



**COOKING CLASSES**  
AT SUR LA TABLE

**PREP NOW, EAT LATER:  
TRADITIONAL TAMALES**

WITH SUR LA TABLE CHEF

# Ingredient Shopping List

Below is a list of ingredients you'll need to make the recipes in this packet. Please reach out for substitution suggestions.

## Proteins

- 2 cups of cooked chicken (see recipe notes for suggestions)

## Produce

- 4 large garlic cloves
- 3 limes
- 2 yellow onions
- 3 fresh poblano chiles

## Dairy/Refrigerated

- 1 1/2 cups crumbled cotija cheese
- 2 cups unsalted butter or lard

## Frozen

- Frozen corn kernels

## Pantry Items

- 1, 14-ounce can fire-roasted tomatoes
- 1, 15-ounce can tomato purée
- Cumin seeds
- Coriander seeds
- Dried oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher or sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Vegetable oil
- Chipotle chile powder
- Granulated sugar
- Baking powder
- 3 cups of chicken or vegetable broth

## Specialty Items

- 2 dried Guajillo chile peppers
- 4 dried ancho or pasilla chiles
- 6 cups masa harina, see pre-class prep notes for purchasing notes
- 1 bag of dried corn husks (we recommend purchasing one extra)

# Equipment Needed

Below is a list of tools you'll need to make the recipes in this packet.

## Cutlery

- Chef's knife
- Cutting board

## Hand Tools/Gadgets

- Measuring cups and spoons
- Liquid measuring cups
- Can opener
- Tongs
- Wooden spoon
- Mixing bowls (various sizes)
- 2 heatproof bowls for softening dried chiles and corn husks
- 2 plates to submerge softening dried chiles and corn husks
- Whisk
- Large spoon

## Cookware

- 2 medium or large skillets

## Appliances

- Blender, food processor or immersion blender
- Stand mixer or hand mixer

## Other

- Kitchen twine (optional)

## If you intend to steam tamales after class, you will need the following:

- Large pot with a rack in the bottom or pressure cooker with a rack in the bottom.
- Note:** tamales need to steam for about 1 hour to be fully cooked, please read through the tamale 101 section prior to class.

## Pre-Class Mise en Place and Notes

- Please gather all ingredients prior to class if you will be cooking along.
- It is helpful to organize the ingredients by recipe on rimmed baking sheets.
- Feel free to pre-measure ingredients, but it is not necessary.
- We encourage you to prep all your ingredients before class as it will allow you to have more time to listen and watch the instructor.

### Oaxacan Chicken Filling

1. No prep is needed before class.

### Poblano and Cotija Cheese Filling

1. Thaw and drain frozen corn kernels.
2. Wash and dry all the produce.

### Chile Rojo Salsa

1. Boil a kettle or medium saucepan of water prior to class. 30 minutes prior to class, to a large heatproof bowl, add dried **ancho chiles** and cover with boiling water. Set a plate over the chiles to submerge, if necessary, and set aside until softened, about 30 minutes.

### Corn Husks

1. 30 minutes prior to class, to a large heatproof bowl, add corn husks and cover with boiling water. Set a plate over the corn husks to submerge, if necessary, and set aside until softened, about 30 minutes.

### Masa Preparada

1. Remove the butter (if using) from the refrigerator 30 minutes prior to class.
2. This recipe makes enough for 3 dozen tamales. We will assemble 1 1/2 dozen of each flavor in class.
3. Masa harina is now stocked in most major grocery stores, as well as at Hispanic grocery stores and online. **Brand suggestions:** Bob's Red Mill Masa Harina, or Maseca (white bag with bright green and yellow lettering).
4. Masa harina is a dried product, similar in texture to flour. There's no substitution that achieves the same consistency—please make sure you are able to find this before class.
5. We recommend buying an extra bag of dried corn husks. Especially if you intend to freeze the tamales—it is best to wrap the tamales completely rather than leaving one side open and if you are new to tamale wrapping the husks can rip easily.

**You will prepare all recipes and assemble your tamales. You have the option of steaming the tamales after class or freezing and steaming later.**

## OAXACAN CHICKEN TAMALES

**Yield:** filling for about 1 1/2 dozen tamales

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2 dried Guajillo chile peppers  
1 cup water  
1/2 (14-ounce) can fire-roasted tomatoes  
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds, toasted  
1/2 teaspoon coriander seeds, toasted  
2 teaspoons dried oregano  
3 large garlic cloves  
2 cups cooked chicken, shredded  
1 bay leaf  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Fresh lime juice

*Chile Rojo Salsa (recipe included)*

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1. **To prepare the filling:** To a large skillet set over medium heat, add the chiles and toast, turning often, until skins begin to blister and chiles are fragrant, about 2 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the chiles to a cutting board and remove stems and seeds.
2. Transfer the chiles to the bowl of a blender, or food processor fitted with a metal blade and add water, tomatoes, spices, and garlic. Process until the mixture is smooth, about 1 minute.
3. Return the sauce to the skillet set over medium-high heat and add chicken and bay leaves. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until reduced to a sauce-like consistency, about 20 minutes. Discard bay leaves, taste and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper and lime juice.
4. Assemble the tamales using the method outlined in Tamale Making 101.
5. **To cook the tamales:** Cook tamales using one of the options outlined in Tamale Making 101.
6. **To serve:** Remove tamales from husks, spoon salsa over the top and serve immediately.

### **Recipe notes and variations:**

- We recommend purchasing 1 rotisserie chicken—the combination of light and dark meat is ideal. You'll need about half of a rotisserie chicken in this recipe.

## POBLANO AND COTIJA CHEESE TAMALES

**Yield:** filling for about 1 1/2 dozen tamales

For extra flavor, roast corn and poblano pepper before adding to the filling.

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*2 tablespoons vegetable oil*

*1 large yellow onion, cut into 1/2-inch dice*

*4 fresh poblano chiles, peeled, seeded and chopped*

*1 cup corn kernels, fresh or, if frozen, thawed*

*2 teaspoons dried oregano*

*1/2 teaspoon chipotle chile powder*

*Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper*

*1 1/2 cups crumbled Cotija cheese*

*Chile Rojo Salsa (recipe included)*

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1. **To prepare the filling:** To a large skillet set over medium heat, add oil. When the oil is shimmering, add onions and cook until soft and lightly browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the poblano chiles, corn, oregano and chipotle chile powder; stir well to combine. Cook until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper

2. Remove the mixture from the heat and set aside to cool. Fold in the cheese.

3. Assemble the tamales using the method outlined below in Tamale Making 101.

4. **To cook the tamales:** Cook tamales using one of the options outlined below in Tamale Making 101.

5. **To serve:** Remove tamales from husks, spoon sauce over to coat and serve immediately.

## CHILE ROJO SALSA

**Yield:** *about 3 cups*

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*4 dried ancho or pasilla chiles, stemmed and seeded*  
*1 (15-ounce) can tomato puree*  
*1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped*  
*1 garlic clove, minced*  
*1/4 teaspoon granulated sugar, plus more to taste*  
*2 tablespoons fresh lime juice, plus more to taste*  
*Kosher salt*

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1. **To prepare the chiles:** To a large heatproof bowl, add the dried chiles and cover with boiling water. Set a plate over the chiles to submerge, if necessary, and set aside until softened, about 30 minutes. Drain.

2. **To prepare the salsa:** Transfer the chiles to a blender along with tomato purée, onion, garlic and sugar. Purée until smooth. Stir in lime juice. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt, lime juice and sugar.

## MASA PREPARADA FROM MASA HARINA FLOUR

**Yield:** *about 3 dozen tamales*

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*6 cups masa harina*

*1 1/2 teaspoons fine kosher salt*

*1 tablespoon baking powder*

*2 cups lard or unsalted butter, at room temperature*

*3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth, plus more as needed*

### **For assembling tamales:**

*1 bag of soaked corn husks*

*Filling of your choice*

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1. To a large bowl, add masa harina, salt and baking powder; whisk to combine, set aside.
2. To the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, add lard or butter and whip on high speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Reduce speed to medium and add masa mixture, one cup at a time, alternating with broth. Beat until well mixed. (Depending on the capacity of your mixer, you may need to do this in two batches.)
3. Increase mixer speed to medium-high and whip until masa resembles the consistency of soft, yet workable dough, about 3 minutes. If the dough is too firm, add more broth, 1/4 cup at a time, until the correct consistency is attained.
4. To test the tamale dough, drop approximately 1/2 teaspoon of dough into a cup of cold water. If the masa floats, it is ready to shape into tamales. If it sinks, continue whipping for another minute. Repeat this “float test” until the sample masa dough floats.
5. Assemble tamales using the method outlined in Tamale Making 101 below.



## TAMALE MAKING 101

In Mexico, tamales are one of the most beloved traditional foods. They are assembled by families or communities in large batches and eaten as breakfast or dinner during festivals and holidays such as Christmas. Tamales start with a dough called masa, which is traditionally made from hominy and lard, and they are then filled with either sweet or savory fillings.

**Most often, you'll be using dried cornhusks to wrap your tamales.** You can purchase these from Latin markets and most grocery stores. Alternative wraps are banana leaves or “ti” leaves, which can be purchased at most Asian grocery stores. For the following recipes, you'll use corn husks.

**Open a bag of husks and soak them in hot water for at least 30 minutes before making tamales.** Weigh them down with a pan or heavy plate to keep them submerged. Rinse to remove any dust or silks and stack them in a large mixing bowl covered with a clean, damp kitchen towel.

There are many ways to wrap tamales, including a single tie or a double tie. **The easiest and fastest way to wrap tamales is to fold them on three sides** and place them in the steamer, open end up, without tying.

**To assemble the tamales,** lay the corn husk flat, rough side down and the tip pointing away from you. If it's a small husk, place two together, overlapping them a bit. Spread about 1/3 cup masa preparada (recipe included) in the center of the bottom part of the husk, using moistened fingers or the back of a spoon, smooth dough to about a 1/3-inch thickness. Top with 2 to 3 tablespoons of filling. Fold the two long sides of the husk towards the middle so that the masa forms a tube around the filling. Fold the pointed tip of the husk down over the filled section. The filling end will be exposed, but the masa will set and protect it during steaming.

**If you don't plan on tying your tamales, they're now ready to be stacked in your steamer.** Alternatively, you can place a single tie around the middle of the tamale to hold the bottom flap in place. Make your ties by tearing off strips of soaked corn husk and twisting them into small ropes, or you can also use kitchen twine.

There are many methods of steaming tamales.

**The classic tamale steamer looks like a large pot with a rack in the bottom.** You can use any large pot with a steamer insert or create your own version by placing a cake rack on inverted small ramekins in the bottom of a heavy pot with a lid. Fill the pot with water almost up to the level of the rack, but not touching the tamales. For smaller batches, a stacking bamboo steamer, electric steamer or pressure cooker works beautifully.

**Place the tamales in the pot or steamer standing upright or stack them by placing one layer facing in one direction and the next at a 90-degree angle,** leaving space for steam to circulate around each tamale. Place the lid on the pot/steamer and bring the water to a steady simmer. Watch the pot for water level and top off with additional water as needed. Keep a pot

of boiling water on the stove to add as needed to the steamer. **Check for doneness after about 1 hour by peeling back the husk. If it comes off smoothly and the masa is firm, your tamale is done.** If not, rewrap it and place it back in the steamer. Depending on the size and quantity of the tamales, cooking time can take up to 90 minutes.

**Pressure cookers can steam tamales in about 20 minutes, saving lots of time.** However, calculate how many tamales will fit in your pressure cooker first to determine how many batches you will need to pressure cook. For large quantities of tamales, a large steamer pot setup may be preferable to a pressure cooker.

**To cook in a pressure cooker,** add a steamer basket or a rack to the bottom of the pressure cooker. Pour in enough water to reach just below the basket or rack. Arrange wrapped tamales, facing up, in the basket. Secure the lid and select Pressure setting on High; set a timer for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, manually release the pressure (quick release) and unlock the lid.

## KNOW YOUR MASA

**Masa Harina** is dried masa flour and can also be used for making tamales. Masa harina is widely accessible and found in most grocery stores. Like fresh masa, masa harina needs to be mixed well with fat, flavorings and liquid to become dough for making tamales. **Note, dried masa flour requires more liquid than fresh masa to achieve a soft and pliable tamale dough.**

**Fresh Masa** is dried corn that has been cooked in alkaline solution, soaked overnight (a process called nixtamalization), and then ground while still wet. Sold in this form, it's called fresh masa, and it makes the lightest, fluffiest tamales. Fresh masa needs to be mixed with fat, flavorings and water or broth before using it to make tamales. Once fresh masa is mixed with fat, flavorings and liquid it is called masa preparada (recipe included). Fresh masa is readily found in well-stocked Mexican markets.

**Mexican and Latin American groceries may also carry “Masa Preparada para Tamales”** (ready to use tamale dough), this is fresh masa that has already been mixed with fat and flavorings and is really for making tamales. **However, store-bought masa preparada may still require additional mixing in order to lighten the texture before using.**