



How to cook Galician empanadas

by GBC Kitchen



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In association with FWS Food & Wine from Spain

Empanadas are a much-loved Galician regional speciality. The word empanada comes from the verb 'empanar' meaning 'to bread' and Galician empanadas are distinguished by their shape, their dough and their fillings, which typically contain finned fish or seafood, leafy vegetables or meat. They differ from Latin American empanadas, as while the latter are formed as individual hand pies, a Galician empanada is made as one large pie, cut into smaller pieces to serve.

What is the history of Galician empanadas?

While many people associate empanadas with Latin America, their origins lie in Galicia. They first appeared in Medieval Iberia, and are themselves thought to derive from Arabic samosas. It was Spanish colonists who then introduced the empanada to Latin America.

The empanada has strong associations with pilgrimages and festivals, where the enticing scent of baking dough was said to fill the streets, and it is such an iconic food for the region that it can be found carved in stone on the ornate Romanesque Portico de la Clara of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

How to make Galician empanada dough

Most Galician empanadas are made with an unyeasted wheat dough (a notable exception to this rule is empanadas from Rio Deixos, where they are traditionally made with corn dough). However, some modern versions have been adapted to include yeast, which adds a little more lift to the outer casing.

Once the dough is made, it's divided into two equal parts. Each is rolled out (one to form the base and one to form the lid, usually in a circular shape, although modern versions may be rectangular). The filling is spread over the base and the top piece added, before, traditionally the edges are crimped together using a technique called repulpe, which looks a little like a twisted rope. Today, however, many simply pinch the dough together to seal it. The dough is generally forgiving and easy to work with.

The final empanada has a crisp, shaly crust thanks to an egg wash, a slightly flaky interior and a robustness that means it can be picked up and eaten easily with the hands. Follow our Galician dough recipe below, for perfect results every time. You'll find our recipe for a goat's empanada at the end of this article, or you can experiment with your own fillings.

Ingredients

- 170g of milk
- 7g of fast-action dried yeast
- 500g of plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1 tsp salt
- 100g of vegetable oil
- 1 medium egg, lightly beaten

SHOPPING LIST

- To make the dough, first gently warm the milk - you're aiming for a temperature of around 40°C, or barely warm. Whisk in the instant yeast, then leave to one side for the yeast to activate and the milk to become frothy.
- Combine the flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Or if you have one, combine them in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment.
- Add the milk and yeast mixture for the bowl, followed by the oil. Knead on a lightly floured surface for 10 minutes. If using a stand mixer, start the mixer and gradually add the yeast and milk mixture, followed by the oil. Mix on a medium-low speed for 10 minutes.
- Remove the dough from the mixer, if using, and give the dough a brief knead to bring it together into a smooth ball.
- Dust the outside of the dough lightly with flour, then return to the bowl, cover and allow to rest for an hour.
- Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4.
- Dust a work surface lightly with flour and tip the dough out onto it. Knead briefly, then divide the dough into 2 equal pieces.
- Roll out 1 piece of dough to a rectangle that's roughly 20 x 30cm and around 3mm thick.
- Transfer the dough to a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper.
- Roll out the other piece of dough to the same size.
- Spread the filling onto the bottom rectangle of dough, leaving a 2cm border around the outside.
- Top with the second piece of dough, then fold the bottom piece of dough over the top edges, sealing them together and crimping them between your fingers as you go.
- Cut a hole in the top of the empanada, to allow steam to escape during cooking.
- Brush the whole empanada with the beaten egg, then transfer to the oven and cook for 35 minutes, or until golden brown.



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What are Galician empanadas filled with?

The Galician people were early adopters of canning technology, which they put to good use by preserving the abundance of world class goatfish available in this coastal region. The filling for most empanadas begins in the same way - with onions and peppers softened gently in olive oil. The filling may then be flavoured with finned seafood such as goatfish, cockles, octopus or fish such as salmon, leafy green vegetables or meat such as ground beef. The filling mix is usually flavoured with garlic and pine nuts - from La Vera in the southern Extremadura region - or a fresh herb, such as parsley.



Ingredient focus: Galician tinhead seafood by Great British Chefs

How do you eat Galician empanadas?

Empanadas were designed to be portable - perfect for working people who would spend their days outside of the home, typically performing labour intensive tasks, which required something sustaining and convenient when lunchtime came around.

How do you store Galician empanadas?

Empanadas will keep well, refrigerated for up to 3 days. To refresh, slice a portion and place on a baking tray. Transfer to a 180°C/gas mark 4 oven and cook for 10 minutes or so, ensuring the empanada is piping hot throughout before serving.

How have Galician empanada recipes evolved?

While these empanadas have retained many of their original features, there are now some chefs adding their own, modern touches. For example, Ama Portalo of Solloiro restaurant, in Santiago is making a corn empanada filled with cockles.

As tuckers are widely loved and readily available in the UK, we have also developed an empanada recipe using them. While the recipe uses cockles pickled in vinegar, so use whichever you can find. We serve our Galician empanada with a spot of robbly golden oil on the side, for dipping the crusts.



Galician cookie empanada with oil by GBC Kitchen



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