**Cooking around the World: Colombia**

Recipes contributed by Rocio Matthews

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**AREPAS CON QUESO** (Thick tortillas with cheese)

*Enjoy these at breakfast with a cup of coffee, or on their own or with shredded beef/chicken for lunch or dinner.*

**Ingredients**

2 cups arepa flour, P.A.N. brand (sold in a yellow package; available at International Grocer, 703 NE Perry Ave. in Peoria)

2 cups hot water

1 stick soft butter

1 lb. shredded cotija cheese (International Grocer or Walmart)

**Method**

*Arepas may be baked in the oven or fried on the stove-top. If baking, pre-heat the oven to 350°.*

Put the flour into a bowl and add the butter and cheese.

Slowly add the water, kneading with your hands to make a soft dough (if water is too hot, mix with a spoon until it cools enough to use your hands). Mix well. If the dough is too dry, add cool water slowly, a little at a time, as needed.

To make the arepas (tortillas), form small balls of dough with your hands (about half the size of a tennis ball), then press them into small pancake shapes. Thickness can vary according to preference. You can also grease the inside of a plastic bag with butter, place a piece of dough in the bag, and flatten it with a small plate.

Arepas may be baked or fried. To bake, place arepas on a pan and bake at 350° until golden. To fry, put a little butter in a skillet and cook arepas over medium heat until golden on both sides (about 5 minutes on each side if the arepas are small). Enjoy!

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**RIPE PLANTAIN**

**Ingredients**

1-3 ripe plantains (buy ahead of time to allow them to ripen further; available at Walmart)

Butter

White hard cheese (Mexican hard cheese or mozzarella) or shredded cotija cheese

**Method**

Preheat the oven to 350°.

Peel the plantains, then slice them the long way into about 5 or 6 slices, depending on the size of the fruit.

Rub the slices with butter and place them in a baking pan.

Top with small pieces of white hard cheese or shredded cotija cheese.

Bake for about 20 minutes or until soft.

Serve alone or with rice.

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**CHICKEN RICE**

*May be enjoyed with a green salad and ripe plantain.*

**Ingredients**

1 ½ lbs. chicken with or without bones

4 cubes chicken bullion

2-3 Tbsp. olive oil

5 cups long grain white rice

1/4 red onion, chopped

1/4 green bell pepper

7 ½ cups chicken broth (1 ½ cups for each cup of rice). You can reserve the liquid from cooking the chicken, adding water to make 7 ½ cups.

2 small envelopes culantro (achiote and cilantro; available at International Grocer or Walmart)

2 Tbsp. tomato chicken bullion (for color and flavor)

small bottle of capers (optional, for flavor)

green olives (optional)

small can minced carrots and peas

green onion, finely chopped

1 Tbsp. lemon juice

**Method**

Boil chicken until white; you can add 2 cubes chicken bullion.

Let chicken cool.

In a large pan, sauté the rice in the olive oil for a few minutes, adding the red onion and the green pepper (take care not to burn the onion).

Add the 7 ½ cups chicken broth, culantro, tomato chicken bullion, and the rest of the chicken bullion cubes. Stir, letting some of the broth evaporate. Lower the heat, cover, and cook until tender.

While the rice is cooking, shred the chicken into a glass dish. Add the green onion, peas and carrots, and lemon juice.

When the rice is done, add to the chicken mixture, making sure to combine it evenly.

Cover for 15 minutes and serve.