

Fried Cheese Arepa Empanadas (Gluten-Free)

Servings: 6 empanadas

Ingredients

- 1 cup arepa flour (masarepa, not masa harina)
- 1 1/4 cups warm water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon oil or melted butter (optional)
- 1 cup shredded cheese (mozzarella, Oaxaca, or a mix with queso fresco)
- Oil for frying

Instructions

1. Prepare the dough

In a bowl, combine the warm water, salt, and oil. Slowly add the arepa flour and mix with your hands until combined.

Let the dough rest for 5 minutes to fully hydrate.

2. Adjust texture

The dough should be soft, smooth, and not sticky.

If it feels dry, add a little water.

If it is too sticky, sprinkle in a small amount of flour.

3. Shape the empanadas

Divide the dough into 6 equal portions and roll into balls.

Flatten each ball into a disc about 1/4 inch thick.

Place cheese in the center, fold over, and seal the edges well.

Press firmly to ensure they do not open during frying.

4. Fry

Heat about 1 inch of oil over medium heat (approximately 350°F / 175°C).

Fry the empanadas for 2 to 3 minutes per side, until golden and crisp.

Remove and drain on paper towels.

Flavor Profile

These empanadas have a crisp, golden exterior with a soft, slightly chewy corn dough inside. The filling is warm, melted cheese, creating a rich and comforting contrast in texture and flavor.

Tips

- Do not skip resting the dough. This step ensures proper hydration and easier handling.
- Keep the oil at medium heat to avoid burning the outside before the inside cooks through.
- Do not overcrowd the pan, as this lowers the oil temperature and affects crispness.
- If the dough cracks while shaping, it is too dry. Add a small amount of water and knead again.
- Seal the edges carefully. You can lightly moisten your fingers with water to help seal if needed.

Storage

Refrigerator:

Store cooked empanadas in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Reheat in a pan or air fryer for best results.

Freezer:

Freeze raw or cooked empanadas. For best results, freeze them individually on a tray before transferring to a bag.

Cook from frozen by adding a few extra minutes to the frying time.

Nutritional Information (per empanada, approximate)

- Calories: 180 to 220
- Protein: 6 to 8 grams
- Carbohydrates: 18 to 22 grams
- Fat: 9 to 12 grams
- Fiber: 1 to 2 grams

Values will vary depending on the type of cheese used and the amount of oil absorbed during frying.