



There is no doubt that *mofongo* is the most famous Puerto Rican recipe—well, perhaps with the exception of the *piña colada*. Green plantains are fried and then mashed with crisp pork cracklings and garlic. The mashing, preferably in a *pilón*, or mortar and pestle, is important to create the correct texture, and the action draws out the flavors and marries them completely. At its most basic, the mash is delicious and filling. When elevated with fillings like this rock lobster (also called spiny lobster) and a white wine sauce, it becomes rich and elegant.

MOFONGO RELLENO DE LANGOSTA EN CREMA CRIOLLA DE VINO BLANCO

Mashed Plantains Stuffed with Rock Lobster in Creole Wine Sauce

SERVES 4

FOR THE MOFONGO:

- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- 4 green plantains, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup chicharrón or crisp cooked bacon
- ¼ cup good-quality olive oil

FOR THE LOBSTER FILLING:

- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, mashed to a paste in a mortar
- ¼ tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 cubanero pepper, diced
- ½ tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¾ cup white wine
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 fresh Caribbean lobster tails, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

MAKE THE MOFONGO: In a heavy skillet, heat 3 inches of vegetable oil over medium-high heat to about 350°F. Line a plate with paper towels.

Fry the plantains in the hot oil until they start to turn golden, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the plantains to the paper towel-lined plate to drain. (This is the same as the first step in making tostones, page 166.)

In a large *pilón* (mortar and pestle), mash 1 of the garlic cloves until very mushy. Add one-quarter of the plantain chunks and ¼ teaspoon of the salt and continue mashing. Add ¼ cup of the cracklings, drizzle in a little of the olive oil to add moisture, and keep mashing until it is all very well combined and has formed a doughlike paste. Press the pestle into the center of the mixture to form a hollow. Use a spoon to loosen the edges, then flip the mofongo out onto a plate. Flip the mofongo once again onto a serving plate so that the hollow cup faces up. This is where your lobster filling will go. Repeat to create three more mofongo cups. (Alternatively, you can form the mofongo into balls and use the pestle to create a well in each on the serving plates.)

MAKE THE LOBSTER FILLING: In a large skillet, sauté the onion, garlic, oregano, and cubanero pepper over medium-high heat until the onion is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add the tomato paste and cook, stirring continuously, for 2 minutes. Raise the heat to high and add the wine and cream. Let the mixture reduce until thickened a bit, about 5 minutes. Stir in the lobster pieces and cook for 3 minutes more. Remove from the heat, season with salt, and sprinkle in the cilantro.

Spoon the hot lobster mixture into the mofongo cups and serve immediately.