

Tostones, Maduros, Platano Y Other Things...

*I am way behind schedule on this post, so I apologize to all those I told to come back sometime on Monday to check out today's post on **PLANTAINS!** I decided to DRIVE home to DC for a much needed break and lots of cookin' in *mi madre's* kitchen.*

Oh yeah, and a week long photo shoot for the book! Man, talk about work. After 10 hours stuck in my car, Geisha and I just wanted to plop down on what ever was soft as soon as we arrived. Instead, I made a bee line for the *cocina* and had *carne ripiada* or *ropa vieja* with black beans and rice. I had called my mom 40 minutes before I arrived and asked her to *please, please* have some food ready. Burger King's crispy and spicy chicken sandwich at 9 am did really mean things to me 10 minutes later. I will spare you.

After I took all of 5 minutes to eat, I was exhausted and would have preferred to pack the calories and carbs on my Beyoncé thick thighs by taking a nap, but I promised to do this...so here I am. Midnight, hungry again, tired and really wanting some chocolate.

Many of you left comments wanting recipes for either *tostones* and *maduros*, both which are eaten ALL the time in my parent's home, my apartment and every other Latino family in the world! Growing up and till this day I always try to make plantain with any Cuban or Latin dinner I cook. The problem lies in not always being able to find ripe ones, last minute. I typically have to wait a few days for them to get black enough.

When I lived in Va, I used to shop for super ripe and right at point plantains at this African market right across the street from my rinky-dink (in s

ize) apartment. If I was really pressed, I'd run instead of drive. I figured with all the deep frying I was getting ready to do, running to and fro would probably be a good idea. Anyway, the Ghanaian owned bootleg shop was the only one near me that always had plantains I could cook that night. Of course, if I was looking for green plantains (which wasn't as often), I could always find that.

So for those of you that love eating plantain and for those of you that never have, I'm about to share with you **three** different ways you can quickly serve this fave fruit of mine and millions of others. I have made it about **5** other different ways, including plantain cheese balls?YUM!!, but I'll save those for some other time.

Damn, this vanilla chai tea is NOT doing it for me right now...(now 2 am)

Thanks to Wikipedia, I get to cheat a

bit tonight (please do forgive me) with some brief history on plantain:

"Plantains tend to be firmer and lower in sugar content than dessert bananas and are used either when green or under-ripe (and therefore starchy) or overripe (and therefore sweet). Plantains are a staple food in the tropical regions of the world, treated in much the same way as potatoes and with a similar neutral flavour and texture when unripe. They are grown as far north as Florida, the Caribbean and Central America, the Canary Islands, Madeira, Egypt, and southern Japan or Taiwan and as far south as KwaZulu-Natal and southern Brazil. The largest exporter of plantains to the United States is Colombia.

MADUROS OR PLATANITOS FRITO

This is my favorite way to eat plantain. Really ripe, sweet and the fastest way of preparing. Though you will want to get a really dark looking plantain, with little to not yellow and definitely **NO** green, you may hit or miss depending on the internal ripening. An example are the ones I cooked a few hours ago. They were very black and soft on the outside but they didn't taste as sweet as I was hoping. **Peeled and sliced diagonally into 1?pieces, they are deep fried until golden brown. You can sprinkle sugar or nutmeg on them.** And all Latin nationalities may even differ in how they eat them. For instance, El Salvadorians cut them thicker and pour a gallop of sour cream on top. Not my cup of tea at all, but clearly it works for them.

Anyway, my dad was okay with the end result, but I like them a bit sweeter. You can eat *plátanito frito* with anything! Really. It's not a fancy way of cooking *plátanos* or anything like that...they're just good!

(These are waaaay too ugly but they were pretty good. Again, they don't have to be this ripened, but it's what I had around tonight).

and then you have...

TOSTONES

This other way of deep fried plantain is very popular. A completely different taste and a bit more labor intensive, I think you'll love these more, especially if you don't have a sweet tooth.

You want to make sure you pick a very green plantain that is hard. If you fry one that is starting to

ripen, you'll quickly see that it won't keep that perfect little flat patty shape. It might not form all that great and start to break apart. But you can go forward with it anyway. Again, b/c these require a bit more work, give yourself a about 10 additional minutes. **Cut into 2?pieces and fry on each side for about 1 minute. Remove from heat and with a brown paper bag, flatten them using the pressure of your palm (yeah the old traditional and practical way of doing it before "** *plantaneras*" became available, if at all). Deep fry for about 2-3 minutes, or until golden. Sprinkle sea salt on the *tostones*, instead of sugar, and you can even do a really good garlic *mojo* to dip in or pour over. I love it with the *mojo* when I add a bit of orange zest.

and lastly (for now)...

PLÁTANO HERVIDO (boiled)

This is also very simple and takes the longest of the three. To make *plátanos sancochados* (the way Cubans say it) you want to get an "in between" plantain that is more ripe than green. It can't be black though. It can show some black speckles but it should be more yellow than anything. **Cut into 2.5? pieces, boil (with peel on) and then peel... You can sprinkle nutmeg on this mildly sweet *plátano* or just eat as is.**

This process is the same way we make a number of other plantain dishes, including "*fufu*" or those cheese balls I mentioned earlier. I'll touch on that later. As I mentioned earlier, there are about 10 or so different ways of cooking plantain that I know of and have had. These 3 are just really easy and basic. I will get into the fancy way of having plantain, though you just might have to wait for the book!

okay sike.

If you have any questions on how to prepare any one of these, please don't hesitate to ask or email me!

Okay I'm out friends. I've had a tremendously long day and I need some sleep before I forget all the groceries I still need to buy first thing in the morning. Doing off site cooking?ugh.

Oh yeah and I have a really exciting non-food related post for next time. Think great music, Grammy nominee, etc...

Stay tuned!

MADUROS OR PLATANITOS FRITO

Ingredients:

- Ripe plantain
- 1 cup cooking oil, vegetable or canola

Instruction:

With a paring knife, cut off ends of plantain, about 1/2". Cut skin vertically, deep enough to see the yellowish meat. Pull apart and peel. Using same knife, slice into the plantain diagonally, making your pieces about 1" thick. In medium skillet, heat oil on high and fry on each side until golden brown. If you like them crispier on the edges, cook just a tad bit longer.

Serves 3; use more plantain to double

TOSTONES

Ingredients:

- Green (very green) plantain
- 2 cups cooking oil, vegetable or canola
- sea salt to taste
- 1 clove garlic (optional)

Instruction:

With a paring knife, cut off ends of plantain, about 1/2". Cut skin vertically, deep enough to see the yellowish/pinkish meat. Pull apart and peel. Cut plantain into 2-3" chunks. In medium skillet heat oil on high. Fry plantain for 2 minutes on each side. Remove from skillet and place on cutting board. If you have brown paper bag, place the plantain in between paper. Using the palm of your hand, mash

the plantain until it's flattened out into a nice patty size. Fry again for about 3 minutes or until golden. Sprinkle salt over top and serve.

If you them to have a garlicky taste, chop 1 clove and saute until garlic is browned. Cook *tostones* per steps above.

Serves 3; use more plantain to double

PLÁTANO HERVIDO (boiled)

Ingredients:

- Ripe plantain
- 4 cups water
- nutmeg, sugar (optional)

Instruction:

In medium sauce pan, boil water. With a paring knife, cut off ends of plantain, about 1/2?. Leaving skin on, cut into 2-3? chunks. Boil for about 20 minutes or until plantain gets bright yellow in center. Remove from boiling water. With the same knife, peel plantain and sprinkle nutmeg or sugar on top.

Serves 3; use more plantain to double