greased griddle or cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Cook arepas on both sides, turning once, until a crust forms and the arepas are golden brown.
7. Transfer to an ungreased baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes. Finished arepas will sound hollow when tapped.
8. Split the arepas in half, scoop out some of the insides and fill with the meat sauce. Serve while hot.

*Masarepa (also called harina precocida and masa al instante) should not be confused with masa harina. Masarepa can be found in most Latin American grocery stores and many ethnic markets.

Variations:

Stuffed arepas may be made with many other ingredients, like pulled pork, chopped rotisserie chicken, black bean and sweet potato sauté, tofu or egg scramble, or any other leftovers in your refrigerator. Cheese (particularly cheddar, mozzarella, Parmesan) as well as fried plantains, avocado, mango salsa also make nice additions.