

Mandioca Frita

From Nelson's Kitchen
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Mandioca Frita is a traditional appetizer served throughout the South of Brazil. The freshly cooked yucca with the steam raising from the dish is a very popular side dish to serve with grilled meats. The fried yucca is usually prepared the day after the yucca was cooked and served plain boiled. The yucca that we find in supermarkets in North America is waxed for preservation. When buying try to select roots that are not bruised and that do not have dark spots. Always buy extra because you will waste some. Prefer the middle thickness as often the very thick specimens are woody.

When harvested fresh from the soil, the yucca is very easy to peel. It has a double skin, a very thin paper like skin and a thicker white skin underneath. You have to remove both of them. In the freshly harvested yucca the white skin separates from the center of the root effortlessly. I used to have a very difficult time peeling the waxed yucca that we find in North America because the skin seems to be firmly attached to the centre. Now I discovered that soaking the roots for a few minutes in very warm water expands the skin and loosens it from the root, making it almost as easy to peel as the freshly harvested roots.

A much easier alternative is to buy frozen yucca that has already been peeled. You can find it at Paraíso Tropical, SuperStore and sometimes at Chinese stores such as Lucky 97.

Ingredients:

- Yucca Root
- Canola Oil
- Salt
- Water
- Mayonnaise
- Ketchup
- Mustard

Procedure:

1. Peel the yucca

- Fill your sink with hot tap water and soak the yucca root in warm water for a few minutes to loosen the skin.
- Trim the ends of each yucca root with a chefs knife.
- With a pointed paring knife peel the yucca starting at the top.
- Cut the yucca into 3 to 4 inch long segments.
- Stand each segment up and cut in half lengthwise.
- Cut each half in half again.
- Remove the centre string from each segment.
- Remove any brown, black, stringy or woody parts.
- At this point you may submerge the peeled yucca in fresh water so that all the pieces of yucca are covered by water, and put in the freezer, or you may proceed to cook it.

2. Cook the yucca

- If you froze the yucca, drop the frozen yucca with the surrounding water in a pressure cooker, adding enough water for the yucca to remain submerged in water after it taws.
- Otherwise drop the peeled yucca in a pressure cooker and cover with water. Do not add any seasoning or salt to the water.
- Cover the pressure cooker, bring to a boil and cook under pressure for 15 minutes.
- Put the pressure cooker under running cold water and carefully move the pressure valve to release the steam.
- Turn off the fire, add salt to the water and let it stand for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Drain the cooked yucca in a colander.
- Often the boiled yucca is served as a side dish to meat dishes as is.

3. Pre-frying the yucca

- The best is to fry the yucca when it has dried well after it was boiled. Typically in Brazil you would fry the yucca the day after you boiled it.
- Heat up pure canola oil in a deep fryer to 325 F. Have enough oil to submerge the pieces of yucca in the oil.
- Add a half dozen pieces of yucca at a time to the fryer and cook it until the pieces acquire a light tan colour. You will finish frying later.
- Repeat the process until you have pre-fried all the pieces of yucca.

4. Preparing the sauces

- In a small dish mix mayonnaise with ketchup to make a rose sauce.
- In a second small dish, mix mayonnaise with mustard.

5. Finish frying the yucca

- When your guests are assembled, warm up the canola oil again this time to 350 F.
- Return the pieces of yucca (6 or 8 at a time) to the hot oil and finish frying them until they acquire a beautiful tanned color. You have to watch closely at this point because they will cook quickly.
- Remove the fried yucca to a paper towel or a cooling rack.
- Lightly sprinkle them with salt while they are still hot.
- Serve as an appetizer with the sauces.