

Vegan Picadillo-Stuffed Arepas (12-14 arepas)

Ingredients:

Arepas:

- 2.5 cups pre-cooked cornmeal
- 3 cups warm water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoon olive oil

Picadillo:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 1 cup yukon potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup cooked lentils
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup pimento stuffed olives, sliced
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

Instructions:

1. Combine cornmeal and salt in a large bowl. Gradually add warm water and knead until a smooth dough forms.
2. Allow the dough to rest for about 5 minutes.
3. Divide the dough into equal portions, shape into balls, then flatten each ball into a 1/2-inch thick disk.
4. Heat a griddle or skillet over medium heat, lightly oil it, and cook the arepas for 5-7 minutes on each side until golden brown and cooked through.
5. Let the arepas cool slightly.
6. For the filling: Start by heating the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the finely chopped onion and cook until it's translucent, about 3-5 minutes. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for another minute, until fragrant.
7. Add the bell pepper, carrots, and potatoes to the skillet. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables start to soften. If the mixture starts to stick, add a splash of vegetable broth.
8. Stir in the cooked lentils, tomato sauce, vegetable broth, olives, apple cider vinegar, ground cumin, dried oregano, chili powder and smoked paprika. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
9. Reduce the heat to low and let the mixture simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the potatoes and carrots are tender. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.
10. Once the picadillo is ready, taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary.
11. To assemble the arepas, once they are cool down split them open add the filling and garnish with cilantro.