



Baked Empanadas (Empanadas de Carne)
Appetizers filled with spicy cumin-flavored beef

Pastry Dough:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup white vegetable shortening
1/2 cup skim milk or unflavored almond milk

Ground Beef Filling

1/2 Tablespoon olive oil
1/3 cup minced onion
1 clove garlic, minced
8 ounces ground beef
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/8 teaspoon ground smoked red pepper

1/2 Tablespoon all-purpose flour
1/2 cup cold water
Optional add-ins:
1 Tablespoon pimento-stuffed green olives
1 Tablespoon minced raisins
1 large hardboiled egg, fine chopped
For Glaze: 1 egg, lightly beat with 1 teaspoon water
Cooking oil as needed

Prepare Dough: In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour and salt. Cut in the shortening till pieces are the size of small peas. Add small amounts of milk to moisten; form dough into two equal balls. Cover with plastic wrap; chill in refrigerator for about 30 minutes.

Prepare Beef Filling: In a large nonstick skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion; sauté 2 minutes; add garlic; cook 1 minute; mix in ground beef, breaking into small pieces; cook over medium heat until beef is cooked but moist. Remove excess fat; season with salt, cumin, and smoked red pepper. In small cup, stir flour into water; add to skillet; cook over medium heat until mixture bubbles and is thickened. Lower heat; if desired, add optional ingredients fine minced green olives; fine minced raisins until mixture is hot. Remove from heat. Gently fold in chopped boiled egg. Set aside.

Roll Dough: Lightly flour work surface; roll out one ball of dough about 1/8-inch-thick; with 4-inch biscuit cutter; cut out circles. Remove excess dough; reroll dough; cut into circles. For each empanada appetizer: lightly wet edges of circle with water; spoon about 1/2 Tablespoon filling on circle; fold the dough over in half to enclose the filling. Press edges together; use a fork to press and seal edges closed. Place on silicone mat on cookie sheet; prick several small holes with tines of fork on the top of filled appetizer. Repeat procedure with remaining appetizers and remaining ball of dough. There will be about 24 appetizers. Brush top of appetizers with egg wash for a glazed appearance. (Can be refrigerated for up to 3 hours.)

Cooking Empanadas: Heat oil in large cast iron skillet; fry until golden brown about 6 to 7 minutes.

To Serve: Arrange appetizers in a basket or on a large plate with your favorite fresh salsa or sauce. Yield: about 24 appetizers

Cook's Note: I planned ahead making the meat sauce, boiling the egg earlier in the day, and storing them in the refrigerator. Later, I brought them back to room temperature when I wanted to fill the appetizers. I served them with fresh spicy tomato salsa. I omitted the olives and raisins, which are included in the traditional recipe that we were served in South America.

About the Recipe: This recipe can be used in make larger handheld sandwich side empanadas or appetizers. These are very popular in Latin America and were one of the first courses we had when visiting South America. The folded pastry is either baked or fried and stuffed with various meats, cheeses, or even fruits. It is a tradition to serve these for special occasions.