



Recipes, Cuisine and Customs of Kenya June 2012

Traditional Kenyan foods reflect the many different lifestyles of the various groups in this multi-racial, multi-ethnic country. Most Kenyan dishes are filling and inexpensive to make. Staple foods consist mainly of corn, maize, potatoes, and beans. *Ugali* (a porridge made of maize) and meat are typically eaten inland, while the coastal people eat a more varied diet.

The Maasai are cattle-herding people who live in Kenya and Tanzania, eat simple foods, relying on cow and goat by-products (such as the animal's meat, blood and milk). The Maasai do not eat any wild game or fish, depending only on the livestock they raise for food.

The Kikuyu and Gikuyu grow corn, beans, potatoes, and greens. They mash all of these vegetables together to make *irio* (a food that is very similar to the recipe for **Mataha**, included in our recipes below). They roll *irio* into balls and dip them into meat or vegetable stews.

In western Kenya, the people living near Lake Victoria (the second-largest freshwater lake in the world) mainly prepare fish stews, vegetable dishes, and rice.



Dining Etiquette

Dining etiquette varies from host to host because of 42 different ethnicities in Kenya, socio-economic class and location. Be observant and take the lead from your host, but below are some general rules of etiquette when dining in Kenya:

- ❖ Before entering a Kenyan home, you should take off your shoes.
- ❖ Bring a small gift but it need not be expensive. Practical gifts are preferred such as pastries, flowers or sweets. In rural areas, sugar or tea is commonly given. Do not bring alcohol unless you know your host drinks.
- ❖ Guests are expected to wash their hands before and after the meal.
- ❖ The host will show you to your seat and the most honored position will be next to the host. When seated, your toes and feet should not be pointing toward the food or other diners.
- ❖ The honored guest is served first, then the oldest male, the rest of the men, children, and then finally the women. Do not begin to eat or drink until the oldest man has been served and has started eating.
- ❖ When eating with your hands, most Kenyans eat only with their right hand. If offered a spoon or fork, hold them in your right hand.
- ❖ Do not put your left hand on bowls or serving pieces. When one communal bowl is present, eat from the part of the bowl/plate in front of you.



Dining for Women

- ❖ After a meal, a small burp signifies satisfaction.
- ❖ Beverages are not served with meals since Kenyans believe it is impolite to eat and drink at the same time.



Tea and coffee are generally served after a meal and should be accepted even if you only take a few sips. Your cup will always be refilled if it is less than half full.

- ❖ Typically the host will give a toast. If you are the honored guest, you are not expected to make a statement or toast, but should offer a small compliment.
- ❖ Do not leave the table until invited to do so.
- ❖ If you move from one area to another in a home, always allow more senior members of your party to enter the room ahead of you.

For specific information about the Maasai culture, please see the DFW program web page for Maasai Girls Educational Fund and link to the educational document 'Maasai Culture – June 2012'.

Our special thanks to Karen O'Brien for contributing recipes and information to DFW for our educational materials.

Source Materials:

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/kenya.html>

http://www.safaritheglobe.com/food_kenya.aspx

<http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Kenya.html#b>



Recipes

Recipes on this page were provided by Maasai Girls Educational Fund from: <http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/kenya-recipes.html>

Rice Pilau (Rice Pilaf)

- 1 lbs. goat, mutton or beef cubes
- 4 garlic cloves
- Salt
- 9 cardamom pods
- 4 T. vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cups rice
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 8 whole cloves
- 8 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- ¼ cup cumin seed powder
- 4 small tomatoes
- 6 cups water



Boil the meat in salted water until tender. Crush the garlic and cardamom together with 2tbsp water using a mortar and pestle. Sautee the onion until it is golden brown. Add the rice, meat, garlic and cardamom mixture, peppercorns, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and cumin seed powder. Cook covered over medium heat until all are nicely brown, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes. Cook and stir until the tomatoes are thoroughly cooked down to the consistency of a sauce. Add the 6 cups water to the rice mixture, bring to a boil and then cook over very low heat, (while covered) for another 15-20 minutes, until all water is absorbed and the rice is cooked through. Serve with *kachumbari*. Makes 6 servings.

Kachumbari Salad

- 4 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped, washed with salted water, and drained
- ½ cup fresh squeezed lime or lemon juice
- 1 cup finely chopped cilantro, Dhania or parsley
- 3 grated carrots

Arrange the tomatoes on a serving platter with onions on top. Sprinkle the parsley (or cilantro) over the top. Place the grated carrots to one side. Splash the lemon juice over all. Do not toss. Serve cold with *nyamachoma* or *pilau*. Makes 6 servings.



Fish Stew

This is originally from Zanzibar but is now a popular dish along the East African Coast. Like most Kenyan stews, it has Indian influence.

Makes 4 to 6 servings



Ingredients

- 3 T. Oil
- 2 to 2 ½ lbs. fish filets, cut into serving portions
- Salt and pepper - to taste
- 1 onion, chopped or sliced
- 2 red or green bell peppers, chopped or sliced
- 6- 8 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 c. tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1 ½ c. coconut milk
- 2-3 tsp. garam masala or curry powder
- 1-2 T. tamarind paste or lemon juice
- Salt and pepper - to taste

Method

1. Heat the oil over medium-high flame in a large skillet or pot. Season the fish with salt and pepper. Sear the fish fillets on both sides and remove to a plate. Do not cook through.
2. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onions and peppers. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and sauté 1-2 minutes more.
3. Add the tomatoes, coconut milk, garam masala or curry powder, tamarind paste or lemon juice, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; then reduce heat to low and simmer for 6-8 minutes.
4. Add the fish fillets, cover and continue to simmer until the fish is cooked through, 5-10 minutes. Serve with rice, boiled potatoes, *ugali*, boiled cassava or chapatti.

Variations

Mtuzi wa Kamba (Shrimp in coconut curry): substitute shrimp for the fish. There is no need to sear the shrimp initially.

Recipe submitted by Kenyan-American Eirene Ng'anga-Hackett

Ugali (Cornmeal Porridge)

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Ingredients

1 cup cold water
1 cup yellow cornmeal
1 teaspoon salt (optional)
3 cups boiling water
Serves 4 to 6

Put cold water in a medium-size saucepan, add cornmeal and salt, mixing continually. Bring to a boil over high heat, gradually stirring and slowly add 3 cups of boiling water to prevent lumps. Reduce to simmer, cover and cook for about 8 minutes, mixing frequently to prevent sticking. The ugali will be done when it pulls from the sides of the pan easily and does not stick. It should look like stiff grits. You can serve ugali with everything from meat stew to sugar and cream. Your choice!

This recipe is from kenyantravelideas.com

Mataha (Dry Maize, Beans & Potatoes)

"This is mashed potatoes with corn, beans, pumpkin leaves etc. I normally substitute the pumpkin leaves with mustard greens and the dry corn with regular corn. If I'm in a hurry, I substitute peas for beans."--Eirene

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Ingredients

½ pound dried red beans
1 pound dried maize (corn)
Salt
8 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
10 pumpkin leaves (or spinach), coarsely chopped

Soak the beans and maize overnight in enough water to cover. Drain, cover again with water, add salt and boil for 2½ hours. Drain and set aside. Cover the potatoes with water and boil until soft. Add the pumpkin leaves and cook until tender. Drain. Add the mixture to the maize and beans and mash it all together. The mixture should be thick and firm.

Recipe submitted by Kenyan-American Eirene Ng'anga-Hackett

Saladi (East African Salad/Relish)

Makes 8 servings

This salad/relish is added to and mixed with the hot spicy food by the guest a little at a time to "cool" the spiciness of the dish and change its texture. If the hostess feels that her dinner is not "hot" enough, a small hot chili pepper is added to the relish.

She may also serve individually or in a bowl additional pili-pili sauce or salad dressing, or hot red pepper dissolved in lemon or tomato sauce. For your Kenyan dinner you might have a cruet of a white French dressing on the table for those who might want to add it to their salad.

Combine:

2 cups cabbage, finely shredded
1/2 cup carrots in very, very thin slices
1/2 cup sweet onion (Bermuda or Spanish or scallions)
1/4 cup green pepper in fine strips.

Fluff the mixture up. That's it. There is no dressing or seasoning. **Fill** small sauce dishes, allowing about 1/3 cup per person.

From: <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Cookbook/Kenya.html>

Pili-pili (Peri-peri) Marinade and Salad Dressing

3 chile, peppers (I use Jalapeno)
4 tablespoons lemon juice or 4 tablespoons lime juice, fresh if possible (increase to ½ cup for salad dressing)
4 tablespoons olive oil (increase to ½ cup for salad dressing)
3 -5 garlic cloves , minced
1 tablespoon paprika (or smoked Paprika)
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon parsley
1 teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients in a blender or chopper until it's a paste. And use as marinade; keep in the refrigerator.

Adapted from the recipe from: [food.com](http://www.food.com)

Coupe Mount Kenya dessert *(Mango Ice Cream with zing!)*

Ingredients

4 to 5 ripe Mangos
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup sugar
2 tablespoon
lemon peel, cut in tiny ribbons
½ cup condensed milk
½ teaspoon salt

Peel, pit and mash the mangos. You should end up with about 2 cups. Whip the heavy cream with the sugar until stiff. In a 2-quart bowl combine the 2 cups of mashed mangos, the lemon peel ribbons, condensed milk and salt. Fold in the whipped cream. Pour into freezer trays or a 6-cup mold and freeze.

Pineapple Rum Sauce *(The zing!)*

Ingredients

1 cup pineapple juice, canned
1 cup sugar
½ cup cooled white rum
3 cups fresh pineapple, cut in ½ inch dices
1 tablespoon pistachio nuts

In a 1-quart saucepan simmer the pineapple juice and the sugar, until it dissolves and forms into a syrup. Add the white rum and cool.

Place the cut fresh pineapple pieces in a 2-quart bowl and pour the pineapple rum sauce over them. Marinate for several hours.

Place 1 scoop Mango Ice Cream in a 6 oz wine glass. Top with 3 to 4 oz of Pineapple Rum Mixture. Garnish with pistachio nuts, coarsely chopped. The rest is history! ;)

Note: Any fruit ice cream will serve for the Coupe Mount Kenya, especially peach ice cream. Fruit sherbet may also be used. Canned pineapple may be substituted for the fresh, but it is just not quiet the same.



Crunchy N'Dizi

(Bananas Served as Dessert)

Ingredients

8 Bananas, peeled

4 oz butter, melted

4 oz groundnuts/peanuts, chopped

Serves 4

Steam the bananas in a large saucepan until heated through; that will only take a few seconds. Be careful that they do not become too soft.

Drain and roll in the melted butter and after that roll each one separately in the chopped groundnuts/peanuts.

Arrange them on a baking dish and bake in the oven for 15 minutes at 190C/375F.

This works great with ice cream, especially the Mango ice cream mentioned earlier!

The dessert recipes are from: kenyatravelideas.com