

## Tamales a-la Chef Carmen | Casa Azul Taquería



**Casa Azul Taquería**  
890 Allens Avenue  
Providence, RI 02905

PREP TIME - 45 min  
TOTAL TIME - 1 hr 45 min  
COOKING - TIME 1 hour

### Ingredients

- 1 lb. lard
- 5 cups Maseca Tamal (dry nixtamalized corn flour / masa mix for tamales)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth (or vegetable broth or water)
- 1 pound package dried corn husks
- 3 pounds fresh masa, store-bought or see recipe below
- 2-3 pounds filling, such as shredded rotisserie chicken mixed with salsa verde, chilled

### Make the masa:

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream lard until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. (Alternatively, use a hand mixer or whisk.)
2. In a separate bowl, mix Maseca Tamal, baking powder, and kosher salt together until well combined. Add dry ingredients to the whipped lard and mix until a shaggy dough forms.
3. Add broth one cup at a time, mixing after every addition, until a light, spongy dough forms. (You may not need to use all of the broth.) Test the masa by pinching off a quarter-size piece of the dough and dropping it into a cup of water. If it floats to the top, the masa is ready. If not, add more liquid and continue to mix.

### Assemble the tamales:

1. In a large bowl or stockpot, soak corn husks in warm water and cover. (If the corn husks rise to the surface, cover with a clean plate or other weight.) Soak until softened, about 30 minutes and up to overnight, then drain and pat dry with a clean kitchen towel.
2. Set a softened corn husk on a flat surface smooth side up, with the wide end facing you and the tapered end pointing away from you. Starting from the wide end of the husk, spread 2 tablespoons masa with your fingers or an offset spatula from edge to edge and about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way up the husk. You should have a rectangle about a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick. Repeat with remaining husks.

3. Add 2 tablespoons of chilled filling to the center of the masa-covered husk. Fold one side of the husk over the filling, then fold the other side to cover completely, gently pinching masa together if necessary. With the seam side up, tuck the tapered end of the husk under the tamal. Repeat with remaining tamales.
4. Line a large strainer or steamer basket with corn husks (this is a good use for any extra-large or extra-small husks) and place a ball of foil in the center, where you will place the tamales against the ball, open side up, leaning them against each other.
5. Once you've assembled all of your tamales, add about 3 cups water to a large pot fitted with a strainer and nestle tamales inside the strainer, steam side and exposed side up, *making sure the tamales do not touch the water*. Steam over medium heat until masa feels firm and separates easily from husks, about 40 minutes to 2 hours.



### 8 Tips for Making Perfect Tamales

1. Make the filling before you plan to assemble the tamales so that you have less work to do on the day of and the filling has time to chill; cold filling will hold its shape better. You want your filling to be moist but not saucy—if it's too liquidy, the filling can seep out of the tamales.
2. You can also make the masa ahead of time: Seal in an airtight plastic bag and refrigerate up to two days.
3. Tamale recipes that call for masa made with lard, will have the best flavor, but for a vegetarian alternative try vegetable shortening or neutral-flavor oil, such as corn oil.
4. You can mix the masa with your hands, but using a hand or stand mixer will speed up the process and yield a fluffier masa. The baking powder can also give masa a lighter texture.
5. If your corn husks are narrow, try overlapping two small husks.
6. A thicker layer of masa will hold its shape better while steaming, but if it's too thick, it'll be difficult to shape. A 50/50 ratio of masa to filling will yield flavorful tamales that are unlikely to fall apart in the steamer.
7. Monitor the water level while steaming: You don't want the tamales to touch the water ever, but you may need to add water to avoid drying out the pot.
8. The best way to test tamales for doneness is to take one out of the steamer and let it cool for 2-3 minutes. If it pulls away from the husk easily and feels firm, your tamales are ready. If not, continue to steam.

### Four Filling Ideas for Tamales

1. One of the most common tamale fillings, shredded **pork** is especially delicious mixed with *salsa verde*.
2. Tamales can be made with shredded or ground **beef**, often mixed with chile.
3. For quick **chicken** tamales, try shredding the meat from a rotisserie chicken and mixing with *salsa verde*, *mole*, or enchilada sauce.
4. Monterey Jack or Oaxacan cheese paired with green chile or refried beans is the most popular **vegetarian** tamale filling. Make your tamales vegan by filling with roasted or sauteed veggies.

### How to Freeze and Store Tamales

Freeze leftover tamales for up to three months. Reheat frozen tamales in a steamer on the stovetop, or by wrapping tamales in a damp paper towel and microwaving.