

Try a Latino Thanksgiving

Before holiday dinners, my Cuban-American family takes a long walk in the woods near our New York home. Then we settle down to a feast.

We warm up with a hot toddy before the main course: roast turkey with my mother Gloria's chorizo cornbread stuffing. Serve it with side dishes of your choice or in the Cuban way, with black beans and white rice.

My mojo is a twist on the traditional cranberry sauce. It's sweet and tart, offset nicely by jalapeño and mustard.

Sweet potatoes are great, but my family prefers sweet plantains. The recipe that follows originally was called Fufu.

And it's not Thanksgiving at our house without poundcake. My wife, Trish, likes it plain; I like it with ice cream. Everyone loves it.



Roasted Turkey With Chorizo- Corn Bread Stuffing

2 cups chicken stock
1/4 cup olive oil
1 small onion, cut in 1/2-inch dice
3 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup each, diced celery and diced carrot
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
2 cups fresh corn kernels (from 4 ears)
1 pound chorizo pork sausage, diced
2 loaves Cuban corn bread (recipe follows) or 4-5 cups store-bought cornbread stuffing cubes
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 bunch scallions, chopped
2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme leaves
1 turkey (12-14 pounds), washed and giblets removed

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, reduce chicken stock to 1 cup. Meanwhile, heat oil in large, heavy-bottomed sauté pan. Add onion, garlic, celery, carrot, bell pepper, corn and chorizo; sauté 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Crumble corn bread into vegetable-sausage mixture; add reduced stock; stir until thoroughly mixed. Add salt, pepper. Stir in scallions and thyme. Remove from heat; set aside until ready to stuff turkey.

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Generously salt cavity and skin of turkey. Pack stuffing loosely in turkey. Place in roasting pan; roast about 4 hours (for a 12-pound bird), or 20 minutes per pound. (Put any extra stuffing in a buttered pan and bake with the turkey for the last hour. Or bake separately at 325 degrees for 40-60 minutes.) Baste with drippings each hour. Let rest 20 minutes before carving.

Serves: 10, makes 8 cups stuffing.

Per serving (4 ounces turkey, 3/4 cup stuffing): 681 calories, 49.2g protein, 36g fat (11g saturated), 38g carbohydrates, 3.6g fiber, 1,275mg sodium.

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Cuban Corn Bread for Stuffing

1 Tb. extra virgin olive oil

1 1/2 cups fresh corn kernels (from 3 ears)
1 cup water
1 3/4 tsps. salt
1/3 cup coarse cornmeal
1 tsp. active dry yeast
1/4 cup lukewarm water
1 tsp. honey
2 cups all-purpose flour
Egg wash: 1 egg, 1 tsp. water

Heat olive oil in a saucepan and sauté corn over high heat for 5 minutes. Add water and 3/4 tsp. salt; bring to boil. Slowly add cornmeal, stirring constantly, and cook over medium heat till water is absorbed. Transfer to a bowl; cool.

Place yeast and warm water in a mixing bowl and let proof 10 minutes. Add honey and stir till dissolved. Stir in cooled corn mixture. Add 1 cup flour; mix till thoroughly incorporated. (Batter will be very wet.) Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place till doubled in size, 3-4 hours. When doubled, thoroughly mix in remaining salt. Gently fold in 1 cup flour till incorporated, and knead 8-10 minutes. (Dough will be moist but satiny.) Shape the dough into a loaf, cover and let rise until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Beat egg and water together in a bowl. Liberally sprinkle two 9-inch loaf pans with cornmeal. Divide dough in half and place in buttered pans. Brush with the egg wash. Bake till golden brown, 35-40 minutes. Remove from the oven; turn onto wire racks to cool.

Makes: 2 loaves.

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Cranberry-Almond Poundcake

2 cups cranberries, fresh or frozen
1/2 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup amaretto liqueur*
3 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 1/4 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
4 ounces almond paste (at room temperature) 1/2 tsp. bitter almond extract (or almond extract)
2 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup plus 2 Tbs. (10 ounces) unsalted butter
6 eggs
1 cup sour cream

Glaze

2 Tbs. amaretto liqueur*
1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

*For non-alcoholic option, substitute water.

Two hours before baking: In small saucepan, heat amaretto and add dried cranberries. Let cool, stirring occasionally, until the fruit has soaked up all the liquid.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Butter and flour a 10-inch Bundt pan, tapping out excess flour.

Sift together flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda. Set aside. In large mixing bowl, using the paddle of an electric mixer on low speed, combine almond paste, almond extract and sugar until mixture looks like wet sand. Add butter; beat at medium speed until very fluffy, about 3 minutes. Scrape bowl with rubber spatula. Add eggs, one by one, beating until blended. On low speed, beat in 1/3 of dry ingredients and 1/3 of sour cream; scrape bowl with a rubber spatula. Repeat twice more. Finally, beat batter for 20 seconds, until smooth. Fold in all berries.

Pour batter into prepared pan. Level top with a spatula and tap pan gently on counter to distribute. Bake 50-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

Cool cake in pan for 20 minutes, then turn it onto a wire rack.

Make the glaze while cake is cooling. Sift the confectioners' sugar into a small bowl and slowly blend in the amaretto with a fork until smooth. Drizzle the warm cake with the glaze.

Serves: 20.

Per serving: 402 calories, 5g protein, 1g fiber, 17g fat (9.5g saturated), 56g carbohydrates, 147mg sodium.

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Cranberry Mojo

1 quart cranberry juice
2 cups fresh cranberries (or unthawed frozen cranberries)
1 medium red onion, finely chopped
1/2 bunch chives, finely chopped
2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and minced
Juice of 5 limes
1/4 cup mustard oil (find it in an Indian or Asian grocery)
Salt and pepper, to taste

Pour juice into a non-aluminum saucepot over high heat. Bring to a boil and reduce the juice to about 1/2 cup of glossy syrup. Remove from heat and set aside.

Place cranberries in bowl of food processor and pulse on and off until finely diced. Do not purée. Transfer cranberries to a mixing bowl, add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Makes: 3 cups.

Per 2 Tbs.: 32 calories, 0.2g protein, 0.1g fat, 0.4g fiber, 8g carbohydrates, 1.5mg sodium.

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Sweet Plantains Mashed With Bacon & Onion (Fufu)

4 sweet plantains, peeled
and cut in 1 1/2-inch pieces (Plantains resemble bananas; they're available in Hispanic groceries and many supermarkets)
1/4 pound of bacon, cut into 1/4-inch squares
1 medium onion, diced

In medium saucepan, cover plantains with cold water and bring to a boil. Cook 10 minutes or until plantains are soft. Drain, mash with a potato masher. (It will be a chunky mash.)

Meanwhile, heat a sauté pan, add the bacon and begin to brown. When bacon is crisp, add the diced

onion and continue stirring 5 minutes. When onion is translucent, remove from heat; drain excess grease, leaving about 2 Tbs. grease in the pan. Gently fold into mashed plantains, transfer to dish, cover and keep warm.

Serves: 10, makes 3 1/2 cups.

Per 1/3 cup: 252 calories, 6.8g fat (2g saturated), 4g protein, 49g carbohydrates, 4g fiber, 129mg sodium.

Hot Toddy

1 quart apple cider
1 pint Captain Morgan's spiced rum
3 navel oranges
64 cloves
4 medium cinnamon sticks

Stud two oranges with 32 cloves each. (To help insert cloves, poke oranges with pointed knife.) Cut those oranges in half, and each half into two 1-inch slices (discard ends). Place all ingredients except remaining orange in a saucepan; bring to a boil. Turn off heat; let mixture steep at least 1 hour. When ready to serve, reheat. Pour into large mugs and place a slice of fresh orange in each mug.

Makes: 6 cups.

Per cup: 275 calories, 0.4g fat, 0.6g protein, 26g carbohydrates, 1.3g fiber, 8mg sodium.

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Appetizer: Ecuadorian Shrimp Ceviche

Here is the Latin version of the shrimp cocktail. My family and friends have enjoyed this ceviche before I started serving it in my restaurant, where it became an instant favorite. I have never met anyone who didn't love it!

1 pound shrimp (16-20), peeled, deveined and cut in half lengthwise

For dressing

Roast, peel, seed and chop:

1 large tomato
2 jalapeno chiles
1 red bell pepper

Roast and chop:

1/2 onion
3/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice
1/2 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
1/4 cup canned tomato juice
1 Tablespoon sugar
Tabasco sauce to taste
Salt to taste

Toss

1 small red onion, thinly sliced
2 Tablespoons chopped chives
2 Tablespoons sliced scallions
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves

For Garnish

1/2 cup freshly made plain, unsalted popcorn

1/2 cup unsalted corn nuts

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Add the shrimp, turn off heat, and blanch for only 1-1/2 minutes. Remove immediately from water with a wire-mesh strainer, put into an ice bath to cool. Drain shrimp thoroughly; put in a mixing bowl.

Place dressing ingredients in a blender or food processor and puree until smooth. Pour over the shrimp and toss.

Just before serving, toss the ceviche with red onion, chives, scallions, and cilantro. Transfer to serving plates, sprinkle with the popcorn and corn nuts, and serve.

Serves: 4

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Tips

If you wake up Thanksgiving morning and begin cooking this entire menu from scratch starting at 7 a.m., your feast will be ready to serve at 4 p.m.

For a shorter day:

Make the yeasty Cuban Corn Bread a day early; it takes 4-5 hours to mix, rise and bake. Faster still: store-bought cornbread cubes (from Pepperidge Farms, for instance).

Make the Cranberry Mojo a day ahead and refrigerate, covered.

Bake the cake a day ahead; store at room temperature.

This month's chef:

Douglas Rodriguez, 34, ignited the Nuevo Latino food movement as chef-owner of Miami's Yuca and New York City's Patria. In January, he'll open a new restaurant, Unico, in New York. He's the author of *Latin Ladles: Fabulous Soups and Stews* and *Nuevo Latino: Recipes That Celebrate the New Latin American Cuisine* (both from Ten Speed Press).