



ANSON MILLS

Little Huaraches (Huarachitos)

Yield

8 (5-inch) huaraches

Time

Day one: soak the beans; Day two: about 1½ hours to prepare the beans and about 30 minutes to make the salsa; Day three: about 1 hour to prepare and cook the huaraches

Cooking Remarks

Oaxacans love to season their black beans with fresh or dried avocado leaves, which have an intriguing anise-like flavor. We were introduced to them as a seasoning for refried beans and like them here, too. You can buy dried avocado leaves on Amazon, but they'll have to be ground up in a spice mill before they're sprinkle-worthy. A touch of dried Mexican oregano makes a fine addition, too.

Equipment Mise en Place

For the beans, you will need a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, a wire skimmer, a food processor, a rubber spatula, a small bowl, a fine-mesh sieve, a liquid measuring cup, a heavy-bottomed 10-inch skillet, a wooden spoon, and a medium bowl.

For the salsa, you will need a food processor and a serving bowl.

For the masa and shaping and cooking the huaraches, you will need a large saucepan (if the hominy is no longer hot); a colander; a food processor; a rubber spatula; a medium glass or ceramic bowl; a digital kitchen scale; two rimmed baking sheets; parchment paper; two gallon-size zipper-lock bags; a pair of scissors; a small offset spatula; a damp kitchen towel; aluminum foil; a heavy-bottomed 10-inch square or rectangular griddle, preferably well-seasoned cast-iron; a pastry brush; and a long metal spatula.

Ingredients

for the beans

- 3 cups spring or filtered water
- 1 cup (6.5 ounces) dried small red or pinto beans, soaked overnight in water to cover, drained
- 1 small onion, peeled and quartered lengthwise (root end left intact)
- 1 (2-inch) piece of carrot, peeled
- 1 slender celery rib, halved crosswise
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled, plus 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons ground dried avocado leaves or 1 teaspoon dried Mexican oregano (optional)
- ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

for the salsa verde

8 ounces (3 medium) tomatillos, husked and quartered
1 serrano chile, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces
¼ cup chopped sweet onion, such as a Vidalia
3 tablespoons juice from 2 juicy limes
1 cup loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves
Fine sea salt

for the masa

1 recipe Fresh Whole Hominy (19 to 20 ounces total weight; 3 to 3½ cups)
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
Vegetable oil, for cooking the huaraches

4 cups finely shredded iceberg lettuce or white cabbage
¾ cup sliced red radishes
4 ripe avocados, pitted, peeled, and sliced
4 ounces queso fresco cheese, crumbled
1 ounce cotija cheese, finely grated

Directions

- 1. Make the beans:** In a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, bring the water to a simmer over medium-high heat. Stir in the soaked and drained beans, onion, carrot, celery, garlic cloves, and bay leaf. Return the liquid to a simmer, and then reduce the heat to low. Cover the pan partially and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, until the beans are tender, 1 to 1¼ hours.
- 2.** Remove the pan from the heat. Using a wire skimmer, transfer the beans to a food processor, leaving the aromatics in the pan; don't worry if a few pieces of onion go along with the beans. Process until the beans are puréed to a paste, about 30 seconds, pausing once to scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula. Scrape the puréed beans into a small bowl and cover them flush with plastic wrap. Pour the bean broth through a fine-mesh sieve set over a liquid measuring cup; you should have about 1 cup.
- 3.** Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed 10-inch skillet over low heat. Add the minced garlic and ground avocado leaves or Mexican oregano (if using) and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant but not colored, about 10 seconds. Add the puréed beans and the bean broth. Increase the heat to medium-high and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon to bring everything into a cohesive bean "soup," until the beans are thick enough that the spoon leaves a trail on the bottom of the skillet, about 10 minutes. Season with the salt and pepper. Scrape the beans into a medium bowl and cover it flush with plastic wrap. Let cool until barely warm, and then refrigerate until ready to use. (Rewarm the beans before making the huaraches.)
- 4. Make the salsa:** Combine the tomatillos, serrano chile, onion, lime juice, cilantro, and 1 teaspoon of salt in a food processor and pulse until an appealingly coarse salsa results, about 10 quick pulses. Taste for seasoning. Transfer the salsa to a serving bowl, cover, and refrigerate until ready to use. (Bring to room temperature before serving.)

5. Make the masa: If the hominy was prepared in advance and is no longer hot—or if it is, in fact, frozen—fill a large saucepan halfway with water and bring it to a boil over high heat. Stir in the hominy and leave it for a few minutes, until a kernel plucked from the water is hot throughout, about 1 minute if the hominy was at room temperature to start or about 3 minutes if it was frozen. Drain the hominy in a colander set in the sink, and then transfer to the food processor. Add the salt and process, pausing once or twice to scrape the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula, until the kernels become a uniformly fine masa that feels like hot Play-Doh, 3 to 4 minutes. Set a medium glass or ceramic bowl on a digital kitchen scale and tare the scale. Scrape the masa into the bowl and note its weight; this will allow you to easily and accurately portion the masa.

6. Wet your hands slightly and divide the masa into 16 even portions based on the masa's total weight. Place the portions in a zipper-lock bag and seal well. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. With a pair of scissors, cut off the side seams of a second gallon-size zipper-lock bag; leave the bottom intact. Open the bag like a book and lay it on the work surface. Remove two masa portions from the bag and reseal the bag. Roll each piece with your hands against the work surface into a baton, and then into a blunt carrot shape about 4 inches long, 1 inch wide at the top, and ½ inch wide at the tip. Place the batons side by side on one half of the cut-open bag, spacing them 4-inches apart, with the narrow ends pointing toward you. Cover them with the other half of the plastic. With a small offset spatula and sliding pressure that moves from the narrow end to the wide end, smooth and flatten each baton into a sandal shape about 5 inches long and ¼ inch thick. Lift the plastic and spread a heaping tablespoon (0.8 ounces) of warm (but not hot) refried beans in the center one of the sandals, keeping the beans well away from the edges. Lift the second sandal and place it directly on top. Wet your fingers slightly and gently pinch the layers together to seal the edges. Drape the plastic over the top again and use the offset spatula to smooth and flatten the huarache until it is 5 inches long by 3 inches wide and of an even 1/2-inch thickness. Lift the finished huarache and move it to the prepared baking sheet. Cover the baking sheet with plastic wrap and lay a damp kitchen towel on top. Repeat the process to make 7 more huaraches; as you work, keep the huaraches well covered to prevent the masa from drying. You will have leftover refried beans; reserve them for another meal.

7. Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set it near the stove. Heat a heavy-bottomed 10-inch square or rectangular griddle—preferably well-seasoned cast-iron—over high heat for 5 minutes. Pour 2 tablespoons of oil in the center of the griddle and slide one of the huaraches through the oil and onto the griddle. Repeat with a second huarache. Reduce the heat to medium or medium-high, depending on your burner. Cook until the bottoms begin to crisp, about 3 minutes. Brush one huarache with oil and, using a long metal spatula, flip it. Do the same with the second. Continue to cook the huaraches, flipping them occasionally, until both sides are crisp with brown splotches and occasional black pinpoint spots, 6 to 8 minutes total. Transfer the huaraches to the prepared baking sheet and cover with foil. Repeat with the remaining huaraches.

8. Adjust an oven rack so that it is positioned 4 to 5 inches from the upper heating element and preheat the broiler. Uncover the huaraches and broil until the surfaces have re-crisped, no more than a minute or so. Flip the huaraches and broil until the second sides have re-crisped. Sprinkle on the queso fresco, dividing it evenly, and continue to broil until the cheese is melted and spotty brown; the cheese browns very quickly, so keep a close watch. Top the huaraches with the shredded lettuce or cabbage, sliced radishes, and avocado slices and shower them with the cotija. Serve, passing the salsa verde separately.