

Gourmet

THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

COOKING VACATIONS

The sky is blue, the sun is sparkling off the water, and the aroma of grilling meat mingles with the spicy scent of the oregano on the coals. Any minute now you can jump into the sea, but at this moment an expert is showing you the secrets of authentic Greek food. We've spent the past year looking for the world's best cooking classes, and we've come back with great tips, fabulous recipes, and a collection of truly amazing places to visit. Whether you want to spend a luxurious week in a country villa with a teacher all your own, camp in the jungle and learn exotic tropical dishes, or just brush up your skills with a two-hour class in an urban outpost, there's surely something here to suit you. And if you want to skip the trip and just start cooking, there's plenty here to keep you occupied, too. Classes begin on page 36.

CONTENTS CONTINUES ON PAGE 12

COOKING VACATIONS RELAXED

SOUTH AMERICA'S NAPA VALLEY

HUEMUL, CHILE Who would have imagined that I'd be ripening avocados into a healthier "butter" for my morning toast, or that I'd eat all sorts of unfamiliar cheeses for breakfast? The Mapuyampay Hostal Gastronómico, at the foot of the snowcapped Andes in Chile's major winemaking region, the Curicó Valley, turned out to be full of surprises. Located in a remote village 100 miles south of Santiago and run by Ruth Van Waerebeek, executive chef of the country's largest winery, Concha y Toro, the school is surrounded by an organic vegetable garden. During our hands-on workshops, Ruth guided the two of us (maximum class size is eight) through the repertoire of Chilean cuisine, from classic (empanadas and *pastel de choclo*, a meat-and-vegetable pie baked under a crisp corn topping) to contemporary (cold avocado soup with ceviche of Antarctic krill and Chilean sea bass with hot-pepper *adobo*). This was a leisurely course—really more of a themed vacation—with time built in for hiking and horseback riding, visits to boutique wineries and farmers markets, sipping Pisco Sours by the pool, and a stop at Concha y Toro, about an hour away. (011-56-9-9-228-0905; mapuyampay.cl; \$250 per day, double occupancy, for up to five days, November through April, including lunch) —Paul Grimes

WHAT I LEARNED How to make use of such diverse local ingredients as *merkén* (a smoky dried-chile mix that added zip to a quince *adobo*) and *chancaca* (unrefined sugar, which we used to make a tangy orange syrup). **BIGGEST SURPRISE** Chilean food is as straightforward as Italian. It's all about the quality of the ingredients. **BEFORE YOU GO** Beware when renting a car: Depending on the company, insurance may not always cover the wheels. (I hit a pothole and had to buy a new tire.) And be prepared to pay a \$131 landing fee (credit cards accepted), good for the duration of your passport.



SEAFOOD EMPANADITAS

Adapted from Ruth Van Waerebeek, Mapuyampay Hostal Gastronómico, Huemul, Chile

MAKES ABOUT 30 HORS D'OEUVRES

ACTIVE TIME: 1½ HR START TO FINISH: 1½ HR

These plump, fried hors d'oeuvres, a seafood variation on Chile's signature baked onion-and-meat-filled empanadas, are hot and juicy. Have plenty of napkins ready.

FOR PASTRY AND FRYING

- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup hot water
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ cup lard at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature
- About 3 cups vegetable oil for frying

FOR SEAFOOD FILLING

- 1½ lb small hard-shelled clams (about 2 inches across), scrubbed
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1½ lb cultivated mussels
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup chopped scallion
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter

- 1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 fresh serrano or jalapeño chile, seeded and finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon paprika (not hot)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ lb shrimp, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ lb sea scallops, tough ligament from side of each discarded and scallops finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley

EQUIPMENT: a 4-inch round cookie cutter; a deep-fat thermometer

ACCOMPANIMENT: tomato salsa

MAKE DOUGH: Stir salt into hot water until dissolved. ▶ Sift flour, baking powder, and sugar into a large bowl, then make a well in center and add lard and butter. Stir salted water into well with a wooden spoon, melting lard and butter, then stir flour into liquid, adding a little water if necessary, to form a soft and pliable dough. Knead dough on an unfloured surface until smooth and glossy, 3 to 5 minutes (dough will be soft and slightly sticky).

▶ Cover dough with a kitchen towel (not terry cloth).

MAKE FILLING: Cook clams in wine in a medium saucepan, covered, over medium-high heat until just opened wide, about 5 minutes (discard any that remain unopened). Transfer clams to a bowl with a slotted spoon, then cook mussels in same liquid, covered, stirring once or twice, until opened, 3 to 5 minutes (discard unopened ones). Add mussels to clams and strain cooking liquid through a paper-towel-lined sieve into a bowl.

(Continued on page 196)

SEAFOOD EMPANADITAS

Continued from page 83

- ▶ Coarsely chop clams and mussels (leave small ones whole).
- ▶ Cook onion, scallion, and garlic in butter in a heavy medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle in flour, chile, paprika, and oregano and cook, stirring occasionally, 2 minutes. Whisk in 1 cup shellfish-cooking liquid and bring to a boil, whisking, then simmer, whisking, 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in clams, mussels, shrimp, scallops, and parsley. Cool completely. (Filling will not be fully cooked.)

MAKE EMPANADITAS: Divide dough in half, then roll out 1 piece of dough into a 17-inch round (⅛ inch thick) on a lightly floured surface. Cut out 12 rounds with cutter and transfer to a parchment-lined large baking sheet. Gather scraps and reroll, then cut out more rounds. Repeat with remaining dough on another baking sheet.

▶ Put a heaping tablespoon filling (it will be wet) in center of 1 round, leaving a ½-inch border. Brush edges lightly with water and pull dough over filling to enclose, then seal edge. Crimp with a fork dipped in flour. Repeat with remaining rounds.

▶ Put a metal rack on a baking sheet in oven, then preheat oven to 200°F.

- ▶ Heat 1½ inches oil to 360°F in a 3-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, then fry empanaditas, 4 at a time, turning with a slotted spoon, until golden brown, 2 to 4 minutes per batch. Transfer to paper towels to drain briefly, then keep warm in oven. Return oil to 360°F between batches.
- COOKS' NOTES:** *Empanaditas* can be formed (but not fried) up to 1 month ahead and frozen in an airtight container.
- Leftover filling can be stirred into hot pasta or soup.