



Mexico: Tamales

Tamales are made from a corn-based dough, called masa, wrapped around meats, beans and cheese and steamed inside a corn husk or banana leaf. Masa is produced by grinding nixtamalised corn. Nixtamalisation is the name given to the process of cooking and steeping corn kernels in an alkaline solution, commonly of calcium hydroxide. This degrades the pericarp, the outermost layer of the corn kernel, and softens the corn, making it easier to grind and also increasing its flavour and nutritional value.



The nixtamalisation process



1% calcium
hydroxide solution

Cook



1 hour



80 °C

Steep



16-18
hours