



## **Black-Eyed Pea and Sweet Potato Ragout (Ndambe) (Tested)**

**Makes 6 to 8 servings**

Here is an easy recipe sure to please. Start to finish time is under an hour. You should be able to easily find the ingredients at your grocery store. I've called for using dried black-eyed peas, but you could use canned peas for a shortcut. But honestly, using dried peas does not add much time to the recipe. They cook pretty fast, and I think it's worth the extra effort. This can be made a day ahead of time and rewarmed for serving.

### **Ingredients**

½ pound black-eyed peas (about 1 generous cup), soaked in water for 1 hour  
½ teaspoon salt  
2 tbsp. vegetable oil, or red palm oil  
1 onion, finely chopped, about 1 cup  
1 bell pepper (any color), finely chopped  
1 tbsp. finely chopped ginger  
½ pound plum tomatoes, chopped, about 1 heaping cup  
1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes, about 2 heaping cups  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Senegalese Chile Sauce (optional)

### **Directions**

Drain the peas, and put into a pot along with 1 quart of water. Bring to a boil, and then turn down to a simmer, for about twenty minutes. Add the salt halfway through the cooking time. At the end of the twenty minutes the peas should be mostly tender. Be careful not to overcook, they will finish cooking in the ragout. Drain.

While the peas are cooking, heat a large sauté pan over medium heat with the oil. Add the onion, bell pepper and ginger, sauté for a few minutes, until the vegetables are softened. Next add the tomatoes and allow to simmer for a few more minutes. Finally, add the sweet potatoes and enough water to barely cover, about 1 ½ cups. Cover the pan, and simmer until the potatoes are just tender, maybe still a bit firm in the middle. My sweet potatoes took only about 7 minutes to

cook. If yours are larger they will take longer. They will cook further once the peas are added, so again I caution you not to overcook them.

Add the black-eyed peas to the sweet potatoes and simmer over low heat for ten more minutes to blend the flavors. Add salt to taste, and add a splash of additional water if necessary.

I think this dish would be nicely complemented by the Senegalese Chile Sauce (Sous Kaani) also posted with this month's recipes.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Adapted from "Yole! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal," by Pierre Thiam



### **Millet-Beef Croquettes (Karakoro) (Tested)**

**Makes about 4 dozen bites**

I was intrigued by the use of millet flour here. Although I didn't find millet flour I assumed that I could just pulverize some millet seed to the same effect and that's what I did.

If you are somewhat experienced at frying food then I would recommend giving this a try. Frying food all depends on the heat of the oil and regulation, so that food doesn't overcook or burn before it is cooked all the way through. You'll want to keep the bites small so they will cook all the way through the middle. The accompanying spicy sauce really is a must here.

I did some additional testing and found that if you want to fry the croquettes one day ahead of time, and then reheat in a 350-degree oven for 10 minutes right before you wish to serve them, they are just about as good as when they were fresh out of the oil.

#### **Ingredients**

Vegetable oil

½ lb. ground beef

½ cup onion, finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2 tsp. kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup millet seeds, ground in a coffee/spice grinder, to make flour

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tbsp. vegetable oil

1 large egg

Senegalese Chile Sauce

#### **Directions**

Heat up a medium sauce pan and add one tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for a few minutes. Add the ground beef and break up with a wooden spoon. Keep

pounding and chopping at the beef until it is in fine crumbs. You want the beef to be as fine as possible so that it will evenly spread throughout the batter. Pour two cups of hot water into the pan and bring to a boil. Let simmer for a few minutes.

In the meantime, blend the millet flour with one-quarter cup of water and the baking soda. Stir with a fork to form a thick paste. Add to the pot with the ground beef and stir until the mixture thickens. Take off the heat and let cool completely.

In a small bowl, crack the egg and add one tablespoon of the vegetable oil. Whisk vigorously and add to the cooled meat mixture.

Using a small melon scoop, or two teaspoons, scoop and form the batter into small balls, about the size of a large marble. Scoop onto a tray and refrigerate until firm if the dough feels too soft to work with. The recipe can be prepared up to this point, and the crolettes can be fried the next day. (The crolettes can also be finished completely, chilled, and rewarmed the next day in a 350-degree oven for 10 minutes.)

Heat up a wok or small/medium size frying pan. The smaller the pan the better, so you can use less oil that way. Pour some oil into the pan. I use the shallow-fry method, that is, the oil doesn't completely submerge the food, I use just enough oil to keep the food floating and from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Drop the millet crolettes into the hot oil and fry on one side until medium brown, then flip to brown the other side. This should take anywhere from 3-4 minutes total. Remove to a paper towel lined platter.

Serve with Senegalese Chile Sauce for dipping.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Adapted from "Yolole! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal," by Pierre Thiam



### **Senegalese Chile Sauce (Sous Kaani) (Tested)**

**Makes about 1 cup**

This recipe is a keeper for me. I want to put it on everything! It's kind of like a spicy ketchup. I'm usually afraid of the habanero chile, but I decided to go all the way with it and add it to my sauce, seeds and all. For my taste, it provided just the right amount of heat, I'd give it 3 stars on the 1 to 5 heat scale. If you remove the seeds before you put the chile into the sauce, you will have a milder sauce.

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 small onion, coarsely chopped, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 6 ripe roma tomatoes (about 1 lb.) chopped
- 1 habanero pepper or Scotch bonnet pepper (seeds removed for less heat)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. butter

#### **Directions**

Heat up a small sauce pan and add the oil, onion, and garlic. Sauté until onion has softened. Add the tomato paste and stir until the paste coats the bottom of the pan and begins to caramelize a bit. Add the chopped tomatoes, habanero pepper, bay leaf, and salt. Simmer partially covered over low heat until the tomatoes break down and become thick, about 30 minutes.

Scrape the mixture into a blender jar (remove the bay leaf), along with the butter, and blend until smooth.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy

Adapted from "Yolole! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal" by Pierre Thiam

## **The Gambia**

Gambia is the smallest country on the African continent. It is a long narrow country in western Africa surrounded by Senegal with the Atlantic Ocean on the west. The country is named for the Gambia River that runs through it. Early inhabitants populated Gambia in 2000 BC. Carthaginian sailors discovered the Gambia River in 470 BC.

Gambia's population was estimated to be just over 2 million in 2016. Ethnic groups include Mankinka, Jakanka-Fulani, Tukulur, Lorobo, Wolof, Jola, Karominka, Serakuleh, Serere, and Manjago. The various ethnic groups live harmoniously. English is the official language but as many as 12 other indigenous languages are spoken as well. The country is predominately Muslim with about 4 percent Christian and 1 percent ancient indigenous religions. This tiny country has a literacy rate of about 55% and education is mandated from ages 7 to 15.

The Gambia has one of the lowest per capita GDP and is one of the world's poorest. Female genital cutting is widespread and infant and maternal mortality is very high. Nearly half of all children die by age 5 due to malaria and diarrheal diseases.

England established a presence in Gambia as their first African colony in 1588. Gambia achieved independence from England in 1965 and was proclaimed a Presidential Republic in 2013. Gambia joined in the Confederation of Senegambia and is officially known as The Republic of The Gambia.

The economy is supported by the export of groundnuts, fishing, animal hides and tourism.

## **Cuisine**

The sub-tropical climate in Gambia and the light sandy soil allows the cultivation of a variety of food sources. Over 75 percent of the population is occupied in agriculture and in raising livestock including beef, goats and sheep. Along with groundnuts, other chief crops are rice, millet, sorghum, corn, manioc, yams, taro, plantains, and beans. A large variety of fruits are grown including mangos, bananas, pawpaws, limes, oranges, coconut and grapefruit. Vegetables include okra, pumpkin, cucumbers, onions, bell peppers, and tomatoes.

Dishes are richly seasoned with thyme, turmeric, nutmeg, basil species, ginger, chilies, lemon grass, bitterleaf, coconuts and sesame. The cuisine of Gambia is similar to neighboring countries in West Africa and is influenced by the many ethnic groups, Arabs, the English and Portuguese. It is traditional to have a balance between colors for an attractive presentation.

Jollof Rice is a popular dish all throughout West Africa. The dish is made with rice, tomatoes and usually chickens.

Yassa is a dish prepared with fish or chicken marinated in lemon or lime juice, and then simmered with fried onions.

Domodah is a ground nut stew that may contain hard boiled eggs, meat, fruits and vegetables and is served with rice.

Chep-bu-jen is the name of a fish and rice stew in the Wolof language.

Base nyebe is a rich stew of chicken or beef served with green beans.

Plasas is meat and smoked fish with a variety of green vegetables.

Chere is a steamed millet flour balls.

Fu fu (or foo foo) is a popular staple dish of sweet potato or maize flour made into a starchy paste and served with soups and stews.

## Sources

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