

Caribbean Recipes to Celebrate the Holidays

The holidays are an amazing time for individuals and communities. Whether it be because of the festive lights glowing in our homes, the joyous dances that animate our gatherings, or even seeing family we haven't seen in a while, the end of December is many things to many people. Regardless of specific holiday traditions, one element that's common to all, is the food. Have you ever returned to work after the Christmas holiday begin to feel your mouth water as your co-workers describe what they ate?

We have. And we've learned our lesson: ask for recipes!

Thus, in the spirit of sharing and of the holidays, we've compiled some of the best Caribbean holiday recipes our friends have shared with us so that you're covered just in case you didn't get the recipe last year. We've arranged a food tour of the Caribbean to satisfy your wanderlust and foodie tendencies. Enjoy!



Breakfast in Guyana : Pepper Pot with Bread

First stop is Guyana for breakfast. While there's usually lots of food on Christmas, we never skip breakfast. In Guyana, Pepper Pot with bread is the perfect way to start Christmas Day. Passed down from Amerindian traditions this saucy meat stew is savory, sweet and filling. Pastor Trenton Hamiden from Paprika, Guyana gave us this recipe.

Photo: Tastes Like Home

- 2 lbs stewing steak (pork or beef) or brisket
- 2 pig trotters or cow's heels (optional: it will make it gooey)
- 2 lbs ox tail
- 1 cup cassareep
- 2 red hot peppers
- 1 inch stick cinnamon
- 3 heads clove
- 2 oz. sugar
- Salt to taste
- 2 stalks basil
- 1 bunch fine thyme
- 1 large chopped onion
- chopped garlic

Clean the meat thoroughly. Put the heel or trotters in covered pan with water to boil then skim. When half tender add other meat and hot water to cover. Add all other ingredients and simmer until meat is tender. Adjust flavor with salt and sugar. Note: This dish develops flavor when left over a period of days. If left un-refrigerated, it must be reheated to a boil every day.

Enjoy with some nice bread to sop up the gravy!



Amuse - bouche in Martinique

Now, here in America we rarely hear of the amuse-bouche, but in France and its territories, there's a course called the amuse-bouche which means "mouth entertainer". This course, like hors d'oeuvres is meant to warm up the mouth for what's to come. Naturally, since it's traditionally a French course, we're stopping next in Marti-

nique for some patés salés.

These individual pies can be filled with veggies, ground beef, or sausage.

Pate salé is considered indispensable on Christmas in Martinique and Guadeloupe. Make this recipe and find out why!

Photo and recipe : Une Plume dans la Cuisine

For about 20 pies

- 14 oz. pie crust
- 7 oz. ground meat (beef, pork or a mix of the two)
- 4 sprigs of parsley
- 1 sprig de thyme or a 1/2 teaspoon of dried thyme
- 1 onion
- 4 scallion
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 egg
- 2 pegs of garlic
- 1/2 teaspoons allspice
- 1 lemon (or 1 two 2 teaspoons of vinegar)
- 1 chills pepper
- 1 hot pepper
- salt
- pepper

Finely chop chives, onion, parsley and peppers (remove the seeds of the hot pepper if you don't want your pies too spicy). Strain the thyme. Crush garlic.

Mix into meat with the all spice, salt, pepper and vinegar (or lemon) and cook in a hot pan until the meat is cooked. No need for oil; the meat is already very fatty. Let cool, then add 1 egg.

Roll the dough on the pastry board, cut dough circles with a cookie cutter or an inverted glass. Garnish with stuffing and cover with another round of dough by properly binding the edges of the pie. Top it with beaten egg yolk.

4- Bake in a hot oven (410° F) for about 15 to 20 minutes, checking the cooking well. Serve hot.

Appetizers in Trinidad : Pastelles



Once your mouth is sufficiently entertained, it's time to head over to Trinidad for the appetizer. This recipe was suggested to us from Carmel Joseph Yapp from Trinidad and is easily made vegetarian.

For the Dough
2 cups yellow commmeal
3 cups warm water
1/2 cup butter
1 1/4 tsp salt

Recipe and Photo: The Guardian TT

In a food processor or by hand, combine cornmeal with butter and salt, Add enough water (begin by adding just two cups) water and process to make a soft, pliable dough. If needed add a little more water. Divide the dough into 12 balls of dough. Cover with a damp cloth to prevent drying. Place one piece of dough on a greased fig leaf, and press to an eight-inch width, spoon two tablespoons filling onto the middle of the dough and fold and seal pastelles. Wrap in fig leaf and tie into a neat package. Steam pastelles for 45 minutes until cooked. Makes 12 to 15 pastelles

Filling

- 1 lb chopped beef and chicken or chicken only
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 1 cup chopped chives
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh thyme
- 2 pimento peppers chopped

- 4 cloves garlic chopped
- 1 tbs chopped celery
- 1/2 Congo pepper, seeded and chopped, (optional)
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup tomato sauce
- 4 tbs Capers
- 3 Tbs stuffed olives, sliced
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 2 tbs fresh thyme

Combine beef with chicken. Add salt and black pepper.

Add 1/4 cup chopped chives and one tablespoon thyme.

In a large sauté pan heat olive oil, add onion, garlic and sauté until fragrant. Add pimento peppers, add remaining chive, pepper, and thyme, add meat and cook until brown.

Add tomato sauce cover and simmer for about 15 minutes.

Add raisins, capers and olives and stir to combine.

Cook for about five minutes more, taste and adjust seasoning.

Add two tbs fresh thyme and stir to combine. Remove from heat and cool.

Prepare dough as in recipe above and fill and fold pastelles as indicated.

Makes 12 to 15 pastelles

Main Course: Sherperd's Pie in Barbados.



This Christmas staple is coming from Barbados' English connection and is always hearty and pleasing. Lana-Norville Clarke from Christ Church, Barbados suggested this yummy dish.

Photo and recipe: grouprecipes.com

- 1oz dripping or 80ml olive oil
 - 1 large onion, finely chopped
 - 1 small tin chopped tomatoes
 - 3.5 oz. carrots, diced (optional)
 - 3.5 oz. assorted wild mushrooms, sliced(optional)
 - 1lb minced lamb-beef
 - 1/2 cup chicken, beef or lamb stock
 - 3.25 oz. red wine
 - 1 tsp anchovy essence(optional)
 - 2 tsp Worcester sauce
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 2 sprigs of thyme
 - 1 tbs plain flour
 - salt and pepper
- FOR THE MASH TOPPING**
- 1 1/2 lb potatoes
 - 2 fl oz. milk
 - 3oz butter
 - 1 egg yolk

In a large non-stick casserole dish heat 1 oz. of dripping or oil. Add the large onion and cook for 5 mins.

Meanwhile, in a large frying pan, heat a little olive oil and fry the mince up evenly and cook until browned. While the meat is frying, break up any lumps with the back of the spoon. Add the carrots and continue to cook for another 4-5 minutes. Meanwhile, in the casserole dish stir the onions and add the wild mushrooms, 1 tablespoon of plain flour (this helps to thicken the juices) and stir. Mix well and add 2 bay leaves, 2-3 sprigs of thyme and the anchovy essence and stir.

To the onion mix add the chopped tomatoes, red wine, stock (keep a little aside, for putting into the mince pan to de-glaze) and Worcester sauce. Add the cooked mince & carrots to the onion mix and then pour the reserved stock into the empty mince pan, scraping off any bits of mince left in the pan. Pour the remaining stock into the pan

containing the mince & onion mixture.

Bring the mixture to the boil, adding a pinch of pepper and let it simmer for about 45 minutes. Boil the potatoes, sieve and put into a bowl.

Add the butter and egg yolk, and mash together. Season with salt and black pepper.

Pour the meat into an ovenproof dish and spread the mash on top, smooth over and mark with a spatula. Sprinkle parmesan over the top if you wish.

Put the dish into the oven-gas mark 6 until it is bubbling and golden.

Finally, what meal is complete without a great dessert? Aisha Alexis whose family is from Puerto Rico shared this satisfying sweet meat with us.

Dessert: Puerto Rican Flan



Recipe from Aisha Alexis

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 5 large eggs
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a heavy saucepan, cook and stir sugar over medium-low heat until melted and golden, about 15 minutes. Quickly pour into an ungreased 2-qt. round baking or souffle dish, tilting to coat the bottom; let stand for 10 minutes.

In a bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Beat in eggs, one at a time, until thoroughly combined. Add remaining ingredients; mix well. Pour over caramelized sugar.

Place the dish in a larger baking pan. Pour boiling water into larger pan to a depth of 1 in. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until center is just set (mixture will jiggle).

Remove dish from a larger pan to a wire rack; cool for 1 hour. Refrigerate overnight.

To unmold, run a knife around edges and invert onto a large rimmed serving platter. Cut into wedges or spoon onto dessert plates; spoon sauce over each serving.

Yield: 8-10 servings.

Drinks on St. Lucia : Squash

On the island of St. Lucia, one drink everyone loves is squash, a lemonade flavored with banana essence. This recipe comes to us from Raul Charles from Mon Repos St. Lucia.

16 tablespoon sour orange juice or 8 tablespoon lemon juice

8 c water

16 drops banana essence
sweeten with sugar as desired

makes 8 cups

Mix and enjoy! Serve chilled.

Have a special recipe or meal you'd like to share? Did we miss something? Visit our Facebook page and post pics of island holiday favorites in your home!