

RECIPES

ZUCCARDI'S ARGENTINE EMPANADAS

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Recipe courtesy of the Zuccardi Family Bodega

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SERVES 6-8

Empanadas are a source of national, local, and family pride in Argentina. Ask any Argentine and he will tell you that Argentine empanadas are better than empanadas from any other country, and that empanadas from his town are better than the empanadas from any other town, and of course that his mother's empanadas are better than anyone else's mother's empanadas.

We had the pleasure of dining with the Zuccardi family, and we can certainly vouch for their claim to make the best empanadas. We are happy that they agreed to let us share their recipe in our book. These are *great* empanadas—and the perfect start to a meal at home, or at the Zuccardi's Casa del Visitante Restaurant, which combines the best of Argentine and Italian tradition. Enjoy them with a glass of Zuccardi Serie A Malbec 2009.

FOR THE DOUGH

2¼ pounds all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons salt
1½ sticks butter (12 tablespoons)
butter
3 ounces lard or vegetable
shortening
2-4 tablespoons cold water
Cornstarch, as needed
2 egg yolks, whisked, for brushing

FOR THE MEAT FILLING

¼ cup olive oil
4 large onions, diced
2 pounds ground beef
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon oregano
6 eggs, hardboiled and chopped

MAKE THE DOUGH

Put the flour and salt into a bowl. Using your fingers or two knives, blend the butter and fat into the dry ingredients until small crumbs appear. Add the water, a little at a time, and gently mix together with a fork until a ball forms. Sprinkle a flat surface with cornstarch and stretch the dough into a large flat disc. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough until it is ¼-inch thick. Sprinkle the top of the dough with cornstarch and fold the dough into four layers. Transfer to a plate and let rest in the refrigerator, loosely covered with a towel for one hour.

When ready to use, with a rolling pin again, roll out the dough until it is ¼-inch thick. Using a cookie cutter (or a glass, or a coffee mug), cut the dough into rounds. Transfer rounds to a platter and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until ready to fill.

MAKE THE MEAT FILLING

Heat the oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking, then add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the ground beef and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned. Add the salt, pepper, paprika, and oregano and stir to combine. Add the chopped eggs, and stir gently to combine well. Remove from heat.

TO ASSEMBLE

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Transfer the pastry rounds to a flat surface sprinkled with cornstarch. Place a tablespoon of the ground meat mixture in the center of the rounds. Using your fingertips, wet the edges of the pastry with cold water. Fold the dough over the filling to form half-moon shapes and crimp the edges with the tines of a fork to seal. Using a pastry brush, brush the tops with egg yolks.

Bake the empanadas in the oven until golden brown, about 15–20 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool for 5 minutes before serving.