Like most families, big traditional meals in my home were saved for holidays and family gatherings. Although some Saturdays were special. When thinking of cultural foods, we often imagine complex traditions that take a skilled hand and a history of knowledge to prepare. That is not the case for this meal. I would wake up on those fateful Saturdays to a happy grandmother offering to make a quick and warm breakfast. I would then reply excitedly, knowing that in less than 30 minutes I would be enjoying a hot bowl of Harina.

Harina is a dish that resembles oatmeal or porridge and it can be found all across the Caribbean Islands. It is essentially a creamy cornmeal but it exists under many aliases. My family is Puerto Rican and we call it Harina, which is short for Harina de Maiz [Corn Flour]. Other Puerto Ricans might also refer to it as Farina or Crema.
de Maiz [Cream of Corn]. A friend of mine from the Dominican Republic knows it as Majarete and enjoys it as a dessert. Another from Guyana calls it Maizena and eats it as a meal for Dinner. I have even heard it go by the name of Jamaican Porridge, Cornmeal Cereal, and on some packages it is labeled Masarepa. It is a very versatile dish seeing as I have mostly enjoyed it as breakfast. The ingredients can also be adjusted to satisfy your flavor palette when making this yourself.

What You’ll Need:
- Goya Corn Meal Fine Grain
- Water
- Milk of your choice
- Butter
- A pinch of Salt
- Sugar
- Vanilla Extract
- Cinnamon

The process of making this happens entirely by guess work on my end. Again, due to its many variations you will find different methods and measurements everywhere you look but overall it is a fairly easy meal to fix so do not worry if you feel that you are making it wrong.

Start with a small sized pot. Fill it with water about 1/4th of the way, then add the milk until you reach the halfway mark of your pot. Basically, equal parts milk and water. Put it on the stove over a medium to low heat setting. At this point I would add “a big spoon of butter” or two to three tablespoons, a pinch of salt, and “a whole lot of sugar.” Taste as you go, add sugar until the milky mixture is sweet enough for your liking. Then pour in a splash of vanilla, add until you feel content. If you’d like to experiment with flavors, you can add a cinnamon stick, nutmeg, or other baking spices now. Stir constantly until the butter melts and sugar dissolves. It is best if you use a spoon that has multiple holes in it. Let it warm until the sides of the pot froth and bubble. You do not want a boil or even a simmer. If the
mixture is too hot, the corn meal will clump when added. Once the sides start to bubble, be sure to never let go of your stirring utensil. Slowly and steadily pour in the cornmeal, keep stirring as you do this. You will feel the mixture start to thicken and that will tell you when to stop pouring. Keep in mind that it may thicken up more as it cools down. Break up any clumps that form as you go. Now you must stay stirring until the cornmeal mixture becomes a creamy porridge-like consistency and when you taste it, you can not feel any uncooked granules. If your mixture is too thick you can add more milk or water. If it is not thickening enough then you must add more cornmeal. However, doing this at a later time will give you an uneven texture throughout.

When it is finished, ladle some into your favorite bowl and top with a sprinkle of cinnamon. Now you have a delicious bowl of Harina to keep you warm on snowy evenings or to help wake you up on a relaxing Saturday morning.

Harina via Alisha Santiago

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