Desserts / Peru

Picarones

Peru's beloved fried doughnuts — rings of sweet potato and butternut squash dough, yeast-risen and crisp on the outside, pillowy within, drizzled with chancaca syrup spiced with anise and cinnamon.

Time 180 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 250 g Orange-flesh sweet potato, cooked and mashed
- ☐ 250 g Butternut squash, cooked and mashed
- ☐ 300 g All-purpose flour
- ☐ 7 g Active dry yeast
- ☐ 30 g Caster sugar
- ☐ 5 g Fine salt
- ☐ 3 g Anise seeds, lightly crushed
- ☐ 700 ml Neutral oil for deep-frying
- ☐ 250 g Chancaca (raw cane sugar block) or dark muscovado sugar
- ☐ 300 ml Water (for syrup)
- ☐ 1 piece Cinnamon stick
- ☐ 3 pieces Whole cloves
- ☐ 1 piece Orange peel strip

Let's make it.

01 Ensure the sweet potato and squash mashes are cooled to lukewarm — warm enough to activate the yeast, cool enough not to kill it (38°C / 100°F is ideal). Combine the mashes in a large bowl. Dissolve the yeast in 3 tablespoons of warm water with a pinch of the sugar and leave 5 minutes until foamy. Add the foamy yeast, remaining sugar, salt, and anise seeds to the mash. Add the flour gradually, mixing to form a soft, slightly sticky dough. It will be softer and stickier than bread dough due to the vegetable moisture — do not add too much flour.

02 Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a damp cloth. Leave in a warm place (25–28°C / 77–82°F) for 1–2 hours until the dough has roughly doubled in volume and looks airy and loose. The dough will also become even stickier as the yeast activates — this is normal. The anise aroma will become more pronounced.

03 Break or chop the chancaca into pieces. Combine with water, cinnamon stick, cloves, and orange peel in a saucepan. Heat over medium, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Once dissolved, bring to a gentle boil and cook for 10–12 minutes until syrupy and fragrant. Strain out the spices and peel. Keep warm. The syrup should be dark, spiced, and thick enough to drizzle.

04 Heat the oil to 175°C (345°F) in a deep, wide pan. Wet your hands thoroughly. Grab a golf ball-sized portion of dough, poke a hole through the center with your finger, and stretch into a ring shape (about 10cm diameter) directly over the hot oil. Drop it in. Fry in batches of 3-4, turning once after 2-3 minutes, until both sides are deep golden-brown. Total frying time is 4-5 minutes per batch. The dough will expand in the oil. Drain on paper towels.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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