

# **MakingTamales.com**

## **Start with the equipment you need:**

Before beginning your tamale adventure, you're going to need some important tools of the trade. Some substitutions can of course be made, but we'll show you what we prefer.

**Large steaming vessel:** We use a large stainless pot with a glass lid and a large perforated steaming basket. The larger the better. Although tamales are certainly worth the trouble, fact is they can be a decent amount of work. You wouldn't want to do all of this for just a couple dozen tamales. You need a pot deep enough to hold the tamales and something that holds enough water that you won't have to be refilling every 10 minutes. The glass lid is nice because you can satisfy your curiosities without letting the steam out.

**Measuring devices:** As many or as few as you like. Everything from large measuring cups to small measuring spoons will come in handy.

**Silicon spatula:** This device is key. A lot of the trick to making good looking tamales is the ability to get very sticky masa dough onto a damp corn husk in a smooth and controlled manner. We feel that the silicon spatula is the best way to go. Also, comes in handy when you're getting down to the bottom of the masa bowl.

**Tongs, forceps, or chopsticks:** You're going to need something to handle very hot little tamales. Big pots produce big steam. The longer the handles the better.

**Gravy separator:** One of the keys to this delicious recipe is using the stock from the meat to moisten the masa mix. Of course, you don't want all of the chicken and pork fat going into the mix so you're going to need a way of getting it out. You can use a ladle, or chill the stock and wait for the fat to solidify, but a good gravy separator comes in handy.

## **Great ingredients = Great tamales**

Tamales are fun to make, but they are a bit labor intensive. If you're going to spend the time, you want to make the best tamales you can. This is where top-notch ingredients make the difference.

**6-8 lb Pork Shoulder Roast** - buy a good quality roast and trim as much of the exterior fat off as you can.

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**5lb Whole Chicken** - don't forget to remove the giblets from the cavity.

**2lbs. Corn Masa** - this usually comes in a 4lb bag, so you'll have enough for two batches.

**1 to 2 packages Corn Husks** - the amount depends on how large you like your tamales. We like our small, so we get a couple of packages. Be sure your husks don't have any black mold on them, and don't use any substitute for real corn husks.

**2 1/2 C. Corn Oil** - oils don't last forever. If you don't remember when you bought it, it's probably time to get a new bottle.

**3/8 C. Garlic Powder** - here's another place you might want to buy a new bottle rather than using that one that's been at the back of your spice cabinet for years.

**5/8 C. Chili Powder** - chili powder is actually a mixture of many ingredients, not just ground chiles. This is an ingredient where buying the best will result in a better tamale.

**1 Tbsp. Whole Cumin Seed** - if you have a means of grinding the cumin, buy an extra amount of whole seeds.

**3 Tbsp. Ground Cumin** - fresh ground spices are always the best, but a little jar of ground will do the trick.

**3 Tbsp. Paprika** - hot, sweet, or smoky...here's a place where you can add your own interpretation.

**2 Tbsp. Salt** - we always use a good kosher salt.

**1 Tbsp. Ground Pepper** - again, fresh ground is always the best.

## **Perfect Preparation:**

There are two important steps to make sure you start early. That's the cooking of the meat, and the soaking of the corn husks. These steps take time and if you don't allow for them, they'll throw off your whole day.

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Let's start with **cooking the meat**. The best way to do this is the night before tamale day. You'll need two large pots. Cut the pork roast into 5 or 6 large chunks. Place the chicken in one pot and the roast in the other and cover both with water. This is also a fun place to throw in some garlic cloves, onion slices, or anything else you think might serve the meat well. Bring to a boil. The chicken will be done in about 2 hours, the roast will need at least 2 ½ hours.

While the meats are cooking (if you're doing this all in one day), start **soaking the Corn Husks**. You need to soak them submerged in warm water for at least 2 hours to make them soft and pliable.

When the meats are done, let them cool in their liquid. If you have enough refrigerator space, you can place them and their pots in the fridge overnight. This will not only cool the meat, but also solidify the fat on top, making it easier to remove.

Remove both meats from their stock, but **save the stock!** This is a key ingredient later on.

Now take the skin from the chicken and **debone** it shredding the meat with your fingers. Shred the pork in a similar fashion while discarding as much fat out of the meat as possible. **Combine** both of the meats.

In a small pot on the stove, warm

**1/2 C of Corn Oil**

**6 Tbsp Chili Powder**

**3 Tbsp. Ground Cumin**

**3 Tbsp. Garlic Powder**

**2 Tbsp. Salt**

**1 Tbsp. Ground Black Pepper.**

You're not trying to cook the spices, just warm them enough to bring out their flavors. Add the spice/oil mixture to your meats. Knead with your hands until the meat and spices are fully incorporated together. This will take many minutes and your hand should feel like it's about to fall off.

When the chicken and pork stocks are cool enough to work with, skim the fat off of the top of the stock with a ladle, or use a gravy separator. Discard the fat. Combine the stocks.

Next we make the dough....

If your stock is chilled in the refrigerator, now is a good time to take it out and warm it on the stove.

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Combine

**2lbs Corn Masa (1/2 the bag)**  
**3 Tbsp. Paprika**  
**3 Tbsp. Salt**  
**1 Tbsp. Whole Cumin Seeds**  
**3 Tbsp. Chili Powder**  
**3 Tbsp. Garlic Powder.**

Mix well.

Now add **2 Cups Corn Oil.**

This is where we find our Kitchen Aid mixer and dough-hook attachment handy. These ingredients are a little much for the smaller Kitchen Aids, but should work well in the larger models.

Add up to **8 cups of stock** to your Masa mixture, kneading or mixing thoroughly after each addition of liquid. Stop adding stock when your mixture is the consistency of thick peanut butter. Don't let it get too thin.

## **Steamy Sauna Time:**

Now it is time to assemble the tamales and get them in the steam.

Drain some of our corn husks and unroll them. Hold one in your hand and, using your silicon spatula or similar tool, smear about 1/4 cup of masa dough onto the husk. You want to cover the 2/3 of the husk toward the wider end of the husk. Leave some of the husk at the top without dough on it. (see photo)



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Now take some of the meat in your hand and squeeze. Place meat in middle of the masa dough in your husk. Roll from the bottom end up so that the masa dough encircles the meat and the roll finished with the un-doughed end of the husk.



Now take the narrow end of the husk, without the masa, and fold it up against the tamale. Set it on the counter with the tamale sitting on its tail, so that it doesn't unroll. Repeat with the rest of the tamales.



Get your large steaming vessel on the stove with water and heat. You want the steaming water to come close to the bottom of the steaming basket, but not so close that you're boiling the tamales. Fill the steaming basket with your tamales on end. If you have to steam several batches and you get to one that doesn't completely fill the basket, you can use an upside down glass jar to fill up some of the space. Lower into the steam.

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The tamales need to steam for at least 2 hours. Check the water level ever so often to make sure that it doesn't run dry. You want to avoid this at all costs. Add water as necessary. After 2 hours, you can take a tamale out and test it. The masa dough should be completely cooked. If it is still gooey and raw, continue to steam for another 30 minutes and check again.



Leftover tamales can be carefully wrapped and frozen for later snacks. Just take a few of the frozen tamales, wrap in a damp paper towel and place in the microwave.