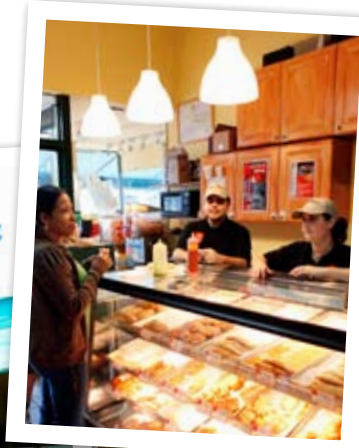




Take It From Here

Miami's turn as Super Bowl host city is the perfect reason to whip up a favorite local snack: **empanadas**.



Each Latin-American country puts its own twist on empanadas; this cornmeal crust is a Venezuelan tradition.

Empanadas aren't exactly the quintessential game-day food, but for this year's Super Bowl, they're in order: The Latin-American snacks are a favorite at Miami's Land Shark Stadium, home to the big game on February 7. You can find empanadas all over Miami, but traditionalists swear by the ones at Charlotte Bakery (1499 Washington Ave., Miami Beach; 305-535-0095), a family business that started in Chile in the 1960s before moving to Venezuela and, eventually, Miami in 1996. The shop specializes in the Venezuelan style: white-cornmeal dough stuffed with shredded beef and deep-fried. Venezuelan expats travel miles for this taste of home. Thanks to this once-secret recipe from third-generation co-owner Harry Coleman, your guests will only have to reach across the coffee table for theirs.

VENEZUELAN EMPANADAS

ACTIVE: 1 hr 25 min | TOTAL: 2 hr 55 min | MAKES: 12 empanadas

FOR THE FILLING

- 1½ pounds beef blade roast, cut into 4 pieces, trimmed
- 4 bay leaves
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ medium onion, diced
- ¼ green bell pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 shallot, diced
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons sazón completa (Spanish seasoning blend, found in the spice aisle)
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- Freshly ground pepper

FOR THE DOUGH

- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil, plus more for greasing and frying
- 1½ tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3½ cups precooked cornmeal (such as P.A.N. brand)
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

FOR THE SAUCE

- 1¼ cups cilantro (leaves and stems)
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium avocado, halved, seeded and peeled
- ¼ green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 4 teaspoons white vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

FOOD PHOTOS: KATE MATHIS; FOOD STYLING: ANNE DISRUDE; PROP STYLING: PAMELA DUNCAN; SILVER INSETS: MARK PETERSON/REDUX (3)



1. Make the filling: Place the beef, bay leaves, 1 tablespoon salt and water to cover in a saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce to a simmer, cover and cook until the meat is almost falling apart, about 1 hour 30 minutes. Transfer the meat to a bowl and shred with a fork; cool. Reserve the broth.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, garlic and shallot; cook until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Stir in the scallion, paprika, sazón completa, oregano, cumin and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Add the beef and 1 cup of the reserved broth and cook over medium heat until thick, about 10 minutes. Season with salt.
3. Make the dough: Mix 3½ cups hot water, the sugar, vegetable oil, butter and salt in a medium bowl until the butter melts. Stir in the cornmeal and flour until a soft dough forms, then knead on a clean surface until the dough comes together. Shape into 12 balls, using about ½ cup dough for each.
4. One at a time, sprinkle each dough ball with water, place between two pieces of lightly oiled heavy-duty plastic wrap (a cut resealable bag works well) and roll into a 7-inch circle. Remove the top sheet of plastic and place 2 to 3 tablespoons filling in the center of the dough. Use the bottom piece of plastic to fold the dough in half over the filling and press to seal. Trim into a half-moon shape with a knife or press down with the round edge of a bowl. Remove the plastic and place the empanada on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
5. Preheat the oven to 300°. Heat 1 inch of vegetable oil in a large skillet until a deep-fry thermometer registers 365°. Fry the empanadas in batches until golden, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined baking sheet; keep warm in the oven.
6. Make the sauce: Combine the cilantro, olive oil, avocado, bell pepper, scallion, vinegar and garlic in a blender. Add 1 teaspoon salt and 2 teaspoons pepper and puree until smooth. Thin out the sauce with up to ¼ cup water and serve with the empanadas.

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