

# African cuisine spices up summer

Now that the weather is finally turning to summer, thoughts are turning to picnics, outdoor barbecues and ethnic food celebrations. When the weather is hot, why not enjoy some hot food to go along with it? Not necessarily hot as in temperature, but hot as in spicy, with flavors bursting forth from chillies, curry and cayenne and a host of exotic spices found in traditional African food.

Following are recipes for an authentic tropical African meal, not a bit like soul food, but a cuisine very separate and distinct. Our African meal will include a snack, soup, salad, a mash, a main dish, dessert and beverage.

(Note: many African dishes require ingredients that are not common here, such as plantain, coconut milk, or mangoes. If you look around, however, most of them can be found in either a large supermarket or a specialty food store.)

**SNACK:** Since many Africans work very hard in the fields or far from home, they take along prepared snacks to eat wherever they are. These snacks are also good for party appetizers. A tasty one is Kaklo, or banana snacks.

## KAKLO

- 2 Bananas
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 fresh chili pepper, seeded and minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger root
- 1 cup flour
- 1/8 cup water
- Peanut oil for frying

Peel bananas and mash. Add chopped onion, tomato and chili pepper and mash again. Add salt and ginger. Mix flour and water, then add mash and stir well. Heat oil until hot enough for deep-frying. Drop mixture by half-teaspoonful at a time into oil and fry until golden brown. Balls should be crisp on the outside, but soft on the inside. Serve as hot or cold snacks, or hot with a main dish.

**SOUP:** Many African dishes use peanuts in some form, either raw or ground up. For our soup, we have a Hot Peanut Soup recipe from Senegal.

## HOT PEANUT SOUP

- 3 cups milk
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups roasted peanuts, shelled, skinned and ground or mashed fine
- 2 tablespoons grated onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped chives for topping



Add cornstarch to milk and stir until smooth. Put into soup kettle with broth and all other ingredients except chives. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Turn down heat and simmer for 10 minutes, continuing to stir. Strain. Serve hot. Top with chives.

**SALAD:** Here are two very easy and delicious salads that would make a cool addition to our African meal. One is a Papaya Salad from Sierra Leone and the other an Avocado Salad from Nigeria.

## PAPAYA SALAD

Peel a ripe papaya and slice it. Place the slices, some grapefruit sections and chunks of peeled melon on plates. Sprinkle with sugar and fresh-grated coconut.

## AVOCADO SALAD

- 1 ripe avocado
- Juice of one lime
- 1 large ripe tomato, cut into wedges
- lettuce leaves

## DRESSING

- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Peel avocado, cut into slices and marinate in lime juice for half an hour. Remove slices. Make individual salads with lettuce leaves topped with avocado slices and tomato wedges. Put a few spoonful of dressing on each salad.

**MASH:** Most tropical African countries make "mashes" of bland, starchy root vegetables to accompany hot, spicy stews. They are often made of cassava (difficult to find in the U.S.), yams or potatoes. Here is one mash called Futali from East Africa.

## FUTALI

Peel 1 large sweet potato per person, cut into chunks and boil in water to cover until tender. Drain. Add 1/2 cup per potato of shelled, roasted, unsalted peanuts ground fine, and mash. Beat with heavy wooden spoon until smooth. Add a little salt if you wish. Serve hot.

**MAIN DISH:** For a main meat dish, a good choice is Ethiopian Hot Wat, or chicken in hot sauce.

## ETHIOPIAN HOT WAT

- 1 chicken, cut into serving pieces
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 3 tablespoons butter or peanut oil
- 2 medium-size onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamon
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon finely minced and peeled fresh ginger root
- 6 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and pierced with fork

Put water, salt and lemon juice into stew pot. Add chicken and simmer covered for 20 minutes. Remove Chicken from stock and set both aside. Saute onions and garlic in butter until tender and add to stock. Heat to boiling point. Add tomato paste, cardamon, cayenne, chili powder and ginger root and stir well. Add chicken. Simmer covered until chicken is tender. Add eggs to stew for the last 10 minutes of simmering time. Serve one egg in each bowl of stew.

**DESSERT:** For those with a sweet tooth, try Chin Chin, an African type of fried cake spiced with lemon and orange peel.

## CHIN CHIN

- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon melted butter or margarine
- Peanut oil for deep frying

Sift dry ingredients together into bowl. Add orange and lemon peel, egg and shortening. Mix to form soft dough. Knead for a few minutes on floured pastry board, adding more flour if necessary to make dough firm and smooth. Cover with cloth and let rise in warm place for 30 minutes. Roll out on floured board to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 1 1/2-inch triangles. Heat oil to deep frying temperature. Drop cakes into oil a few at a time, frying until they are brown. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve hot. Makes 2 dozen.

These recipes are from *Black Africa Cook Book*, by Monica Bayley, 1977, Determined Productions, Inc., San Francisco, CA.

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