

Grab a handful of Jamaican flavor

Hand pie features flaky pastry and spicy beef filling

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Is there anything more delightful than a hand pie?

If you're not sure, these flaky pastries — representative of a street-food staple across the Caribbean — should win you over with their sunny, island flair. Stuffed with ground beef seasoned with the traditional Jamaican aromatics of scallions, garlic, curry powder, allspice and chili, they offer just enough spice to create some heat, but not so much that you can't taste the flavors.

The original recipe paired the beef with a sour cream pastry crust tinted yellow with turmeric, but I thought a shortening-based hand pie dough would be easier to work with. And I was right: Pulsed together in a food processor, the dough is not only super forgiving, making it easy for even a novice to roll into circles, but also sturdy enough to fold and stuff with filling. Plus, it bakes up tender and flaky.

If you like a little more fire on your lips, add another habanero or two; if you desire less, substitute a less-fiery Scotch bonnet pepper. I served the hand pies warm, with a mango dipping sauce.



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Highly spiced Jamaican beef hand pies get a gentle heat from habanero chili.

1 pound lean ground beef
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
12 scallions, chopped fine
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 habanero chile, stemmed, seeded and minced
1 teaspoon dried thyme
3/4 teaspoon curry powder
3/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 slice hearty white sandwich bread, torn into 1-inch pieces

For dough
4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons table salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
8 tablespoons vegetable shortening, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1 cup vegetable stock or broth
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
5 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
1/2 cup fresh or frozen mango cubes, thawed
1 teaspoon honey
1 teaspoon white vinegar
1 tablespoon finely minced red onion
Juice of 1 lime
2 tablespoons water

Make filling: Combine 1 tablespoon water, salt and baking soda in a large bowl. Add beef and mix until thoroughly combined. Let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.

Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add beef mixture and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until beginning to brown 5 to 7 minutes. Add scallions, garlic, habanero, thyme, curry, allspice and pepper and cook, stirring frequently until scallions are softened, about 3 minutes.

Add bread and remaining 1 cup water and stir to incorporate. Bring to boil then reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until sauce thickens and coats beef, 8 to 10 minutes. Mash beef mixture with potato masher or fork until fine-textured and bread is fully incorporated, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a clean bowl and let cool completely.

While meat cools, make dough: Process flour, salt and baking powder in food processor until combined, about 3 seconds. Add shortening and pulse until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal, 6 to 8 pulses. Add broth and beaten eggs and pulse until dough just comes together, about 5 pulses. Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and knead until dough forms smooth ball, about 20 seconds.

Divide dough into 16 equal pieces. With your cupped hand, form each piece into smooth, tight ball. (Dough can be covered and refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions, place 1 rimmed baking sheet on each, and heat oven to 425 degrees.

Working with 1 dough ball at a time, roll each dough ball on lightly floured surface into 6-inch circle. (Don't worry if it's not perfect.) Place a scant 1/4 cup meat filling in center of dough round. Brush edges of dough with water and fold dough over filling. Press to seal, trim any ragged edges, and crimp edges with tines of fork. Pierce top of each hand pie once with fork. (This allows steam to escape during baking.)

Drizzle 2 tablespoons oil over surface of each hot baking sheet, then return to oven for 2 minutes. Brush tops of hand pies with remaining 1 tablespoon oil.

Carefully place half of the hand pies on each prepared sheet and bake until golden brown, 20-25 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Transfer pies to wire rack and let cool.

Meanwhile, make mango sauce by pureeing mango, honey, vinegar, onion, lime juice and water in blender or food processor until ingredients are smooth.

Serve hand pies warm or at room temperature, with mango sauce for dipping.

Makes 16 hand pies.
— Adapted from "The Savory Baker" by America's Test Kitchen (Feb. 2022, \$35)

CORNBREAD

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Masa harina's softer and finer texture is precisely why it's suited for making doughs for tortillas and tamales. But it also serves to make an even more tender Southern-style cornbread when used in place of coarse cornmeal. That I was using locally produced heirloom masa harina — from Masienda, located in West Los Angeles — surely didn't hurt; it produced such a fantastic, mind-changing flavor.

At the same time as this revelation, my partner and I were battling — as is our perennial predilection — over whether to add sugar to cornbread. I grew up in a household that didn't use it, and our cornbread was flatter and had a crunchy bottom. My partner, however, grew up with Jiffy cornbread mix and, thus, prefers a sweeter, cakier texture.

If you're from the South, you may know that the sweet-versus-unsweet cornbread debate is drawn almost exclusively along racial lines.

In her award-winning 2017 Charlotte Observer article "Why does sugar in cornbread divide races in the South?," author Kathleen Purvis writes:

"Until early in the 20th century, Southern cornmeal was made with sweeter white corn and it was water-ground. When industrial milling came along, that changed. The steel-roller mills used yellow corn that was harvested before it was ripe, so it had less sugar. They eliminated the germ so [the corn] kept longer, but it had less corn flavor. And they ground it finer. You had to add a little flour to help it rise and sugar to add flavor."

Purvis goes on to posit that because this new yellow cornmeal was cheaper than that made with white corn, "Black cooks who had little money may have changed their cornbread to match the cornmeal they could afford."

On the opposite end of the spectrum, when using masa harina instead of cornmeal in my cornbread, I noticed a distinct corn-sweetness that I had never tasted in regular American cornmeal before — and I wanted more of it. So, I indulged my partner's wishes and added a spoonful of sugar to my next batch of cornbread, then a second spoonful the next

time, and on and on until I landed at the perfect amount for my recipe.

The sweetness made the cornbread taste corn-ier, just like the masa harina. And so what began as a happy accident produced a cross-cultural bread that offered me a chance to learn from it the more I worked on it. In my often-jaded mind when it comes to cooking, it was refreshing to have my previously held notions of my most nostalgic food get broken apart and built back up even better than before.

MASA HARINA CORNBREAD

Time: 45 minutes
Yields: Serves 8

This cornbread recipe is pretty classic, save for the use of masa harina instead of cornmeal, which gives the bread a more tender texture and corn-forward flavor. Regular granulated sugar is used to sweeten the cornbread, but feel free to use honey, maple syrup or even light brown sugar instead. The amount called for is not so large that the alternative sweeteners will affect it dramatically beyond a slightly darker color once baked.

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing and serving
106 grams (3/4 cup) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
155 grams (1 1/4 cups) masa harina
52 grams (1/4 cup) granulated sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
2 cups whole milk
2 large eggs

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Grease and flour a 9-inch round or 8-inch square cake pan with butter and flour.

2. Meanwhile, whisk together the flour, masa harina, sugar, baking powder and salt in a large bowl. In another bowl, whisk together the melted butter, milk and eggs until smooth. Pour the liquid ingredients over the dry ingredients, and stir until just combined (do not try to remove all the lumps from the batter).

3. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Place the pan in the oven and bake until golden brown at the edges and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 35 minutes.

4. Remove the pan from the oven and let the cornbread cool for 10 minutes. Invert the cornbread and remove it from the pan or cut into wedges and serve from the pan. Serve with more butter melted over the top of each wedge.

JAMAICAN BEEF HAND PIES

For filling
1 tablespoon plus 1 cup water, divided
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

Maple glaze adds sweet, tangy flavor to pork chops

By **LINDA GASSENHEIMER**
Tribune News Service

Here's a way to add flavor to boneless pork chops. I find they can easily become dry when served without a sauce. This maple glaze solves that problem and adds a sweet and tangy sauce to the dish. You can make this quick dinner in one skillet. To speed the cooking time, the potatoes and broccoli are first cooked in the microwave.

Helpful Hints

- You can use yellow Yukon Gold potatoes instead of red potatoes.

Countdown

- Mix maple syrup, vinegar and mustard together.
- Microwave vegetables.
- Make pork and vegetables in skillet.

Shopping List

To buy: 1 small bottle maple syrup, 1 jar Dijon mustard, 1 small bottle of apple cider vinegar, 1/2 pound red potatoes, 1/4 pound broccoli florets, 2 6-ounce boneless pork chops
Staples: olive oil, salt and black peppercorns.

SKILLET MAPLE-GLAZED PORK CHOPS WITH POTATOES AND BROCCOLI

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer



Linda Gassenheimer-TNS

Skillet maple-glazed pork chops with potatoes and broccoli.

1/4 cup maple syrup
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1/2 pound red potatoes
1/4 pound broccoli florets, cut in half if large (about 1 1/2 cups)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 6-ounce boneless pork chops
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Mix the maple syrup, apple cider vinegar and mustard together in a small bowl and set aside. Wash potatoes do not peel and cut into 1/2- to 1-inch pieces. Place in a microwave-safe bowl and add the broccoli florets. Microwave on high 4 to 5 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pork chops, potatoes and broccoli. Saute 4 minutes, stirring vegetables as they cook. Turn the pork over and continue to stir the potatoes and broccoli. Saute 3 to 4 minutes. A meat thermometer should read 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Divide the pork and vegetables between two dinner plates. Add the maple syrup sauce to the skillet and stir to warm through, about 1 minute. Spoon the sauce over the pork.

Yield 2 servings.
Per serving: 478 calories (38%

from fat), 12.4 g fat (2.4 g saturated, 5.0 g monounsaturated), 96 mg cholesterol, 45.1 g protein, 49.7 g carbohydrates, 3.1 g fiber, 226 mg sodium.

Linda Gassenheimer is the author of over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook." Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.

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