

Mexican Wedding Cakes Recipe

I wonder when the holiday baking period officially ends. After Christmas or before New Year's Eve? Does it end on January 6th to celebrate Epiphany? In our home the holiday baking will continue for a while because baking and cooking actually relax me. I know, I'm weird like that.

The other day I had a sweet idea to invite the family over for dessert after our post-Christmas lunch at a local restaurant. To continue the holiday celebration I'm serving an international array of sweets. A French Gateau au Chocolat, an American apple pie, a plate of [German Spekulatius cookies](#), and last but not least, Mexican Wedding Cakes.

No, no one is getting married (at least not that I know of), but I want to celebrate a sweet Christmas with the family by serving Mexican Wedding Cakes in contrast to the multi-tiered conventional wedding cake.



Mexican Wedding Cake Cookies

History of Mexican Wedding Cakes

Mexican Wedding Cakes are actually bite-sized cookies traditionally served at special occasions such as weddings and christenings. The recipe calls for rich ingredients such as butter and sugar which in years past was normally reserved for significant events.

In Mexico the sugar cookie became popular following Spanish colonization in the 16th century. Some food historians believe these types of cookies and cakes derive from Moorish

traditions that spread through Europe and eventually reached the Americas.

Other historians say Mexican wedding cakes may have migrated to Mexico with European nuns, or may have been associated with cookies served beside Russian samovars (tea urns).

Somehow, someway the cookie recipe traveled far and wide.

One Cookie, One World

Across the world, the basic recipe includes butter, powdered sugar, flour, finely chopped nuts, and the best pure vanilla extract you can find. The shape varies from round and flat to crescent-shaped.

The cookie name on the other hand is quite diverse depending on the country. You'll find them called Russian Tea Cakes, Mandulás kifli (Hungary), Polvorones (Spain), Finska kakor (Finland), and Napoleonshatte (Danish) and the list of names go on.

Holiday celebrations will continue for a few weeks, so I won't end my holiday baking right away. The Mexican Wedding Cake cookies are easy to make and your guests will really love the powdery melt-in-your mouth cookie.

Mexican Wedding Cakes Recipe

*Butter and nuts and vanilla to spice,
melt in your mouth Mexican Wedding Cakes,
are heavenly nice!*



Mexican Wedding Cake Cookies

Cookie Ingredients (Makes about 50 cookies)

- 1 cup (105 grams) nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts, or hazelnuts)
- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter (high fat content European-style) cut into teaspoon sized cubes, room temperature
- 1/2 cup (30 grams) confectioners' (powdered or icing) sugar
- 2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups minus 2 tablespoons (255 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons flour (for grinding the nuts)

Sugar Dusting Ingredients

- 1 cup (120 grams) powdered (icing or confectioners) sugar, sifted



Mexican Wedding Cake cookie dough

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (177 degrees C) and place rack in center of oven.
2. Place nuts on a baking sheet and bake until lightly brown, about 8 minutes. Allow the nuts to cool completely.
3. Place nuts and 2 tablespoons (25 grams) of flour into your food processor. Pulsate until the nuts are finely ground (being careful not to form a paste).
4. In your stand mixer (hand or electric mixer), beat the

butter and sugar until light and fluffy (about 3 minutes). Add the vanilla extract and baste. Add the remaining flour, salt, and cinnamon and beat until combined. Stir in the ground nuts.

5. Cover and refrigerate the dough until firm (about 60 minutes).
6. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
7. Using a large melon baller, take the approximate amount of dough needed to form the chilled dough into balls about 1 inch (2.5 cm). Place them 2 inches (5 cm) apart on the prepared baking sheets.
8. Bake for about 8-11 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies just begin to turn light brown.



Mexican Wedding Cake cookies after baking

9. Remove the cookies from the oven and carefully place them on a wire rack to cool for about 5 minutes.

10. Place 1 cup (120 grams) of sifted confectioners' sugar on a flat plate or in a bowl. Work quickly and roll the hot cookies in the sugar, one at a time using a spoon or knife to cover them completely. Alternatively, you can sift confectioners' sugar directly onto the cookies.
11. Place the cookies on a wire rack to cool completely before storing (in an airtight container).

Before serving you may want to dust the cookies again using sifted confectioners' sugar.

Bon Appétit!

Perfecting Paella

Perfecting Paella, pleez! Is it all in the pan or is there more? If the dish is made correctly, it's one of the most perfect comfort foods. If made incorrectly, it's a disaster dish that just can't be fixed. Maybe that's why discussions about Paella recipes can go on until the wee hours of the morning, similar to the perfect New Orleans Gumbo recipe—a post I'll get to one of these days.



Traditional preparation of paella

Historically, Paella the Spanish rice dish that includes different combinations of vegetables and meats, characteristically seasoned with saffron and good olive oil, originates from Valencia in Eastern Spain and requires the freshest ingredients and the best rice to make it truly wonderful.

Where does Paella come from?

The most common story of paella's origins is that servants would take leftovers from Moorish royal banquets and cook them over open fires preparing delicious dishes to bring home to their families. Those must have been some seriously delicious leftovers!

The word "paella" may come from the Arab word 'baqiyah', which means 'leftovers'. Some linguists though believe that the word 'paella' is derived from a Latin word 'patella', which was a flat plate used for religious offerings. So the dish name is actually for the cooking utensil.

What's required to make an Authentic Spanish Paella?

For hundreds of years people not only argue over the origins, but on the ingredients and the perfect paella recipe since many different varieties of paella are passed on to the family cooks as best kept secrets. This includes for example, the Valencia version where fish and shellfish are an absolute 'no go' which makes sense because the laborers of the fields serving at the Moorish royal banquets were far from the coastline.

Therefore an authentic Valencia version never includes fish and seafood, but chicken and rabbit as well as snails and often beans and artichokes. Let's not stop there, other varieties include *Paella de Marisco* (Seafood Paella), a vegetarian versions containing hearty white beans, artichokes, eggplant and peppers, or the mixed Valencian Catalan version.

The Perfect Paella Pan

There are many different ways to prepare paella as there are little fishing villages in and around Spain, but first things first I need a Paella pan and I need it fast. I'm only in Barcelona for the weekend and want to make paella at home this winter.



Traditional Paella Pan

I should go to a little *Ferreteria* (hardware store) to get my Paella pan, but I'll head to El Corte Ingles, my favorite Spanish department store and ask for a '*paellera*'. I'll opt for an enameled steel pans made of carbon steel and coated with a speckled black enamel finish. They won't rust, are affordable, and make cleanup a breeze. It should also be a flat-bottomed pan, which is uniquely made for my modern burner.

If I don't have luck finding a '*paellera*' at El Corte Ingles, I'll just buy a Gucci purse instead and head towards 'La Boqueria', Europe's best food market which has been operating since the 13th century. No, I won't buy a Gucci purse, that's just the Diva in me is coming out. I'll buy a Chanel.

Seriously, at La Boqueria I'm sure to find the pan, the rice, and a place to rest my legs while enjoying Tapas. I'm on vacation after all.

Perfect paella, it's all in the Bomba

The perfect paella is not only in the pan but the rice they say and namely the Bomba rice, a short grain and pearl-colored round rice. Bomba is 'the' supreme rice in Spain, because it absorbs three times its volume in broth (rather than the normal two), yet the grains remain firm and delicious. Since Bomba can absorb much more liquid, it's hard to overcook it and since I'm new to paella, this is the rice for me.



Bomba rice; Wiki photo by J.P.Lon

Bomba rice grows leisurely in the village of Calasparra until it matures. This longer growing cycle produces dehydrated kernels which are ready to absorb the utmost flavors of paella broth. This is my absolute fear, the absorptions process which can be the difference between crunchy or mushy paella. I don't know how to control the amount of liquid yet, but will soon learn.

Ay, yi, yi! I pray the primrose path to perfecting paella is a perpetual pleasure. ☐

Just as paella historically melded unique ingredients, the dish is a union of Spain for the dish, the Romans, for the pan, and the Arabs, for the rice. Without the unity of these nations, we'd be living in a world without paella and that would be a pity.

Tapas in 10 Minutes

Now that you understand the [difference between tapas and pinchos](#), you can make Tapas in 10 Minutes. Yes, you can make all of the tapas listed below in about ten minutes each. All you need are a few basic ingredients (bread, olive oil, garlic, fish, meat), organizational skills, and time before your guests arrive.



Tapas in 10 minutes

The preparation work can be done the morning of the party or an hour or so before which leaves you time to take a break from that annoying family member or to enjoy precious time with your guests.

You don't need to serve everything at once, so only need to sneak into the kitchen a few times in order to prepare tapas in 10 minutes. So let's get started with these easy recipes!

Paprika with Anchovies and Garlic (Pintxo Pimiento Anchoa y Ajo)

- 3 ounces red smoked paprika (I found it in the Turkish

section of the grocery store)

- 1 jar of anchovy fillets in olive oil or a can of sardines in sunflower oil
- 1 clove of fresh garlic, sliced thin
- 1 loaf of crusty bread, sliced
- Toothpicks

Paprika with Anchovies and Garlic Pinxto Preparation

1. Cut the paprika in small parts and place over the bread slices.
2. Place an anchovy strip or whole sardine on top of the bread.
3. Place one garlic slice on top of the sardine.
4. Pierce the pinxto with a toothpick!
5. Chill in the fridge or serve immediately on chilled plates!

Tomato Bread Tapas (Pan con Tomate)

- 8 slices of long loaf crusty bread toasted cross-wise
- 1 ripe tomato, sliced in half
- 1 clove of fresh garlic
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt to taste



Pan con Tomate (Bread with Tomato)

Tomato Bread Tapa Preparation

1. Place bread slices in toaster and toast until golden brown or toast the bread in a frying pan until it is crisp and golden brown.
2. Remove the bread from the toaster or pan and rub the garlic halves on the bread.
3. Brush bread with olive oil.
4. Rub the tomato thoroughly onto each slice of toasted bread, making sure that the juice of the tomato penetrates the bread.
5. Sprinkle sea salt over the slices.
6. Serve immediately and enjoy!!

Tip: Hey, why not place black and green Spanish olives in a Cazuela bowl for another quick tapa, but don't forget the toothpicks!

Grilled Shrimp Tapas (Gambas a la Plancha)

- 1 pound raw shrimp, peeled (Keep the heads for fish stock)
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced 1/8" – 1/4" thick
- 1 dried red chili pepper (optional)
- 8 T olive oil (I use a cheaper one to sauté)
- Fresh squeezed lemon juice (optional)
- Chopped parsley (optional)
- 1 loaf of crusty bread

Grilled Shrimp Tapas Preparation

1. Sauté the garlic until it turns golden brown being careful not to burn it. Add the chili pepper and sauté for one minute.
2. Add the shrimp and sauté the mix at medium high heat until the shrimp are pink.
3. Serve in a Cazuela bowl and garnish with a few drops of lemon juice and chopped parsley.

Grilled Peppers (Pimientos de Padrón)

- 1 pound Pimientos de Padron, washed, blotted dry, and with stems
- 4-8 T Olive Oil (I use a cheaper one to sauté)
- Sea salt to taste

Pimientos de Padrón Tapa Preparation

1. Place the peppers in a bowl and pour about 2 T of olive oil on them coating them thoroughly. I personally like to reduce the amount of oil, even though olive oil is healthier.
2. Pour the remaining olive oil in a frying pan and heat on medium heat. Once the oil is hot, place some of the whole peppers into the pan and fry for 2-3 minutes, making sure to cook on both sides until slightly blistered. Fry the remaining peppers in batches and excess oil on paper towels.
3. Sprinkle peppers with sea salt and serve immediately in a Cazuela bowl.

Iberico Ham on Long Bread (Pintxo Jamon Iberico)

- 3.5 ounces (100g) of thinly sliced Iberico Ham (Serrano will also do)
- 1 long loaf of crusty bread
- Toothpicks



Serrano Ham Tapas

Iberico Ham on Long Bread Pintxo Preparation

1. Place the bread slices on a platter or plate
2. Place the Iberico Ham on the bread slices, add a double portion if desired
3. Make it a pinxto and pierce the ham with a toothpick and serve immediately or later!

Have you been keeping count of the toothpicks? ☐

Salmon with Egg and Mayonnaise Pinchos (Pincho Salmon con Huevo y Mayonesa)

- 5-6 ounces smoked salmon, sliced thin
- 3-4 hardboiled eggs, sliced
- Fresh ground black pepper
- Garlic mayonnaise
- 1 loaf of crusty bread
- Toothpicks

Salmon with Egg and Mayonnaise Pinchos Preparation

1. Place the bread slices on a platter or plate.
2. Dot the bread slices with garlic mayonnaise.
3. Place a small piece of salmon on the bread slice.
4. Place an egg slice on top of the salmon.
5. Sprinkle sea salt and freshly milled pepper to taste.
6. Make it a pinxto and pierce the ham with a toothpick and serve immediately!

Fierce Potato Tapas (Patatas Bravas Tapas)

- 4-5 medium potatoes skin on if desired, washed, cut in 1/3" to 1/2" bite sized chunks, cooked in salted water, and excess water removed and boiled for about 10 minutes, they should be a bit firm and not too soft.
- 4-8 T Olive Oil (I use a cheaper one to sauté)
- Sea salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 1 T. Spanish paprika dried seasoning

- Garlic Mayonnaise (Good store bought brand to save time)



Patatas Bravas Recipe

Fierce Potatoes Tapas Preparation

1. Place the cooked potatoes in a bowl and drizzle enough oil to coat the potatoes. Add some sea salt to taste, pepper, and Spanish paprika and stir to ensure each tater is covered with seasonings
2. Place the potato chunks in a frying pan on medium to high heat.
3. Stir the potatoes constantly ensuring each side becomes a golden color.
4. Place in a Cazuela bowl and serve immediately with garlic mayonnaise!

Enjoy the tapas in 10 minutes (per tapa or pinxto) recipes below at an Olympic-themed party or anytime you need good fun food.