



Dining for Women

Making Connections
February 2008
Ethiopia

A woman born in Ethiopia is expected to live to age 41.... She will likely marry at age seventeen and give birth to six children, not counting those she will lose during pregnancy or within the first five years of life. There's a 35% chance she will be literate and a 50% chance she will live below the poverty line.

For the 29 million women who live in rural, mountainous areas of Ethiopia, early marriage is widespread. Pregnant women customarily deliver their babies at home with only a female elder in attendance. For a woman in obstructed labor, the closest skilled doctor able to provide a cesarean section may be more than 200 miles away. While having many children is extolled in Ethiopian culture, pregnancy and childbirth are risky endeavors for a woman where the maternal death rate is among the highest in the world.

Fistula Foundation

This month marks our second collaboration with the BlogHer project on maternal and child health with support of the Fistula Foundation in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is an ancient and fascinating culture, threatened in the last century by environmental, political, and economic disasters. For the basic facts about its recent history the challenges it faces, see the summaries at the following:

<http://www.fistulafoundation.org/hospital/ethiopia/>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072164.stm

FYI: Child Marriage

One of the main reasons why fistula is so rampant among Ethiopian women is that they tend to be married very young. The government, women's organizations, and some leaders within the Coptic Church are trying to change this; but ancient cultures change slowly. National Public

Radio produced a thorough feature on Ethiopia's child brides just last year. Rather than rehashing it for you, I'm sending you straight to the site where you can read or listen to the report and see photos of women interviewed for the story. You'll hear from a grandmother who married so young she can't remember when, an eight year-old with an uncertain future, and an activist who survived an early marriage and is working to help other young women. The site also contains an audio slide show that addresses the connection between child marriage and fistula and features the Fistula Hospital. Please go to <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6560441>

49% of Ethiopia's girls are married before their 18th birthdays. But Ethiopia ranks only 12th on the list of countries worldwide with high percentages of child marriage. It's a phenomenon perpetuated by poverty throughout much of the world. This past October, PBS's NOW examined the worldwide impact. Here are some of the findings it reported:

Nearly half of all girls in southern Asia and in Africa are married before turning 18. Thirty percent of Latin American girls.

Girls younger than 15 are five times more likely to die during childbirth or pregnancy than older women. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide. Mortality rates for babies born to mothers under age 20 are almost 75% higher than for children born to older mothers. The children that survive are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, and are more at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS.

There are approximately 2 million girls living with fistula, and 100,000 new cases every year, due to early marriage and pregnancy.

One of the highest risk factors for HIV/AIDS for women in some poor countries is early marriage.

Child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education. Their children are also more likely to be illiterate. They and their children remain in poverty.

Child brides are more likely to experience domestic abuse and violence than their peers who marry later.

What needs to happen to stop early marriage and its consequences? Education. Poverty reduction. Employment opportunity. Bills currently before the U.S. House and Senate would offer financial and other means of support for reducing child marriage if passed. For what we can do to support for this legislation and otherwise, see <http://icrw.org/html/getinvolved/advocacy-childmarriage.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/341/take-action.html>

Recommended Book

Almost fifty years ago, two gynecologists living in Australia and motivated by their deep religious faith were looking for something more to do with their training. Dr. Catherine Hamlin and her late husband Dr. Reg Hamlin found that something in Ethiopia. In *The Hospital by the River*, Nobel Prize-nominee Catherine Hamlin tells the rest of the story. Whether or not one can relate to their calling (the hospital and work itself is not “religious” in nature), one can’t help but be impressed by their devotion and years of service to the women of Ethiopia and their determination to make westerners aware of the very “not for polite society” condition from which so many suffer. Nor can one fail to be moved by their patients’ stories. Here’s one:

Even though everyone’s story was amazing, some were even more so. One young woman arrived at the hospital and handed us an envelope with a letter inside that had been written by a missionary doctor down near the Kenyan border. It introduced her and asked us to treat her fistula. There was nothing especially unusual about her. Like so many of our patients she was dressed in rags and weak from hunger. The sealed envelope was so worn and grubby you could hardly read it, but inside the clean letter was legible enough. To our surprise it had been dated sever years ago. “Why has it taken you seven years to get here?” I asked. She told me she had been begging at the bus station for her fare. That was how long it took to raise the money.

Recommended Book: Dr. Catherine Hamlin with John Little, *The Hospital by the River: A Story of Hope* (Monarch Books, 2001).

Socially Responsible Shopping

Love coffee? Thank Ethiopia. (See more in *Dining* below). Carolyn’s found several sources for fair trade coffee as well as Ethiopian crafts:

http://www.highergroundroasters.com/store1/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=1&products_id=2

<http://www.javaforjustice.com/oromia-photo-project.html>

<http://treefrogcoffees.com/ethiopian.htm>

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ethiopian-Reflections>

<http://www.mamaafrika.com/about.php>

Very Special: A socially responsible business called Creative Women sells beautiful and very high quality fair trade textiles made by women’s groups

in Ethiopia, including silk/cotton scarves made from silk spun by patients in a training program at the Fistula Hospital. To read more about Ellen Dorsch and Kathy Marshall, the two “creative women” who put together this project, see

<http://www.vermontwoman.com/articles/1207/creative.shtml>.

For the scarves, go to

<http://www.creativewomen.net/nOurProducts.html> and click on “new products.” You’ll see contact info at the top of the page; scroll down to view the scarves. Creative Women is mainly wholesale, but Carolyn spoke with Ellen and she is happy to sell directly to DFW members.

Just in Time: Carolyn also sent along this announcement from Women for Women International, our featured program in December:

Surprise your Valentine with a bouquet of eco-friendly roses and Organic Bouquet will include a free heart shaped box of organic chocolates. With each purchase Organic Bouquet will donate 10% to Women for Women International. To order, go to www.organicbouquet.com/wfwfreechoc Offer expires 2/20/08.

Roses grown in the developing world are among the most pesticide-laden crops. Most of field laborers who work among all that poisoned beauty are women. Buying organic roses for Valentine’s (or dropping a subtle hint to a certain someone who might) is having a heart in more ways than one!

Dining With Women

When we think of Ethiopia, it’s more often famine than food that comes to mind—unless you’re lucky enough to live near an Ethiopian restaurant and regularly experience its wonderful cuisine. But surely famine ought to come to mind, for once again we’re confronted with a culture that has produced sophisticated flavors and renowned hospitality enjoyed by others while too many of her own people go without.

Ethiopia is a land of poor tenant farmers. Some 80% of the people try to subsist on what they can grow on the 10% of the land that is arable. In the 1970s, Ethiopia was producing enough of its own grain to feed its people. But not since the drought of the mid-eighties—when one million Ethiopians starved as the world moved too late—has it been able to come close to feeding itself without foreign assistance. Even with that aid, things have worsened. Yield is off as the land has degraded and fertility is low. Child nutrition is worse than ever. The average farm family can feed itself about five months of the year—if it’s a good year. Too often, it isn’t. 2003 saw another devastating drought; the only good news there is that the world was better prepared to help and fewer—but still too many—people starved.

AIDS is having a profound impact on productivity and the export economy—coffee and other agricultural goods being Ethiopia’s chief exports—has been unfavorable. Coffee—native to the land and a source of pride—has been so deflated in value on the international market that coffee farmers often turn to drug-related crops to make do. (Buy fair trade coffee!)

The government has taken some step to make its people more food secure. In 2004, it orchestrated a massive move of some 2 million people out of the arid highlands into areas where they might eat better. School feeding programs are giving many children more regular meals and the budget for food security has increased. Many non-profits work diligently to do what they can and stress the importance of helping Ethiopians feed themselves. But everyone involved knows that even with the best of circumstances, it will be a long time before this country can feed itself well.

And yet—or perhaps because of the fragility of their food system—Ethiopians enjoy meals together when they can. And I mean together. Large extended family meals, with or without the numerous holidays celebrated by its various traditions as excuses, are integral to the culture. Some say Ethiopian food can only be made properly in large quantity.

Remember that if you decide to attempt its daily bread, *injera*. You’ll certainly come to appreciate the skill of Ethiopian women who regularly make a lot of these spongy but thin, lacey rounds. Injera is made from fermented Teff—a type of millet that is very high in protein.

Ethiopians love spice and have ingeniously integrated red chili, ginger, and a bounty of spices with its indigenous foods. Honey is the favorite sweetener and even forms the basis for a potent fermented beverage (of which there are several in this culture). The base for many if not most dishes is *Niter kebbeh*, butter enhanced with hot pepper, fenugreek (a spice that gives Ethiopian food a very distinctive flavor), and other spices. Berberé is the house spice blend with which every cook seasons her stews. If fortunate enough to have lamb or chicken, she might make a *wat* with this spicy blend; otherwise vegetables and lentils receive similar treatment.

Ethiopian meals are truly communal. When eating well, the many dishes of a meal—vegetable and meat stews, raw spiced beef, spiced cheese, grilled meats- are brought to low tables on platters of injera, with more injera on the side in elaborate pedestled baskets with funnel-shaped lids. Injera serves the purposes of serving dish, plate, and bread. Guests break off a piece of injera and use it to sop up or pick up a piece of food. But before they begin, there’s a ritual of handwashing with perfumed water. To commence the eating, the hostess might break off a piece of injera, knob a choice morsel with it, and pop it into the mouth of the most honored guest.

It's also common for Ethiopians to do this for friends around the table. Go ahead, we won't stop you....

After the meal, hands are washed again. Incense, Frankincense is a favorite, perfumes the room. More perfume comes with the freshly roasted coffee, sometimes spiced or laced with butter, that is poured from an elaborate pot (if you have the means) into small cups. Coffee is passed around to each guest. There may be two or three rounds, the last one is called "bareka," blessing. Truly one is in Ethiopia if one can eat this way regularly.

We are blessed to have the opportunity to learn about and experience something of Ethiopia's food artistry and hospitality. Miriam, Carolyn and I have had loads of fun researching and making Ethiopian foods. You'll see the recipes below. You may by all means modify the service—perhaps you really can't see pouring soupy, spice-tinged stews onto spongy bread on top of your best tablecloth. And you probably don't have the equipment (or the skill) to create massive *injera* rounds from which everyone can eat. However, you can try smaller rounds, serve on plates. Or put out the dishes in bowls and pass the bread in a basket.

And while you can easily make Berbere and Niter Kebbeh and something that tastes good and reasonably resembles *injera*, you can also purchase these, as well as the bread baskets, coffee services, etc. from Ethiopian purveyors in the U.S. Here are two sources:

<http://www.abyssiniamarket.com/etfretinande.html>

<http://www.ethiopiainspices.com/html/products.asp?ItemID=1029>

MENU

Injera (Ethiopian Flatbread)

Yemarina Yewotet Dabo (Ethiopian Honey Bread)

Dabo Kolo (A Crunchy Snack)

Doro Wat (Ethiopia's National Dish—Chicken Stew)

Mesir Wat (Red Lentil Stew)

Yataklete Kikil (Gingered Vegetable Stew)

Lab (Spiced Cheese—on it's own or mixed with Yegomen Kifto)

Yegomen Kifto (Spiced Collard Greens)

Chocolate Spiced Rum Cake with Cinnamon Whipped Cream

Fair Trade Ethiopian Coffee (see *Shopping* above)

Berberé (Essential Ethiopian Spice Blend)

fr. Marcus Samuelsson, *The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa* (John Wiley and Sons 2006)

Berberé is a spicy blend that flavors much of Ethiopian cooking. Each cook's mix is slightly different, so you should feel free to vary too—

especially when it comes to the heat. Ethiopians like it hot, but do adjust if you wish (substitute more sweet paprika for the dried chilies). The combination of fenugreek and red pepper is a must—if you don't have some of the others, don't worry. It's best to start with whole spices, roast them just until fragrant, and then grind them together. I give the quick version here using pre-ground spices, but amounts would be the same.

Mix together the following and store in a jar in a dark cupboard:

1 t ground fenugreek (found in Indian stores. If you can only find whole seed, grind them in a coffee or spice grinder)
1/2 c ground dried chilies (cayenne—ouch! or ancho—milder, etc)
1/2 c paprika
2 T salt
2 t ground ginger
2 t onion powder
1 t ground cardamom
1 t ground nutmeg
1/2 t garlic powder
1/4t ground cloves
1/4 t ground cinnamon
1/4 t ground allspice

Niter Kebbeh (Essential Ethiopian Spiced Butter)

Like Indian *ghee*, this staple butter of Ethiopian cuisine has been clarified. That is, the milk solids have been removed so that when used in high heat cooking, the butter does not brown or burn. And it tastes phenomenal, especially with the aromatic spices. It also keeps very, very well in the fridge—2-3 months if airtight. Honestly, this stuff would make cardboard taste good! As with Berberé, the spices vary but fenugreek has to be in there and it's great if you can use freshly roasted and ground whole spices.

1 lb unsalted butter, cut into pieces
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 t finely chopped fresh ginger root
2T finely chopped onion
1/2 t ground turmeric
1/2t ground cardamom
1/8t ground nutmeg
1/8 t ground fenugreek

1/2" piece of cinnamon stick (or 1/2t ground)
one whole clove (or 1/4t ground)

In heavy saucepan, heat the butter over moderate heat. Stir and turn the pieces so that they melt evenly. Do not allow the melted butter to brown or bubble — lower heat if necessary. As soon as all the butter is melted, increase the heat and quickly bring it to all to a bubbly boil. A mass of small white bubbles will form on the top.

Stir in the "wet" ingredients: the garlic, ginger, and onion. Cook for a minute, then add all the spices. Reduce heat to a very low simmer for thirty minutes to an hour. Do not stir. The milk solids should sink to the bottom of the pan. A clear butter liquid should float on top.

Carefully strain the liquid through a clean cloth (cheesecloth) or fine sieve. Repeat as necessary to obtain a liquid that is clear and free of spices and milk solids. Pour the niter kebbeh into a clean jar with an airtight cover. Keep in the refrigerator and use as needed. (It will solidify when chilled.)

Injera (Daily Bread)

It may help to see what you're aiming for and how Ethiopians in the US have adapted *injera* to our kitchens. I prefer the recipe below, but check out the technique at <http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/bread/recipe-injera.html> . *Injera* is a spongy sourdough-based bread. Authentic *injera* takes days to make. Chef Marcus Samuelsson, who was born in Ethiopia, raised by adoptive Swedish parents and has recently become reacquainted with his native land's cuisine after years of success as one of America's most respected chefs, gives a quick version with yogurt adding the sour element in his new African-inspired cookbook. Teff can be found at natural food stores, Whole Foods, etc. *Injera* is traditionally made in huge rounds that serve as serving trays as well as bread. It's much easier to make smaller rounds. This recipe works for with a rather large 12" pan. Use less batter (1/4-/1/3c) for an 8 or 10" pan. Nonstick is best but be careful that you don't overheat and ruin your pan. *Injera* should be lacy and thin—but that takes real skill. If you get something between that and a pancake, you're doing well. And it will taste good. You can make the batter awhile ahead. You can make the breads a couple of hours ahead, but eat these warm. Of course they're best fresh and it might be fun (and funny!) to make some at the last minute at the meeting. If you're worried, have some cooked rice or flour tortillas on hand just in case. Or, order from the sources listed above.

2 c teff or fine-ground (not stone ground) whole wheat flour
1 c all-purpose flour

1 1/2t baking soda
1 t salt
1/2 c plain yogurt
3 c club soda

2T clarified butter or vegetable oil for greasing the pan

Mix together the dry ingredients. Whisk together the soda and yogurt. Whisk the liquid into the dry and make a pancake-like batter.

Grease your pan and heat it over medium high heat. Pour or ladle 1/2c batter into the pan, starting in the center and swirling out—keep it thin. Pick up the pan and tilt it to get a thin even layer. Cook 20 seconds. You'll see bubbles on top. Cover the pan and cook 30 second longer. The top should be shiny but dry when done. Remove the injera and keep warm in a towel while you make more.

Yemarina Yewotet Dabo (Honey Bread)

From last December's *MC*. Ethiopians enjoy this with some sweet butter. Since the recipe appears online, I'm just going to give the link here. A tip not in the link: you can make this in an ovenproof pot or casserole (about 3 quart capacity and at least 3" high). If you like ginger, add a little pinch.

<http://www.globalgourmet.com/destinations/ethiopia/yamarina.html>

Dabo Kolo

fr. http://www.congocookbook.com/snack_recipes/dabo_kolo.html

This is Ethiopian snack food: crunchy, spicy, like popcorn, like peanuts, like pretzel balls, and you can't eat just one. Try them as an appetizer when members arrive. These keep well (if you can keep away from them).

2c wheat flour (all-purpose unbleached or whole wheat)
1-2T Berberé (2 is really spicy)
1T sugar
1/2 t salt
1/2c water
4T softened (room temperature) butter

Preheat oven to 350° F. Mix together dry ingredients (flour, berberé, sugar, and salt). Slowly add the water and mix so to form a thick paste. Remove the mixture from the bowl and knead it on a lightly-floured surface

for a few minutes to form a thick dough. Add the softened butter and knead for an additional five minutes. Let the dough rest in a cool place for ten minutes. (You could do this in your mixer or food processor.)

Divide the dough into handful-size pieces and roll these into long "pencils" not quite as thick as your small finger. Cut these rolls into pieces, each piece no longer than finger-width.

Place on a greased baking sheet. Bake twenty-thirty minutes, stirring or shaking the pan a few times to prevent sticking. When done, remove from oven and allow to cool completely. Store in a dry air-tight container.

Doro Wat

fr. Marcus Samuelsson, The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa

This spicy chicken stew is the national dish of Ethiopia. The sauce is thin—all the better to soak into injera. I've modified the recipe for potluck ease to use boneless chicken thighs. A cut-up whole chicken would be more authentic.

2 med. red onions, diced

Salt

1/4 c Niter Kebbeh (spiced butter)

1/4 ground cardamom—freshly ground if possible

1/4 t black pepper

3 whole cloves

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 1/2" piece ginger, peeled and chopped

1 T Berberé (adjust as you please up or down the heat scale)

2 1/2 c chicken stock, divided

3lb boneless chicken thighs, cut in half

1/4 c dry red wine

juice of 1 lime

4 hard-boiled eggs, peeled

Dry and salt the chicken thighs and set aside. Combine the onions, a pinch of salt, and half of the butter in a Dutch oven over low heat. Cook, stirring occasionally until the onions are golden, 15 minutes. Add the rest of the butter, and the spices. Cook about 10 more minutes until the onions are meltingly soft and take on the color of the spices. Add 2 c stock and the chicken, bring to a simmer and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the remaining 1/2c stock and the wine, simmer again for 10 minutes. When the chicken is done, gently stir in the lime juice and eggs and simmer another 5 minutes.

Adjust the sauce for salt. You can make this ahead and reheat it. Serves 8 or more on at a potluck.

Mesir Wat (Ethiopian red lentil puree)

adapted fr. http://www.whats4eats.com/recipes/r_be_mesirwat.php

2 onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2t minced ginger
1/4 c *Niter Kebbeh*
2 T Paprika
1t Turmeric
1/2t Cayenne (more or less, depending on how spicy you like it)
1 lb split red red lentils
4 c chicken stock or water
salt and pepper

Puree the onion, garlic and ginger in a food processor or blender.

Heat niter kebbeh in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Add turmeric, paprika and cayenne pepper and stir rapidly to color oil and cook spices through, about 30 seconds. Add the onion puree and sauté until excess moisture evaporates and onion loses its raw aroma, about 5-10 minutes. Do not burn; lower heat if necessary.

Add lentils and water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer till lentils are cooked through and fall apart, about 30-40 minutes. Add water or stock if necessary to keep from drying out. Stir in salt and pepper to taste and serve. Serves at least 8 for a potluck.

Yataklete Kilkil (*Ethiopian Gingered Vegetable Stew*)

adapted fr. http://www.whats4eats.com/recipes/r_ve_yatakilkil.php

About half of all Ethiopians are Coptic Christians who keep a number of fasts, the most important being during Lent. This is a very popular dish for Lent when meat and dairy products are forbidden. Carolyn added a small amount of chopped cabbage to the dish. She said it was colorful and delicious and went well with the red lentil dish above. She suggests that you may want to try broccoli or cauliflower instead of green beans since they are in season now.

6 small new potatoes, cut in 1-inch pieces
4 carrots, peeled and cut in 1/4 inch nickels
1/2 lb. green beans, cut in 1 inch pieces
3 T *niter kebbeh*

2 medium onions chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 T fresh ginger, minced
2 jalapeno or other small fresh hot green peppers, seeded and minced
1t flour (optional, for a thicker stew)
1/2 t ground cardamom (optional but much beloved in Ethiopia)
Salt and pepper

Heat the *niter kebbah* in a large saucepan over medium heat. Place onions, garlic, ginger and peppers in pan and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring and being careful not to burn the garlic. Add flour to mixture, stir and cook for about 2 minutes. Add potato pieces and 3/4 cup of water and stir. Bring to a slow boil, cover and cook for 3 minutes. Add the rest of the vegetables and the cardamom, stir well, reduce heat to medium low, cover and cook 10 to 15 minutes more, adding water and stirring as necessary to prevent sticking on the bottom. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve. Serve 8 or so potluck-style.

Lab (Spiced Cheese)

adapted fr. Jeff Smith, The Frugal Gourmet On Our Immigrant Ancestors (Morrow, 1990)

We might tend to treat this as an appetizer. Ethiopians typically eat it at the end of a meal. But they also mix it with greens. Frankly I think Farmers Cheese is pretty boring, but it's amazing what the butter and spices do for it. And mixing it with the collards (see below), makes a great dish.

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 c spiced butter
1/4 t ground cardamom
salt and pepper to taste

1lb farmers cheese or dry-curd cottage cheese

Saute the garlic in the butter a few seconds and add cardamom to blend. Remove from heat and cool. Stir into the cheese and add salt and pepper to taste. Use in the recipe below or serve along side other Ethiopian dishes with injera. You can make it ahead and store it in the fridge, but allow enough time for it to come to room temp before serving, you may want to warm it gently, stirring, over hot water so the butter melts evenly into the cheese.

Yegomen Kitfo (Collar Greens with Spiced Cheese)

adapted fr. Jeff Smith, The Frugal Gourmet On Our Immigrant Ancestors (Morrow, 1990)

2 lbs collard greens (or kale), tough stems removed and leaves chopped
1/2 c water or chicken stock

1/2 t cayenne pepper (opt)
1 t black pepper
2 peeled and crushed garlic cloves
1/4 c spiced butter
3 T chopped yellow onion
salt to taste

Lab (see recipe above)

Cook greens, in a 4 quart saucepan, covered, with the water or stock until wilted. Add spices, butter, and onion. Cooked covered until the greens collapse and the onion is soft. Add salt to taste. Allow greens to cool a bit. Spoon *Lab* on top or mix it in with the greens before serving. You can make this ahead and reheat it. Serves 6-8.

Chocolate Rum Cake with Cinnamon Whipped Cream

adapted fr. Marcus Samuelsson, The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa (John Wiley and Sons, 2006)

Ethiopians don't really do dessert, but they do like cakes for celebrations, love coffee after a meal, and (unless forbidden by religious tradition) enjoy a heady imbibe on occasion. This cake covers it all. Chef Samuelsson was especially inspired by the spicy aromas of Ethiopian cooking to create this simple chocolate cake. Miriam though it needed a little punch—a rum punch, to be exact. She added a soaking syrup than turns this simple cake into a moist, potent dessert. Go either way with it.

For the cake:

4 oz semisweet chocolate, chopped
3/4 lb (3 sticks) unsalted butter, cut in pieces
1/4 c strong brewed coffee
1/4 c dark rum
2 c sugar
3 large eggs
2 c flour
pinch salt
1 t ground cinnamon
1/8 t ground cloves
1 t baking powder
1/2 t baking soda
1/2 c buttermilk
1 t vanilla

For Miriam's Rum Soaking Syrup

1/2c rum

2T butter
1/4c sugar

For Whipped Cream

1 t ground cinnamon
1 c heavy cream
1/4 confectioner's sugar
1 t vanilla
2 T dark rum

Preheat oven to 350. Butter and flour 2 8" round pans (or try 1 13x9).

Combine the flour, spices, salt, baking soda and powder and blend well. Set aside. Melt chocolate and butter in the top of a double boiler (or in the microwave, stirring and watching carefully). When melted, stir in the rum, coffee, sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Transfer to a large bowl.

Beat the eggs into the chocolate mixture. Stir in the reserved dry mix. Add the buttermilk and vanilla and mix until combined well and slightly thickened.

Pour in prepared pan(s). Bake about 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. **WITHOUT THE SOAKER:** Remove and cool in pan about 20 minutes on a rack. Then unmold and cool completely. Top with whipped cream when serving. **WITH THE RUM SOAKER:** Just before the cake is done, heat the rum, sugar, and butter until the sugar and butter melt and all is blended well. When the cake is done, place it on a rack. Pour the soaker over it (you can poke a few holes in the cake with a fork if you like to facilitate the soak). Allow the cake to cool. Unmolding may be difficult, so serve slices right from the pan and top with whipped cream.

For the whipped cream: toast cinnamon in a small pan over medium heat until fragrant, 30-60 seconds. Cool. Combine cream, sugar, and vanilla and beat to semi-stiff peaks. Fold in cinnamon and rum.

Serves 16. The cake freezes well.

Voices: Young Patients of the Fistula Hospital

fr. Dr. Hamlin's book and the Fistula Foundation website (see Resources)

By way of introduction, Dr. Hamlin's comments on child marriage:

It is a joyous occasion if a boy is born, but there is not so much excitement if it is a girl. Often there is a shortage of money even for food, let

alone to send the children to school. If they can afford education, boys get first preference. Girls stay at home to help their mother with cooking, weaving and looking after the livestock. A girl learns her status early when she sees her brother studying while she cooks for him.

They may be betrothed at eight or nine. Negotiations are made between the two families, and money and goods exchanged for the young bride. She is then escorted usually sitting on a donkey with a brother or her father holding her, to the village of the young man who is to be her future husband. Here she lives with her in-laws, learning the ways of the household and getting to know her husband. Pregnancy may occur at the age of fourteen, seldom before, as puberty is late in Ethiopian girls, who are often undernourished and of small stature.

We are hopeful that change may gradually take place, especially as education spreads out into the remote areas. There is a rider in Ethiopia's constitution that states that provinces are allowed to follow their traditional practices, so this rather negates any legislation the government might introduce to improve things, as it has recently tried to do. In the meantime my heart goes out to these girls. They hardly have time to enjoy childhood before they are married and pregnant. Because they are still not sufficiently developed, childbirth can be a traumatic experience.

Nineteen year-old Simenye's Story

I came to live with my cousin in Oromia when my parents died a long time ago. I was living with my cousin in a refugee camp when he chose a husband for me. I was married one year ago and I got pregnant right away.

During the labor, my cousin and my husband and some neighbor women were with me. I was in labor for four days and on the fourth day, the baby came, but it was dead. When the baby died, my husband left me. I think the baby died because I had a sickness when I was pregnant. I caught this sickness from the wind.

People said that my body was wounded. My cousin heard that there was a place in Addis Ababa that could help me and so he brought me here. I came here on Monday and the people he told me I will be cured.

I haven't had my operation yet. I don't know what I will feel. They say I will have the operation next week and that my operation will be a simple one.

When I am cured, if my cousin will let me, I want to stay here in Addis Ababa and work in someone's house. Otherwise, if I go back home to Oromia to my cousin, I'll go to school. I'd like to go to school.

Sixteen year-old Naneye's Story

I got married four years ago and then I got pregnant two years later. My pregnancy was fine. I was not sick until the labor. My family was with me during the labor and also my husband. I was in labor for a long time. On the 4th day, they took me to a health center. At the health center, I delivered a dead baby and they told me that I needed to come here to Addis Ababa to Fistula Hospital. My husband brought me here and he is waiting for me to get cured.

The people here [at Fistula Hospital] are very kind. They gave me an operation so that I would not leak anymore. I was not scared of the operation. I am happy to be cured and to be going home again. I don't know what I will do when I go home. I will get my health back first and then I will think about it.

Eighteen year-old Mekebe's Story

I got married three years ago (at age 15). I got pregnant one year ago. When I was six months pregnant, I left my husband's house and went to my mother's house so that I could have my baby at home with my mother. When I started my labor, my mother and my sisters were there with me.

I was in labor for three days and it was very difficult. My stomach was hurting me so much. After the third day, my mother took me to Arba Minch Hospital where the doctor took out the dead baby. They took me back to my mother's house and I was very sick. I didn't walk for 10 days. My husband was not there with me during my sickness so three months after the baby died, I left him.

The doctor at Arba Minch gave me a referral paper and told me to go to Addis Ababa. I took a bus all day to come here. I was very sick and so they gave me medicine for three months before I could have my operation. I was scared of the operation at the beginning, but when I knew that there was no pain, it was okay. After the operation, I stayed in bed for a long time to recover.

If it is possible, I want to get married again and have a baby. I will go back to my mother's house and I will work in my village. I look forward to going home and seeing my friends again without this sickness.

Seventeen year-old Abebe's Story

I studied in school until 7th grade. I helped my mother at home with housework, but I didn't have to carry too many heavy things.

I got married when I was 15. I met my husband for the first time on my wedding day. My parents chose him for me. I felt sad that I had to quit my education, but otherwise I liked my husband. He was a good man.

I got pregnant one year later. My pregnancy was fine. My labor started at three in the afternoon and my husband and my mother were with me. A traditional doctor told me to go to the hospital. I went to Asosa Hospital and they operated to take out the baby, but it was dead.

After the baby died, I went back to my village and two months later my husband married another woman. My friends were there to help me in the village. I lived with my mother. When I came to Fistula Hospital, I was very happy. I knew this was the place where I would get cured. It has been 15 days since my operation and now I am dry.

I have made friends here. We have fun together and we talk about our health and our operations. We ask each other, what will you do when you are cured?

When I am cured, I want to go back home and continue my education. I want to study and I want to become a doctor like the doctors here and help girls like me who have this problem.

When I go back to my village, I will tell other women to go immediately to a hospital so that they won't have a problem with their labor. Most people don't know that a hospital can help them, but if they knew, they'd go.

Connecting Further

Through the “Love-a-Sister” program, you, a group of friends or your DFW chapter can directly help one of thousands of women with stories like the ones above who seek help from the Fistula Hospital. A \$450 contribution—spread out over the course of one year pays for her surgery and postoperative care. For more on Love-a-Sister, see

<http://www.fistulafoundation.org/help/loveasister.html>.

Resources

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