



November 2014

Customs and Cuisine of Uganda

Known as the "land of a thousand hills," Rwanda is a mountainous country, bordering on Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Rwandan food is neither spicy nor hot. People eat simple meals made with locally grown ingredients. The Rwandan diet consists mainly of sweet potatoes, beans, corn, peas, millet, plantains, cassava, and fruit. The potato is now very popular, thought to have been introduced by German colonists.

Rwandans who live in rural areas rarely eat meat. Some families have cattle, but since cattle are considered a status symbol, people seldom slaughter them for meat.

In urban areas meat is more plentiful. The most popular meats are beef and chicken. People who live near lakes may catch and eat fish. Tilapia and sambaza are raised on fish farms and are popular choices.

A traditional breakfast consists of sweet potatoes and porridge. Lunch and dinner may consist of boiled beans, bananas, sweet potatoes or cassava. Umutsima (a dish of cassava and corn), isombe (cassava leaves with Eggplant and spinach) and mizuzu (fried plantains) are common dishes. Dinner is the heaviest meal.

Between meals, Rwandans often snack on fruits. Tropical fruits such as avocados, bananas, mangos, pineapple, and papaya are abundant in Rwanda. Roadside vendors in urban areas sell roasted corn and barbecued meat.

Etiquette

Many Rwandan men enjoy drinking beer, but women rarely drink alcohol in any form. They do drink tea with lots of milk and sugar.

Refusing to partake of offered food or drink is considered a grave insult. Hosts typically sip from drinks and taste the food first before passing them to the guests to show that they are safe for consumption and have not been poisoned.

Avoid asking about someone's ethnicity or referring to someone as Hutu or Tutsi. Rwanda is a country whose deep wounds are healing, and the government is working hard to ensure that Rwandans heal together, so as to avoid another conflict in the future. To do so they have emphasized the idea that ethnicity no longer exists, that everyone is simply Rwandan.

Dress appropriately. People in Kigali take pride in their appearance and tend to dress up. Do not wear shorts—shorts are worn only by Rwandan schoolboys.

Source material:

<http://www.EnjoyRwanda.info>

<http://www.CultureCrossing.net>

<http://www.EveryCulture.com>



Recipes

Spinach, Avocado and Mango Salad Serves 6-8



A Rwandan meal wouldn't typically include a salad. But avocados and mangoes grow in abundance in Rwanda, and a fruit salad could be served for dessert. Spinach is also a stand-in for the cassava leaves that show up in their diet. So I came up with a spinach-avocado-mango salad for you. Or at least I thought I did. Next, I checked the Internet for ideas. My work was done when at least a dozen salads turned up with just these ingredients. This is a blend of some of the ideas I came across.

Ingredients

Dressing

1/3 cup orange juice
1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Salad

10 cups baby spinach leaves, (about 8 ounces)
1 1/2 cups radicchio, torn into bite-size pieces
8-12 small red radishes, (1 bunch), sliced
1 small ripe mango, sliced
1 medium avocado, sliced

Directions

Whisk juice, vinegar, oil, chili powder, salt and pepper in a bowl.

Just before serving, combine spinach, radicchio, radishes and mango in a large bowl. Add the dressing; toss to coat. Garnish with avocado slices.

Recipe adapted from, and photo credit:

www.eatingwell.com/recipes/spinach_avocado_mango_salad.html



Dining for Women

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Pan Fried Tilapia Serves 4-6



Tilapia is raised on fish farms in Rwanda. Here is a very simple recipe.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 tablespoons sweet paprika
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup butter (for frying)
- 4 -6 tilapia fillets, fresh or frozen (thawed)

Directions

Combine the flour and spices on a plate. Dip tilapia in spices and pan fry in butter on medium for approximately 5 minutes on each side. Serve!

Recipe source and photo credit: www.food.com/recipe/pan-fried-seasoned-tilapia-464936



Dining for Women

November 2014

Pinto Beans with Potatoes



This recipe comes by way of “The Africa News Cookbook,” originally published in 1985. Shown here with fried plantains (bananas) on the side, the dish is traditionally made with manioc (the edible starchy tuberous root of the cassava plant), potatoes are a reasonable substitute.

Ingredients

2 cups dried pinto beans, rinsed and soaked overnight
3 large potatoes, peeled and diced
2 celery stalks, sliced
1 teaspoon salt
1 onion, thinly sliced
peanut oil for frying

Cover pinto beans with enough water to cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until they are just tender.

Add potatoes, celery, salt and more water if necessary. Cook over low heat.

Just before the potatoes and beans are tender, gently fry the onions in a heavy skillet. Using a slotted spoon, add the beans to the skillet and stir until well mixed and heated through.

Serve over hot rice or ugali (cornmeal mush) or alongside fried plantains and tilapia.

Recipe source: [The Africa News Cookbook: African Cooking for Western Kitchens](#)



Pineapple Upside-Down Cornmeal Cake (Tested)

Ingredients:

Fruit topping

6 tablespoons unsalted butter
3/4 cup packed dark brown sugar (light is OK)
4-6 fresh pineapple rings, sliced about 1/4" thick, or
canned pineapple if you prefer
cherries for garnish

Cake

1 cup milk
1/2 cup coarse-ground cornmeal (not fine or instant)
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 whole eggs
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup canola oil

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a microwave-safe dish, bring the milk to a boil. Remove the milk from the microwave and add the cornmeal. Stir and let soak at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt the butter in a 10-inch cast iron skillet over medium heat. Once the butter has melted, turn off the heat, add the brown sugar, and stir until the sugar dissolves - about 2 minutes. (If you don't have a cast iron skillet a regular 10" round cake pan will work as well.) Remove the skillet from the heat and carefully place the pineapple rings over your sugar. Place cherries in middle of rings.

Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt into a medium mixing bowl and whisk to combine.

In a separate mixing bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the sugar to the eggs and whisk to combine. Add the canola oil and whisk. By now the cornmeal will have turned into a semi-solid mass. Scoop the whole blob into the eggs and whisk vigorously to break up the lumps. Add flour and stir just until combined.

Pour batter over fruit in the skillet and bake for 35 minutes, or until golden on the top and a cake tester comes out clean. (Be sure to place your pan on a cookie sheet to catch drips just in case your pan overflows.) Remove from oven and let cool for 30 minutes in the skillet. Set a platter on top of the skillet and carefully invert the cake.

Recipe Notes:

If you are using fresh pineapple you may want to roast it. Lay slices on a cookie sheet and roast them in a 350 degree oven for 15 minutes beforehand. For a more detailed treatment of this recipe, see The Proven Platter blog for November.