

Sabor S☀lar
de Sabana Grande
A (Mostly) Solar Taste of Sabana Grande

*Solar Cooker Recipes and
Advice on Solar Cooking
from the Women of
Sabana Grande, Nicaragua*

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INTRODUCTION

This version of “Sabor Solar” is an adaptation of the Spanish original, which was distributed to solar cooker owners in the community of Sabana Grande in Totogalpa, Department of Madriz, Nicaragua.

It includes the best recipes of the Spanish version and adds bonus recipes (Gallo Pinto and Refrescos) for dishes enjoyed throughout Nicaragua.

The women of the community of Sabana Grande generously contributed their favorite solar cooker recipes as well as advice on how to use the solar cooker. They hope that others can utilize the knowledge they have gleaned from their years of experience with solar cookers.

The recipes describe how the women prepare food in their own homes in rural Nicaragua, sometimes using wood or gas stoves in addition to the solar cookers. It should be noted that the recipes were not tested outside of the kitchens of the contributors. It’s possible that you may have to adjust the ingredients and cooking time significantly. Additionally, it’s important to remember that cooking time for solar-cooked food varies considerably and depends on the strength of sun and other factors. If the recipe has the “☀☀☀Very sunny days” notation, it should not be attempted if there is not strong and sustained sunlight.

For more information on solar cooking and related activities in Nicaragua, visit www.grupofenix.org.

HELPFUL HINTS AND SUCH...

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOLAR COOKING

- ✓ Use less seasoning, since the seasoning is not burned away in the cooking process and the flavor is preserved.
- ✓ Don't add salt when you begin to prepare beans or hard vegetables such as carrots and potatoes, but rather after they've cooked and are softened.
- ✓ Use little water in the preparation of most foods. Natural juices of vegetables and meats will probably provide enough moisture in the cooking process.

OTHER USES OF THE SOLAR COOKER

- ✓ Store foods inside the solar cooker, since they are protected from animals and dust there.
- ✓ Reheat food or coffee.
- ✓ Heat water to bathe with.
- ✓ Dry plants for home remedies or spices for cooking, such as oregano.
- ✓ Remove stains from clothing by soaking the stained portion in detergent and heating in the solar cooker.
- ✓ Dry damp clothing
- ✓ Dry clay bowls and other arts and crafts.

PASTEURIZATION OF WATER AND MILK

- ✓ Water can be heated until it's free of microbes. It needs to reach a temperature of 65° C or 150° F for pasteurization.
- ✓ At 70° C or 160° F there is sufficient heat to pasteurize milk and other foods.

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Foods prepared in a solar cooker may be more nutritious than foods prepared by conventional cooking methods. Because of the intense heat of a flame, vitamins are "burned up" during the cooking process and disappear from the food. The preparation of food in the solar cooker is not as rapid and intense, therefore conserving more of the food's vitamins and proteins.
- ✓ Additionally, food prepared in solar cookers doesn't burn in the pot!

1. BASIC RECIPES

Beans

Note: You can successfully cook beans in a solar cooker only when there is strong, sustained sunshine.

1. Place 2 cups of beans (pre-soaked) in a pot suitable for the solar cooker, and add enough water to cover the beans, about 6 cups.
2. Place this in the solar cooker and allow it to cook for several hours, moving the cooker according to the movement of the sun.
3. After the beans have softened, add salt.

☀☀☀ Very sunny days: Cooking time is 2 to 4 hours.

Rice

Rice Recipe 1

1. Before adding the rice, place water in the solar cooker to heat. Use just enough water to cover the quantity of rice you are going to cook. For one pound of rice, about ½ liter (approximately two large cups) should be adequate.
2. Let the water heat for ½ hour or more. When the water is very hot, prepare the rice: put in 1 tablespoon (or more, if you wish) each of diced bell pepper, tomato and onion. Add salt to taste.
3. Put the rice and diced vegetables in the water. Add one to two tablespoons of oil.
4. Cover the dish and place in the solar oven.

☀ Sunny days: Cooking time is 1 to 2 hours.

Rice Recipe 2

In a bowl suitable for the solar cooker, mix together:

½ pound rice, 1 cup of water, onion and salt to taste. Cover and place in the solar cooker.

☀ Sunny days: Cooking time is 1 to 2 hours.

Note: To improve the taste of the rice, you may sauté it on a stove before adding it to the water.

Plantains (Plátanos)

With peel: Place the plantain on a plate and put it in the solar cooker. Cooking time is about 1 ½ hours. *Without peel:* Same procedure; cooking time is about 1 hour.

“Hard boiled” style eggs

Put the entire egg (or several eggs, if you wish) in a pot and place it in the solar cooker. Cooking time is about 1 ½ hours.

Note: Eggs cooked in this manner may have a blackish color when they're done. To avoid this, you may put just enough water in the pot to cover them.

Pasta

In a pot, place the desired amount of pasta (macaroni, shells, etc.) with just enough water to cover it and stir. Add salt and diced tomato, bell pepper and onion (about 1 tablespoon each). Add tomato paste and soy sauce or other condiments as desired. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of oil and stir this all together well.

☀Sunny days: Cooking time is 1 to 1½ hours.

Chicken with vegetables

1 pound of chicken (or try other meat or a meat substitute of your choice)

Diced vegetables of your choice (such as potato, squash, carrots, etc.) sufficient to cover the chicken in the cooking dish.

1. Wash the meat well and place in a cooking dish with the diced vegetables.
2. You may add a little water, although the juices of the meat and vegetables may be sufficient. Place in the solar cooker.

☀Sunny Days: Cooking time is about 2 hours.

2. MAIN DISHES AND SIDE DISHES

Mexican-style Tacos

Recipe contributed by Doña Vidalia R. (recipe originally introduced in Sabana Grande by "Leo," a Grupo Fenix volunteer)

1 pound of chicken (or try a meat substitute such as soy chorizo) shredded

1 to 2 cups of corn (fresh, frozen, or canned--- in Sabana Grande, canned is used)

1 cup refried beans

cheese, shredded or diced

bell pepper, onion, tomato and garlic to taste, diced

8 to 10 tortillas

chile sauce or picante sauce

1. Sauté the chicken or substitute on the stove with the bell pepper, tomato, onion and garlic.
2. Place a bit of this mixture in each tortilla and roll it up. Place the filled tortillas in a dish.
3. Sprinkle the cheese, corn and chile sauce on top of the tortillas, cover and place the dish in the solar cooker.

☀Sunny days: Cooking time is about 2 hours.

Yuca leaf cakes (think of potato cakes or vegetable fritters)

Recipe contributed by Doña Aura Verónica I.

2 eggs, beaten

3 tablespoons of flour

1 pound of yuca leaves, washed, de-veined and chopped (perhaps spinach would be a good substitute for this ingredient)

bell pepper, onion and tomato to taste, diced

1. Stir all the ingredients together, mixing well.
2. Make 2-3 inch long cakes out of the mixture. Place on an oiled cookie sheet in a shallow pan and put this in the solar cooker.

☀☀☀Very sunny days: Cooking time is 3 to 4 hours.

Eggplant “Sándwiches”

Recipe contributed by Doña Maria Alejandra G.

2 eggplants

for the filling: use ½ pound soy chorizo or other meat substitute or ½ pound chicken, already cooked on the stove

chopped or shredded cheese, to taste

2 eggs, beaten

2 tablespoons flour

1. Wash the eggplants and cut them into slices. Lightly sauté the eggplant slices on the stove for 15 minutes.
2. Remove the eggplant slices and allow them to drain well.
3. When the eggplant has drained sufficiently, mix together the soy chorizo or chicken with the cheese and place it in between two slices of eggplant, sandwich style.
4. Mix the flour with the beaten eggs. Place the eggplant sandwiches in this mixture and coat them thoroughly.
5. Brown the eggplant sandwiches on the stove for a few minutes.
6. Place in the solar cooker, in an oiled dish.

☀☀☀Sunny days: Cooking time is about 1 hour.

BONUS RECIPE NOT INCLUDED IN SPANISH VERSION (BECAUSE VIRTUALLY ALL NICARAGUANS ALREADY KNOW HOW TO MAKE THIS!)

Gallo Pinto (Literal translation: “Painted Rooster”)

Note: Gallo Pinto is an extremely popular dish in Nicaragua, and is served frequently in many if not most Nicaraguan homes.

2 cups red beans (solar-cooked or otherwise)

2 cups rice (also solar-cooked or otherwise)

Onion, bell pepper and tomato (1-2 tablespoons, or to taste) diced

Salt

Fry the onion, tomato and bell pepper in oil (the more oil you use, the more “authentic” it will taste). Add the beans and fry the mixture some more. Add rice and fry a little more. Add salt. Enjoy with tortillas and a refresco or coffee.

3. COOKIES AND CAKES

Note: Only attempt to bake in the solar cooker on days with strong and sustained sunlight.

Polvorones (Cookies, usually consumed with coffee)

Recipe contributed by Doña Carmen G.

1 pound of flour
2 eggs
2 cups of milk (soy milk may be used)
½ cup sugar
4 ounces vegetable shortening
4 ounces margarine
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon or vanilla
½ teaspoon baking powder

1. Stir all ingredients together and beat until a dough is formed.
2. Form into balls and place on an oiled cookie sheet or pan.

☀☀☀Very sunny days: Cooking time is about 2 hours.

Oatmeal cookies with raisins

Recipe contributed by Doña Marta G.

2 cups instant oatmeal
4 teaspoons flour
4 teaspoons honey
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons oil
1 pinch of salt
raisins

1. Place the oatmeal and flour in a bowl, mix together. Add the honey, oil salt, cinnamon and raisins, stirring well.
2. Place spoonfuls of the mixture on aluminum foil and place this in the solar oven.

☀☀☀Very sunny days: Cooking time is 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Banana cake

Recipe contributed by Doña Carmen G.

6 bananas, mashed
3 cups flour
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
½ bar of margarine
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking powder

1. Melt the margarine and leave it to cool.
 2. Mix the mashed bananas with the sugar with a fork.
 3. Beat the banana/sugar mixture with the margarine then add the flour, eggs, cinnamon and baking powder.
 4. Beat this mixture well and place in an oiled pan. Place in the solar cooker.
- ☀☀☀Very sunny days: Cooking time is 2 to 3 hours.

4. USING THE SOLAR COOKER TO TOAST GRAINS, ETC.

It's possible to use the solar cooker to toast coffee beans, corn, cocoa beans (in the shell) soybeans and seeds, such as squash seeds used in beverages (see below).

Depending on the strength of the sun, it may require several days to completely toast foods.

5. BEVERAGES

Pinolillo

No cookbook about Nicaraguan food would be complete without mention of pinolillo, which is pretty much the national beverage. (Nicaraguans call themselves "Pinoleros," in fact.) Pinolillo is a corn-based beverage that also includes cacao and soybeans (as well as cinnamon and perhaps additional flavorings), all toasted and ground. The pinolillo dry mixture is then dissolved in milk or water, and served cold or hot.

Pinolillo can be made using the solar cooker to toast the ingredients, but it usually takes a week or more to complete the process.

"Refrescos"

Refrescos are beverages made from fruit juices or ground seeds added to water and are usually served cold in a glass (over ice, if it's available).

Basic Refresco recipe:

Fruit juice from fresh fruit, such as pineapple, pitahaya (purple cactus fruit), passion fruit, marañón (cashew fruit), orange, lime, et cetera.

Water

Sugar (lots of it, if you want this beverage to be truly Nicaragua-style)

A pinch of salt

Mix all ingredients together according to taste.

Refresco of ayote seeds

Recipe contributed by Doña Aura Verónica I.

1 pound of ayote squash seeds, toasted (perhaps pumpkin seeds might substitute)
2 liters of cold water
1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon

1. Toast the seeds in the solar cooker. This may take one to two days.
2. Grind the roasted seeds and strain to filter out any large pieces; you should have a fine powder.
3. Mix the ground seeds with cinnamon and add to the water. Mix well and serve over ice.

Medicinal Teas

Recipe contributed by Doña Rosa Amalia P.

For colds or the flu

Place in ½ liter of water ONE of the following ingredients:

Lemon grass: 1 or 2 roots of the plant for a strong tea, or use the leaves

Lime tree leaves: 7 leaves.

Eucalyptus: 1 to 3 leaves.

Oregano (fresh, large-leaf variety): 5 leaves.

Note: Use the eucalyptus for tea or steam inhalations..

Preparation:

1. Place the water in the solar cooker to boil. Cooking time is about 1 hour on sunny days.
2. Add sugar or honey to taste.
3. Wash the leaves well, then chop them into little pieces or mash them.
4. Put the leaves in a cup and add the boiled water.
5. Cover and allow to steep for a few minutes.