

🌟 CHILES EN NOGADA (Chiles in Walnut Sauce)

Ingredients:

12 poblano chiles
2 tbsp salt
1 tbsp white vinegar
5 eggs, separated
½ cup all-purpose (plain) flour
Oil for frying
Seeds of 1 pomegranate
Sprigs of parsley, for garnish

NUT SAUCE

30 Walnuts in their shells or 1 cup walnut halves
1 ½ cups milk
1 cup thick cream (crème fraîche)
6 oz queso fresco (or feta cheese)
2-3 tbsp sugar
Pinch salt

FILLING

1 lb pork loin
4 cups water
¼ onion, in a chunk
5 cloves garlic, 3 whole, 2 chopped
1 sprig parsley
1 tbsp salt
1/3 cup oil
¾ cup finely chopped onion
2 cups peeled and finely chopped tomatoes
4 tbsp minced parsley
1 apple, peeled and chopped (about 1 cup)
1 large pear, peeled and chopped (about ¾ cup)
1 peach, peeled and chopped (about ½ cup)
1 plantain or large firm banana, peeled and chopped (about ¾ cup)
1/3 cup raisins
1/3 cup chopped blanched almonds

Directions:

☀ To prepare the nut sauce, shell the walnuts, place in a heatproof bowl, cover with boiling water and let soak for 5 minutes. Drain, then peel the thin tan skin from the nuts. Place the walnuts in a small bowl, cover with 1 cup (8 fl oz) of the milk and let soak for 12 hours.

☀ Drain the walnuts, discarding the milk. (If packaged nuts are used, reserve ½ cup/4 fl oz of the soaking milk for use in pureeing the nuts.) Transfer the walnuts to a blender and puree with the cream, the remaining ½ cup (4 fl oz) milk and the queso fresco, sugar and salt. Refrigerate.

☀ To prepare the filling, place the pork, water, onion quarter, 3 garlic cloves, parsley and half of the salt in a large saucepan. As soon as the water comes to a boil, cover and cook over medium heat for 40-60 minutes or until the pork is tender. Drain, reserving ½ cup (4 fl oz) of the cooking stock. Let the pork cool briefly, then chop finely and set aside.

☀ Heat the oil in a large skillet or saucepan. Add the chopped onion and garlic and sauté for 4 minutes or until transparent. Add the tomatoes and mince parsley and cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Mix in the remaining salt and the apple, pear, peach, plantain, raisins and almonds and cook over medium stock. Correct the seasonings and cook, uncovered, over low heat for 7-10 minutes or until the fruit is cooked and the mixture has thickened. Set aside.

☀ Roast and peel the chiles. Make a lengthwise slit in each one, being careful not to break it, and remove the seeds and membranes. Soak the chiles in water to cover with the salt and vinegar for 20-60 minutes, depending on how "hot" they are.

☀ Rinse the chiles, drain well and pat dry with paper towels. Use a spoon to place some of the meat mixture inside each chile, being careful not to overstuff or the filling will spill out when the chile is cooked. Set aside.

☀ Beat the egg whites until they form stiff peaks, then stir in the yolks one at a time. Spread the flour on a plate, turn each chile in it to coat lightly, and then dip into the beaten eggs, so that the chile is completely coated.

☀ Heat ½ C in oil in a skillet. When hot, add the chiles one or two at a time and fry on each side until lightly browned. Drain on absorbent paper. The chiles can be served cold or at room temperature. Arrange them on a platter, cover with the nut sauce and sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds. Garnish with sprigs of parsley.

☀ Variations: There are as many minor variations of this recipe as there are people who prepare it. Some cooks add chopped citron, cinnamon and black pepper to the chopped meat mixture and a little sweet sherry or white wine to the nut sauce. Some use coarsely ground pork instead of cooked and chopped pork loin. The major difference is whether the chiles are covered with batter or not. Traditional recipes call for coating the chiles, but you may leave them uncoated, according to your taste and the amount of time you have to prepare them.