

SALVADORAN PUPUSAS

Cheese, Black Bean & Winter Squash

Prep Time: 45 minutes | Cook Time: 30 minutes | Yield: 4 Portions (4 Pupusas)

Description

Pupusas are the national dish of El Salvador and a cornerstone of Central American masa culture. Made from nixtamalized corn, these thick hand-formed cakes are traditionally filled, griddled, and served with curtido and salsa roja. The flavor profile balances warm toasted corn, creamy melted cheese, earthy beans, and lightly sweet roasted squash. Pupusas are communal food—meant to be shared, eaten by hand, and enjoyed in the rhythm of conversation. Their roots trace back to Indigenous Pipil communities, where nixtamalization preserved both nutrition and culinary heritage.

Ingredients

- 1 cup masa harina (nixtamalized corn flour) *chefs product choice - [Masienda](#)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup warm water (as needed for soft dough)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp kosher salt
- FILLINGS:
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked black beans (see bean preparation below)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded mozzarella or Oaxaca-style cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup roasted winter squash mash (see squash preparation below)
- Oil or dry comal for cooking *option of 1 teaspoon of oil to dough to make more pliable



Directions

1. In a mixing bowl, combine masa harina and salt. Gradually add warm water, mixing until a soft play-dough consistency forms. Rest 10 minutes covered.
2. Divide dough into 4 equal balls. Flatten each into a thick disc.
3. Place approximately 1 tablespoon (1 oz) filling into the center. Seal dough carefully around filling and gently flatten to about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness.
4. Preheat comal or skillet over medium heat. Cook pupusas 3-4 minutes per side until lightly charred and heated through.
5. Optional: Finish in 275°F oven until internal temperature reaches 165°F for food safety.
6. Serve warm with curtido and salsa roja.

Black Bean Preparation

1. Soak 1 cup dry black beans in 3 cups water overnight (8–12 hours).
2. Drain and cover with fresh water. Simmer 60–90 minutes until tender.
3. Season with salt during final 10 minutes of cooking.
4. Drain most liquid and mash to thick, spreadable consistency.

Winter Squash Preparation

1. Peel and cube 1 cup winter squash.
2. Toss lightly with oil and a pinch of salt.
3. Roast at 400°F for 20–25 minutes until tender and lightly caramelized.
4. Mash to a thick, smooth consistency suitable for filling.

Chef Ron's Notes

- Use high-quality heirloom masa for superior corn aroma and flavor.
- Keep hands slightly damp when shaping to prevent cracking.
- Do not overfill—thin even distribution prevents bursting.
- Pupusas are traditionally eaten by hand and shared communally.
- Curtido improves when fermented 24 hours in advance.
- Encourage students to listen to the sound of the comal—it tells you when heat is correct.

