

## Picadillo Empanadas with Romesco Sauce

Picadillo is a classic Cuban dish made with chopped meat, usually beef, onions, garlic, raisins, almonds, olives, tomatoes, and spices. It is usually served with rice. Picadillo comes from the Spanish word, "picar", which means "to cut into small pieces".

### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds fresh ground chicken thighs
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground Spanish paprika, preferably,
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 6-ounce can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon dry Sherry
- 1/3 cup golden raisins, chopped
- 1/4 cup green olives, chopped
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 packages puff pastry, thawed
- 1 extra large egg
- 2 teaspoons water
- Romesco Sauce
- 2 medium red bell peppers
- 2 plum tomatoes
- 1/2 cup Marcona almonds, unsalted
- 2 ancho chiles, soaked in boiling water until soft,
- 1 tablespoon roasted garlic paste
- 1 slice whole wheat bread
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Spanish paprika
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

### Method

1. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat; add ground chicken,

mashing it with the back of a spoon. Cook until lightly browned. Add cumin, cinnamon, oregano, and garlic; toast spices and garlic for 1 minute or until fragrant. Add sherry and tomato paste; cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes or until paste is well combined with chicken.

2. Add raisins and green olives. (Mixture will be tight, if serving over rice, thin it out with a can of stewed tomatoes.) Taste, adjust seasoning if necessary; cool completely before proceeding.
3. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Combine egg and water in a small bowl. Unroll puff pastry, dust with flour and roll lightly to flatten. Cut circles, using a 3-inch cookie cutter or small glass. Using a small spoon or melon baller, spoon meat mixture onto one half of each circle. Lightly brush one side of pastry with egg wash, fold over, sealing edges firmly. Repeat until all the meat is gone.
4. Arrange empanadas on a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving an inch between each. Brush with egg wash, sprinkle a few toasted sesame or poppy seeds on top. Bake for 8-12 minutes or until golden brown. Keep warm until serving.
5. For the Romesco: Place tomatoes, and peppers onto a small baking sheet; place under a broiler and broil turning into tomatoes and peppers are charred. Remove from the oven; let cool. Once cooled, peel the skin from the peppers and remove stem and seeds.
6. Place almonds into a food processor; pulsing until smooth. (This is nut butter.) Add roasted tomatoes and peppers, chiles, garlic, bread, vinegar, paprika, and salt. Blend until almost smooth; add olive oil. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. The Romesco can be made up to 5 days in advance. Bring to room temperature before serving.

## Notes

The picadillo should be made at least one day in advance. You want the mixture cool when filling the pastry. You can make the empanadas a couple days in advance and bake. When ready to serve, re-heat in a preheated 325 degree oven for about 10-15 minutes or until warm. A good quality prepared tomato sauce is great for dipping the empanadas. Heat, add fresh cilantro and serve alongside empanadas. Source: Yolanda Banks