



Making tamales is traditionally a group activity, and Grubbs' recipe can easily be scaled up to feed a crowd.

WRAP IT UP

A Mexican staple made easy

First popularized in the lower South as a portable snack by seasonal field workers from Latin America, tamales are traditionally made in a communal setting, in which generations and communities gather to stuff and wrap corn husks. We turned to Wesley Grubbs,

the chef de cuisine of Minero in Charleston, South Carolina, to show us how to make them. Start by soaking corn husks in hot water—use a pot lid or heavy object from around your kitchen to keep them submerged. For the proper dough consistency, be sure to find masa harina instead of corn meal (which is the backbone of Delta tamales, but that's another story). Grubbs advises not getting too caught up with appearances. "A bad-looking tamale is still a good tamale," he says. "It may not be pretty, but who cares?" With the husk in hand, spread a spoonful of dough in the center and top with chicken filling. Pull the two long edges of the husk toward each other to gather filling into the center, then tuck one long edge under the other and roll into a cigar shape. Take one of the open ends and fold it toward the center, sealing it off. You can use butcher twine or the traditional strip of corn husk to tie off the tamale, but leave room for the dough to expand during steaming. Grubbs finds they're even better as leftovers, so pop them in the microwave for a minute and a half and enjoy all week.—*Lia Grabowski*

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN BONCEK

Wesley Grubbs' Tamales

2 packs dried corn husks
1 whole cooked chicken (store-bought is fine)
1 can chipotle in adobo
½ cup lard, chilled

2 tablespoons salt
2 cups masa harina
6 cups chicken broth

Makes 9 to 12 tamales

1



SOAK HUSKS

Soak a pack of corn husks in water for at least 20 minutes, making sure they are completely submerged. (Have the second pack on hand in case some husks tear during folding.)

2



PREPARE CHICKEN

Debone and shred chicken. Puree chipotle peppers in a blender, then mix with pulled chicken to desired level of heat.

3



MAKE MASA FILLING

In a stand mixer with paddle attachment, whip lard until doubled in volume. Add salt, 1 cup masa, and 1 cup chicken broth and mix until incorporated. Add remaining masa and enough stock so the mixture resembles wet sand.

4



FILL HUSKS

Remove husks from water and allow to drip dry for 5 minutes. Spread a scoop of dough evenly over husk, leaving a 1-inch border. Add about 1 ounce of chicken filling down the middle.

5



WRAP TAMALES

Bring long edges of husk together to center dough. Roll husk into a cigar shape around dough and fold bottom end up. Tie with twine or lay fold-side down. Repeat with remaining dough.

6



STEAM TAMALES

Fill a pot with water so the bottom of a steamer basket sits just above the water. Bring to a vigorous simmer. Place tamales into basket, folded side down. Cover and steam for 45 minutes.