



# Spicy Beef Empanadas

**MAKES 1 DOZEN**

The empanada, which literally means “wrapped in bread,” is a savory pastry enjoyed in nearly every country in South America. One of my best empanada memories was in Chile's Atacama Desert. After a record-breaking rainstorm in San Pedro, I slogged my way to local chef Gabriella's kitchen where she taught me to make empanadas stuffed with spicy beef, olives, and a slice of boiled egg.

Petite in stature and wearing an embroidered white dress, she welcomed me into her three-table restaurant which fed a local demand for her wood-fired empanadas. Gabriella spoke no English and I spoke no Spanish, but our shared love for cooking helped us communicate without saying a word. Arm to arm, we pressed our knuckles into corn dough, kneading it with pork fat before filling the savory pastry with beef, olives, and spices. I attempted to mimic her technique, but her perfect rhythm transcended my efforts. Together, we baked a dozen hand pies in her wood-fired oven until they were crisp and golden. My pies looked a little sad next to her perfect ones, but when I tasted them warm from her stone oven, I realized the flavor was equally faultless. In my own kitchen, it took many tries to match Gabriella's technique, but I finally got pretty close. I usually double my recipe to freeze several empanadas so they're ready to bake whenever I need them. And even without a wood-fired oven, they're nearly as delicious as the ones we cooked in the desert.

## INGREDIENTS

### Filling:

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 pound ground beef  
1 serrano chile, minced  
2 teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon ground allspice  
1 teaspoon smoked paprika  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
½ teaspoon black pepper  
½ cup golden raisins

¼ cup fresh lime juice

¼ cup sour cream

1/3 cup black olives, quartered

### Dough:

1 ½ cup all purpose flour

1 cup stone ground corn flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

4 ounces (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

½ cup cold water

2 eggs



## PROCESS:

**Make the filling:** Heat the oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the beef, chile, chile powder, cumin, cinnamon, paprika, salt, and allspice and cook for 8 minutes, breaking up the beef with a spoon until it is browned. Add the raisins and lime juice, bring to a boil, and cook until almost all liquid evaporates, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in the sour cream and olives. Cool completely. Peel the hard-boiled eggs and cut each lengthwise into six slices.

## Make the dough:

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the flour, corn flour, baking powder, and salt just until combined. Add the lard (or butter), and pulse 20 times, until the mixture resembles a coarse cornmeal. Whisk the water and one egg in a small bowl, then gradually add to the dry mixture, pulsing until a soft dough forms (do not overmix). Wrap dough with cling wrap and let it rest for at least one hour, and up to one day in the refrigerator.

When you're ready to assemble the empanadas, divide the dough in half. On a floured board, roll out one half to an 18"-inch thickness. Cut out six 4-inch rounds from the dough. Repeat with remaining dough. Whisk the remaining egg in a small bowl, adding 1 teaspoon of water. Place 2 heaping tablespoons filling in the center of each dough round, and top with one slice of egg. Lightly brush edges with egg wash. Fold dough over to make a half-moon shape and press the edges together. Pleat the edges and place on two baking sheets lined with parchment paper. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for about 30 minutes. (Empanadas can be made a day ahead of time and refrigerated for up to 1 day.)

Preheat a pizza stone in the oven to 450 degrees (this could take 30 minutes). Brush the empanadas very lightly with the remaining egg wash. Bake for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown. Serve warm.