



**Recipes**  
**Women's Earth Alliance, Liberia and Sierra Leone**  
**March 2012**

**In This Month's Recipes:**

- ❖ Liberia and Sierra Leone Etiquette, Customs, and Cuisine
- ❖ Menu and Recipes

**Cuisine:**

*Liberia, its name derived from the Latin liber, meaning "free," was founded by freed American slaves in the early nineteenth century. The most important city is Monrovia and was named in honor of President Monroe, who held office at the time the Republic was officially established. Red, white, and blue mailboxes, American currency, and the widespread use of English bespeak the American influence, and it is not unlike visiting part of our own country in the summertime.*

*Cassava, tiny hot red peppers, sweet potatoes, yams, and green bananas dominate the market, but there are also collard greens, cabbage, eggplant, okra, coconut, and fresh ginger. The staple food is rice, which is eaten twice a day in most households.*

*Tiny roadside restaurants are called "Cook Shops" and feature Jollof Rice along with an assortment of stews. Cooking is done outdoors on the ubiquitous three-stone hearth. You'll find dishes like cabbage cooked with bacon and pigs' feet, sweet-potato leaves with fish, palm nuts with shrimp in fish or chicken stock, and dried Norwegian fish. Goat Soup is the national soup and is served at every important state function.*

*Liberians love sweet desserts and American pastries such as sweet-potato pie, coconut pie, and pumpkin pie. Peanuts are used in cookies and desserts of all kinds. Liberian rice bread made with mashed bananas is a great delicacy. Ginger beer and palm wine are the preferred beverages. Liberian coffee is excellent.*

Source:

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

**Etiquette:**

**How Dinner is Served in**

**Liberia-**A feeling of good fellowship and relaxation is reflected at a Liberian table. When you are a guest in a Liberian home, you are overwhelmed by the number of dishes spread before you. The hostess, dressed in a long, strikingly colorful skirt, a handsome blouse, and a huge bandanna, spends a great deal of time preparing this dinner. Then she sets all of the bowls on the table and sits down. She remains seated until the dinner is completely finished. Everything will be eaten from one dinner plate. Guests are asked to help themselves. No dishes are removed until the meal is over.

Food is eaten with the fingers by many Africans, but the American influence in Liberia is very strong, and most hostesses set the tables with plates and glasses, both turned over with the napkin

resting on the inverted plate. Fruits may be served later in the evening.

### **How Dinner is Served in Sierra Leone**

If you visit a Sierra Leonean friend, he or she will almost always invite you to stay and eat. Usually the men and boys eat separately from the women and girls. Everyone washes their hands before they eat, and then they gather around in a circle with a huge dish of food placed in the middle. Sharing is an important part of life in Sierra Leone, and each person eats from the part of the big dish that is right in front of him or her. It is very bad manners to reach across the dish! Only the right hand is used for eating; the left hand is considered unclean.

When you are eating, you usually don't talk. Talking shows a lack of respect for the food. It is rude to lean on your left hand while you are eating. People usually drink water only after a meal is over.

The oldest males get the choicest food, the best pieces of meat or fish. Then the young males take the next best pieces, and then finally the women and girls get any meat or fish that is left. Sometimes the women and girls wait until the men and boys have had all they want before they eat.

#### **Menu**

- Monrovia Collards and Cabbage
- Easy Jollof Rice
- Bean Drops (*Binch Akara*)
- Lemon Chicken and Okra
- Liberian Stewed Mangoes with Cloves

#### **Cuisine:**

In **Sierra Leone**, the staple food is rice. "If I haven't had my rice, I haven't eaten today," is a popular saying. Sierra Leoneans eat rice at least twice a day. Only women and girls prepare the food. They usually cook in big pots on a three-stone stove (three big rocks that support the pots). Firewood or charcoal is the main fuel, except among some city dwellers, who use gas or electricity.

Many ingredients go into sauces or stews to go with rice. The most popular sauces are made of greens, especially cassava or potato leaves. Other common ingredients include palm oil, onions, tomatoes, yams, and red peppers. Sometimes groundnut (peanut) oil or coconut oil are used. Other sources of protein that go into the sauces include groundnuts and beans, as well as fish, chicken, goat meat, or pork. Seafood, such as oysters, lobster, and crab, may also be used. Most of the calories, however, come from rice, which is eaten in large quantities.

Fruits in Sierra Leone include oranges, bananas, pawpaws (papayas), lemons, avocados, guava, watermelons, mangoes, and pineapples. Fruit is usually eaten as a snack. Plantains are often sliced and fried as chips for a snack. Tea and coffee are drunk in some parts of the country for breakfast. Cokes and beer are popular with many people who can afford them.

Source:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/stories/stories.cfm?psid=111>

***Rice is eaten with the hands by squeezing or rolling it into a ball, dipping it into the sauce, and then popping it into the mouth. If rice falls from your fingers or mouth, you don't put it back in the dish. When everyone finishes eating, they wash their hands and thank the cook.***



## Monrovia Collards and Cabbage

### **Ingredients (yields 8 portions):**

- 1 Bunch of collard greens
- ½ lb. of bacon, cut in 1- to 2-inch pieces
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 tbs. salt
- 1 Tbs. crushed red pepper
- 1 Tsp. black pepper
- 2 lbs. of cabbage, cut into 8 wedges
- (If collard greens are not available, use 2 lbs. spinach instead, in which case cut cooking time to 10 minutes.)

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### **Directions:**

In a 4-quart sauce pan, combine collard greens, bacon, onion, salt, crushed red pepper, black pepper and 1 quart of water and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

**Add** cabbage and 1 oz. of butter or oil.

**Cook** for 15 minutes or longer until vegetables are tender.

**Correct** the Seasoning to your taste.

**Strain** before serving if water has not been absorbed.

\* Ham hocks previously cooked may be substituted for bacon, but save the water in which ham hocks were cooked to use as the liquid for the recipe.

Note from Karen: For less fat, you can also use a cooked, smoked turkey leg instead of ham hocks or bacon. Be sure and shred the meat off the cooked turkey leg and add it to the vegetables when you add the cabbage wedges. You can also use some of the water in which the turkey leg was cooked as your 1 quart of water.

Source: <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Cookbook/Liberia.html>

## Easy Jollof Rice

### **Ingredients (yields 6-8 cups):**

- 1 pound parboiled rice
- 1 can tomato puree (400 grams)
- 1 onion, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves
- 4 tsp. olive oil
- 6 small or 3 large red bell peppers, seeded and sliced
- 1 bunch of thyme, leaves picked
- 1 tsp. white pepper
- 6-8 chicken bouillon cubes (recommended: Maggi or Goya)



**Directions:**

With blender, blend tomatoes, onions, red pepper, and garlic until smooth. Add bouillon cubes, thyme and white pepper.

Add olive oil to the blended paste, and set the mixture aside. Add 4 cups of water into a pot.

Wash the rice in hot water until the water is clear. Drain through a fine sieve.

Pour the rice and blended mixture into the pot of water and stir with wooden spoon. Set the stove to medium heat and place pot on stove, then let it cook for 45 minutes while stirring every 15 minutes.

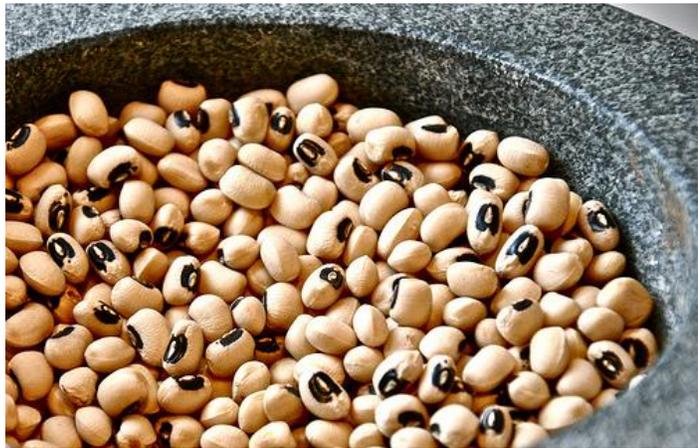
Source: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/saras-secrets/jollof-rice-recipe/index.html>

### *Bean Drops (Binch Akara)*

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**Ingredients:**

1 pound black-eyed beans (peas)  
2 teaspoons salt  
black pepper to taste  
1 small onion, very finely chopped  
2 cups oil

**Directions:**

Pour dry beans in a blender with a cup of water. Chop for one minute. Pour in large bowl add water. Stir until "skins" of the beans to float. Strain into colander; discard the bean "skins" and reserve the ground bean "paste".

Blend bean "paste", onion and pepper to taste. Pour in a bowl, add salt, and stir with a wooden spoon for two minutes. Heat oil until moderately hot. Drop mixture into oil with spoon. Fry until golden brown. Drain on absorbent paper. Small balls can be served with toothpicks; good as a appetizer or side dish.

Source: [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Miscellany/African Recipes.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Miscellany/African_Recipes.html)

### *Lemon Chicken and Okra- Sierra Leone*

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**Ingredients:**

2 chicken breasts  
1/2 tsp paprika  
1 lemon

salt and pepper  
2 cups of chicken stock  
1/2 cup of rice, uncooked  
2 tomatoes  
1 cup okra, sliced  
1 onion  
1 can of tomato puree  
1/2 tsp turmeric



**Directions:**

Put the chicken in a bowl and squeeze the lemon over it. Set aside for half an hour. Chop the onion and saute it in a bit of oil until it's cooked; remove from pan and set aside.

Put the chicken in the pan with the stock. Bring to the boil and then simmer for 12 minutes. Now add the rice, puree, chopped tomatoes, onion, rice, turmeric, paprika, salt and pepper. Stir well. Cook for 30 minutes adding the okra about 10 minutes from the end so it'll just be cooked.

Source: <http://foodsoftheworld-emmamoir.blogspot.com/2011/04/sierra-leone-lemon-chicken-and-okra.html>

*Liberian Stewed Mangoes with Cloves*

**Ingredients (serves 6-8):**

4 large ripe mangoes, peeled and sliced  
¾ cup sugar  
¾ cup water  
6 whole cloves



**Directions:**

Begin by making a sugar syrup. Combine the sugar and water in a pan, bring to a boil and cook for 1 minute before taking off the heat and adding the cloves. Allow to cool completely.

When the syrup is cold add the mangoes and return to the heat. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes, covered, until the mangoes are tender. Take off the heat, allow to cool and serve in ice cream or compote dishes, garnished with cloves and blanched slivers or orange zest.

*Note from Karen: I researched many versions of this recipe, and found some that recommend you use the sugar "syrup" in a can of cling peaches as a substitute for the sugar syrup you make yourself, but then you'll have some cling peaches you'll need to do*

*something with.*

Source: <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/miscellaneous/fetch-recipe.php?rid=misc-stewed-mangoes-cloves>