

SPANISH JAMÓN (HAM) CROQUETAS WITH A CHIMICHURRI TWIST

INGREDIENTS

For the croquetas (makes about 20):

- 60g butter
- 60g plain flour
- 500ml whole milk, warmed
- 150g cooked jamón or ham, finely chopped
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Salt and pepper
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 150g breadcrumbs (panko works well for extra crunch)
- Oil for frying

For the chimichurri dip:

- 1 jar Chimmi & Co Original Chimichurri
- A squeeze of lemon juice
- Optional: a spoon of Greek yoghurt or sour cream if you want it a bit creamier, though it's excellent straight from the jar too

METHOD

1. **Build the béchamel.** Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, cook until soft, about 4 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook for another minute to get rid of the raw flour taste. Gradually add the warm milk, whisking constantly, until you've got a thick, smooth paste. This takes patience, don't rush the milk in all at once or you'll end up with lumps.
2. **Add the filling.** Stir through the chopped jamón, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Keep cooking and stirring for another few minutes until the mixture is very thick and starts pulling away from the sides of the pan. It should be much firmer than a normal béchamel.
3. **Chill it.** Tip the mixture into a shallow dish, cover, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, ideally overnight. This step matters. A warm or soft mixture will not hold its shape and will fall apart in the fryer.
4. **Shape and coat.** Once firm, roll into small cylinders or balls, about a tablespoon each. Dip each one in beaten egg, then roll in breadcrumbs. For extra crunch, double-coat: egg, crumb, egg, crumb again.
5. **Fry.** Heat oil to 180°C. Fry the croquetas in small batches for 2 to 3 minutes, until deep golden and crisp. Don't crowd the pan, the temperature will drop and they'll turn greasy instead of crisp. Drain on paper towel.
6. **Serve hot, with the chimichurri dip on the side.** Straight from the jar is genuinely all it needs. If you want to stretch it further or mellow the sharpness slightly, fold in a spoon of yoghurt or sour cream.

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