

There is something exciting about the many ways you can use a simple masa to create different forms, shapes, and flavors. A gordita is one of many examples, made by puffing up a rounder, thicker tortilla, then opening it up to form a pocket—sort of like a pita bread.

A mixture of potato and chorizo is one of the most popular and classic gordita fillings in Mexico. Because chorizo is so strongly spiced and has some heat of its own, I prefer a milder salsa with this dish. Its real job is to provide a little tanginess to cut through the meaty sausage and starchy potatoes.

GORDITAS DE PAPAS CON CHORIZO

Potato Gorditas with Chorizo Makes 8

Filling and Cooking

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1 cup peeled, diced russet potatoes (from about 1 medium-to-large potato)

Rice bran oil or canola oil, for griddling

1 cup Chorizo Oaxaqueño (page 44, *not included*) or crumbled store-bought Mexican chorizo, casings removed

Masa

3 cups Homemade Masa (page 12, *not included*) or masa prepared from store-bought masa harina

1 tablespoon lard or softened unsalted butter

For serving

Salsa de Árbol (see below)

Queso fresco

Thinly sliced cabbage

Chopped fresh cilantro

Diced white onion

Bring a small pot of water to a boil; add the salt and potatoes, and let cook until al dente, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain and set aside.

In a medium bowl, mix the masa with the lard until well combined. Form the masa into 8 equal balls, a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each, then flatten each ball slightly. In a tortilla press lined on both sides with a round of plastic, flatten each masa ball into a round slightly thicker than a tortilla (between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and 4 inches wide).

In a large skillet or griddle over medium heat, drizzle in about 1 teaspoon oil for each tortilla, and add as many tortillas as you can without overlapping them. Cook, turning once, until puffed up and filled with air, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove and let cool slightly. Using a paring knife or butter knife, pierce the edge of each gordita horizontally, then carefully wiggle the knife between the layers, separating them and creating an opening in the top third of the gordita (it should look like a coin purse).

When ready to serve, in a large skillet or griddle over medium-high heat, drizzle in 1 to 2 teaspoons oil and add a gordita; cook, turning once or twice, until lightly crispy on both sides, about 4 minutes total. Repeat with the remaining gorditas, adding more oil to the pan as needed.

Meanwhile, in a separate medium skillet, cook the chorizo, stirring occasionally, until cooked through and hot, about 6 minutes. Stir in the potatoes and cook until hot and tender. Divide the mixture among the gorditas, stuffing 1/4 cup of it into each pocket. Garnish with the salsa de árbol, queso fresco, cabbage, cilantro, and onion.

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Salsa de árbol is a smooth, saucy salsa that is high in acid and tartness thanks to the tomatoes, tomatillos, and vinegar. You can use this salsa as the base for chilaquiles, tossed onto chips or totopos (page 64/*not included*), or spooned atop any antojito or entrée that contains a lot of fat, like a braised meat or stew such as Birria al Res (page 151/*not included*). The salsa's acidity will help add contrast and cut the richness of these dishes.

This salsa is not quite as spicy as the Salsa Frita de Árbol (page 222/*not included*), but it is still quite impressively spicy.

SALSA DE ÁRBOL

Makes about 2 cups

1 tablespoon olive oil

Scant 1/4 cup dried árbol chiles, stemmed and seeded

1 1/2 cups (12 ounces) canned diced tomatoes and their juices

1 small tomatillo

2 tablespoons white vinegar

1 small clove garlic

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed

In a small pot, heat the oil over high heat, then add the chiles; let cook, continuously tossing the chiles so that they do not burn, about 10 seconds. When they turn bright orange, they are done. Immediately remove from the oil.

Add three-quarters of the chiles to a blender and reserve the rest. Add the tomatoes, tomatillo, vinegar, garlic, salt, and 2 tablespoons water and blend until smooth. Taste and adjust the seasoning, or blend in more of the remaining chiles, to taste.

Pour the blended salsa into a small pot, bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and let simmer for 15 minutes. Serve warm or cool.

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