

New England: Freedom Findin' & Food Fixin'

By P. Elizabeth Wilson
for Kraft, Inc.

Black people helped settle New England, and participated in the American Revolution. Blacks also influenced the cooking heritage of New England.

Among the people contracted for his recipes was Thomas Allen.

Mr. Allen has been a chef, baker and caterer of international cuisine. For some 20 years he has been cooking and baking. More recently he has been instructing young adults, ages 16 to 22, in the art of cooking. One of the delectable dishes he prepared for our visit was filet of sole. When asked how he kept it so hot he imparted this philosophy, "make the people wait on the food, not the food on the people." And it was certainly worth the wait!

Casseroles are a style of cuisine for which New England is famous. And to complete his buffet in the "proper Bostonian" way, Mr. Allen included a yam, corn and custard casserole. Coconut, a popular ingredient of Caribbean influence, sweetens this delicious dish and adds both a texture and flavor complement to the vegetables. This casserole is a prime example of how to mix culinary traditions for a successful result.

Many cuisines, however, are magnificent just as they are. Miss Candida Baptista, a Boston resident originally from New Bedford, retains much of her Cape Verdean heritage in her kitchen. She prepared her cultural Cape Verdean "Jagaceda," commonly referred to as "jag." It is a combination of rice and beans prepared with paprika (for coloring) and is akin to our ham-seasoned black-eyed peas and rice and the West Indian goat-seasoned rice and peas. To transform this simple recipe into a main dish she suggests adding linguica (a Portuguese sausage), chicken or any other meat you have.

Cape Verde Island is off the coast of Northwest Africa near Senegal. The people of Cape Verde gained their independence just a few years ago. Until that time, they were under Portuguese rule. Now, Candy tells us, each July 7-12 the New England Cape Verdeans celebrate their independence with festivities, parades and pageants. Naturally, everyone partakes of several variations of "jag," which can be prepared with any variety of bean as well as meat. Candy told us that "jag" and chicken are to Cape Ver-



Candida Baptista remembers her Cape Verdean heritage each time she prepares "jagaceda." While it's a common meal accompaniment at home in New Bedford, Candy's friends in Boston make special requests for the dish at parties, too.

deans as hamburgers and french fries are to Americans. One of the specialties her father prepares is "gofongo." It is made with flour and oatmeal or possibly cornmeal, shaped into donut-like breadsticks about six inches in length. We also learned that "canga," a kind of chicken soup, "gofongo" and "jag" were three dishes enjoyed by New Bedford Cape Verdeans often.

Through our warm and gracious Connecticut hostess, Mrs. Ruth Frazier, we had the pleasure of meeting some modern-day leaders of New England's Black community. Dr. John Rogers, already mentioned for his work "Inner City Bicentennial Booklet 1776-1976," lived in Connecticut countryside with his family before joining the staff of the University of Hartford. Mrs. Dwen Andrews, his daughter, remembers on Saturdays being all starched and polished and waiting for Dad. It was

his day to market and theirs for the movies. During our visit with Dwen, she recalled many happy experiences and many delightful productions of her mother's from their country kitchen -- gingerbread, and Saturday specials of baked beans and brown bread. The brown bread was made using the basic recipe with the addition of raisins, molasses and onions. The mixture was placed in shortening

and left to steam for approximately 2 hours. On some Sundays chicken, too old to fry, was fricasseed and served with yeast rolls.

Dwen also remembered a lot of walking, touch football with her three older brothers, swimming in the murky water hole, country fairs and pot luck suppers. At the pot luck suppers there was always plenty of good food. Baked apples cored and stuffed with butter, sugar and nutmeg. A smidgen or two of nutmeg was also used in rice pudding, apple cobbler and other New England puddings and casseroles. Another highlight was an occasional strawberry shortcake festival. At such times, the thought of anything less than pure, unadulterated cream would have been scandalous.

Today, Dad is busy with the Black Studies Program at the University of Hartford and with his responsibilities as an historian and organizer. Dwen is busy with her husband and two daughters, her responsibilities as a leader and board member of 4-H Clubs and as a community liaison to the Board of Education.

She shared with us a new direction in the 4-H Clubs. On her agenda, in addition to the husbandry division, is home economics. The children are now participating in sewing classes, arts and crafts expositions and preparing for competitions in Connecticut's home shows. Super snacks known as Big Grinders are part of the nutrition program. Big Grinders place emphasis on the value of eating snacks like prunes stuffed with peanut butter or peanut butter in celery sticks instead of candy. Good snacking habits contribute in no small way to weight maintenance and nutrition.

Newcomers to the northeast have another perspective on cooking traditions of the area. "The unusual thing about New England," said Frances Johnson, manager of the Unity Plaza branch of the Hartford

National Bank, "was they served spaghetti sauce separate from the noodles." A native of St. Louis, she now resides in Hartford with husband Verne and daughter Tish thriving on the discovery of culinary adaptations of all kinds.

At the end of each day she deposits the change in her pockets in a recycled cheese bucket. At the end of the year this accumulated stash is exchanged for food for Christmas entertaining. In the past, her feasts have included shish-kebabs served with mushrooms caps, maraschino cherries and pineapple chunks, all prepared in wine sauce and cream of onion soup. She offers fresh shrimp in a cabbage shell with cocktail sauce and creole pig's feet. The Johnsons also enjoy fried porgies, a tasty sunfish-shaped fish, very popular in this area.

Fran is presently experimenting with ground cloves and nutmeg as seasonings in meats and vegetables. Her experiments show nothing conclusive at this time, but if any of her discoveries equal the flavor of the stuffed bell peppers she prepared for us, history is still in the making.

The Kraft Kitchens have illuminated the highlights of our culinary collection on this heritage trip by providing a number of convenient recipes based on those we found in New England.

From New Bedford's Cape Verdean Oatmeal Sticks, a variation of "gogongo," and Cape Verdean Rice, a one-step version of "jagaceda," with African-Portuguese overtones, these recipes offer flavorful companions to most any dinner entree. Add sausage or chicken to the rice dish to make it the main course itself.

While casseroles have gained a particular popularity in the northeast, cooks throughout the country know their merits. Inspired by Thomas Allen's sumptuous food idea, the Kraft Kitchens present this simplified recipe for Yam and Corn Casserole. It retains the call for coconut, complementing the sweet potato and corn flavors, for an interesting wintertime dish. This casserole is ideal to take along to a pot luck supper, too.

PARMESAN OATMEAL STICKS
1-1/2 cups of flour
1 cup old fashioned or quick oats,

uncooked
Kraft grated parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon baking powder
Parkay margarine
1/2 cup milk

Combine flour, oats, 1/4 cup cheese and baking powder. Cut in 1/2 cup margarine until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add milk, mixing just until moistened. Shape into ball. On floured surface, knead dough ten times; roll out to 9-inch square. Brush with melted margarine; sprinkle with cheese. Cut dough into 24 sticks; place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 425° 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve warm. 2 dozen.

CAPE VERDEAN-STYLE RICE

2 cups water
1 16-oz. can kidney beans, rinsed, drained
1 cup rice
1/2 cup french dressing
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Combine ingredients; bring to boil. Cover; simmer 20 to 25 minutes or until rice is tender, stirring occasionally. 6 to 8 servings.

Variation: Substitute 16-oz. can lima beans for kidney beans. Add 1/2 lb. sliced cooked smoked sausage or 1-1/2 cups chopped cooked chicken before simmering.

YAMS AND CORN CASSEROLE

1 17-oz. can yams, drained, sliced
1/4 cup flour
1 8-1/4-oz. can cream style corn
3 eggs, beaten
1-1/2 cups milk
1/2 cup flaked coconut
1/4 cup Parkay margarine, melted
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Toss yams with flour. Place in greased 10 X 6-inch baking dish. Combine remaining ingredients; pour over yams. Bake at 325°, 40 to 45 minutes. Cool 5 minutes. 6 servings.

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"Jagaceda" is a traditional dish in New Bedford, Massachusetts, brought from Cape Verde Island off the coast of Northwest Africa. The Kraft Kitchens offer a convenience recipe for Cape Verdean-style rice with rice, beans and sausage for a tasty dinner entree.

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