

*There are some things that are bona fide and simply can not be altered. Period. Then there are those things that can be played around with and even taken to an upper echelon of greatness, not exhibited in the original.*

Early last year, I interviewed J. Lo's personal chef, the man that opened up and ran her Madre's restaurant in LA. He's Cuban. An all out, non-English speaking Cubano that told it to me like it was. When I asked him about molecular gastronomy and all its hype and glory these days, he quickly objected. In the same emphatic manner in which Chef Joel Robuchon did when I posed the same question.

As far as Cuban food goes, most elderly home-cooks and seasoned chefs will adhere to that philosophy?that Cuban food is Cuban food and is extraordinary without having to add all these over-the-top ingredients.

In my young career as a chef/cook/blogger (what ever the hell you want to classify me), I disagree, just a bit.

Some things can be altered and reinvented and fused, ultimately resulting in something like **"You've Won a Car"** on the **Price is Right!**

I do it to flan all the time. I love having over 40 flavors and so do my clients and friends! You couldn't even guess what's the best seller these days. Ironically, non having to do with "traditional" Cuban flavors. The technique, yes, but the flavors are representative of "other" ingredients I've embraced and just love.

Notwithstanding the large number of purists that still remain, I respect them and stick to certain rules with certain dishes.

**CARNE ASADA**, or a good ass roast is one of them!

My mother, whom I reference a lot in this blog, is my **Master Chef**. She's taught me 90% of what I know and continues to guide, scold, correct and on the proud occasion, compliment me! **"Mi'jita, pero eso te quedo riquisimo!"** she'll say! Other times, she'll tell me in a stern voice that I didn't add enough water, or that I added entirely too much cumin to my **ropa vieja**. *"Si, si, si, mami..."*

For my birthday, back in November, we feasted for the 2.5 weeks I was home. I'll share that whole **caja china** experience in a different post, because it really does deserve its own. Anyway, on the night WE made the roast, I was all geek'd because I was going to "alter" it to my new-found interest in non-traditional seasoning for our glorious traditional food!

Yeah right. Hold up, wait a minute. She caught me rubbing down the roast with a made-up **mojo**, and stopped me in my rightful track.

*I gracefully ignored her and kept it moving. The roast had to be rubbed down and let sit overnight, so I was on a mission.*

*This is what the raw round looks like, with all its mojo goodness on it. **Admission:** I can't believe I've not shared a home made mojo recipe with you that like using it and rely on Goya's or some other store brand pre-made mixture. I'll get to that. And if you can't wait, email me.*

Making the roast is fun, yet intricate. Perfecting **carne asada** is a job. It's a professional job. Not for the instant gratification individual (much like myself); rather for the chef/cook that can appreciate the steps and technique.

### **For starters, let's talk about the ROUND.**

Round is a primal cut of the cow, toward its rump. A really chunky and juicy part that when used right, might be one your more frequent go-to cuts. There's the *top*, *eye* and *bottom* round. Each has its own common use and technique (i.e., roasting, pan-frying, broiling and braising). Top round, at least the way we make in on our very traditional Cuban home, is our main, go-to cut.

In addition to *carne asada*, we also use round to make Carne Con Papa (that post needs some serious love?won't you give it some?)

For our **carne asada**, the important thing is making sure it's browned properly and all the way through by **braising** it. This process is what ultimately gives it that color and look. After all, we know the aesthetic of food is the first thing that attracts to us dishes. The subsequent steps (ie, simmering in the right amount of liquid) helps in tenderizing the tough cut and yielding enough sauce for the final dish. For browning or "*dorando*," we use canola oil and let it cook for 30-45 minutes or so, depending on the size of your round and temperature you're cooking it in. To ensure you accomplish that pretty and perfect *dorado* color, you should turn your chunky round every 15 minutes (again, depending on the size and temperature).

This is the unfortunate, yet challenging part!! This recipe is going into the never-ending cookbook I'm STILL working on and I can't publish the full recipe. I think I've given you hints on how to start, at least. I swear to you to though, that it's utter goodness and I love being able to successfully make a beautiful plate of *carne asada*. The resulting sauce is good enough to soup out of a spoon. So with that, I'll leave you wanting and supporting me in getting the book published, which you can refer to on page 73!

If you attempt to make and accomplish it, and I HOPE you do, serve it with white long grain rice or

brown rice seasoned with **achiote** or saffron and definitely some plantains or *tostones* on the side!

Buen Provecho!

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I invite you to read the [last post](#) to be informed and hopefully be involved in **STIR IT 28**, the nation-wide campaign that myself and two other bloggers have formed to benefit Haiti. As part of the **STIR IT 28**, month-long fundraiser, my **ONE COMMENT. ONE EATS.** hunger campaign will extend to the relief efforts in Haiti. For every comment left on this post, one non-persishable food item will be donated to [Share Our Strength](#). Please consider being a part of movement! Comments will be eligible until Feb. 28th. Our campaign Facebook page is [here](#). Here is the badge you are free to place on your blog. Please link back to <http://tinyurl.com/yfvvzd4>. Thanks!