



OLD SCHOOL grandma vickie's capirotada

FOR MY GRANDMA Vickie, food was a big part of preserving our Mexican culture and history. From teaching me how to make flour tortillas to making tamales for Christmas every year, cooking was an important part of our family's traditions. She had

a strict Catholic upbringing in Tijuana, Mexico, but she wasn't religious or traditional. Grandma Vickie told it like it was, talked openly about sex and birth control, and raised her kids and grandkids with feminist ideas. One of my favorite dishes of hers is capirotada, a Mexican bread pudding that's tradition-

ally served during Lent—she made this whenever we craved it, not just around Easter. This strong lady knew how to keep her family close—by making yummy food for us to share.

Each family's capirotada recipe is slightly different. To make grandma Vickie's version, **butter** both sides of six **French bread rolls**. Cut the bread into tiny slices and lightly brown them in a skillet. Peel and seed two **green apples** before chopping them into ½" chunks. Cut one pound of **Monterey Jack cheese** into long, skinny slices and shell two cups of **peanuts**. In a large pot, alternate layers of bread, cheese, apples, and peanuts, repeating until you run out of ingredients. Grandma's recipe calls for three cones of **piloncillo**, Mexican brown sugar (found in Latin grocery stores), but you can substitute three cups of **dark brown sugar** and three tablespoons of **molasses** in a pinch. In a separate pot, boil four cups of water, the piloncillo and six **cinnamon sticks** until the sugar melts and thickens. Remove the cinnamon sticks and pour the liquid on top of the layers. Cover the pot and cook on low to medium heat for 30 minutes, or until the cheese melts. The ingredients should meld together but the bread should not be mushy. Serve warm and enjoy!

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