

**Niger November 2016  
Appetizer Party Recipes**



**Spice Crusted Sweet Potato Wedges (Tested)—Africa  
Serves 4-6**

Sweet potatoes are very common in the African diet. The leaves of the sweet potato plant are used as cooked greens, and the tubers are very often served fried, just like our French fries. Now, I love sweet potato fries, but that's not going to work for a potluck. Instead, we'll bake them sprinkled with a crusty spice blend.

In thinking about how to present sweet potatoes as an appetizer I was looking through my spice drawer and had an “aha” moment. I spied my jar of “everything bagel seasoning.” The bagel seasoning has sesame seeds in it, which are used plenty in African cooking. There are also poppy seeds in the mix, but I swapped them out for nigella seeds. Ginger and curry added to the mix round out the seasoning.

When picking out sweet potatoes or yams try to find ones that are skinny and long. They will make the most uniform wedges. If you end up using fat round potatoes, just try to slice them into wedges approximately the same size.

**Ingredients**

- 3 lb. sweet potatoes or yams, unpeeled, sliced into wedges
- 3 tbsp. oil
- 1 tbsp. sesame seeds, toasted
- 1 tbsp. nigella seeds (or poppy seeds)
- 1 tbsp. dried garlic flakes
- 1 tbsp. dried onion flakes
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. curry powder

## Directions

Cut the sweet potatoes into wedges, about 6 to 8 per potato, depending on the size and shape of your potato. Put them into a large bowl and drizzle them with the oil.

Mix all the rest of the seeds and spices together in a small bowl. Toss this mixture over the potatoes and mix all together.

Spread on a baking sheet and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, turning once during the baking time.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



## Easy Samosas (Tested)—India Makes about 50 mini samosas

This iconic Indian snack is sold at street stalls and fine restaurants all over India. The proper and authentic Indian way calls for making your own pastry dough, with a slightly intricate rolling process. And they really must be fried.

But I wanted us to be able to have samosas, even if we don't make dough and fry them. So I've come up with a couple of hacks to bring easy samosas to the masses. We'll use ready-made spring roll wrappers, and we'll bake them. Admittedly, the fried version is better, but the baked version is perfectly acceptable. You can serve them with [coriander chutney](#), which has been previously published on the DFW site.

## Ingredients

1 large russet potato (about 14 oz.)

1 cup frozen petit peas

¼ cup oil

½ cup finely chopped onion

1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger (about 1 tbsp.), peeled and minced

1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced

¼ chopped cilantro  
2 tsp. kosher salt  
1 tsp. ground coriander  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
1 tsp. garam masala  
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper  
2 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 tbsp. flour  
1 pkg. 6-inch by 6-inch spring roll wrappers  
Cooking oil for frying or baking the samosas

### **Filling**

Peel and chop the potato into large chunks and boil as you would for mashed potatoes. When done put the potatoes into a large bowl and mash. Add the frozen peas to the potatoes. This will help cool the potatoes down quickly.

Next, heat a medium-size skillet with the oil and add the onion, ginger, and jalapeno pepper. Sauté for about 3 minutes until softened. Add the salt, coriander, cumin, garam masala and cayenne pepper. Stir this for about one minute.

Scrape the onion mixture into the bowl with the mashed potatoes. Add a couple tablespoons of water to the pan to rinse out the remaining residue in the pan and add to the potatoes, add the lemon juice. Mix well and taste to adjust seasoning if necessary. Let cool completely before assembling the samosas.

Mix the flour in a small bowl with 1 tablespoon of water to make a thin, smooth paste. This will be the “glue” that will close the samosa triangles.

### **To assemble the samosas**

Have the spring roll wrappers opened up and covered with a dish towel to keep them from drying out.

Remove one at a time and cut into 3 equal strips. The strips should be placed so that the short end is at your waistline. Place a small amount of the filling at the bottom of the strip, about the size of a marble. Fold up the samosa in a triangular fashion, like a flag. Seal the end of the triangle with some of the flour paste and lay the triangle on a parchment lined sheet pan covered with a dish towel.

Click on the word [fold](#) for a very short instructional video on how to form samosas. You’ll need to scroll all the way to the bottom of the post in order to view it.

(Do note that the wrappers used in the video are 8-inch wrappers, which I was not able to find at my grocery store. But I believe that the 6-inch wrappers work just as well. If you do come across the 8-inch wrappers, then you will cut them into 4 strips.)

Once you've made all the triangles, it's time to cook them. You can either choose to fry them, which is the best method, and traditional, or you can bake them.

### **Frying method**

Heat a frying pan or wok and add the oil. A wok works best because you can get away with using less oil. You need to add enough oil to allow the samosas to float. Test the oil by dipping a corner of one samosa into the oil, if it starts to sizzle then the oil is ready. Add the samosas, 6 to 8 at a time works well in a wok. They should take about a minute to a minute and a half, then flip them over and fry for one more minute. Remove to paper towels to drain. Arrange on a platter. They can be served hot or at room temperature. Serve with coriander chutney.

### **Baking method**

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Brush the samosas lightly with vegetable oil on both sides and place on a baking sheet. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until the bottom side is golden. Turn them over and bake for another 10 to 12 minutes, until they are golden on both sides. (The samosas in the photo I've included are baked, just so you'll know what they look like when done.)

Arrange on a platter. They can be served hot or at room temperature. Serve with coriander chutney.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



### **Sweet Chocolate Tamales (Tested)--Guatemala Makes 24**

This recipe for chocolate tamales is the result of my dear friend Alice Krause's madly creative genius brain. When it comes to dreaming up desserts, Alice's brain has no limits! Here is her sweet variation on tamales. While the recipe may look daunting it can be made ahead. Both filling and batter can be made several days ahead, as can the finished tamales. The crème anglaise can be made ahead as well. Re-steam (or even microwave) tamales before serving.

### **Ingredients**

**(divided into 3 parts--for the masa, the filling, and the crème anglaise)**

**For the masa**

1 or 2 pkgs. dried corn husks  
2/3 cup Crisco shortening  
3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened  
2/3 cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
2 cups Masa harina  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1 cup whole milk  
1 cup coconut milk  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp ground cinnamon

**Prepare the cornhusks.** Place the husks in a salad spinner, cover with hot water, place lid on to keep them submerged, and let sit for a couple of hours until the husks are pliable. Drain off excess water.

Select 24 of the largest and most pliable husks—ones that are at least 6 by 7 inches. If you can't find enough good ones, overlap two smaller husks as your base. Keep the husks covered with a dish towel to prevent them from drying out while you work on preparing other ingredients.

**Prepare the masa.** In the bowl of an electric mixer beat the vegetable shortening and butter until very light, about 1 minute. Add the sugar and half of the masa and beat until combined.

Mix the milk and coconut milk together and alternately add with the remaining masa in several additions to the batter until the mixture is the consistency of medium thick batter.

Add baking powder, salt, and cinnamon, beat for 30 second more, to a soft consistency. Set aside until tamale making time. (For the lightest textured tamales, refrigerate the batter for an hour or so, then re-beat, adding additional milk or water to bring the mixture to the soft consistency it had before.)

**For the filling**

4 dried ancho chiles, candied (see instructions below)  
½ cup butter (1 stick)  
½ cup cocoa  
1 cup sugar  
¼ cup flour  
1 cup pepitas (pumpkin seeds)  
2 eggs  
1 tbsp. tequila

1 tsp. vanilla  
Pinch of salt

**To make the candied ancho chiles.** De-stem and de-seed the chiles. Cut into small pieces. In a small sauce pan add half-cup sugar and half- cup water; boil to dissolve sugar. Add the chiles and simmer for an additional 5 minutes; drain the chiles and reserve ½ cup of the liquid for making the crème anglaise in the following recipe.

**Prepare the chocolate filling.** Melt butter in saucepan with cocoa and stir until smooth.

In a food processor, combine sugar, flour, pepitas, and candied ancho chiles. Process until a coarse, sandy texture is achieved, about 30 seconds. Add this to the cocoa-butter mixture in the saucepan. Whisk in the eggs, tequila, vanilla, and a pinch of salt. Transfer to a bowl.

### **Set up the steamer**

Pour a couple of inches of water into the base of your steamer. (Pro-tip: place a quarter on bottom of the pan, when you stop hearing the clanging of the quarter, time to put more water in steamer base.) Line the bottom of the steamer with leftover cornhusks to protect the tamales from direct contact with the steam and to add more flavor. Make sure to leave space between the husks so condensation can drain.

Whew! Now you are ready to start assembling the tamales. You have your bowl of masa, your bowl of chocolate filling, your corn husks prepared, and your steamer pot ready and waiting.

### **Form the tamales**

The very best explanation that I can give you as to how to form tamales can be seen right [here](#). (For our recipe, use about ¼ cup masa and 1 tablespoon of chocolate filling.) The video only lasts 1 minute. When you're done watching come back and we'll talk about how to steam them.

As they're made, stand the tamales on their twisted bottoms on the corn husk lined steamer. If you don't have that many tamales that you are making, or you find that they are toppling over, you can use little wads of aluminum foil placed strategically in the pot to keep them upright.

When all the tamales are in the steamer, cover them with a layer of leftover cornhusks; separate the tamales with extra cornhusks. Set the lid in place and steam over a constant medium heat for about 1 1/4 hours.

Watch carefully that all the water doesn't boil away; to keep the steam steady pour boiling water into the pot when it is necessary Tamales are done when the husk peels away easily. Remove the steamer tray of tamales from the heat for a few minutes to set.

For the best textured tamales, let them cool completely, then re-steam about 15 minutes to heat through.

Serve tamales opened up on a plate with a drizzle of the crème anglaise, and perhaps a few toasted pepitas.

### **Candied Ancho Chile Crème Anglaise**

#### **Ingredients**

2 cups half-and-half or whole milk

2 vanilla beans

4 large egg yolks, at room temperature

½ cup reserved ancho chile syrup

To make the custard. Set a fine strainer over a medium bowl and set the bowl in a shallow container of ice water.

Into a 2-quart saucepan, pour in the cream or milk. Split the vanilla beans and scrape the seeds into the milk. Add the bean pods as well. Simmer over low heat until small bubbles appear around the rim, approximately 5 minutes.

In another bowl, whisk ½ cup of the cooled ancho chile simple syrup and egg yolks just until combined. Whisk in half of the hot half-and-half in a thin stream. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan and cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the sauce has thickened slightly, 4 to 5 minutes. Immediately strain the sauce into the bowl in the cold ice water bath to stop the cooking. Serve right away or refrigerate until chilled.

Recipe and photo credit: Alice Krause



**Shaking Beef (Bo Luc Lac) (Tested)—Vietnam**  
**Serves 6 to 8**

This recipe comes from Charles Pham, who owns a very famous Vietnamese restaurant in San Francisco, The Slanted Door. They typically go through about 800 pounds of beef each week! In Vietnam the dish is usually made with tough beef cuts, but Pham knew this dish would be exceptional if he used better ingredients, like beef tenderloin. You could substitute another type of beef, just as long as it's a tender cut.

This recipe has been adapted by Alice Krause, and tested in her home kitchen. It's also been tested out on our Dining for Women group to much acclaim!

**Ingredients**

1½ lb. beef tenderloin, cut into 1" cubes  
1 tsp. sugar  
1½ tsp. salt  
¾ tsp. fresh black pepper  
2 tbsp. neutral cooking oil, such as canola or corn oil

**Dipping sauce:**

Juice of 1 lime  
2 tsp. sugar  
½ tsp. kosher salt  
½ tsp. fresh black pepper

**Vinaigrette:**

¼ cup rice vinegar  
1 tbsp. light brown sugar  
2 tbsp. fresh lime juice  
3 tbsp. light soy sauce  
1 tbsp. dark soy sauce  
1 tbsp. sake  
1 tbsp. fish sauce

4 tbsp. neutral cooking oil, such as canola or avocado oil  
4 green onions, white and green parts, cut into 1" pieces  
½ small red onion, thinly sliced  
2 tbsp. thinly sliced garlic  
2 tbsp. butter  
2 bunches watercress, for garnish

Marinate the beef by combining sugar, salt, pepper and oil in a large bowl, cover bowl with plastic wrap and set aside to marinate at room temperature for an hour or refrigerate overnight.

Prepare the dipping sauce by combining the lime juice, sugar, salt and pepper.

Prepare vinaigrette by combining vinegar, sugar, lime juice, light soy, dark soy, sake and fish sauce. Set aside to infuse flavors.

Heat wok over high heat. (Note: these directions call for wokking the beef in two additions). Add 2 tablespoons oil to the wok. When the oil starts to smoke, add half of the drained beef (discard marinade) in a single layer. Continue to cook, flipping once until browned, approximately 3 minutes for medium rare.

Add half of the green onions, red onions and garlic and cook for 1 more minute. Pour half of vinaigrette down the side of the wok, and then shake pan to release the beef and toss with the vinaigrette. Add one tablespoon of butter and continue to shake pan until butter melts, hence the term "Shaking Beef." Remove the meat and onions from the wok. Set aside on a serving platter and keep warm.

Repeat entire process again with all remaining ingredients. Combine with previously wokked beef.

To serve, garnish the platter of meat with the watercress and the dipping sauce. Alternatively, you can skewer the beef cubes, as shown in the photo above.

Recipe adapted from "Vietnamese Home Cooking," by Charles Pham  
Photo credit: Alice Krause



### **Customs and Cuisine**

The types of food people of the Azawak consume are based on seasonal availability. During the rainy season and harvest, animals produce more milk, which results in healthier (more protein rich) diets and more readily available food. During the cold and hot seasons, milk is scarcer, resulting in the need to purchase supplements such as powdered milk, macaroni, etc. Millet and sorghum are staple grains, which have been bought through trading with the southern farming groups (Hausa, Djerma) for centuries.

Women are very knowledgeable about traditional medicines, including the herbs, tree leaves and fruits/berries that must be consumed in order to prevent or heal various illnesses, ranging from malaria to indigestion. As the biodiversity in the zone is reduced due to climate change and overexploitation, however, these plants are becoming more scarce, resulting in greater dependence on Western medicines and imported foods for the family's health and nutrition. Milk, once the main staple food for the Tuareg diet, has in turn been effected by the losses of biodiversity, as many of the most nutritious grasses and trees are not as available as in the past, resulting in the need to have many more cows or goats to produce the same amount of milk as did one healthy cow in years past. Because of this social-ecological relationship, the Tuareg's livelihood has become highly dependent upon the market.

The Tuareg people are therefore not self-sufficient with their livestock production. Selling livestock allows families to purchase most household staples, which aside from grains like millet, include sugar, rice, beans, powdered milk, tea, oil and spices. When families have

fewer livestock, they rely on remittances from migrants to Libya or other countries. During a normal day, household consumption consists of millet porridge (*ilewa* or *arajira*) for breakfast and lunch and *ishink* for dinner. *Ishink* can be any cooked meal, but most often ranges from millet paste and black sauce (based on available spices and leaves) to beans and rice. As the market has begun to dominate household food consumption, cheap imported food stuffs such as cookies, oil, Maggi and other items have become a part of household consumption patterns. Unfortunately, this change is not seen as supportive of household health and nutrition, but the lack of available healthy alternatives (gardens, milk) forces many households to accept these foods.

During festivities such as marriages, baptisms and Muslim holidays, meat is consumed in larger quantities and shared by all. This sharing aspect greatly supports community nutrition, as well as building solidarity between people. While meat is also consumed during other times of the year, it is quite rare, as killing one's livestock is reserved for special occasions. Also, many Tuareg people consider their livestock as their children, and thus would not easily sell or kill their livestock for their own benefit.

True yams of West Africa (called nyams in Niger) are a starch and not at all sweet. Yams are a staple in Niger and West Africa, sweet potatoes are not. Yams are usually pounded, dried and water added to make fist size dough balls. While eating, each person receives their own fist-sized ball. Using their right middle and ring finger they take a small piece of the fufu, dip it into sauce and eat it. The index finger is not used for eating, nor do any of the fingers go into the mouth. Culturally, everyone shares a bowl of stew, takes bites in tandem and eats from their side of the bowl until full. Portions are usually very generous if given individually. A cook will be greatly disappointed and embarrassed that they did not serve you enough if you finish your plate.

Yams, yucca and regular white potato are often sliced and fried as well. In Niger and West Africa, spice mixtures (depending on the region) are served on the side to dip. Many times with Calve (mayonnaise). Spice mixes that are available in the U.S that can be used are Old Bay, Lawry's or even Adobo. In Niger, spice mixtures vary greatly and can be quite hot. On occasion, many people also dip them in sugar for a treat as well.

To be specific about the Tuareg and in light of the holiday season, cheese, dates and melon slices with hot sugary black or green tea are very commonly served.

Tuaregs are nomadic and as such, meals are usually very simple to prepare unless there is a special occasion. Daily meals always consist of some dairy and millet gruel, as their livestock are their primary source of nutritional intake.

Finally, the peanut sauce recipe served with beans and rice (see below) is a traditional Niger family recipe from Tahoua, Niger handed provided by Amman Imman. Rice is served everywhere and is also one of the staples given by food programs around the globe. Many stews are also served with French-style bread as well.

**Traditional Tamashaq (Tuareg) food, consumed by the women of Tangarwashane:**

*Eshahid* (strong green tea and sugar - typically made by men), *Tegalla* (wheat semolina bread broken into small pieces and eaten with a meat or tomato sauce), *ilewa* (millet pounded and cooked into a paste, and eaten with milk), *tilafarat* or *mofay* (rice and meat), *ishink* (sorghum, rice, or millet with sauce – the sauce can be a green leaf sauce, a vegetable sauce, or a meat sauce), *arajira* (millet, milk, water, sometimes also eaten with goat cheese and/or dates), *Chuku* (traditional cheese made from goat and cow milk, also sometimes added to arajira), local tree fruits including ‘pomme de Sahel, goat, camel, and cow milk and meat (especially during rainy and harvest season, or during annual Muslim celebrations). Dates are also typically consumed during celebrations. There are also many medicinal products collected from the trees of the Sahel, known by Tuareg women.

**Types of Hausa/Djerma/West African food also consumed by Tuareg:** *malohiya* (zogola leaves, oil,meat), peanut sauce (peanut butter, vegetables, meat), *Kapto* (Moringa leaves, onion, *kuli kuli* (matter remaining after peanut oil is extracted)), *bean cakes* (bean flower dough fried in oil), *beignets* (wheat flour dough friend in oil), *Shinkafa da wake* (beans and rice), *gundusuro* (cow pea), *tuwo* (millet, sorghum, rice, macaroni with sauce), sauces (okra, tomato, locally available leaves, spices), *hura* (millet, milk, and water)

**Household supplements that typically must be purchased:** Western medicine (when traditional products cannot be found), powdered milk (when milk supplies are short - typically in hot cold and hot season), cookies, macaroni, Couscous, vegetables (tomatoes, lettuce, potatoes, carrots, onion, garlic, etc.), Maggi (flavor enhancer for food), imported vegetable oil, gari (typically a poverty food).

Although Tuaregs in the Azawak eat more millet-based foods, Tuaregs who live in cities eat peanut sauce. Groundnuts, in particular peanuts, are abundant natural resources in West Africa and readily available as an inexpensive form of protein. Peanut sauce is also highly versatile. It can be loaded with vegetables with or without meat and served with different forms of starch, i.e. fofou, couscous, dipped with French bread or over beans and rice. This meal can be enjoyed with the cold and sweet traditional drinks: bissap (cold hibiscus tea with sugar) and lemoun hari (lemon-ginger tea with sugar).

**Basic Peanut Sauce**

2 Large onions, slivered

1 Head of garlic, crushed

2 – 3 Large tomatoes chopped in large squares (about ½ inch in size, do not make them too small)

2 Cups oil (olive oil)

½ jar of natural peanut butter

6 bouillon cubes (vegetarian or chicken)

Dashes of cayenne pepper for a kick

**Cooking Method:**

Put the onions and oil in a large sauce pan. Sauté for a few minutes, add the garlic and continue cooking until onions become translucent. Once translucent add the tomatoes,

bouillon, a few dashes of cayenne and any other vegetables you wish. Cook until the tomatoes begin to break down, then stir in the peanut butter. At this point, turn the heat down some and stir minimally. The sauce is finished when the oil rises to the top and separates.

Additions and Suggestions: Chopped meat can be added with the onions. If using fish or shrimp, these should be added with the vegetables. Spinach, green bell peppers, eggplant, cabbage and okra are traditional additions to the sauce. Add spinach a few minutes after the other vegetables.

Add all, one or none to the sauce. Mix and match for variation. Serve hot with rice, couscous, French bread or beans and rice.

Source: Provided by Amman Imman