



CHRISTMAS MEXICAN FRUIT PUNCH (PONCHE DE FRUTAS NAVIDEÑO)

MAKES 30 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS:

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| 8 quarts water | 1 cup raisins |
| 1 lb. tejocotes | 6 oz. walnuts, coarsely chopped |
| 3 whole oranges | 3 cinnamon sticks |
| 8 guavas | ½ cup whole cloves |
| 2 lbs. sugar cane | 2½ lbs. piloncillo |
| 1 lb. pitted prunes | 3 cups brandy or rum (optional) |
| 3 pears | |

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a medium saucepan, bring one quart of water to a boil. Add the tejocotes, lower the heat and simmer for 6-8 minutes until softened. Remove the fruit, peel and cut off the hard ends.
2. Prepare the fruits: Peel the sugar cane and slice it into medallions. Remove the stems and cores from the pears and cut into large chunks. Cut the guavas and prunes in half. Stud the oranges with the whole cloves. Cut the cone of piloncillo into large chunks.
3. In a very large pot, bring the remaining water to a boil. Add all the fruits and nuts to the pot and bring it back to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for one-half hour, stirring gently now and then. Add the piloncillo and cinnamon. Simmer for another half hour.
4. Remove from heat. Ladle into cups, making sure each cup gets some chunks of fruit and nuts. Add rum or brandy to each cup as desired and serve hot.

NOTE:

- * Dark brown sugar can be substituted for the piloncillo.
- * *Ponche* is an art form with almost as many variations as there are cooks. Some recipes call for apples, others pears and many use both. Many recipes will include tamarind pods while others add jamica, a drink brewed from dried hibiscus flowers. Use your own creativity to create your own *ponche* recipe.

