Jackfruit Tamales

You can make one of your favorite Mexican restaurant specialties in your own kitchen. Pumpkin takes the place of fat in the masa dough for these tamales, making the dough light and easy to work with.

Note: Canned jackfruit can be full of sodium. Check labels and select the brand with the lowest amount of sodium, such as Trader Joe's brand. Rinsing and draining can also help reduce sodium.

By Shelli McConnell

Makes 18 tamales
Ready In: 2 hours

INGREDIENTS:

18 dried cornhusks

10 dried New Mexico red chiles (1½ oz.)

¼ cup chopped onion

½ cup no-salt-added tomato sauce

4 teaspoons pure maple syrup

2 cloves garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried Mexican oregano, crushed

¼ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon sea salt

1 14-oz. can green jackfruit, rinsed, drained, and chopped (see headnote)

2 cups masa harina

1 teaspoon regular or sodium-free baking powder

1½ cups canned pumpkin

1¼ cups low-sodium vegetable broth

1 In a very large bowl cover cornhusks with boiling water. Let stand 30 to 45 minutes or until husks are soft. Drain well; pat dry with paper towels.

2 Meanwhile, for chile sauce, in a dry extra-large skillet cook chiles over medium-high about 3 minutes or until toasted, turning occasionally. Let cool. Remove stems and seeds. Coarsely tear chiles.

3 In a medium saucepan combine chiles, onion, and 1¼ cups water. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chiles and onion to a blender or food processor; reserve cooking liquid. Add the next six ingredients (through salt). Cover and blend until smooth, adding reserved cooking liquid a little at a time as needed to reach a sauce like consistency.

4 For filling, in a bowl combine jackfruit and ⅓ cup of the chile sauce.

5 For masa dough, in a large bowl stir together masa harina and baking powder. Add pumpkin and broth. Beat with a mixer on medium until dough is thick but not sticky to incorporate some air into the dough.

6 To assemble tamales, starting at the wide end of a corn husk, spoon 2 rounded tablespoons masa dough onto husk and pat into a 4×3-inch rectangle. Spoon 1 rounded tablespoon filling lengthwise down the center of dough, leaving a slight border of dough at ends. Fold a long edge of husk over filling so it brings long edges of masa together. Roll up husk. Fold bottom up; tie with a cornhusk strip or 100% cotton kitchen string. Place on a rimmed baking sheet until all tamales are assembled.

7 To steam tamales, add a steamer basket to an 8-qt. pot. Add water to just below the basket. Stand tamales upright in steamer basket. Bring water to boiling. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover; steam 45 minutes to 1 hour or until dough easily pulls away from corn husks and is cooked through. Uncover; let stand 10 minutes before serving. Serve tamales with remaining warmed chile sauce.