### Shredded Chicken in Pepper Sauce

Ají de Gallina is one of Peru's classic dishes. Indigenous ajís, or peppers, are important to the flavor of this sauce, but since the fresh peppers are hard to find, this recipe calls for the pepper pastes, which can be found in jars in Latin markets.

Rinse the chicken and pat dry. Place it in a soup pot, pour in the stock and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, partially covered, until the chicken is tender and opaque throughout, about 45 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a platter and let cool. Reserve the cooking liquid. When the chicken is cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the bones, discarding the skin and bones. Shred or cut the meat into bite-size pieces and set aside.

In a saucepan over medium-low heat, melt the butter with the olive oil. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and *ají* pastes and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Meanwhile, in a blender or food processor, combine 1 cup of the reserved cooking liquid, the evaporated milk, cheese, crackers and salt. Process until smooth, then transfer to the pan with the onion mixture and cook until the mixture thickens slightly, about 10 minutes. Add the chicken and ground walnuts to the sauce and stir to mix well. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes to allow the flavors to blend. To serve, place a scoop of the rice in the center of each plate. Top with the chicken mixture, garnish with the walnut halves and serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Latin Cooking, by Patricia McCausland-Gallo, Deborah Schneider & Beverly Cox (Oxmoor House, 2010).

### Coconut Meringue Cookies

Beloved throughout South America, coconut cookies are sold in markets and pastry shops and by street vendors.

Preheat an oven to 325°F. Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment or waxed paper.

In a large bowl or in the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the egg whites and salt. Using a handheld electric mixer or the stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on medium speed until very foamy, about 30 seconds. Increase the speed to high and beat until soft peaks form. With the mixer running, add the granulated sugar in a slow stream. Add the vanilla and beat until stiff, shiny peaks form. In a separate bowl, whisk the coconut and confectioners' sugar until the coconut is evenly coated. Gently fold the coconut mixture into the egg whites until just blended.

Spoon heaping tablespoons of the batter onto the prepared baking sheets. Bake the cookies until dry on the bottom, about 20 minutes, reversing the positions of the baking sheets after 10 minutes. Let the cookies cool on the pans for 2 to 3 minutes, then transfer to wire racks and let cool completely. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days. Makes 3 to 3½ dozen cookies.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Latin Cooking, by Patricia McCausland-Gallo, Deborah Schneider & Beverly Cox (Oxmoor House, 2010).

### February 20, 2011

# Ingredients for Shredded Chicken in Pepper Sauce

- 1 chicken, 5 to 6 lb., or 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken breast halves, each about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.
- 8 cups chicken stock or low-sodium broth
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tsp. ají amarillo paste\*
- 1/4 cup ají panca paste\*
- 1 can (10 fl. oz.) evaporated milk
- 1 cup shredded *queso blanco* or farmer's cheese
- 8 saltine crackers
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- ½ cup ground walnuts
- Cooked white rice for serving
- Walnut halves for garnish
- \* Available at Williams-Sonoma stores.

#### Ingredients for Coconut Meringue Cookies

- 4 egg whites
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 21/3 cups sweetened flaked coconut
- 1⅓ cups confectioners' sugar

#### **Dried Spices and Herbs**

- Achiote seeds (annatto seeds)
- Allspice
- Aniseed
- Bay leaves
- Canela (also called true cinnamon bark or Mexican cinnamon)
- Chili powder
- Cloves, whole and ground
- Coriander seeds
- Cumin
- Oregano, Mexican dried
- Peppercorns, black

#### **Aromatics and Other Seasonings**

- Chocolate
- · Currants, dried
- Piloncillo sugar (Mexican brown sugar)
- Raisins, golden and brown
- Sesame seeds
- · Vanilla, beans and extract

#### **Spice Mixtures and Pastes**

- · Achiote paste
- Aji chili pastes, amarillo, panca and verde (yellow, red and green)
- Moles (Mexican ground-spice mixtures)
- Recados (Mayan ground-spice mixtures)

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### WILLIAMS-SONOMA

# Technique Class: Latin Cooking

Latin America is a land of dramatic landscapes and varied climates, ranging from steaming tropical rain forests to rolling grasslands and mild mountain valleys to snow-capped volcanic mountains, vast desserts and frozen tundra. A rich indigenous Latin American culture and cuisines existed before any European contact; post-conquest, the arrival of settlers from Spain and Portugal, African slaves and Chinese indentured servants brought even more diversity to Latin America's cooking.

## Latin American Regions

- Baja California
- MexicoCuba

- Puerto Rico
- Dominican Republic
- Central America

# Latin Produce and Pantry

Latin American cooking draws on a bounty of fresh seasonal produce and fruits; hearty, nutritious grains and legumes; fresh cheeses; corn in all its forms; and a pantry of spices, seasonings and sweeteners. This guide includes some of the common ingredients used in Latin cooking.

#### Fresh Vegetables

Beets, bell peppers, cabbage, cactus paddles, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chard, chayote, corn, cucumbers, green beans, eggplant, jicama, kale, lettuce, malanga, okra, onions, potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatillos, tomatoes, watercress, wild mushrooms, winter squash, yellow squash, yucca, zucchini

#### **Cheeses and Dairy Products**

Cotija or queso blanco, crema, evaporated milk, queso añejo, queso fresco, queso menonita, sweetened condensed milk

#### **Sugar and Sweeteners**

Agave nectar, confectioners' sugar, granulated sugar, honey, molasses, *piloncillo* 

#### Fruits, Berries and Melons

Acai berries, apples, avocados, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, cherimoya, coconuts, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, limes, mangoes, oranges, papaya, passion fruit, persimmons, pineapples, plantains, plums, pomegranates, quince, raspberries, sour oranges, star fruit, strawberries, tamarind, watermelons

#### Grains, Seeds and Nuts

Amaranth, almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, pine nuts, pumpkin seeds, quinoa, walnuts

#### Wine, Beer and Spirits

• South America

Cachaça, light beer, light and dark rum, Kahlua, Pisco, red and white wine, tequila

#### Corn Products

Corn tortilla chips, corn tortillas, dried corn husks, huitlacoche, masa, masarepa, masa harina, pozole or cooked hominy

#### Legumes

Black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, chickpeas, lentils, lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, red beans

#### **Pantry Staples**

Coconut milk, corn flour, corn oil, lard, olive oil, peanut oil, rice, semolina pasta, sweetened flaked coconut, wheat flour

#### Ingredients for Red Beans and Rice

- 1 cup dried red beans
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 cups water
- 1 tsp. sea salt, plus more, to taste
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 3 thick-cut bacon slices, diced
- 1/2 white onion, diced
- ½ green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- ½ red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 1 can (8 fl. oz.) tomato sauce
- 1½ cups uncooked long-grain white rice
- 2½ cups chicken stock, low-sodium broth or water

#### Ingredients for Fried Green Plantains

- 2 green plantains
- 3 cups canola oil
- Salt, to taste

### Red Beans and Rice

Beans and rice is the unofficial national dish of Latin cooking. A similar dish, made with black beans, is sometimes simply called "black rice." This recipe, made with creamy red beans, is equally authentic and very attractive. While there is little meat in beans and rice, few dishes are as satisfying.

Pick over the beans and discard any misshapen beans or stones. Rinse the beans under running cold water and drain. In a saucepan over high heat, combine the beans, bay leaf and water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 1 hour. Add the 1 tsp. salt and simmer until the beans are very tender but not cracked, 2 to 3 hours. Remove from the heat and let the beans cool in their liquid.

In a heavy fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the bacon and cook, stirring, until browned and crisp, about 8 minutes. Add the onion, bell peppers and garlic and cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are softened, about 2 minutes. Add the oregano, cumin and pepper and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the tomato sauce and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes more.

Add the rice and stir to coat with the tomato mixture. Sauté until the rice has absorbed the tomato sauce. Add the stock, stir once and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook until the rice has absorbed all of the liquid, about 20 minutes.

Using a large spoon, transfer the beans, along with a few spoonfuls of the cooking liquid, to the pan with the rice and stir in. Cover and cook until the rice has absorbed all of the liquid from the beans, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes, then stir gently. Season with salt. Divide among warmed bowls or plates and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Latin Cooking, by Patricia McCausland-Gallo, Deborah Schneider & Beverly Cox (Oxmoor House, 2010).

### Fried Green Plantains

These delicious green plantain fritters are enjoyed throughout Latin America. Some are thick and some are paper-thin, but patacones or tostones are among the most important foods to home cooks and restaurants alike. Although fried twice (once to cook and soften, and once to ensure they are golden and crisp), the fritters are very easy to prepare. Serve them alongside ropa vieja, a Cuban stew made with shredded meat.

To peel the green plantains, slice the ends off with a knife and make a lengthwise cut from one end to the other of the plantain skin. Remove the rest of the skin from the plantain. Slice the plantain into chunks 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide.

To precook the plantains, in a sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat the oil to 325°F on a deep-frying thermometer. Reduce the heat to medium, add the plantain chunks to the oil and deep-fry for 3 to 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the plantains to a paper towel–lined plate.

Continued on next page

While the plantains are still warm, flatten them with a wooden press or a heavy fry pan. Place an opened plastic bag over your wooden press or on your counter, put each plantain chunk inside the bag, and smash it with the top of the wooden press or with the pan.

To finish cooking the plantains, reheat the oil over medium-high heat to 350°F. Add the plantain chunks and deep-fry until lightly golden, about 2 minutes. Transfer the plantains to a paper towel–lined plate and sprinkle them with salt. Serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Latin Cooking, by Patricia McCausland-Gallo, Deborah Schneider & Beverly Cox (Oxmoor House, 2010).

### Ropa Vieja with Fried Plantains

Loosely translated as "old clothes," ropa vieja is among Cuba's most-loved dishes, not only because it is a simple and tasty way to feed a crowd. The cooked meat can be sliced, but it is most often shredded, giving the dish its name, before being added to a colorful sofrito made with tomato and red annatto oil, which is available at some Latin markets. If you use the annatto oil, omit the achiote paste.

Put the meat in a Dutch oven or other large, heavy pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add just enough cold water to barely cover the meat. Stir in the salt and tuck the onion, peppercorns and bay leaf around the meat. Set over medium heat and slowly bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook until the meat is very tender,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 hours. Using tongs or 2 large forks, transfer the meat to a carving board and let cool. Strain the cooking liquid through a fine-mesh sieve set over a bowl and reserve. Discard the solids.

Meanwhile, make the sauce: In another Dutch oven or a large, heavy sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Add the onion, bell pepper, carrot, garlic and chili and cook, stirring often, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 2 minutes.

If you used the vegetable oil (not the annatto oil), crumble the achiote paste into the pot and cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cinnamon. Cook, stirring often, until most of the liquid has evaporated. Remove the pan from the heat.

Add 1½ cups of the reserved beef cooking liquid to the vegetables, set the pan over medium heat and simmer for 10 minutes to allow the flavors to blend. Using a sharp knife, trim the excess fat off the meat. Carve the meat across the grain into slices about ¼ inch thick, or shred into bite-size pieces using your fingers or 2 forks. Add the meat to the simmering sauce and cook until heated through, about 5 minutes. Spoon the stew onto plates and top each serving with a few pimiento slices and a sprinkling of capers. Serve with fried plantains and rice. Serves 6 to 8.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Latin Cooking, by Patricia McCausland-Gallo, Deborah Schneider & Beverly Cox (Oxmoor House, 2010).

# Ingredients for Ropa Vieja with Fried Plantains

- 3 lb. flank steak or lean chuck
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ white onion, peeled but with root end intact, stuck with 1 whole clove
- 10 black peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf

#### For the tomato sauce:

- 2 Tbs. annatto oil or vegetable oil (see note above)
- ½ white onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 small carrot, peeled and diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbs. seeded and minced serrano chili
- 2 tsp. achiote paste (optional; see note above)
- 2 cups seeded and diced fresh tomatoes, or canned tomatoes, drained
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup jarred sliced red pimientos, drained
- 2 Tbs. capers, drained
- Fried green plantains for serving
- Cooked white rice for serving