Main dishes / Mexico

Tamales de Pollo con Salsa Verde

The corn husk is the cook's oldest envelope — spread with masa dough whipped with lard until it floats on a bowl of water, filled with braised tomatillo chicken, then folded and steamed until the masa pulls cleanly from the husk like paper from a gift, revealing a soft, fragrant package that smells of corn and steam and celebration.

Time 210 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 400 g Masa harina (corn dough flour, Maseca brand)
- ☐ 480 g Warm chicken broth (for masa)
- ☐ 12 g Fine salt
- ☐ 300 g Tomatillos (husked, halved)
- ☐ 150 g White onion (half for braise, half for salsa verde)
- ☐ 60 g Dried corn husks (30–35 husks, soaked in hot water 1 hour)
- ☐ 160 g Lard (room temperature, soft)
- ☐ 6 g Baking powder (for light masa texture)
- ☐ 600 g Chicken thighs (bone-in, skin-on)
- ☐ 30 g Serrano or jalapeño chiles (2–3, roughly chopped)
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves (4 cloves)

Let's make it.

01 Combine the chicken thighs, halved tomatillos, chopped chiles, half the onion (roughly sliced), and garlic in a pot with enough water to just cover (about 400g). Bring to a boil and simmer for 35–40 minutes until the chicken is completely cooked through and pulling from the bone. Remove the chicken pieces and let cool enough to handle. Shred the meat, discarding the bones and skin. Return the braising liquid and cooked vegetables to a blender and blend until smooth — this is your salsa verde filling sauce. Return the shredded chicken to the sauce and season assertively with salt. The filling should taste boldly seasoned — it will mellow inside the masa.

02 Beat the soft lard in a stand mixer with the paddle on high for 3–4 minutes until it is very pale, fluffy, and has roughly doubled in volume. With the mixer on medium, add the masa harina and baking powder alternating with the warm chicken broth in 4 additions, scraping down between each addition. Beat the salt in at the end. The finished masa should be light, spreadable, and very smooth — like thick hummus or a slightly stiff whipped cream. Test by dropping a small ball into a glass of cold water: if it floats, the lard is sufficiently aerated and the masa will be light. If it sinks, beat 2 more minutes.

03 Lay a softened corn husk with the wider end facing you. Spread about 60g of masa in a thin, even rectangle (15x10 cm) on the upper two-thirds of the husk, leaving the bottom third and a 2cm border on the sides bare. Place 2 tablespoons of filling in a line down the center of the masa. Fold one side of the husk over the filling so the masa meets and encloses the filling, then fold the other side over, and fold the bare bottom of the husk up to seal. Stand the tamales upright in a steamer basket, open end up. If needed, use extra torn husk strips to tie them closed.

04 Place the assembled tamales upright and packed tightly together in a steamer pot — they support each other. Add water to just below the steamer basket. Bring to a rolling boil over high heat, then reduce to maintain a vigorous steam. Cover tightly and steam for 75–90 minutes, checking the water level every 30 minutes and adding boiling water as needed. The tamales are done when the masa pulls cleanly and completely away from the corn husk without sticking. Let rest 10 minutes off the heat before serving — they firm and set during the rest.

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