

CONVERSATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: LET'S TALK ABOUT FOOD

CONVERSATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: *the Past*

Wanda dePaz-Ibanez

Serenata de Bacalao (salted codfish salad)



Directions

1. Salted codfish needs to be prepared by desalting. There are several techniques. The simplest, but longest, is to rinse under running water and then soak in fresh water for 24 hours, changing the water three times during the process. A shorter procedure is to soak for about two hours and then change the water and boil for 10-20 minutes or until desalted to taste.
2. Once ready, drain all the water and shred or cut the codfish into smaller pieces. Pull any skin or remaining bones from the fish.
3. Finely dice the onions, dice the pepper, and finely shred the cabbage. Cut the tomatoes into eight wedges each. You may also add sliced avocados and/or manzanilla olives and capers.

Ingredients

- 1 salted codfish (preferably with no bones, sin espinas)
- 2 medium onions
- 2 medium green bell peppers
- 2 medium ripe tomatoes
- Shredded green cabbage (about a quarter or more depending on your preference)
- Cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper (to taste)*

*Taste before adding any salt, it may already have enough

4. On a platter, scatter about half the cabbage and pile the codfish on top. I like to mix about half the onions and peppers and place on top of the fish, but it is really a matter of preference. Place the rest of the ingredients around the codfish in an attractive pattern. Finally, sprinkle with olive oil to taste. If needed, add some salt and fresh pepper to taste. You may adjust any of the ingredients to taste. For example, I usually add less green peppers and more avocados and tomatoes! Listo!
5. Serve with boiled viandas (any root vegetables like yuca, malanga, batata, potatoes), and/or green boiled bananas and ripe plantains. This may also be served with white rice. One of my favorites is to serve the bacalao on top of tostones (twice fried green plantains) as an appetizer!

Wanda dePaz-Ibanez Food Memory of Serenata de Bacalao

This recipe is one among many favorites! I chose it because it is one of the recipes that my mother prepares for us frequently and that my seven siblings and I love to share. (Even though my youngest sibling is already in his 50s, mom still loves to prepare our favorite foods!). I also chose it because it is not as well-known as some of my other favorites, like arroz con pollo or plantain mofongo.

I grew up in Jayuya, a small town in the heart of our Puerto Rican mountains. When I was growing up, seafood was not part of our traditional diet, except for salted codfish (bacalao). Bacalao is prepared in many delicious forms, and was a staple of menus during Lent, when meat of any kind was not allowed. Codfish salad is enjoyed during the rest of the year as a light and refreshing meal during our warm tropical days! Living in Florida, I think this a perfect recipe for our hot summers, since it is refreshing like a ceviche, simple and fast to prepare, and you do not need to turn the stove on!