

SIFT Sunday

A taste of Nicaragua



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Gallo Pinto

Gallo Pinto, or rice and beans, is one of the most traditional dishes that you'll find in Nicaragua. The name means "speckled rooster" in Spanish, after the colour that the beans bring to the rice.

Ingredients (serves 10, costs approx £3)

- 400g black turtle beans
- 10 sprigs of fresh coriander, finely chopped
- 1 onion, finely diced
- ½ green pepper, finely diced
- 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 700 ml chicken (or vegetable) stock
- 370g white long grain rice (not quick cook)
- ½ tsp salt



Method

1. Rinse the beans, place into a saucepan and add one litre of fresh water.
2. Bring the water to a boil, cover the pan and boil for ten minutes. Reduce heat to a very low simmer and simmer for an hour until the beans are soft and the juice is almost consumed. Add the salt part way through the simmer. Add more water if the beans start to boil dry.
3. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan. Add the dry, uncooked rice and saute for two minutes over a medium heat (adjust the heat to ensure that you don't burn the rice).
4. Add the coriander, pepper and half of the onion to the pan and saute for another two minutes.
5. Add the chicken stock and bring to the boil.
6. Cover the frying pan and reduce the heat. Leave to simmer for about 15-20 minutes, until the rice is tender, stirring to make sure that the rice doesn't stick. Add more water if necessary.
7. Drain the excess juice from the beans, then stir them into the rice with the other half of the onion. Add salt to taste.
8. Add the remaining 3 tbsp of oil and fry the gallo pinto for a few more minutes before serving.

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Ensalada de Repollo

Ensalada de Repollo is a fresh Nicaraguan cabbage salad. Slice the cabbage as finely as you can for the best result and make sure that you prepare it at least 2 hours before serving to give the dressing a chance to work on the other ingredients.

Ingredients (serves 8-10, costs approx £1.50)

- ½ white cabbage, finely sliced
- 1 carrot, julienned
- ½ red onion, finely diced
- 2 salad tomatoes, diced
- 60ml distilled (white) vinegar
- 1 lime, juiced
- 15g fresh coriander, chopped
- ½ tsp salt



Method

1. Place the cabbage, carrot, red onion and tomatoes in a bowl.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, lime juice, salt and coriander.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad ingredients and mix together. Place in the fridge for 2 hours before serving.

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Carne Asada with Chimichurri

For many Nicaragua families, meat is only eaten on special occasions. Carne Asada means “grilled meat” and this dish is served with a parsley and garlic sauce called chimichurri.

Ingredients (serves 6, costs approx £5.60)

- 395g thin cut beef steaks, cut into 12 pieces
- 100g pack fresh flat leaf parsley
- 4 cloves garlic
- 240ml olive oil
- 60ml red wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp water
- 1 ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp finely ground black pepper



Method

1. Put the parsley and garlic in a food processor and process until finely chopped.
2. Add the oil, red wine vinegar, water, salt and pepper and process until it forms a thick sauce.
3. Place half of the chimichurri in a bowl for serving with the cooked meat.
4. Place the steaks in a non-metallic bowl and pour the remaining chimichurri over the meat. Cover the meat and let it marinate in the fridge for 30 minutes, turning several times.
5. Preheat the grill to high.
6. Drain the beef and grill until cooked to taste.
7. Serve the grilled beef with the remaining chimichurri on the side.