Pan Cubano

Servings: 12

Cook Time: 20–30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 quart water
- 1 oz salt
- 2 oz instant yeast **or** 4 oz dry yeast **or** 8 oz fresh yeast
- 1 oz sugar
- 3.5 lbs strong white bread flour
- 3 oz vegetable shortening or lard
- Strips of palm leaf from saw palmetto
    - You may also use string, shoelaces, or pieces of parchment paper to mark the loaves.

Instructions

1. Knead all ingredients, except the palm leaf strips, for about 15 minutes. Let the dough rise for 45 minutes.
    a. The dough should be stiff rather than sticky.
    b. If using a mixer, use the dough hook on low speed for 4 minutes, then increase to a higher speed for 6 minutes.
2. Shape the dough into 6 balls, about 6 oz each. Let them rise again for 45 minutes.
3. Roll each dough ball into a sausage shape. Flatten the dough ball, then fold it over itself a couple of times and gently pull and shape it into a long loaf.

    a. You may use a rolling pin if preferred.
4. Wet the palm leaf strips and press them firmly into the tops of the loaves.
    a. If palm leaf is unavailable, use wet string, shoelaces, or parchment paper.
    b. The purpose of the palm leaf is to help humidify the dough as it bakes.
5. Place the loaves palm-leaf side down, leaving space between them for expansion. Cover and let rise for 45 minutes.
6. Preheat the oven to **400°F**. A pizza oven may be used if available.
7. Flip the loaves onto baking sheets so the palm strip is on top.
8. Bake for **20–30 minutes**, or until the loaves are golden and fully baked.

Notes

Pan Cubano is traditionally baked with a palm leaf pressed into the dough, which creates its signature line down the center of the loaf.