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Gluten-free arepas offer rich corn flavor as counterpoint to gooey mozzarella filling

By Susie Iventosch



Arepas with Mozzarella Filling Photos Susie Iventosch

When I saw these enticing corn-based snacks at a street fair in New York City last fall, I just couldn't pass them up! Anything made with corn has my number, but these also had a delicious, gooey mozzarella filling and the combination was delicious. They were like two thick corn pancakes with mozzarella cheese in the middle, grilled to perfection. I make mine with only corn flour, so this version is gluten-free too, and great for anyone with wheat allergies.

Arepas date back to pre-Colombian times, but are still a very popular staple in Colombia, Argentina, Panama and now, New York City! They can be served plain or with any number of fillings from meats, to veggies and cheese, or even eggs. Or, you can top them with chopped tomatoes and cilantro. Sometimes they look more like an English muffin, with the filling in the middle, and sometimes they more resemble pancakes, a bit thinner. When I decided to make them myself, I tried several different recipes before settling on my own. I

thinned out my batter and made them more like stacked thin pancakes, layered with the cheese. I think what makes them so tasty is that the batter is made with puréed frozen corn, so they have a really rich corn flavor.

We normally make the arepas about four inches in diameter, but on several occasions, we've made them smaller, about two-inches in diameter, to serve as appetizers. Whichever way you decide to make these, they will probably become a staple in your diet, too. This recipe makes about 12 four-inch single pancakes, or 6 double stacked.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup frozen corn kernels
- 1 1/4 cup corn flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 3 tablespoons canola oil or olive oil (for frying the corn cakes)
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

DIRECTIONS

Place corn in the bowl of your food processor and puree until almost smooth. There will still be some lumps and that is okay.

Turn the corn out into a mixing bowl. Add all remaining ingredients except the mozzarella. Stir well. If the mixture is too thick, add a little extra milk.

Preheat the griddle over medium-high heat. Spoon the corn batter onto the griddle in whatever size pancakes you would like. We make a 4-inch pancake for a side dish, and we make a 2-inch pancake for an appetizer size.

Allow the pancakes to turn golden-brown on the bottom and then flip to cook the other side.

Once the second side is cooked, cover the tops of half the pancakes with a slice or two of the mozzarella. Then leaving the prettiest side up, place the remaining pancakes on top of the mozzarella. Cook just until cheese is melted and gooey.

If you want tall arepas, just double up the pancake sandwiches with a layer of mozzarella in between for a double arepa pancake sandwich.

Serve hot with your favorite hot sauce, salsa, or dipping sauce.



Photo Susie Iventosch



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[back](#)

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