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310 **FOOD: Stirring Up Memories**

Eight culinary celebrities give us the recipes it wouldn't be Christmas without.

BY JONATHAN HAYES



By JONATHAN HAYES Photographs by MARCUS NILSSON

STIRRING UP MEMORIES

THEY'RE FAMOUS CHEFS NOW, WITH GROWN-UP PALATES, SOPHISTICATED TASTES. DOES THAT MEAN THEY'VE OUTGROWN THE WHOLE VISIONS-OF-SUGARPLUMS THING? NOT AT ALL. EIGHT CULINARY CELEBRITIES GIVE US THE RECIPES IT WOULDN'T BE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT.

At the end of their workday on Christmas Eve, chefs unbutton their white jackets, hang up their toques, and with a sigh of relief, leave their sous-chefs in charge of the kitchen for a few days. No sooner do they get home than they're often thrust back into a kitchen—one that's small and staffed by amateur helpers, some with tiny hands and huge expectations. But even for the most sophisticated chefs, holiday cooking is not about wowing everyone

with the latest ingredients and chicest techniques. It's about re-creating traditional holiday dishes—all those old standbys that affirm a family's shared history, the simple foods they've loved since childhood, those rib roasts and cookies that are always the same no matter how much everything else may change. We asked eight of our country's best chefs to share their favorite recipes and the memories that go with them.

Smoked Turkey-Sweet Potato Tamales

Stephan Pyles, Stephan Pyles, Dallas

I grew up in West Texas, in a town called Big Spring; we used to say that it wasn't the end of the earth but you could see it from there. My dad owned a truck-stop café that served a mix of Southern food, Tex-Mex, and ranch cooking. Every Christmas, Rosalie, one of the dishwashers at the café, made turkey and sweet potato tamales, which she shared with everyone. I loved them; unwrapping the corn husk around the tamale was like unwrapping a little present. And I loved that at Christmas there was never a limit—no one ever said, "You're going to spoil your appetite." You could always just go for it.



Smoked Turkey–Sweet Potato Tamales (from Stephan Pyles)

Masa harina is the flour made from dried masa, the corn dough used to make authentic Mexican tamales. If you can't find it at your local market, try mexgrocer.com.

1 sweet potato
10 large corn husks
1¾ cups masa harina
1¼ cups very hot water
½ cup plus 2 Tbsp. cold vegetable shortening
¼ cup cold chicken stock or canned broth
1 tsp. baking powder
2½ tsp. salt ▶

1 Tbsp. maple syrup
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. chili powder
1 (6-ounce) chunk smoked turkey breast, chopped

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Pierce sweet potato and place on a baking sheet. Place in oven and bake 50 minutes, or until completely soft. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Place corn husks in a large bowl; add water to cover and let stand at least 30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, place masa harina in an electric stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment. With mixer on low speed, add hot water in a slow, steady stream until dough forms into a ball. Increase speed to medium-high and mix 5 minutes. Reduce speed to low and add shortening, 2 Tbsp. at a time, until blended. Increase speed to medium-high and beat 5 more minutes, until dough is smooth and light, stopping midway to scrape sides of bowl.
3. In a small bowl, stir together chicken stock, baking powder, and 1½ tsp. salt. With mixer on low speed, slowly add stock to dough, beating until combined, occasionally scraping sides of bowl. Increase speed to medium-high; beat 5 minutes more, or until light and fluffy.
4. Peel sweet potato; discard skin. Place flesh in a food processor fitted with metal blade. Add maple syrup, cayenne pepper, chili powder, and remaining tsp. salt; process until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add half of sweet potato puree (about ½ cup) to dough in mixer. Mix on high until blended, occasionally scraping sides of bowl.
5. Drain corn husks and pat dry. Tear 16 ¼-inch-wide strips from 2 husks to use for tying tamales. Lay out 4 husks on board. Divide half the tamale dough evenly among husks; spread into 5-inch squares, leaving 1 inch at each end of the tamale uncovered. Spoon 1 Tbsp. sweet potato puree in center of each tamale and spread down the

middle of each dough square, leaving ½ inch dough exposed at each end. Spoon a scant ¼ cup turkey on top of sweet potato.

6. Roll corn husks starting at one side, so filling is completely enclosed and husk overlaps itself. Twist ends to close; tie each end with reserved strips. Repeat with remaining ingredients.
7. Meanwhile, fill a large pot with 2 inches water; bring to a simmer. Place tamales in a steamer basket, set basket in pot (basket should not touch water), and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Steam tamales 35 to 40 minutes, checking occasionally to maintain water level (tamales are done when dough easily pulls away from husk). Serve hot.

Makes 8 servings.