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HOLIDAY

BEST

FARM-TO-TABLE RECIPES

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COMPILED BY CARLOS FRÍAS, MIAMI HERALD FOOD EDITOR

A message from

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Let's call these farm-to-table recipes.

The theory, you've heard, is the less an ingredient has to travel before it arrives on your plate, the better the flavor. And I'm all about better flavors. The same is true, I think, with recipes: Those grown in our own backyard can be some of the best.

The recipes I loved the most that we printed in the Miami Herald this past year were the ones that screamed South Florida. In them, you'll recognize our varied cultures, cuisines and customs. No need to go scrambling through dozens of cookbooks for incredible flavors. South Florida has its own food culture. These recipes are a nod to the ingredients, techniques and most important, the people, who are shaping the flavors of Miami. You'll find dishes from restaurant chefs to home cooks, but all of them show a personal connection to where we live. That unique point of view is something worth celebrating this and every holiday.





CUBAN CREMA DE VIE

Think of Crema de Vie as the Cuban version of spiked eggnog. It's a tradition to make the creamy-smooth drink before the holidays to share with family and friends into the New Year. If someone shows up to your Christmas party with a bottle of homemade Crema de Vie, get them under the mistletoe.

INGREDIENTS:

Peel of 2 limes
1 cinnamon stick
1 cup sugar
6 egg yolks or pasteurized egg product equivalent
1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
2 cups white rum, or to taste

PREPARATION:

Bring 1 1/4 cups water to a boil with the lime zest and cinnamon stick. Add the sugar and stir until dissolved. Reduce heat to a bare simmer and cook 15 minutes. Remove the cinnamon stick and lime peels and strain mixture through a coffee filter. Cool to room temperature. Beat the egg yolks until frothy. Beat in the condensed and evaporated milks, sugar syrup and rum. Refrigerate at least 8 hours before serving.

Yield: 16 servings



MARIO’S ARGENTINE EMPANADAS

Mario Smuglovsky has been making empanadas — delicious meat-stuffed patties that melt in your mouth — for more years than most people have been alive. He and his wife owned a Miami restaurant but he never made them for sale — only as gifts to friends and family. The Miami Herald featured the story in July of how his delicious meat pies turned this 90-year-old Argentine immigrant into the “Empanada Man.”

INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs. ground chicken breast
1 1/4 lbs. onions, chopped
6 hard boiled eggs, chopped
4 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese
Round pastry dough (empanada-size pastry shells available at Graziano’s or other Argentine markets)
Handful of raisins
Olives
1 tablespoon chopped garlic

1 teaspoon Complete Seasoning Mix
1 teaspoon Old Bay Seasoning
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/4 teaspoon cumin powder
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 tablespoons white cooking wine
Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

In a saute pan, place olive oil and chopped garlic, stirring until golden. Cook ground chicken on medium heat, stirring constantly. Add dry ingredients (reserving the raisins, eggs, and cheese) and cook for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, saute the onions with olive oil until caramelized and add cooking wine. Add caramelized onions to chicken and stir mixture together; continue cooking over medium heat and add salt and pepper to taste. Add 2 cups boiling water to ground chicken to tenderize and

cook for an additional 15-20 minutes or until water evaporates. Remove excess liquid and add the remaining ingredients (raisins, chopped eggs, and cheese). Stir well and allow mixture to cool. Stuff empanada shells with mixture, adding one medium-sized pitted olive per empanada. Fold over crust and close using fork to pinch together or crimping method. Empanadas can be baked immediately or frozen for future use. If frozen, do not defrost prior to baking; brush with egg mixture and bake as follows. To bake, beat one egg and brush over top and bottom of empanada and place on parchment paper-lined cookie sheet in center oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until crust is golden-brown. Beef empanadas can be made using ground beef for this recipe.

Yield: 24-36 empanadas, depending on size of pastry shell

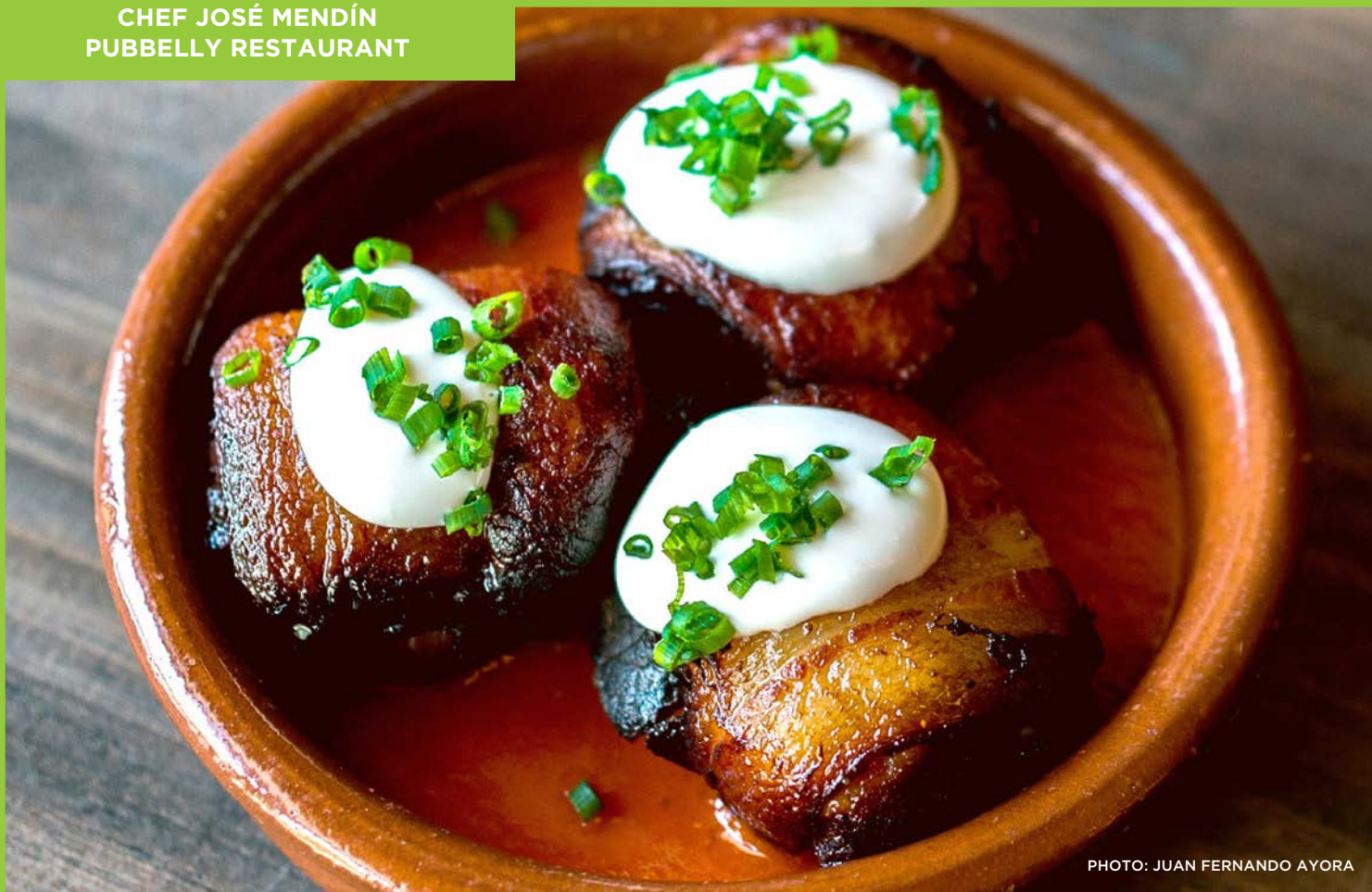


PHOTO: JUAN FERNANDO AYORA

PUBBELLY DATES WITH CHORIZO

The “boys” behind the Pubbelly restaurants continue to surprise fans and connoisseurs of their gastropub — and not just at their restaurants, anymore. Their cuisine can now be found even aboard the Norwegian Escape. These stuffed dates are their signature dish.

INGREDIENTS:

8 large medjool dates
8 tablespoons chorizo mix (see recipe below)
8 bacon strips
3 cups tomato sauce (see recipe below)
2 1/2 tablespoons goat cheese cream
(see recipe below)
1 ounce fresh chives, finely chopped

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
Take the medjool dates, make a slice on one side of each date, split open and remove the pits. Spoon a heaping spoonful of chorizo

mix and stuff the date. Take a bacon strip, wrap it tightly around the date and seal well. Arrange the dates on a baking tray lined with parchment paper and bake on the middle rack for 35-40 minutes. The bacon should be brown and crispy and the chorizo fully cooked. In a small pot, bring the tomato sauce to a simmer, pour the sauce onto a large serving dish and place the dates on top of the sauce. Spoon a teaspoon of goat cheese cream on each date. Garnish with fresh chives.
Yield: 4 portions

CHORIZO MIX

1 cup Argentinian chorizo
1/2 tablespoon smoked paprika
1/2 tablespoon granulated garlic
Remove the Argentinian chorizo from its casing and place in a bowl. Add the smoked paprika and granulated garlic and mix well.
Yield: 4 portions

TOMATO SAUCE

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 onion, peeled, diced
1 tablespoon garlic, peeled, chopped
2 cups canned red peppers, do not strain
2 cups canned tomatoes, do not strain
1/2 tablespoon kosher salt
In a large pot add the vegetable oil and bring to a medium/high heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until caramelized. Once golden, add the canned tomatoes and the canned peppers. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cook on a low heat for 1 hour and stir every so often. Remove from the heat, add to a blender and puree until smooth. Season with kosher salt.
Yield: 4 portions

GOAT CHEESE CREAM

1/4 cup goat cheese
2 tablespoons sour cream
Place the goat cheese and sour cream in a food processor and pulse until smooth.
Yield: 4 portions

CHEF BRIAN NASAJON
BEAKER & GRAY RESTAURANT



BEAKER & GRAY'S CAULIFLOWER WITH
BACON, QUESO FRESCO AND YUZU

BEAKER & GRAY'S CAULIFLOWER WITH BACON, QUESO FRESCO AND YUZU

Chef Brian Nasajon's father, Tony, a Brazilian raised in Uruguay who loves grilled meats, wrinkled his nose at Nasajon's idea for a cauliflower dish on Beaker & Gray's menu. Like so many of us raised on bland boiled vegetables, there is a stigma to overcome that often goes back to childhood. The key to the dish is to chop the florets into small pieces that are small and uniform enough to be evenly coated by the finger-licking bacon-huancaina sauce and to sear them in oil on high heat so they char slightly. Zero pre-boiling.

INGREDIENTS:

3 heads multi-color cauliflower
3 ounces scallions, chopped
Huancaína sauce (see separate recipe)
Bacon vinaigrette (see separate recipe)
Chili vinaigrette (see separate recipe)

PREPARATION:

Cut cauliflower into small florets. Bring sauté pan to very high heat with a drizzle of olive oil. Add cauliflower and pinch of salt. Sauté for 3-4 minutes. To sauté pan, add huancaína and let cool until sauce is reduced by half. (Sauce should be thick.) Place cauliflower in serving dish, keeping sauté pan hot. Add bacon and chili vinaigrette mixture to sauté pan, let it warm up, then pour over cauliflower. To garnish, add 3 ounces chopped scallions and serve yuzu foam (see recipe) using spotted spoon to maintain foam texture.

HUANCAÍNA SAUCE

3 ounces shallots, thinly sliced
1 ounce garlic, thinly chopped
1/4 ounce salt
1 1/2 ounce aji amarillo sauce*
3/4 cup sake
3 cups heavy cream
2 ounces Parmesan cheese

Sweat out garlic and shallots with salt over medium heat. Add aji amarillo and cook for 2 minutes. Deglaze with sake. Add heavy cream. Bring to a simmer. Stir in Parmesan. Blend and reserve.

*Aji amarillo sauce is available at Sedano's and some other Latin markets.

CHILI VINAIGRETTE

1 ounce Fresno peppers
1/2 ounce jalapeño
1/2 ounce garlic
2 ounces shallots
7 ounces champagne vinegar
2 ounces red wine vinegar
4 ounces sugar
1 ounce fish sauce
Pinch of salt

Thinly slice ingredients, place in pot and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and let cool. (Chili vinaigrette will be added to bacon vinaigrette).

BACON VINAIGRETTE

1 pound bacon
2 cups chili vinaigrette (recipe above)
3/4 cup sugar
1 ounce salt

Cut bacon into small, thin dices. Place into cold pot and set over very low heat. Cook until mostly rendered. Add sugar and salt. Continue to cook until the rest of the bacon is rendered out. Add chili vinaigrette. Cook until most of vinegar is cooked out and bacon vinaigrette is thick. Let cool to room temperature.

YUZU FOAM

2 cups yuzu juice
Pinch of soy lecithin

Bring ingredients to a simmer. Stir until lecithin is dissolved and let cool. Whisk or use immersion blender to create foam-like texture.

Yield: 4-6 servings



PINCH KITCHEN'S ORGANIC BEET SALAD WITH HERBED GOAT CHEESE

Beets taste like dirt. And their bright red juice turns everything into a murder scene. But in the hands of Pinch Kitchen chef John Gallo, beets are elevated with a gourmet flourish you can try at home. The key: Cook them low and slow (like great barbecue) in a brine with thyme and bay leaf.

INGREDIENTS:

3 medium organic red beets
3 sprigs of thyme
1 bay leaf
1/2 cup goat cheese
1/4 cup scallion greens
1/4 cup picked tarragon leaves
1/4 cup picked oregano leaves
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup golden raisins
3/4 cup rose water
1/4 cup toasted & chopped pistachios, skin on
1/4 cup plain goat cheese
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
Salt to taste

PREPARATION:

Place the beets in a medium size pot, cover with water, add thyme and bay leaf and season the water with salt until it tastes like ocean water. Cover pot with a tight-fitting lid and cook on medium. You want a steady boil but not a rolling boil, for about one hour. Poke the beets with a skewer, and if the skewer goes through without any resistance, the beets are cooked. Otherwise, continue to cook for up to another half-hour. Strain beets from water and let cool slightly. With a kitchen rag rub the skin off the beets. Do not let the beets get cold or it will be harder to peel off skin. It's best to wear gloves so the beets don't stain your hands red. Dice the peeled beets and let them cool.

HERBED GOAT CHEESE:

Remove cheese from refrigerator and allow to soften. Place the cheese into a food processor with the lemon juice, tarragon, oregano and half the scallion greens. Blend on medium speed until it

starts to come together, then on high until the cheese becomes a bright pastel green color. Season with salt to taste.

GOLDEN RAISINS:

Place the golden raisins into a small pot, cover with rose water, bring to a simmer and shut off the flame. Let the raisins cool inside the rose water for at least half an hour.

PLATING:

Place a medium dollop of the herbed goat cheese onto the bottom of the plate. Spread the cheese using the back of the spoon to make a "swoosh." Toss 1/2 cup of the diced red beets in a bowl with sherry vinegar and 1/2 tablespoon of raisins. Season with salt to taste. Place beets on top of the herbed goat cheese, straining it of any residual liquid from the bowl as you plate. Crumble plain goat cheese on top of the beets. Add a few pinches of chopped toasted pistachios and the remaining scallion, sliced into thin rings. Yield: 2 servings



ELEANOR PESCE'S “MOM'S MEATBALLS”

Miami Herald dining critic Victoria Pesce Elliott commemorated her late mother, Eleanor, in a heartfelt November 2015 story that went on to be named Best Food Essay by The Association of Food Journalists this year. She shared her essay with readers and now, we're sharing her mom's recipe with you.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound ground beef
1/2 pound ground veal
1/2 pound ground pork
5 cloves minced garlic
1 1/2 cups freshly grated parmesan cheese
1/4 bunch Italian flat-leaf parsley
(about 1/4 cup chopped)
2 large eggs

1/2 loaf (about 1 cup) day-old Italian bread
3/4 cup milk for soaking bread
1/2 cup seasoned Italian bread crumbs
Salt and pepper
Bowl of clean water for dipping hands
while forming meatballs
Enough olive oil for frying (at least 1 cup)

PREPARATION:

If you have a butcher who will grind the meat for you, have him combine the beef, veal and pork in the grinder. If not, mix the meats together in a large bowl. Add the garlic, cheese and parsley. Beat the eggs and add them to the mix. Gently mix with your hands. Break the bread into bite-

size pieces and let soak in the milk until soft. Add the softened bread and milk to the mix. Add breadcrumbs. Salt and pepper aggressively. With an ice cream scooper or a large spoon dunked in water, form meatballs dipping hands into the water each time so the meat is smooth and wet as you roll it. Heat 1/2 cup of the olive oil in a large skillet, preferably a cast iron one. Fry one marble-size meatball to taste for seasoning. Add more cheese, salt or pepper as needed. Fry meatballs four or five at a time. Do not crowd the pan. Turn them gently so that all sides brown to a nice golden color. They will still be pink in the center. Do not overcook them. They will continue to cook in tomato sauce. Let them drain on layers of paper towels until they are ready to go for a swim in sauce.

Yield: About 18-24 meatballs



BOUNTIFUL FLORIDA FISH 'BFF' CAKES

Olivia LaRochelle may be just 12 years old. But her recipe earned her a seat at this year's Kids' "State Dinner" hosted at the White House by first lady Michelle Obama. For the past two years, LaRochelle has entered the Healthy Lunchtime Challenge, a nationwide recipe contest for kids that promotes cooking and healthy eating. Olivia's submission was chosen as a finalist the first year she entered. This year, she won.

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 pound skinless largemouth bass, or any white-meat fish such as cod, cut into small pieces
1 egg white
1 cup cooked brown rice
1/2 cup black beans, rinsed and drained
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt or to taste
1/2 cup whole-wheat panko breadcrumbs

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except breadcrumbs. Form mixture into 4 patties, pressing each patty together so it holds its shape. Line a medium baking sheet with parchment paper. Put breadcrumbs on a plate and roll the patties in the breadcrumbs. Place each patty on baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes or until light golden brown and fish is cooked through. Meanwhile, in medium bowl, toss salsa ingredients until well combined. In a small bowl, stir together all ingredients for yogurt sauce. Top each fish cake with salsa and drizzle with yogurt sauce. Sprinkle with additional cilantro if you wish. Serve with orange wedges.

SALSA

1 1/4 cups diced mango
1 1/4 cups diced strawberries
1 cup diced avocado
3/4 cup diced cucumber
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

ORANGE-YOU-GLAD YOGURT SAUCE

1/2 cup low-fat plain yogurt
3 tablespoons orange juice
1/2 teaspoon orange zest

Yield: 4 servings



PAUL MENTA'S BONELESS STUFFED LIONFISH

It may look menacing, but in fact, lionfish is delicious and tamed, now that many Florida grocery stores and fish mongers stock it fresh in their cases and remove the barbs that have helped them sit atop the food chain off Florida's coast. Chef Paul Menta of Three Hands Fish market in Key West shares his favorite lionfish recipe. Man is back atop the food chain.

INGREDIENTS:

1-2 pounds of lionfish, spines removed, cleaned and deboned
4 Key West pink shrimp
1 jumbo stone crab claw, or 3 ounces of other crab meat
1/2 cup coconut oil
2 egg yolks
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1/4 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 teaspoon Key West seafood spice or Old Bay seasoning
1/4 cup Demerara Florida sugar
1/2 cup white wine
1 bunch cilantro
2 Key limes or 1 regular lime
2 tablespoons cornstarch

PREPARATION:

Rub lionfish with coconut oil. Remove shrimp heads and save for sauce. Clean shrimp. Crack large stone crab, remove all meat.

STUFFING:

Thinly slice shrimp and mix with crab. Take one egg yolk and whip in coconut oil, Key West seafood spice, touch of Dijon mustard

and sea salt to make fresh mayo. Fold seafood into mayo gently and stuff lionfish. Bake at 370 degrees for 18-23 minutes depending on fish size.

DEMI GLACE:

While waiting, pour the Demerara sugar into the pot over medium-low heat and stir continuously until it first liquifies and then burns black. Once blackened, add the shrimp shells and heads and stir until coated. Then add white wine, stir, and add enough water so the shrimp shells and heads are covered by roughly one inch of water. Then add the chopped cilantro. Raise temperature and let it come to a rolling boil, thicken with the cornstarch, and then strain - separating the heads and shells from the sauce.

SPASSO'S GNOCCHI

Gaetano Ascione, a chef at two Michelin-rated restaurants who now owns Spasso in Coconut Grove, wants to prove even children are capable of making a great meal. He came up with this simple but tasty take on a gnocchi recipe (the dough includes ricotta cheese, not potato, to make them lighter) that kids could make for Mom on Mother's Day. Proof: He showed food editor Carlos Frias' own kids how to do it in a May edition of the Miami Herald.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound fresh ricotta
1 1/2 cup of freshly grated Parmigiano cheese
1 1/2 cup of all-purpose flour
1 egg
A pinch of salt
Cracked pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

In an electric mixer with paddle attachment, add all the ingredients and mix for a couple of minutes until a consistent ball is formed. Knead gently for another four minutes until ball is dry to touch. Roll baseball-sized ball of dough into 3/4 of an inch diameter dowels and cut dowels into inch-long pieces. Roll pieces over the tines of a dinner fork, lightly dusted in flour to create spiral look. Drop the gnocchi into salted boiling water and cook until they float, about 1 minute. Add the gnocchi directly to a sauté pan with sage butter sauce (recipe below) over medium-low heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve on a warm plate, adding parmigiano cheese to taste.

SAGE BUTTER SAUCE:

2 ounces unsalted butter
5 green leaves of fresh sage
Salt to taste

In a large sauté pan, add the butter and the cut sage and let simmer until the butter is just melted. Add the salt.

Yield: 6 servings



**BONNIE MASSEY
EAST RIDGE AT CUTLER BAY**

BONNIE MASSEY'S BANANA BREAD

At East Ridge at Cutler Bay, Bonnie Massey, 92, greets every new resident moving into the retirement community with a homemade baked goodie - usually her famous banana nut bread. Featured in September in the Miami Herald, Massey's banana nut bread recipe was her mother-in-law's. As a young married woman, Massey baked it for church bazaars and family gatherings. Now she typically bakes two loaves at a time, keeps one and gives the other away.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup ripe mashed banana
(about 2 large or 3 medium)
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup oil
1 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup chopped nuts

PREPARATION:

Blend together bananas, eggs, sugar and oil. Add sifted dry ingredients and mix only until blended. Bake 1 hour at 325 degrees in small loaf pans.





CREDIT: From The Cuban Table: A Celebration of Food, Flavors, and History by Ana Sofía Peláez and Ellen Silverman. Copyright © 2014 by the authors. Reprinted with permission from St. Martin's Press.

NATILLA AND MERENGUITOS

Natilla is one of those grandma-made Cuban comfort foods that Miami author Ana Sofía Peláez wrote about so eloquently in her cookbook “The Cuban Table,” such that it earned the book a James Beard Award nomination in 2014. Think of these custards as unpretentious crème brûlées. This is the author’s grandmother’s own recipe. Follow her writing at HungrySofia.com. “Pair the natilla with these Merenguitos, and you have a simple but delightful and authentic crowd-pleaser. Note: Plan on your kids sneaking these out of the cookie jar, so make plenty.”

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups whole milk at room temperature
1 whole cinnamon stick
4 large egg yolks
One 2-inch strip of lime peel
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
4 tablespoons cornstarch
Ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

PREPARATION:

Combine the milk, egg yolks, sugar, cornstarch, and salt in a mixing bowl and whisk until the mixture is well combined and there are no

visible yolks. Pass the milk mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a 3- to 4-quart saucepan. Add the cinnamon stick and lime peel and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until it thickens slightly, about 15 minutes. Lower the heat to medium-low, stir in the vanilla, and continue to stir until it coats the back of the spoon, an additional 5 to 7 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and set aside. Pour the custard into individual bowls or ramekins while still warm. Sprinkle with cinnamon to taste. Bring the custard to room temperature then chill in the refrigerator until set, at least 2 hours. The custard can be kept chilled in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Yield: 8 servings

MERINGUES

INGREDIENTS:

5 large egg whites (1/3 cup) at room temperature
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon lime juice

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to between 400°F and 450°F (see note). Line two 13 x 18 x 1-inch baking

sheets with parchment paper or a nonstick liner. Using a hand beater or stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase the speed to medium-low and add the sugar one tablespoon at a time until the meringue holds soft peaks, about 5 minutes. Add the lime juice. Gradually increase the speed to high and continue to beat the meringue until it forms glossy, firm peaks, an additional 3 to 5 minutes. Using a pastry bag fitted with the star attachment, pipe the meringues onto the prepared baking sheets in the desired shape or drop small mounds onto the sheet with a spoon. Place both baking sheets into the preheated oven, close the door, and immediately turn the oven off. Leave the oven unopened for at least 8 hours or up to 12 hours.

NOTE: The oven should be preheated to 400°F for small meringues and 450°F for large meringues. Prepare all the baking sheets before opening the oven. Once it is preheated, it should only be opened once to insert all the baking sheets at once.

Yield: 32 small meringues or 8 large meringues