



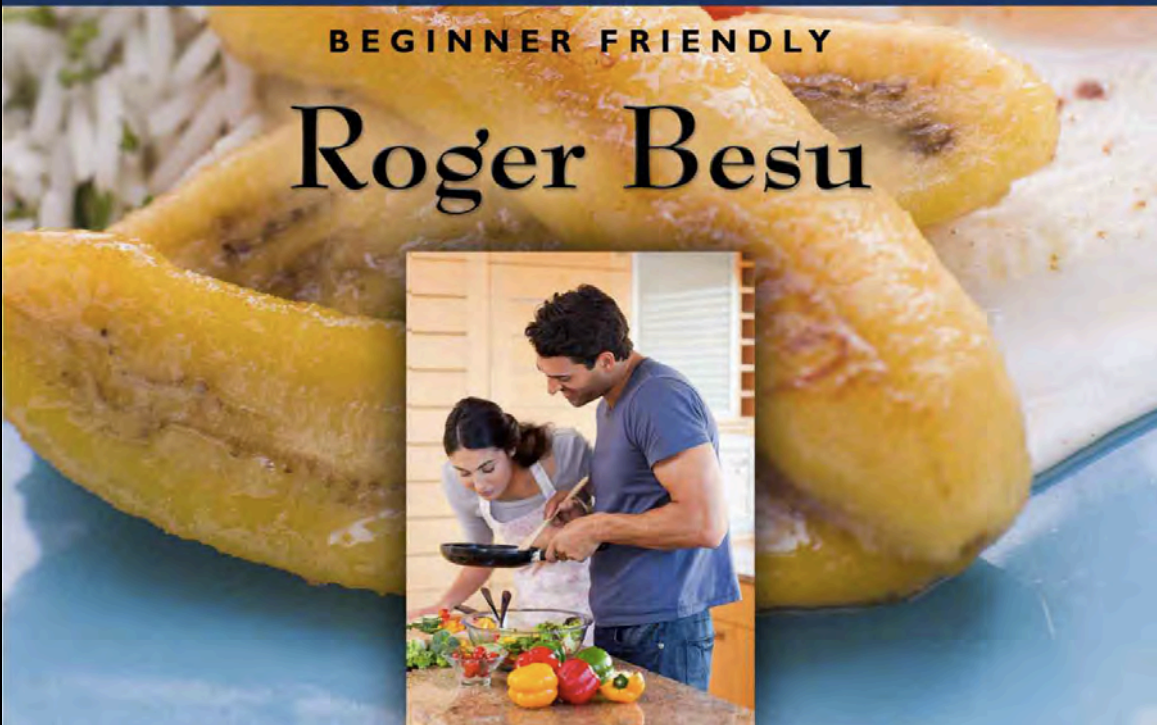
CUBAN COOKING 101

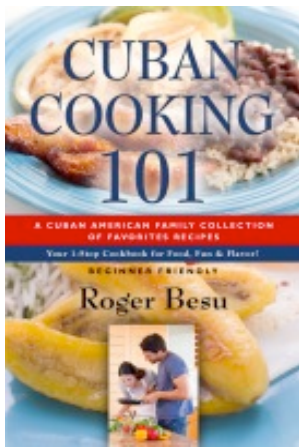
A CUBAN AMERICAN FAMILY COLLECTION
OF FAVORITES RECIPES

Your 1-Stop Cookbook for Food, Fun & Flavor!

BEGINNER FRIENDLY

Roger Besu





This is an attempt to memorialize and bring a recent hobby, close to my heart and stomach, to those of you who are either in my family, or close enough to be family. My intention is to make this a reference and guide for the staple recipes that our family most frequently ate and enjoyed. I contemplated many names for this book and finally came up with the not so original but very fitting title of “Cuban Cooking 101” It really is meant to be easy enough for anyone, regardless of cooking experience, looking to whip up a Cuban dish.

Cuban Cooking 101

by Roger Besu

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Cuban Cooking 101

A Cuban-American Family Collection of Favorite

Recipes by Roger Besu

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First Edition

Introduction

This is an attempt to memorialize and bring a recent hobby, close to my heart and stomach, to those of you who are either in my family, or close enough to be family. My intention is to make this a reference and guide for the staple recipes that our family most frequently ate and enjoyed. I contemplated many names for this book and finally came up with the not so original but very fitting title of “Cuban Cooking 101” It really is meant to be easy enough for anyone, regardless of cooking experience, looking to whip up a Cuban dish. Ultimately, I have put this book together as a tribute to my loving wife. She is a fantastic cook and throughout the years has infused our lives and our gastronomic experiences via a “*pinch*” of this and a “*dash*” of that!

Like many Cuban- Americans of the baby boomer generation, my wife and I arrived here as children from Havana, Cuba as part of the Exodus after 1959. We grew up with our parents’ and family’s illusion that this was just a temporary stay. It wasn’t, and as it turned out, a sleepy Floridian town evolved into a microcosm of Cuban life; Miami became to us, a second Havana; A slightly different venue; but, very Cuban in culture and taste. Thus, the sub-title of our book is “A Cuban-American Family Collection of Favorite Recipes”.

Cuban cooking is not an elitist or eclectic style of cooking; in fact, it is very simple food prepared with some very basic flavor enhancing ingredients. Although most of the Caribbean islands’ cultures and cuisines illustrate the influences left behind by Spanish and African occupancy, there are no strict African or Spanish dishes here. These recipes are very much Caribbean in flavor and often times distinctly Cuban. Naturally, the islands tend to borrow from each other and so very often you may find some overlap. In that spirit, I found it almost mandatory to include some of our family favorite Bahamian recipes that are part of our Repertoire. Our family spent a lot of time in the Bahamas and their rich traditions and approach to food could not be excluded from here.

The desire to put a book like this together began when my own kids started going off to college. Admittedly, I grew tired of answering the phone and having one of them tell me to put Mom on the phone because they needed a recipe for some basic dish that they were looking to make that evening. Imagine a desperate call asking for directions on how to prepare “Caldo Gallego” via long distance! These charges from college were killing me! In an era before free long distance in the continental U.S. was a standard feature, these frequent and lengthy calls made the phone bill look like a tuition payment!

I had come to realize that these kids along with others of their generation had grown up enjoying all the delicacies of our culture but had no idea how to prepare it themselves; I mean a simple “sofrito” (the base of all Cuban dishes) was a foreign concept to them! It was easy to get away with this living in Miami. There was always a mother, grandmother or aunt to make sure you didn’t go hungry or one could always pop into a typical restaurant where Cuban food was a standard fixture on the menu. However, you take them out of Miami, and the phone becomes the “lifeline” to mom.

Most of these recipes are from the family archives; and some are so basic that most Cuban cookbooks have a version of them. However, I have found that several of the books I reviewed tend to overwhelm the reader with either too many recipes or instructions that are far too complicated. My wife’s approach of a dash of this and a pinch of that, has not worked for me as a cook. So, In addition to providing simplified instruction for the “How To” portion of the recipe I have also tried to be as descriptive as possible with the ingredients and quantities. I

admittedly cannot cook without quantified measurements and from my experience neither can most novice chefs. The emphasis of the book is on ease and swift preparation. From what I remember a Cuban mother could whip something up in the kitchen that feeds everyone with minimal fuss, leaving them sucking their fingers dry.

This book is neither for the library nor a book to adorn that coffee table in your living room. It is meant to be the go-to guide for everyday cooking readily available on your kitchen counter. So go ahead and wear these pages out, until the recipes become second nature. Remember, this may be the beginning of a culinary journey for you, so do not think of this as the bible of authentic Cuban gastronomic experiences; but, rather a fun and creative ongoing work in progress. I learn something new almost every day. Patience brings rewards; think of cutting those bell peppers and onions into diced bits as a form of therapy!

Oh and don't forget to keep me informed of any new discoveries and modifications you make in your kitchen, as I am sure you will. There is always room for improvement!

To Enjoy!

Roger Besu

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Appetizers / Saladitos

Ajies Asados con Huevos / BBQ bell pepper with egg

This is exquisite delicacy I picked up from Daniel, an Argentine friend of mine who is a master of Argentinian Asados (BBQ). It is a great appetizer while you are waiting for the meat to barbecue.

bell pepper (any color, but I preferred red), seeded eggs, whole
and whole except cut off 1/3 of pepper off the top.

Procedure

- 1 Take a fresh bell pepper, red is my preference. Remove the tops from the peppers and scoop out the seeds and ribs. Carefully trim the bottoms if necessary to make peppers stand straight when upright.
- 2 Place the pepper in the barbecue upside down at medium heat to bake the inside. Turn it over and with the opening up and balanced, break a whole egg and pour into the cavity of the pepper very slowly and carefully so as not to break the yolk. Cook for about 5 minutes or until the egg inside is cooked completely and looks like a poached egg. Add salt to taste and serve very hot.

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer, Barbecue

Cangrejos Dip / Crab Dip

This is an easy dip made with crab meat that will delight your guests and open the appetites

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 2 cans | crab meat, lump, drained (Costco is a excellent brand) | 1 cup | Gruyere cheese, shredded |
| 6 pack | 8-ounce containers cream cheese, softened | 2 each | lime juice, fresh squeezed |
| 3 each | shallots, peeled and finely diced | 1 tsp | Tabasco sauce |
| 1 cup | Swiss cheese, shredded | 2 Tbs | butter |
| | | 1 cup | Regiano Parmesan Cheese, grated |



Procedure

- 1 Sauté shallots in butter till translucent. Mix all ingredients together except for parmesan cheese. Place in pyrex. Cover with layer of parmesan cheese. Preheat oven at 350 degrees. Bake for 45 minutes , or until top layer is light golden.

Servings: 10

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer

Cebollas Dip / Onion Dip

This is a perfect Simple Recipe Secret for the gatherings and Holidays. Don't reveal the formula, unless you trust the recipient not to turn you in. Basically, it is something to whip up (prep time = about 5 minutes) for the early arrivals to eat with chips and keep the entertained while the pig or turkey is ready. Thanks to Lipton for this easy grub!

- 1 each Lipton Recipe Secrets Onion 16 ounces sour cream
Soup Mix. (The box has two envelopes.)



Procedure

- 1 In medium bowl, blend all the ingredients; chill if desired and Serve!

Servings: 4

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer

Recipe Tips

Variation: Salsa Onion Dip: Stir in ½ cup of your favorite salsa.

Ceviche de Camaron / Shrimp Ceviche

This simple South of the Border dish is delicious and can be fiery. The seafood in ceviche is cooked briefly before it's marinated - a wise policy to adopt for all raw shrimp. This shrimp ceviche has sweet, nutty Andean corn kernels (called choclo) and red onions. In the Andes shrimp ceviche is often served with chifles (fried plantain chips) on the side with a cold beer.

| | | | | | |
|-----|------|---------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------------------------------|
| 3 | cups | shrimp, shelled and cleaned, small to medium size | 1 | tbs | sugar |
| | | | 1 | cup | choclo, or other fresh corn kernels |
| 1 | each | lime, juiced | 1/4 | cup | cilantro, chopped |
| 1/2 | each | onion (red) sliced | | | Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste |
| 1/4 | cup | orange juice, fresh squeezed | | | Hot pepper sauce, to taste |
| 1/2 | cup | ketchup | | | |
| 1 | tbs | vinegar | | | |



Procedure

1. Cut the onion into the thinnest possible slices, slicing it with the cut side facing down so that the pieces are semicircular in shape. 2. Place the onion slices in a bowl of cold salted water, and let soak for 20 minutes. 3. Cook the corn kernels in a pot of boiling salted water until just tender. Drain and rinse with cold water. 4. If the shrimp is not cooked, bring a pot of salted water to a boil, and add the juice of one lime to the pot. Boil the shrimp for one to two minutes, until just cooked. Drain shrimp and rinse with cold water. 5. De-vein the shrimp and trim off the tails, and place in a bowl. 6. Drain onions and rinse with cold water. Add onions and corn to bowl with the shrimp. 7. Whisk together lime juice, orange juice, ketchup, sugar, and vinegar. Toss with shrimp, corn, and onions. Taste and season with salt and pepper. 8. Chill shrimp until ready to serve. Toss shrimp with cilantro before serving, and drizzle decoratively with ketchup if desired.

Servings: 4

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Croquetas / Croquettes

If there were to be a candidate for a national Cuban appetizer, this would rank there in the top with the likes of "pastelitos". These fried delicacies are usually served at parties, picnics and any type of gathering. You can find them made of ham, like in this recipe, or made with chicken, and fish stuffing. This is an item that you can sample in the Miami Cuban cafés all over the town. They are made in many and you will probably develop the unique size for your technique.

| | | | | | |
|-----|------|--------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------------------------------------|
| 3 | cups | ham, cooking, either ground up or finely chopped | 2 | cups | bread flour, or fine breadcrumbs |
| 1/8 | lb | butter (about 1/2 stick) | | | peanut oil for frying, or as needed |
| 1 | cup | flour, all purpose | 1 | tbs | parsley, finely chopped |
| 2 | cups | milk, whole | 1/2 | tsp | black pepper freshly ground |
| 3 | tsp | lime juice, fresh squeezed | 1 | tsp | salt |
| 1 | each | Egg beaten | 1/2 | tsp | nutmeg, freshly grated |



Procedure

- 1 Melt the butter in a large frying pan over low heat. When it bubbles a little, add the flour, then add the milk and whisk until the mixture gets into a smooth paste. Avoid lumpiness by not over cooking. Mix in the ham, parsley, salt, pepper, nutmeg and lime juice and cook for 2 minutes, while stirring constantly. Remove from heat and set aside in a separate bowl to cool; or if you want you can refrigerate for later use.
- 2 To prepare for breading. You can use a large cutting board as a work surface, or I sometimes use a plastic bag where I place the bread flour or crumbs. Take a tablespoon of the mixture and shape it with your hands into a cylinder of about 2 inches long and 3/4 inch in diameter. Submerge into a bowl where you have the beaten eggs and then into the crumbs to coat the cylinder well. Repeat for every croquette, replenishing the crumbs and/or egg as necessary.
- 3 In a deep fryer, or a heavy large skillet with high sides, pour 3 inches of oil and heat at high heat to about 400 degrees F. Insert 1/2 dozen croquettes at a time without touching each other and fry them, turning all the time until golden on all around. Keep the number you are cooking to the 1/2 dozen so the oil maintains temperature for the next batch, or they will turn out mushy instead of crisp. As they come out of fryer, place them in a kitchen paper towel to drain the excess oil off.
- 4 While the frying is ongoing, pre-heat your oven at 200 degrees F., and as the croquettes dry, move them and place them into a baking sheet in the oven to keep warm. Serve them warm!

Servings: 40

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer

Recipe Tips

To make chicken croquettes, substitute the ham for cooked ground chicken meat.

To make fish croquettes, use white fish meat ground up. I prefer cod, but anyone will work. If you have one of those fish seasoning powders or Old Bay, you might want to use it in the fish meat to enhance the "fishy" flavor.

Garbanzos Fritos / Fried Chick Peas

This is one of those adapted Spanish regulars that Cubans adopted for their arsenal of recipes. It is a great appetizer or side dish. Very tasty and nutritious too. If, you have it as main dish, accompanied by fluffy white rice is the best. Tostones (Fried Green Plantains) also complement this dish well.

- | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 cans | garbanzos (chick peas) beans, drained | 1 tbs | Garlic, finely minced salt (optional) |
| 1 lb | ham, cooking, with bone in center, cut into 1/2 inch cubes | | black pepper freshly ground, to taste |
| 2 each | chorizo, Spanish, cut into thin rings | olive oil for cooking | |
| 1 each | green, red, yellow and orange peppers, diced small | 1/2 tsp | cumin, ground |
| 1 each | onion large, peeled and cut into small dice | 1/2 tsp | red pepper flakes, depending on your taste and valor |



Procedure

- 1 Cut up ham steak and chorizo in small 1/2 inch cubes. In a deep heavy skillet, swirl the olive oil on bottom and sauté the ham and chorizos in medium heat in the oil until lightly browned. Add onions, garlic and peppers. Sauté for about 4 minutes at medium heat. Add Garbanzo beans and cook uncovered for about 20 minutes. Add salt and pepper if desired; but, I warn you to taste it because the chorizo and ham will give it the salty taste already.

Servings: 4

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Guacamole a la Mejicana / Guacamole (Avocado Dip) Mexican style

As the title suggests, this is a very Mexican dish. It goes from very mild to very hot, depending whether you are a Tex-Mex or a Mejicano! It's all in the hot peppers you add to this dip. It is a very simple concoction and loved by most everyone. It is served either as an appetizer, or a snack, or a side dish. We cannot conceive of having a Taco night without this on the table. If you are doing this with cocktails, choose a good reposado Tequila and don't forget the lime and the salt for the shots! I have this avocado tree in my backyard these days and around the Spring time it starts to get flowers and get ready for a large crop at the beginning of the summer. When they come, they are like rain, so we have to come up with ways to eat the avocados, and this guacamole is a fine way!

- | | | | |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 each | garlic cloves | | salt to taste |
| 2 each | Hot fresh green chiles to taste (I'd choose 2 serranos), stems removed | 2 Tbs | fresh lime juice |
| 3 each | ripe avocados, preferably the black-skinned Hass | 2 Tbs | crumbled Mexican fresh cheese (queso fresco) for garnish |
| 2 Tbs | chopped fresh Mexican herbs (such as cilantro, pipisa or papalo) | 2 slices | radish, for garnish |
| 1 each | white small onion (fresh knob onion—green tops still on—is best), finely chopped | | |



Procedure

- 1 In a small dry skillet over medium heat, roast the unpeeled garlic until it is soft and blackened in spots, 10 to 15 minutes. Cool, then slip off the papery skins and finely chop.
- 2 Finely chop the garlic and green chiles, and scoop them into a bowl.
- 3 One at a time, run a knife down through each avocado, starting at the top, until you reach the pit; continue cutting around the pit until you reach the point you started. Twist the two halves of the avocado apart. Remove the pit and discard. Scoop the flesh into the bowl with the chiles. Mash coarsely with the back of a spoon or an old-fashioned potato masher.
- 4 Add the herbs and onion, stir to combine, then taste. Season with salt (usually about a teaspoon) and lime juice. Scoop into a serving dish and garnish with cheese and radishes

Servings: 8

Degree of Difficulty: Very easy

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer, Holiday, Salad, Snack, Vegetables

Recipe Tips

Alternative garnishes: 3/4 cup (about 3 ounces) toasted pumpkin seeds, or 3/4 cup sliced “nacho ring” pickled jalapeños (you'll need half of an 11-ounce can), or 3/4 cup (about 2 ounces) coarsely crumbled chicharrón (Mexican crisp-fried pork rind)

Chips or Bread: 1 1/2 to 2 pounds large, sturdy chips (preferably homemade or from a local tortilla factory) or small (2- to 3-inch) tostadas. OR 2 baguettes (about 1 pound each), diagonally sliced 1/2-inch thick, brushed with olive oil and toasted on a grill or under a broiler

Hamburguesitas de Chorizo / Chorizo Sliders

These small hamburgers are a delight for appetizers to open up the appetites. They have chorizo (Spanish sausages) for a distinct flavor from the old country.

| | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|----------------------------------------|
| 1/2 | lb | Spanish chorizo, casing removed and coarsely chopped | 2 | each | avocados, seeded, peeled and mashed |
| 1 3/4 | lb | ground beef, pork or turkey | 1 | each | lemon juice, freshly squeezed |
| 1/4 | cup | Worcestershire sauce | 1 | each | garlic clove, minced |
| 1 | tbs | smoked sweet paprika, a scant palmful | 1 | bunch | cilantro, chopped, optional |
| | | Kosher Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste | 1/3 | cup | cream |
| | | extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling | 12 | each | slider rolls or split brioche rolls |
| 1/2 | lb | Manchego cheese, shredded | | | Small Bibb lettuce leaves, for topping |
| | | | | | Sliced plum tomatoes, for topping |
| | | | 1 | each | Sliced small red onion, for topping |



Procedure

- 1 Heat a cast iron skillet or griddle over medium-high heat.
- 2 Grind the chorizo in a food processor into very small crumbles. Place the ground chorizo and ground pork in a bowl and season with Worcestershire, smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Add a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil to the meat mixture and combine. Form 12 patties that are thinner at the center than the edges. Cook the sliders 3 minutes per side. Pile shredded cheese onto the burgers for the last minute of cook time to melt.
- 3 Meanwhile, place the avocados in a food processor. Add the lemon juice, garlic, cilantro, if desired, and cream, and process until very smooth and mayo-like in consistency.
- 4 Serve the sliders on rolls topped with lettuce, tomato, onion, and avocado cream sauce.

Servings: 12

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 12 minutes

Recipe Type

Appetizer

Recipe Tips

This is part of trio made on a program for 30 minute meals, see video <http://www.foodnetwork.com/30-minute-meals/spanish-surf-and-turf/index.html>

Source

Author: Recipe courtesy Rachael Ray

Mariquitas / Plantain Chips

This is the appetizer that evaporates into thin air when you lay it out. I don't know what it is about it, but like the commercial for a poor imitation says, you can't just eat one! Chicharritas is the Cuban name given to green plantain chips, sliced round, fried and salted. Mariquitas is what Cubans call them when they are sliced the Nicaraguan way; slicing them lengthwise to create long, slender, wavy chips, fried and salted. They are really good brought to the table piping hot and sprinkled with mojo.

- 4 cups vegetable or peanut oil 1 Tbsp salt to taste
2 each plantains



Procedure

- 1 Pour the oil to a depth of 2 or 3 inches in a deep-fat fryer, a dutch oven or heavy skillet. Heat to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Peel the plantains. Plantains are not bananas and are not easy to peel. To make peeling easier, cut ends off each plantain and make several shallow cuts lengthwise (avoid ribs). Soak in hot water (not boiling) about five minutes, then peel. Slice lengthwise for Mariquitas or in round chips for Chicharritas, as thinly as possible (1/8" or less), using a mandolin, if you have one; or with a sharp knife. Slide them into the hot oil in small batches. You don't want them to clump together. Fry until golden brown and crispy, about 1 to 2 minutes, turning with a metal skimmer. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and/or mojo. Serve at once.

Images



Chicharritas



Mandolin slicer

Papas Rellenas / Fried Hash Stuffed Potatoes

Papas Rellenas (Cuban fried stuffed potatoes) are without question one of the more classic of Cuban side dishes for your arsenal. They're ideal for a party or other event. They are potato balls stuffed with picadillo and fried. A little time consuming, but well worth the effort. A mata-hambre (hunger killing lead ball), if I ever had any! This recipe requires you to make 1 lb of Picadillo - Cuban Meat Hash; recipe found in the Meat Chapter.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 each | potatoes, large, peeled and cut into quarters | 1 tsp | salt |
| 1 cup | bread crumbs | 1 lb | Picadillo, cooked and ready - See how in Meat Chapter |
| 4 Each | eggs | | |



Procedure

- 1 Add salt to a pot of cold water, and boil the potatoes until they are soft. Drain the potatoes, and then mash them, then set aside to allow them to cool. Separate the egg yolks from the whites in two bowls. Mix the egg yolks into the mashed potato mixture, whisk the egg whites for a minute. Take a 1/4 of a cup of the mashed potatoes, and form it into a ball. Make a dent in the ball, to give it more of a bowl shape. Fill the indentation with a tablespoon of picadillo, and then reseal it. Reshape the potato as a ball again. Dip the ball in the egg whites, then roll the ball around in bread crumbs until it is coated. For a better coating, or for a crunchier texture, you may dip the ball into the egg whites again and coat it with another layer of bread crumbs. Refrigerate the potato balls for at least four hours before frying. To fry, pour enough oil into a skillet or frying pan to cover half of the balls, the oil should be at least 350°. Place several balls into the frying pan and cook on each side until golden brown, usually 2-3 minutes, taking care not to overcook. Drain the stuffed potatoes on paper towels, do not stack them. The other cooking method is to deep fry the papas rellenas at 375° until golden brown, they cook best deep-fried when they are frozen.

Servings: 6

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Paté Cubain

This recipe of home made paté is simple to make and will blend well with your pocketbook. It is a superb appetizer for pre dinner company. I keep my mouth shut as to the ingredients because, unless it is a connoisseur, your company will have difficulty telling between this and the Trois Petits Cochons, made in France and priced in the clouds. This is my wife's recipe and it took me a long time to pry it off her head. There was great reluctance in relinquishing this popular appetizer. "Do not release until my ashes are spread on the beach" – this is what she told me. But, she consented to an exception to my readers! Something that you should respect as well, unless you want a ghost pulling on your toes at night. Seriously!

- | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 lb | fryer chicken livers, rinsed, drained and paper towel dried | 1/4 tsp salt | 1/4 tsp black pepper corns, ground |
| 2 each | shallots, peeled and finely diced | 1/2 tsp Herbs de Provance, dried | 1 oz brandy |
| 4 tbs | duck fat (sold at most gourmet shops) | | |



Procedure

- 1 Use a deep heavy skillet of sufficient size to accommodate all the livers spread on the bottom without touching each other. First put the duck fat in the skillet and heat at medium heat until it melts. Add the shallots and cook until translucent. Season the livers with the herbs de Provance, salt and pepper on one side and put into the skillet. Cook in Medium heat and once they are brown (about 5 minutes), flip and season the other side the same and cook another 5 minutes. Add the Brandy and flambé. Once the fire goes out, cook for another 5 minutes. Put the livers and the remnants of the juices in the skillet in a food processor and blend into a paste. Place the paste in the containers. Add a light coat of coarse black pepper on top. Let it cool down for ½ hr. Place Saran wrap over the top and seal the containers and refrigerate immediately. They will keep well refrigerated for a couple of weeks; however, I doubt that this will last that long in your fridge. Hard to resist! Serve as a spread on your favorite crackers.

Yield: 1 Cup

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Serrucho en Escabeche /Pickled Sword Fish

This appetizer takes about a week to get ready. It needs to set in refrigerator for a week to real get the flavor. However, it becomes a great dish to have handy for company, or when you want to gnash on something real flavorful.

| | | | | | |
|-------|------|----------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | lbs | sword fish, cut in steaks no more than 1/2 inch | 1/2 | cup | capers drained |
| | | | 1/2 | tsp | black pepper freshly ground |
| 1 1/4 | cup | olive oil | 1 | tsp | salt |
| 1 | cup | flour, all purpose | 1/2 | tsp | Paprika, to taste |
| 2 | each | onions large, sliced | 1/2 | tsp | Red pepper flakes, or to taste |
| 2 | each | green bell pepper seeded and sliced | 1 | cup | divided, 1/2 of olive oil and 1/2 apple cider vinegar to cover ingredients |
| 1 | cup | olives, pitted, (optional) | | | |



Procedure

- 1 Dredge the slices of fish through the flour and fry them at medium heat. Once finished, place them on kitchen paper towels to drain.
- 2 Sauté the sliced onions and peppers in the same oil the fish was fried, strain the oil if necessary.
- 3 Place in a glass or ceramic bowl (DON'T USE STAINLESS STEEL), the fish, onions, peppers, paprika, olives, capers and salt. Cover the ingrediens with the olive oil and vinegar.
- 4 Cover the bowl with all the ingredients in it and place in refrigerator for at least a week.
- 5 Serve cold or room temperature

Servings: 10

Preparation Time: 1 minute

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Recipe Type

Appetizer

Tostones / Fried Green Plantains

Plantains, as most of you who are Cubanitos know, are not bananas. In fact, it is considered a vegetable. Plantains have to be cooked in order to be edible. This recipe is for the twice fried green plantains. This delicacy is a side dish that is used very often to accompany almost any kind of Cuban recipe. I call them a side dish because every time I make them I remember my father standing on the side lines eating them by the stove as they were coming out. He said they tasted better that way. It was hard keeping up with him! My father used to call them "ambuilas" and he told me that it was the name they used in the Western part of the island where he came from. Thus, custom seems to have stuck because now when we make them, all the family goes into a holding pattern around the finish product in the kitchen and start eating them before dinner! It is for this reason that if there are more members of the family standing around at frying time, I recommend that you make double the quantity you were planning on.

3 each plantains - green, peeled
and cut in chunks 2" long

garlic salt or plain salt to taste
peanut oil for frying, or as needed



Procedure

- 1 Tostones are twice-fried plantain chips. When making Cuban tostones, first use green plantains (plantains yellow or with a black skin are ideal for platano maduro - the sweet and soft dessert version). Peel plantains(see Tips), then slice into pieces, each piece about 2" long. Fry the 2" chunks in a deep fryer or heavy skillet with about 3" of oil at high heat (about 400 degrees F.) until soft, take them out and let them drain on kitchen paper towels. Next, when they are cool to handle, take each piece and smash it in a tostonera (a tostones press available at most online Cuban stores). If you don't have a tostonera, you can simply place paper towels over a slice, and smash it into a flat round cake like with a can of food. Make sure the chunk or slice is standing up as opposed to on its side to smash them.
- 2 The Second Frying round: Before you go into the second round of frying, it is recommended that you take a large bowl of chilled water and salt it, then each toston should be dipped in this water ever so slightly to wet them, make sure you let the water drip off before you put them in oil. When your cooking oil is hot again, add all of your flat plantain pieces (I go from the water dip direct to fryer with each one) and fry them on each side until golden brown. Allow them to drain on paper towels, sprinkle them with mojo sauce (if you like) and salt or garlic salt, to taste, or put the mojo on the side to use as a dipping sauce. The Cuban Mojo sauce recipe is in the Sauces chapter.
- 3 Serve as hot as possible - assuming that the crowd will allow them to reach the table!

Servings: 12

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Recipe Type

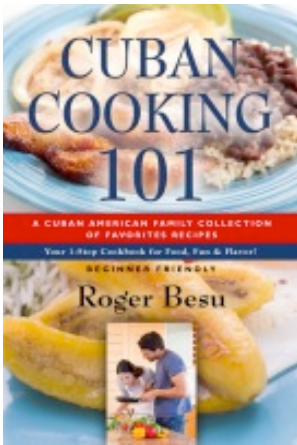
Side Dish

Recipe Tips

Peeling green plantains works easier if you place the whole plantain in chilled water for about 10-15 minutes before you attempt peeling.

Tostonera. (Plantain Press) This is a low cost invention sold in most Cuban markets in Miami and online. While not an essential kitchen must have tool, it does ease the task of flattening.

For the ultimate cheater shortcut: There are a number of frozen pre-cooked tostones in the market at Cuban markets. These save you the peeling, pressing them flat and the first round of frying. However, I never found them as satisfactory as the fresh ones; but then, there is the "Maya" brand. I have to admit that since I discovered this brand, I don't do them from scratch anymore. If you do use any of these pre-cooked ones, you should still dip them in the salt water before going into the second round of frying.



This is an attempt to memorialize and bring a recent hobby, close to my heart and stomach, to those of you who are either in my family, or close enough to be family. My intention is to make this a reference and guide for the staple recipes that our family most frequently ate and enjoyed. I contemplated many names for this book and finally came up with the not so original but very fitting title of “Cuban Cooking 101” It really is meant to be easy enough for anyone, regardless of cooking experience, looking to whip up a Cuban dish.

Cuban Cooking 101

by Roger Besu

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