



Sharsheret in the Kitchen - Cooking with Jennifer Stempel, The Cuban Reuben Follow Up May 11, 2022

- Click [here](#) for Sharsheret in the Kitchen webinar – Cooking with The Cuban Reuben
- Recipes from this webinar: <https://sharsheret.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SITK-May-2022-The-Cuban-Reuben-Recipes-Final-1.pdf>

FOLLOW JENNIFER HERE:

- Website: <https://www.jenniferstempel.com/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thecubanreuben/>
- If you have more questions, reach out to Jenny through her website or on Instagram.
- If you make one of these delicious dishes, please post it on social media and tag @sharsheretofficial and @thecubanreuben.

JENNIFER'S TIPS:

Picadillo

- The meaning of *picadillo* is literally “thing that is chopped/ground” so it’s basically the Cuban version of a meat sauce or chili. It’s traditionally made with beef.
- The natural sugars in sweet onions caramelize in the dish, and add an additional depth of flavor.
- You can use any color bell pepper, but green can have a bitter flavor, so Jenny recommends red, orange, or yellow.
- *Sofrito* is the base of many Cuban dishes: onions, peppers, and garlic. There are similar things in other cuisines like the trinity or mirepoix. If there is a pepper allergy, you could substitute tomato or carrot, but it will change the flavor profile.
- Jenny suggests using a microplane grater for finely mincing her garlic.
- Jenny adds garlic after onion and peppers have softened (onions become translucent), because when garlic burns, it becomes bitter.
- You can use any ground meat (chicken, beef, regular ground turkey or ground turkey breast - anything you want). You could also try it with a plant-based protein (lentils, Impossible beef, etc.) but because they break down quicker, you want to change up the order so it doesn’t turn to mush. Jenny recommends adding the plant-based protein right before you simmer, if you go that route.
- Jenny uses a wooden spoon with a flat edge to break up the turkey very quickly so it’s not stringy.
- Make sure the meat is fully cooked through before you go on to the next step. If you’re doing this with beef, you can leave a little of the pink.
- There are several varieties of *Sazón* and *Sazón Tropical*, but if you want a dish with vibrant color, make sure to use the one that has achiote and culantro which is what gives the orange hue.
- If you don’t have it, you can substitute with regular *Sazón*.

- Cumin adds warmth without adding heat. Cuban food is high on seasoning and flavor, not on heat.
- Jenny recommends using the fine side of the box grater to grate the zucchini so that the zucchini melts into the dish. If you have a picky eater that won't like seeing the green spots in the dish, you can peel the zucchini first and they won't notice!
- You can use any dark green leafy veggie: kale, chard, spinach, anything in your fridge that's about to turn. Jenny recommends chopping it really small so it's barely noticeable. Make sure to only use the leaves (no stems) if using heartier greens like kale or chard. You can also use "super greens" blends that your grocery sells. She doesn't recommend using frozen spinach because it will release too much liquid.
- If you can't have cilantro, you can sub in flat leaf Italian parsley.
- If you want to cook this in a pressure cooker, make sure to cook your meat before putting it in.
- Green olives are a nod to the Spanish influence in Cuban cooking. If you really like them, "measure with your heart," and add more than the recipe calls for! Make sure to add some of the brine too. Manzanilla olives are her favorite variety.
- If you don't like olives, make sure to add more salt or it might work to use capers and some of the brine as a substitute.
- To taste for salt and pepper, she runs her finger along the back of the spoon and tastes what's on her finger and adds accordingly.
- When a recipe calls for a pinch of salt, it's referring to a three-finger pinch (ie. whatever you can pick up with three fingers).
- You can eat it before it simmers down, but technically it's supposed to simmer down for about 20 minutes.
- This is traditionally served over white rice, but it can be served over anything mild in flavor, like mashed potatoes, riced cauliflower, quinoa, brown rice, pasta, etc.
- Jenny's family leaves the bay leaf in the *picadillo*, and if you're served the bay leaf, it's good luck!
- To freeze, let it cool (even cool them overnight in the fridge). Then Jenny recommends putting a serving size in a freezer bag and freeze lying down so it freezes flat. The flavors build over time!

Vegetarian Black Beans

- Jenny makes a large pot of beans and then freezes individual portions. That way, it lasts her months.
- You technically can make this with canned beans, but it won't produce the same results. It won't be as delicious; along the lines of store-bought pie dough vs. a



homemade crust. Jenny discourages using canned beans.

- If you don't have a pressure cooker, you can do it on the stove, it just takes longer. You could also do it on the crock pot (it'll take all day).
- If you forgot to soak your beans, you'll just need to add some time to the pressure cooker.
- Mashing some of the beans with a potato masher makes it creamy without adding cream, and makes it thicker without a thickener. She didn't drain any of the water.
- For the *sofrito*, don't use the onions and peppers you used in the pressure cooker, because these elements have already lost their aromatic strengths in the pressure cooker. You want fresh flavors from new onions and peppers.
- Fresh oregano is more intensely flavored than dried. You can use dried, but adjust for the strength.
- You can use sugar substitutes. Jenny has used agave or stevia before. The sugar (or substitute) balances out the bitterness of the black beans.
- You can use salt or *Sazón Tropical*, but Jenny recommends *Sazón Tropical*.
- Cubans eat black beans and rice the way Americans eat mashed potatoes and gravy. The traditional way to eat these beans is on top of white rice. Make a well in a little hill of white rice and fill it with beans. And serve the *picadillo* on the side.

Avocado Layer Salad


- Seedless cucumbers are the tastiest, but you could use others. She recommends slicing them thin- the thinner the better.
- She used a beefsteak tomato, but any kind works- slice as thin as possible- paper thin! You should be able to see through it ideally.
- Jenny suggests picking avocados before they're ripe so they ripen at home sitting on her counter, but that takes forethought! Once they ripen, she puts them in her fridge and they last a long time. If you want an avocado that you can use that day, you want the avocado to have a little give when you squeeze it.
- Red wine vinegar can be substituted for the seasoned rice vinegar.

Miscellaneous


- Jenny uses a Santoku style knife from Japan gifted by a friend, so she doesn't know the brand, but you can find Santoku knives many places in the US.
- You see a lot of Spanish, African, and Indigenous flavors in Cuban cuisine such as olives, citrus, root vegetables like yucca.
- Jenny uses [Barkeepers Friend](#) to keep her pots shiny.




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