



## Recipes, Customs and Cuisine of the Dominican Republic April 2014

### Customs and Cuisine

Dominican Republic cuisine is predominantly made up of a combination of Spanish, indigenous Taíno, and African influences, the first and last occurring over the last five centuries. Dominican cuisine resembles that of other countries in Latin America, those of the nearby islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba most of all, though the names of the dishes will differ.

Breakfast can consist of eggs or meat and *mangú* (mashed plantain). As in Spain, the largest, most important meal of the day is lunch. Its most typical form, nicknamed *La Bandera* ("The Flag"), consists of rice, red beans, meat (beef, chicken, pork, or fish), and salad.

Since the Dominican Republic was formerly a Spanish colony many Spanish traits are still present on the island. Many traditional Spanish dishes have found a new home in the Dominican Republic, some with a twist. African and Taíno dishes still hold strong, some of them unchanged.

All or nearly all food groups are accommodated in typical Dominican cuisine, as it incorporates meat or seafood; grains, especially rice, corn (native to the island), and wheat; vegetables, such as beans and other legumes, potatoes, *yuca*, or plantains, and salad; dairy products, especially milk and cheese; and fruits, such as oranges, bananas, and mangos.

Preferred Dominican beverages include rum, beer, fresh fruit juices, smoothies, and coconut water.

**If invited to dinner** at a Dominican's home bring a gift such as chocolates or pastries. A handshake, with direct eye contact and a welcoming smile is standard. Maintaining eye contact is crucial as it indicates interest. Although punctuality is considered a good thing, guests are not expected to arrive on time for social occasions. Arriving between 15 and 30 minutes later than the stipulated time is considered on time.

**Dress well** - Dominicans take pride in their appearance and judge others on their clothing. People are extremely fashion conscious and believe that clothes indicate social standing and success. They take great pride in wearing good fabrics and clothes of the best standard they can afford. Designer labels, particularly those from the USA, are looked upon favorably.

**Racial and economic issues** determine social stratification in the Dominican Republic. People considered "upper class" are descended from the European settlers and have lighter skin than those considered "lower class" - darker skinned people descended from African slaves or Haitians. Status is defined more by family background than by absolute wealth. There is little social mobility.

**The family** forms the basis of stability. The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the extended family, which generally encompasses three generations. Often several generations live in the same house. Loyalty to the family comes before any other social relationship, even business. The Dominican constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Over 90% of the population is nominally Roman Catholic.

**Source:** <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/dominican-republic-country-profile.html>  
and Mariposa DR Foundation

## Recipes



### **Chicharrones de Pollo (Crispy fried chicken)** serves 8

Chicharrones, especially chicken chicharrón (also known as pica-pollo), are usually eaten with tostones – see recipe below.

#### **Ingredients:**

1 3½ pound chicken, cut into small serving pieces and rinsed in water and the juice of one sour orange or lime  
1 teaspoon oregano  
1 medium red onion, grated  
3 garlic cloves, crushed  
2 tablespoons rum

2 chicken bouillon cubes, dissolved in 6 tablespoons hot water  
6 cups all-purpose flour  
vegetable oil for frying  
2 limes, cut into wedges

#### **Directions:**

At least 6 hours in advance, marinate the chicken pieces with the oregano, onion, garlic, rum and dissolved chicken bouillon cubes. Refrigerate.

Put at least 2 cups of flour in a large plastic bag. Add a few chicken parts at a time and shake to coat them well and evenly. Remove the pieces as coated, but don't shake off the excess. Keep adding flour to the bag until the whole coating procedure is finished.

Meanwhile, in a big frying pan, heat 2 inches of vegetable oil to medium high temperature. Drop in the chicken parts and fry them until golden brown on all sides.

Drain, dry on paper towels and serve immediately, garnished with the lime wedges.

Recipe provided by Mariposa DR Foundation



**Moro de Habichuelas Rojas  
(Rice with red beans)**

serves 8

Dominicans are not the only ones to serve rice and beans, or to make moro. This dish seems to exist in different incarnations in several Caribbean nations. In Cuba it is referred to as “moros y cristianos” and Haiti it is known as “ris et pois,” and prepared with fewer ingredients than the Dominican one.

**Ingredients:**

1½ cups dry red beans, or 1 16 oz. can of red beans, drained  
2½ cups uncooked white rice  
8 cups of water

1 medium red onion, finely chopped  
4 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 medium green bell pepper, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon oregano  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, finely chopped  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
2 chicken bouillon cubes  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
½ teaspoon vinegar

**Directions:**

Soak the beans overnight in enough water to cover. Drain. Place the beans in a large pot and boil them in 8 cups of water until tender, for about one hour. Add more water if necessary until tenderness is reached. Drain the beans, reserving the cooking liquid and set the beans aside. Rinse the rice twice in cold water, and drain.

Pour the olive oil into a pan large enough to accommodate the beans and rice, and saute the onion, garlic, green pepper, oregano, salt, coriander, and the cooked beans (or drained canned beans). Add the chicken bouillon cubes, tomato paste, vinegar and 1 cup of the bean’s cooking liquid (use 1 cup of water if canned beans were used). Mix well and cook for three to four minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add 3 ½ more cups of the bean cooking liquid, adding water to complete it, if needed. Bring to a simmer, add the rice and mix well. Cook uncovered over medium high heat until *almost* all the liquid has been absorbed. Reduce the heat as low as possible, cover and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the rice is tender. Remove the lid and allow the Moro style rice to dry for 5 minutes.

**Variation:** Substitute 1 cup of unsweetened coconut milk for 1 cup of bean cooking liquid or water.

Recipe Source: Mariposa DR Foundation

**Tostones (Green Plantain Fritters)**

Yield: 20 pieces

**Ingredients:***Tostones*

3 green plantains  
oil for frying (canola or vegetable)  
black pepper  
salt  
garlic powder (optional)

**Garlic Dipping Sauce**

1/3 cup olive oil  
1 teaspoon dried or fresh thyme/cilantro/parsley  
black pepper to taste  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon lime juice  
5 cloves garlic, finely minced

**Directions:**

Heat the oil to medium-high while preparing the plantains. Peel plantains and chop into 1 inch rounds. Fry 1 inch rounds for 6 minutes, remove from oil. Drain on paper towels.

Smash each piece until flattened. Use a tostonera – see below - or any canned item. Fry for a second time until golden brown. Sprinkle salt, black pepper, and garlic powder if you are using it, and set aside to cool.

**For the garlic dipping sauce**, finely chop garlic cloves. In a bowl, add olive oil, thyme, black pepper, cayenne pepper, salt, lime juice, and garlic. Whisk vigorously and enjoy with hot *tostones*.

**Notes:**

Here's a *terrific pictorial on how to make tostones*. ( <http://www.inner-gourmet.com/2012/04/tostones-with-garlic-dipping-sauce.html> )

If you do not own a *tostonera* (plantain press), you can smash the plantains with any canned item you may have in your pantry. You can purchase a *tostonera* for about 9 dollars at Amazon.com ( <http://amzn.to/1fnF5Rd> )



### **Arepa (Corn bread)**

serves 8

Dominican *arepa* is a cornmeal and coconut cake, traditionally prepared in an iron pot on top of red-hot coals. A metal lid is placed on the pot, then more coal is put on the lid. Venezuela and Columbia also have their version of arepa, which is nothing like the Dominican version. Theirs is more like a tortilla filled with meat and cheese, and referred to as “Venezuelan arepa.”

#### **Ingredients:**

3 cups fine cornmeal  
1 cup coconut milk  
3 cups milk  
4 eggs  
½ cup butter, at room temperature  
2 teaspoons salt  
2 teaspoons sugar  
¼ cup fresh shredded coconut  
1 teaspoon anise seeds

#### **Directions:**

Preheat the oven to 375.

In a large bowl mix the cornmeal with the coconut milk and add 1½ cups of milk. In a heavy skillet cook this mixture at medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Gradually add the rest of the milk, the sugar, and the salt, until you obtain a smooth mixture.

Let it cool for 10 minutes and add the eggs, butter, coconut, and anise seeds. Mix well. Cook for another 10 minutes at medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Pour the mixture into a well-greased casserole or cake pan, roughly 8 ½” x 11”.

Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Serve hot or at room temperature.

**Variation:** for a different take on *arepa*, one that does not include eggs and is sweeter, visit the **Dominican Cooking** (<http://www.dominicancooking.com>), also known as Aunt’s Clara’s table. It’s worth checking out for more Dominican recipes.

Recipe Source: Mariposa DR Foundation



**Ensalada de Frutas Tropicales  
(Tropical Fruit Salad)**

serves 12

This salad can be prepared the night before as time enhances its flavor.

**Ingredients**

2 ½ cups orange juice

½ cup white wine

1 cup sugar

2 grapefruits

3 oranges

1 medium pineapple, peeled and cubed

- 1 medium papaya, peeled and cubed
- 4 bananas, peeled and sliced in chunks
- 1 medium cantaloupe, peeled and cubed
- 3 ripe mangoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 tablespoons red maraschino cherries, sliced

**Directions**

In a bowl combine the orange juice, white wine and sugar.

For the oranges and grapefruits take a sharp paring knife and slice off the top and bottom of the fruit. Stand the fruit on the cut end and slice off the peel and pith all around the fruit, you may end up removing some flesh in order to do this but that's OK. Slice in between the membranes of the fruit to release the segments into the bowl with the juice.

Add the rest of the fruit to the bowl and combine gently.

Cover and refrigerate, allowing the fruit to marinate at least 6 hours. Serve cold.

Variation: Replace the maraschino cherries with grapes.

Recipes provided by Mariposa DR Foundation (with the exception of the Tostones recipe) and credited to "Dominican Cooking" by Maria Ramirez.

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