

# HOJA SANTA CHEESE AND CHORIZO BLUE CORN GRIT CAKES

If I do say so myself, this dish is delicious. The leaf hoja santa is native to Meso-America. In today's Central and South America, the leaf is known as yerba santa, Veracruz pepper, and Mexican pepper leaf. It's used in savory and sweet dishes, and the big, heart-shaped leaves are usually wrapped around meat, fish, and occasionally tamales. You can burn the wrapping for aromatic purposes, similar to burning incense. Its flavor has been likened to sassafras, mint, tarragon, and even eucalyptus. Hoja santa cheese was originally wrapped in the leaf. You can substitute for your favorite cheese.

This one's for Adrian in honor of the chorizo blue corn dressing he cooks for his church.

**ACTIVE TIME:** 40 minutes

**START TO FINISH:** 2 to 3 hours

**MAKES 12 (3-INCH-SQUARE) GRIT CAKES**

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided, plus more for brushing

8 ounces fresh chorizo

½ cup sliced scallions (about 5 stalks)

4 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

1 teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon cracked black pepper

1½ cups blue corn grits

1 cup crumbled hoja santa cheese

Poached eggs, for serving

Hot sauce or Locust Bean and Chili Oil (page 286), for serving

Rub two 9-inch baking pans with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat, and brown the chorizo for 5 to 6 minutes, breaking it up and crumbling into pieces. Add the scallions, stir, and remove from the heat. Strain off any excess oil and set aside.

Bring the stock, butter, salt, and pepper to a boil in a medium pot over high heat. Whisk in the grits, lower to a simmer, and cook, stirring frequently, until the grits are tender, about 25 minutes. Remove from the heat and fold in the chorizo mixture.

Pour the hot grits into one prepared baking pan. Spread the crumbled hoja santa cheese over the top and press down into the grits using a spatula. Allow the grits to cool completely.

Preheat the oven on the low broil setting and position a rack in the top of the oven.

Cut the grits into 3-inch squares and place in the second prepared baking pan. Make sure to leave about 1½ inches of space between each cake to toast evenly.

Generously brush the tops of each grit cake with olive oil. Place under the broiler and broil for about 3 minutes, until evenly browned and crispy along the edges.

Serve the grit cakes topped with a soft poached egg and a dash of hot sauce or chili oil.