

Recipes, Cuisine and Customs of Kenya January 2013

Cuisine

Kenya has no single culture that identifies it. There are about 37 different ethnic groups in Kenya, each with its unique culture. As a result, there is no single dish that represents all of Kenya. While different communities have their own native foods, the staple foods in Kenya include cereals (maize, millet, sorghum and others depending on the region) eaten with various meats and vegetables. Foods that are universally eaten in Kenya are ugali, sukuma wiki, and githeri – recipes begin on page 3.

The Maasai, cattle-herding peoples who live in Kenya and Tanzania, eat simple foods, relying on cow and goat by-products (such as the animal's meat 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*. 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.

The Kenyan diet also includes tea - Kenya tea in the form of Chai (tea with milk and sugar) is the beverage of choice. It is served for breakfast, at mealtimes, and also during Kenya's regular teatime. Another popular social drink, and one that also makes a good accompaniment for nyama choma, is Kenya's signature-brand beer - Tusker.

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

Spices of Kenya

Traditional Kenyan dishes use a variety of spices, mostly hot. Chilies, pepper, jalapenos, and other spices create tasty meals with a bit of bite, such as chicken curry and matoke. Exotic spices like cardamom and cumin are also main seasonings in Kenyan culinary fare. Here are some of the more popular spices used in Kenyan cooking:



Tamarind

Tamarind is believed to originate in East Africa. Known for taste as well as aroma, tamarind flavoring melds sweet, fruity, and sour. The spice comes from a bean pod grown on a tamarind tree. To extract the spice you must open the pod and find the sticky pulp substance surrounding the seeds. In contrast to other traditional Kenyan spices, tamarind contains little to no heat. Add tamarind to pork, rice, or chicken dishes including Kenyan chicken tikka and tamarind chutney.



Cardamom

Similar to ginger, cardamom seeds come from a large, leafy green plant. Characterized by subtle warmth, this aromatic spice provides a pod which encloses three sets of two rows of about six seeds per row. The sticky seeds come in black, green, or bleached white. Kenyans use this spice often in many dishes including biriani, a hearty dish originating on the West Coast of Kenya. Kenyan biriani calls for meat such as goat, chicken, or beef as well as rice, potatoes, and a rich blend of spices including four cardamom pods.

Coriander

The seed of *coriandrum sativum*, a plant similar to parsley, produces coriander. A coriander seed, characterized by a brown, yellow, or red color and approximately 1/5 inch long, provides unique flavoring ground or whole. Coriander is used in the popular Kenyan Christmas dessert, yogurt chutney. Kenyans also use this spice in matoke, a dish of mashed plantains, as well as in yellow curry. A Kenyan chicken curry recipe can be found on page 5.

Cumin

A warmer spice, cumin comes from the seed of a small umbelliferous plant. The powerful bitter taste adds a spicy and sweet aroma and taste to stews and chicken. Store cumin in airtight packages and roast the seeds before using to maintain the sharpness. Consume either as a whole seed or ground. Kenyan's use this spice in dishes such as yellow curry, chicken curry, and rice pilau, a dish similar to rice pilaf.

Kenyan Spices – eHow.com – http://www.ehow.com/list_7544005_kenyan-spices.html#ixzz2DeIXySFv

Recipes begin on page 3

Recipes

Ugali

This is very stiff maize meal (cornmeal) porridge. The consistency is similar to play-dough.

Serves 4

Ingredients

4 c. water

3 to 4 c. maize meal

Directions

Bring water to boil in a pot. Add the maize meal and stir to prevent lumps. Add more maize meal to make the porridge thick. Keep stirring until the maize meal is well cooked. Tip out onto a plate and shape into a ball. Best served hot with sukuma wiki and beef stew.



Sukuma Wiki

Serves 2

In Swahili, sukuma wiki means 'push the week'. These are green vegetables in the form of collards or kale, and are used to stretch the meals to last for the week.

Ingredients

2 T. fat (oil or shortening)

1 onion

1 tomato

a bunch of sukuma (kale or collard greens), chopped

salt



Directions

Melt fat in a pot and add the onions. Stir well and sauté for a bit. Add tomato and sauté. Add sukuma and sauté for a short time. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and salt to taste. Let the mixture simmer until the sukuma has reached a desired tenderness.

Pilau (Spiced Rice)

Ingredients

3 c. rice
6 c. water
salt
onions
sliced tomatoes/tomato puree
garlic
ground Spices - cinnamon, cardamom, cumin seeds, black pepper
beef or chicken slices



Directions

Fry onions and garlic until brown. Add pieces of beef or chicken, cook until brown. Add spices and tomatoes, cook until smooth. Add clean washed rice. Add water and salt, mix and cover until cooked. Serve with kachumbari salad – (sliced tomatoes and onions).

Chapati

Makes 8 chapatis

Ingredients

3 c. whole wheat flour
salt to taste, about 1 tsp.
water as required (about 1 ½ c.)



Directions

Knead flour and water, starting with only a slight dribble of water and adding more as you go until the dough becomes smooth but not too sticky. Cover for at least 5 minutes. Divide into balls and roll out into disks, slightly thicker than denim material; sprinkle with flour as you roll. Place a non-oiled pan on a moderately high fire and test its surface temperature by holding your hand over it. When very hot, put a chapati on the pan and press it flat with a spatula or dry cloth to make it rise up. Flip and repeat so it becomes lightly browned on both sides. Chapatis are often brushed with ghee (clarified butter) after being cooked.

<http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cookbook:Chapati>

Kuku Paka (Kenyan chicken in coconut curry sauce)

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

3 lbs. chicken, cut into pieces	1 T. curry powder
1 onion, chopped	2 tsp. cumin seeds
2-3 hot chili peppers, chopped	2 c. chopped tomatoes or tomato sauce
2 T. ginger, peeled and chopped	2 c. or 1 (15-oz.) can coconut milk
2 T. garlic, chopped	salt and pepper -- to taste
¼ c. oil or ghee	½ c. cilantro, chopped



Directions

Add the onion, chilies, ginger, and garlic to a food processor or blender and process until smooth. Add a little water if necessary. Heat the oil or ghee in a large pot or wok over medium flame. Add the onion puree, curry powder, and cumin and sauté, stirring frequently, for 5 to 8 minutes, or until cooked down. Stir in the tomatoes and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the chicken, coconut milk, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until the chicken is cooked through and tender, anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. Add more water as needed. Stir in the cilantro, adjust seasoning with salt and pepper, and serve with rice or chapatti.

<http://www.whats4eats.com/poultry/kuku-paka-recipe>

Githiri (Kenyan corn and beans)

Serves 4 to 5

Ingredients

3-4 ears corn cut fresh off the cob (or 2 c. frozen corn)
 2 c. cooked beans, any type
 water - to cover
 salt and pepper - to taste



Directions

Add the corn and beans to a large pot with enough water just to cover. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer until cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes.

<http://www.whats4eats.com/vegetables/githeri-recipe>

Biskuti ya nazi (Coconut Macaroons)

Makes 35 cookies

Ingredients

2 ½ c. dried and shredded coconut
1 c. cashew or macadamia nuts
1 c. granulated sugar
3 egg whites
butter



Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 deg. F (180 deg. C). Lightly grease 2 baking sheets with butter. Beat the egg whites with an electric mixer on high until soft peaks form. Gradually add the sugar. Make sure to beat after each addition until the peaks are glossy. Chop the nuts finely. Add them with the coconut to the mixture. Wet your hands and put the mixture on the baking sheets in rounds. Bake them until they are lightly golden (this takes about 20-25 minutes). Cool them. If kept in an airtight box, they will keep for 2-3 days.

<http://www.kenya-advisor.com/kenya-desserts.html>

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