



Beans in Bean Mushroom Sauce

Serves 6 to 8

This is a dish that is served in most African countries using local mushrooms and beans. There are many types of beans available in Africa, just as there are here. I chose to use scarlet runner beans in this recipe, for their beautiful color, shape and size. I wanted something to contrast with the black-eyed peas.

Keep in mind that you will need to cook your beans ahead of time, as much as a couple days ahead is fine. Then you can assemble and cook the dish whenever you are ready. You can also fully prepare the dish one day ahead of time. This gives the beans time to soak up some of the delicious braising liquid and result in a more flavorful dish.

To simplify this dish, you could use canned beans, drained and rinsed. I would imagine that a combination of small white navy beans (instead of black-eyed peas) and kidney beans, would be a good choice.

And do note that you can always freeze the leftover portion of a can of coconut milk in ice cube trays, and have the cubes at the ready the next time you need a portion of coconut milk in a recipe.

Ingredients

3 tbsp. cooking oil, (palm oil, or groundnut oil if you have it)
1 cup pearl onions (I used frozen)
10 large mushrooms, quartered
1 green or red bell pepper, chopped or sliced
1 jalapeno pepper, chopped
3 plum tomatoes, chopped (about 1 ½ cups)
1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, sliced into matchsticks

1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. curry powder
¼ tsp. cinnamon
1/3 cup coconut milk
½ cup bean liquid from the fresh cooked beans (or water if using canned beans)
2 cups cooked black-eyed peas (about 1 cup dried peas)
4 cups cooked beans, your choice (starting from 1 to ½ cups dried)
Peanuts, chopped, for garnish
Green onions, chopped, for garnish

Directions

Heat the oil in a large skillet and add the onions, mushrooms, bell peppers, and jalapenos. Sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, until everything has started to soften. Add the tomatoes and cook for another minute or two.

Add the fresh ginger, salt, and spices and stir for one minute. Add the coconut milk, bean liquid and the cooked beans. Simmer until heated through, and liquid slightly thickened.

Garnish with peanuts and green onions.

Recipe credit: Linda McElroy, adapted from “Zainabu’s African Cookbook,” by Zainabu Kpaka Kannon

Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Jollof Rice
Serves 4 – 6

Jollof rice is a classic West African dish. Every region has its own variation. The rice dish can include beef, lamb or chicken, and sometimes Jollof rice is vegetarian. This version uses chicken.

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 14.5 oz. can chopped tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 3 lb. chicken, cut into pieces or 3 lb. chicken thighs
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup uncooked Basmati rice, rinsed and drained
- 3 large carrots cut into 1 inch chunks, about 1 ½ cups
- 1 large green pepper, cored and diced
- 2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves

Heat vegetable oil in a large casserole pan. Sauté onion over medium low heat until softened, about 4-5 minutes. Add chopped tomatoes and tomato paste. Simmer over medium low heat for 5 minutes. Add salt, black pepper, cayenne pepper and red pepper flakes. Bring to a simmer. Add chicken pieces, skin side down and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Turn chicken pieces over and continue to simmer for another 15 minutes. Add broth, rice, carrots, green pepper and thyme.

Bring to a boil, lower heat. Cover and simmer for about 30 minutes, adding more chicken broth if necessary, until rice is tender and chicken is cooked through.

Recipe credit: Kathy Williams, based on multiple versions

Photo credit: Kathy Williams



Ginger Tea
Serves 4 – 6

Ginger drinks are common in West and North Africa. This refreshing drink can be served hot or cold. Ginger drinks are typically very sweet, but feel free to adjust sugar to taste.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh unpeeled ginger, sliced, about 3 oz.
7 cups water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

Garnish:
Lemon slices
Fresh mint leaves

Bring ginger slices and water to a gentle boil. Simmer for 30 minutes. Strain the tea. Add sugar and stir until dissolved. Chill or serve hot. Garnish with lemon slices and mint.

Recipe credit: Kathy Williams, based on multiple versions and travel to North Africa
Photo credit: Kathy Williams



Mali

Culture

Mali is a landlocked country in western Africa. Formerly called the French Sudan, it borders Algeria, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Mali is located in what was a great medieval empire. The Sahara desert covers the northern half of Mali.

Mali has a population of almost 17 million. Half of the population is Mandinka; the other half is comprised of various ethnic groups including Moors and Tuareg nomads. The languages are Bamanankan and French. French is the official language in schools and the government. Ninety-five percent of the population is Muslim. Many people fled from Mali to Niger during a coup, political upheaval and continued armed conflict in 2012.

The country has one of the world's lowest gross domestic product per capita. Most Malians are illiterate due to widespread lack of education. Lack of medical care is widespread and malaria is the leading cause of death in children. Most Malians live in small rural villages and farm small family plots of land. Droughts can be severe.

There are many festivals and rituals celebrating life, including weddings and naming ceremonies for infants. Islam is the primary religion and the festivals have native tribal cultural influences.

Cuisine

The cuisine of Mali varies from region to region due to different cultural groups, but there are dishes found throughout the country. Chickens have been raised in Mali for thousands of years. Other protein sources include lamb, beef and fish.

Vegetables farmed include carrots, yams, sweet potatoes and peanuts. Grains include millet and rice. Rice is a main staple and can provide up to 40 percent of the daily food intake. African rice has a distinct taste, coloring and aroma. There is evidence that millet and rice have been farmed since 1,000 BC.

Typical dishes include rice with vegetables in a peanut sauce, rice or other cereal grains served with tomatoes and fish or meat with vegetables. Meat curries are frequently made with lamb.

“Riz au gras” is a dish of rice with vegetables and meat. “Jollof rice” is rice with tomatoes, vegetables and meat.

Drinks include a sugar, lemon and ginger drink called jinjinbere. Dabileni is a drink made of sugar, water and sorrel.

Meals end with a strong sweet tea. Three rounds of tea are served; the first is for life, the second is for love and the third is for death.

Sources

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“Africa” Lonely Planet

Photo credit: Caravan to Class