

# Guyana's rain forest: Waterfalls, cliffs, golden frogs

By ALBERT STUMM  
Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — From 6,000 feet above Guyana's rain forest, the jungle canopy below spread to the horizon in every direction, like wall-to-wall green carpeting. Winding, mud-brown tributaries of the Demerara River shimmered in the sunlight.

My endless view of the jungle and the aggressive hum of the plane's propellers eventually drowned out the grittiness I'd experienced in the capital, Georgetown. Headed for Kaiteur Falls, I began to relax, for the first time in three days.

I'd come to this South American nation to see where my father-in-law grew up, and my husband prepared me for conditions I wasn't exactly used to. The gargantuan bugs, he warned, were as ubiquitous as the abject poverty. I went into the trip with an open mind but slathered myself with insect repellent so strong that it actually rubbed varnish off wooden furniture.

Those first days in Georgetown, though, I felt like a target. Crime is rampant and unemployment is high. I was hassled by vendors working from ramshackle stalls, and I was told it wasn't safe for me to go anywhere alone, even during the day, or walk anywhere at night, even in groups. One bartender insisted we take a taxi three blocks as the sun was setting, and he provided a password to make sure we got the cab he called: "ambassador."

I couldn't wait for our excursion to the country's interior.

The plane took off from a small airfield near Georgetown, hooked a left for an aerial view of the low-rise capital, and veered south over the vast expanse of green. About 90 minutes later, we bounced onto an airstrip with the buzz from a brief, disconcerting alarm and came to a stop about 200 yards from the cliff that produces one of the world's largest waterfalls.

A guide told our group of about a dozen that the Potaro River drops



AP Photo/Albert Stumm

This March 7 photo shows the 741-foot high Kaiteur Falls in Guyana's verdant rain forest. According to legend, the waterfall on the Potaro River was named after a Patamona chief named Kai, who paddled over it in self-sacrifice to protect his tribe from raiding rivals.



AP Photo/Albert Stumm

This March 7 photo shows a man on a tour of Kaiteur Falls inching close to the cliff edge for a picture.

a staggering 741 feet, about the height of the Time Warner Center in New York. The waterfall gets its

name from Kai, a Patamona chief who according to legend paddled his canoe over it in self-sacrifice

to appease Makonaima, the Great Spirit, and protect his tribe from raiding rivals.

As the guide led us through lush vegetation, he helped us search for tiny golden frogs, small as yellow M&Ms, that live their entire lives in pools in the leaves of giant bromeliads, a relative of the pineapple that grows 15 feet tall. He pointed to other highlights: a rubber tree with a fruit resembling a red onion; a vine you can slice and drink water from; a sticky scarlet moss that traps insects, one of six carnivorous plants in the park.

Closer to the falls, the distant "shhhhhh" of crashing water rose to a low rumble. I clambered over and under gigantic boulders and up to an overlook, taking in my first view of the cascade freefalling into the verdant canyon. I ignored signs to stay at least 8 feet from the edge, getting low to peer into the straight

drop dozens of stories below as low passing clouds blended with the rising mist.

Over the next couple of hours, we hiked trails around the waterfall and scaled up to two more lookout points for closer, even more stunning views. Standing at the third, I realized this was the most isolated place I'd ever been. The falls are at least a three-day trek from the nearest road.

Rejuvenated, I returned to Georgetown for another few days with newfound appreciation for Guyana.

I soon learned there's hope in the capital since a new government took power last year, with efforts to clean up both the corruption and litter that have deterred tourists. Already, my in-laws said, the capital was cleaner than they remembered.

Meanwhile, all those taxi rides were cheap, averaging about \$2 US per trip, and we traversed the city in search of hidden delights. I sopped up probably a dozen versions of curry with roti, the Indian flatbread, including one made from labba, an herbivorous jungle rodent the size of a lamb. And cook-up rice that was on nearly every menu — a varying one-pot dish with black-eyed peas and coconut milk — reminded me this former British colony shares more in common with the Caribbean than its Latin neighbors to the south.

By the end, I was weaving through crowds at the main Stabroek Market with the confidence of a local. More comfortable now, I chatted with vendors about the cornucopia of exotic fruits, settling on a fragrant bag of red bananas.

On our last night in town, a cousin of my husband's took us to a bar, Seeta's. It was the only place I saw that was packed after dark. We knocked back a few bottles of Banks beer, mixed in with the crowd and met plenty of warm, inviting people, and I finally saw the other side of this evolving destination.



AP Photo/J.M. Hirsch

One-dish baked chicken dishes like this are a reliable and easy way to get dinner on the table fast during the workweek.

## Embracing the baked dinner as your weeknight meal solution

By MELISSA D'ARABIAN  
Associated Press

People often ask me what my most-used kitchen tool is (a high-speed blender). But if you were to ask my mom that same question 30 years ago, I am sure she would have answered her Pyrex baking dish.

When I was growing up, probably 75 percent of my meals were made in that thing. Baked fish. Baked chicken. Baked pasta. Baked rice casserole.

Baked dinner figured big in my childhood. As I got older and moved into my own apartment, I wondered why my mom didn't explore other techniques a little more. She could have been searing that fish! And why not saute that chicken for some delicious crusty browning that results in so much flavor?

Now that I'm a mom, I understand the appeal of the litany of baked dishes my mom had on her (admittedly limited) menu. Baked stuff is easy! And as a mom of four busy girls, I need something easy to make on a Tuesday night, because between dance class and lacrosse practice, I only have a short window during which to make dinner happen. And since the healthiest dinners are the ones we make ourselves, baked chicken is on frequent repeat in my family meal repertoire.

But I've learned a few lessons during the past forty years, improving significantly upon Mom's version.

First, I use dark meat chicken with the bone-in. This significantly widens the window of cooking time forgiveness, so if someone is running late, dinner is still juicy. Plus, dark meat chicken has more flavor, and the little extra fat means it's more filling. Second, I go heavy with the aromatics — herbs, onion and garlic almost can't be overused in baked chicken.

Upgrading from white wine to vermouth also is a great flavor-booster. Lastly, I start the chicken with just enough of a saute to

### BEST BAKED CHICKEN

**Start to finish:** 1 hour 15 minutes  
**Servings:** 4

- 8 bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons herbes de Provence (or dried thyme and oregano mixed)
- 20 cloves garlic, peeled, lightly smashed
- 3 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup dry vermouth

Heat the oven to 350 F. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. In a large, Dutch oven over medium-high, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Working in batches, briefly brown the chicken thighs on both sides, 6 to 7 minutes, transferring them to a plate as you work.

In a small bowl, toss together the herbes de Provence, garlic, shallots and remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Add a little salt and pepper.

Once all the chicken has browned, return it to the pot off the heat. Arrange the chicken in a single, but tight layer. Spoon the shallot and garlic mixture around the chicken. Pour the lemon juice and vermouth evenly around the chicken. Cover the pot and bake for 15 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 15 to 25 minutes, or until the chicken reaches 175 F.

*Nutrition information per serving: 290 calories; 110 calories from fat (38 percent of total calories); 13 g fat (2.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 130 mg cholesterol; 380 mg sodium; 10 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 29 g protein.*

get a tasty, golden crust. But if you really can't make that happen, don't be shy about just loading up that glass baking dish and popping it into the oven.

## Kohlrabi, miso and soy sauce lend an Asian flavor to slaw

By KATIE WORKMAN  
Associated Press

I love all kinds of coleslaw, or just "slaw" as many people call it. I even like the sometimes mediocre, very creamy slaw served in those little paper cups alongside a sandwich at the deli or diner.

But I like to change up the notion of slaw, too, from the traditional all-American mayo-based types to this version, which is based on the salads we get when we go to Japanese restaurants. My older son, Jack, craves this gingery-miso dressing and I figured it would be great tossed with a jumble of crunchy shredded vegetables.

Kohlrabi was a great place to start. It is a member of the cruciferous vegetable family. They are about the size of an orange, with a bunch of stems sticking out and a thick skin that can range from pale green to purple-ish. The leaves, stems and root are all edible, and the smaller ones tend to be more tender and flavorful. It

reminds me in taste and texture of peeled broccoli stems.

Peel it very thoroughly (you may need a sharp knife for this, as the skin is quite tough) and slice, julienne or grate it into your salad for a great crunch and a fresh but slightly spicy flavor. It also can be cooked: steamed, sauteed, roasted or fried, but I more often than not use it raw for its appealing mild flavor and pronounced crispness.

If you can't find kohlrabi, any number of other veggies can be substituted. Consider a blend of jicama and celeriac (both trimmed and grated or cut into matchsticks), or turnip also would be great.

*Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, "Dinner Solved!" and "The Mom 100 Cookbook." She blogs at <http://www.themom100.com/about-katie-workman/>*



AP Photo/J.M. Hirsch

Carrot, cabbage and kohlrabi slaw with miso dressing.

### CARROT, CABBAGE AND KOHLRABI SLAW WITH MISO DRESSING

For the best crunch, toss the salad with the dressing no longer than 6 hours before serving, and keep it refrigerated. The dressing is wonderfully potent, so you may not need all of it. Leftover dressing is great drizzled over brown rice.

**Start to finish:** 15 minutes  
**Servings:** 6

- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 2 tablespoons yellow or white miso
- 2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 2 cups finely shredded green or red cabbage

- 6 large carrots, peeled and shredded or cut into very thin matchsticks
- 1 kohlrabi, jicama or celeriac (or a combination) peeled and shredded or cut into very thin matchsticks
- Toasted sesame seeds, to garnish (optional)

In a small bowl, whisk together the ginger, shallot, miso, oil, vinegar, soy sauce and sesame oil.

In a large serving bowl, combine the cabbage, carrots and kohlrabi. Drizzle about three-quarters of the dressing over the slaw, then toss well. Taste and adjust with additional dressing as desired.

*Nutrition information per serving: 120 calories; 60 calories from fat (50 percent of total calories); 7 g fat (0.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 430 mg sodium; 15 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 3 g protein.*