

Ponche Navideño



Christmas Fruit Punch (Makes about 16 cups)

3 quarts of water (12 cups)

2 (6-inch) pieces of Mexican cinnamon (canela)

8 oz. tejocotes, left whole (about 16 total)

6 large guavas, peeled, seeded, cut into large bite-size pieces

2 apples (Gala, Fuji, or Golden Delicious), peeled, cored, and cut into large bite-size pieces

4 (4-inch) pieces sugarcane, peeled and cut into pieces

8 pitted prunes, cut into quarters

½ cup raisins

8 oz. piloncillo or dark brown sugar

5 tamarind pods, peeled, seeded, and boiled for pulp (optional)

→Combine the water, cinnamon, and tejocotes in a large pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Decrease the heat to maintain a constant soft simmer and cook for about 5 minutes, or until the tejocotes are soft. Remove from the heat and scoop out the tejocotes. Peel them and remove the hard seed inside. Cut them into large bite-size pieces. Return them to the pot.

→Add the guavas, apples, sugarcane, prunes, raisins, piloncillo, and tamarind (if using). Simmer for at least 30 minutes, stirring gently. The piloncillo will dissolve as the ponche cooks.

→Discard the cinnamon pieces, pour into cups, and serve.

NOTES:

- I have been lucky enough to find both fresh and frozen tejocotes. They are crab apple-like fruit that come from a hawthorn tree. They have a sweet and sour taste reminiscent of an apricot and a plum. I would say in a pinch you could try to substitute fresh apricots, although I have never tried them in ponche. Apricots seem to be the most similar in texture and taste.
- I highly suggest that you remove the seeds from the guavas as they tend to get stuck in your teeth. I have made the ponche with and without removing the seeds, and I honestly feel that it is a necessary step. While you do lose a portion of the guava, the flavor still remains.
- I have also used both fresh and frozen sugarcane. I honestly liked the frozen sugarcane better when making ponche because you don't have to worry about peeling and cutting it. You need a REALLY sharp knife to cut fresh sugarcane.
- If you are using the tamarind, I suggest that you remove the pod and veins. Then place it in a small saucepan, and cover with about an inch of water. Bring the water to a simmer and turn off the heat when it appears that the pulp is falling away from the seeds. Using a wooden spoon, stir the tamarind around so that pulp pulls away from the seeds. Then strain the tamarind water straight into the ponche.
- You can make the ponche a day in advance to allow the flavors to develop overnight.

Recipe Source: Adapted from Fany Gerson's My Sweet Mexico

