



Causa de Lima

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

Causa is a colorful chilled Peruvian appetizer of spicy mashed potatoes layered with avocado, fish, egg, and olive salads. The hue comes from its varying chiles, particularly the aji amarillo (a bright orange chile with sweetness and heat) and poblano chile (green with very little heat). I sampled a few causas in Lima restaurants as appetizers and light meals. But I particularly enjoyed making them with chef Tomas in his Miraflores cooking school. We mashed potatoes with various chiles that tinted them gorgeous colors. We also used ring molds, stacking each potato layer with salads and sauces. Once assembled, they are kept in the refrigerator for up to a day. Since then, I've made causa for dinner parties, cutting bite-sized stacks to serve on appetizer spoons that disappeared instantly when passed to my guests.

INGREDIENTS

Potatoes:

1 pound gold potatoes, scrubbed
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon
kosher salt

Aji Amarillo Paste:

1 aji amarillo chile (or small red bell pepper)
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

Green Chile Paste:

1 poblano chile
1 garlic clove, minced
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

Avocado Filling:

1 avocado, pitted, peeled, and chopped
Juice of 1/2 lime
1 tablespoon finely chopped red onion
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Tomato Salsa:

1 small tomato, finely chopped
Juice of 1/2 lime
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh
cilantro
1 teaspoon finely chopped red onion
1 teaspoon finely chopped jalapeño
chile
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Tuna Filling:

1/2 cup canned tuna, drained
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 tablespoon finely chopped red
onion
1 teaspoon thinly sliced green onion
(green part only)

Causas:

1/2 cup vegetable oil
Juice of 1 lime
Kosher salt and black pepper
3 small shrimp, steamed or sautéed
1 hard-boiled egg, cut into small
wedges

PROCESS:

Cook the potatoes: In a large pot, cover the potatoes with water. Add 2 tablespoons salt, bring to a boil over medium-high heat, and cook until tender and you can easily insert a fork into the potatoes, about 20 minutes. Drain and cool for 10 minutes. When the potatoes are cool enough to handle, peel and press through a potato ricer into a bowl. Set aside.

Make the aji Amarillo paste: In a small saucepan, cover the aji Amarillo (or red bell pepper) with water and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Drain and cool. Cut off the stem, remove the seeds, and discard. Transfer the flesh to a small food processor and add the salt. Process until it becomes a paste, adding 1 teaspoon of water if needed. Set aside.

Make the green chile paste: Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, cover the poblano with water and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook until soft, about 12 minutes. Drain and cool. Cut off the stem, remove the seeds, and discard. Transfer the flesh to a small food processor and add the garlic and salt. Process until it becomes a paste, adding 1 teaspoon of water, if needed. Set aside.

Make the avocado filling: in a small bowl, mash the avocado and stir in lime juice, onion, and salt. Set aside.

Make the tomato salsa: in a small bowl, stir all ingredients together and set aside.

Make the tuna filling: In a small bowl, stir all the ingredients together (reserving a couple green onion slices for garnish) and set aside.

Assemble the causas:

Transfer half the potatoes to another bowl and add the aji amarillo paste, 1/4 cup of the vegetable oil, half the lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Stir until combined. To the remaining potatoes, add the green chile paste, remaining 1/4 cup vegetable oil, remaining lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Stir until combined.

Lightly oil an individual 1-cup mold set on a plate. Press half of the aji amarillo potato mixture into the mold. Spoon in 1/2 cup avocado filling (save remaining for another use). Top filling with the remaining aji amarillo potato mixture. Press lightly, then slowly remove the mold. Top with a spoonful of tomato salsa and the shrimp.



In a second mold, make another causas: Spoon half the tuna filling into the mold and top with the green chile potato mixture. Press lightly, then slowly remove the mold. Top with the remaining tuna filling, a few slices of green onion, and wedge of hard-boiled egg.

Alternatively, you can make bite-sized causas by pressing all the layers into an 8-inch round cake pan and cutting out circles with a 1 1/2-inch cookie cutter. (The "scraps" are great for snacking!) Serve on small spoons or cocktail napkins.

Refrigerate until ready to serve. The causas can be made up to one day before serving.