

Traditional Kenyan Recipes

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(Kenyan spicy fried fish filets)

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Samaki wa Kukaanga (Kenyan spicy fried fish filets)

4 Servings

Samaki wa Kukaanga, Swahili for "fried fish," is a simple but popular way to prepare fish in Eastern Africa. It is sometimes sold at roadside stands.

Ingredients

- Fish fillets, cut into serving portions -- 2 pounds
- Lime or lemon juice -- 1/4 cup
- Garlic, minced -- 4-5 cloves
- Salt -- 2 teaspoons
- Cayenne pepper -- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon
- Oil -- 1/2 cup

Method

1. Add the fish, lime or lemon juice, garlic, salt and cayenne pepper to a large, non-reactive bowl and set aside to marinate for 20 to 30 minutes.
2. Heat the oil in a saute pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Remove the fish fillets from the marinade and pat dry with paper towels. Fry the fillets in the hot oil until browned on each side.
3. Serve with rice and sukuma wiki (see greens recipe variations).

Variations

- The amount of cayenne can be varied to your taste. Or try using a minced jalapeño or Serrano pepper.



Irio (Kenyan mashed peas, potatoes and corn)

4 to 6 Servings

Originally a dish of the Kikuyu people, irio is a hearty and nutritious accompaniment to meals that has become popular throughout Kenya. It has many variations, but potatoes and peas are the staple ingredients with corn the most common addition. Irio is famously paired with grilled steak in the combination known as nyama na irio.

Ingredients

- Green peas -- 2 cups
- Potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks -- 1 1/2 pounds
- Water -- to cover
- Salt -- 2 teaspoons
- Corn, fresh or frozen -- 2 cups



Method

1. Place the peas and potatoes in a large saucepan and add water to cover. Stir in the salt and place over medium flame. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are cooked through. Drain, reserving the liquid.
2. Simmer the corn with a little salted water in a separate saucepan for a few minutes while the potatoes and peas are cooking.
3. Mash the potatoes and peas together with a potato masher or put through a ricer to form a pale green puree. Stir in the corn with a little of the reserved liquid and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve hot.

Variations

- In Kenya, dried green peas are often used for this dish and need to be soaked in water and then cooked separately from the potatoes.
- Add a little butter to the final puree for a little more flavour if you like.
- Stir some lima beans or sautéed greens into the puree for added flavour, texture and colour.

Nyama Choma (Kenyan grilled meat)

4 to 6 Servings

In Kenya, any gathering is an excuse for eating nyama choma, Swahili for "roast meat." From the finest restaurants to roadside shacks, roast goat meat is served up as a kind of social lubricant, often aided by copious amounts of the local beer. Nyama choma is always eaten with the hands, and common side dishes include kachumbari salad and ugali.

Ingredients

- Goat or beef meat, cut into bite-sized chunks -- 2 pounds
- Oil -- 3 tablespoons
- Warm water -- 2 cups
- Kosher or sea salt -- 2 tablespoons



Method

1. Prepare your grill and have it hot. Toss the meat with the oil, then thread it on skewers. Stir the salt into the warm water until it is fully dissolved.
2. Grill the skewered meat, basting it occasionally with the salt water, until it is cooked to your desired doneness.
3. Remove the meat from the skewers and serve with kachumbari salad and ugali.

Nyama Choma Variations

- **Meat:** Goat is the meat of choice in Kenya, but beef will work just as well. Chunks of meat on skewers are easiest to grill, but whole legs or shoulders are often roasted until fork-tender. The cooked meat is then pulled off the bone with the fingers. Using short ribs, spare ribs and offal for nyama choma is common as well.
- **Seasonings:** The only seasoning used for authentic nyama choma is salt and pepper, but if you prefer, you can first marinate your meat in a mixture of minced onions, minced garlic, ground ginger, hot pepper flakes and a little lemon juice.

Side Dish - Ugali (Serves 4)

- 4 cups water and 3 to 4 cups maize meal
- Bring water to a boil in a pot. Add the maize meal and stir to prevent lumps. Add more maize meal to make a thick porridge. Keep stirring until the maize meal is well cooked. Tip out onto a plate - the ugali should hold its shape.

Sukuma Wiki (Kenyan greens simmered with tomatoes)

4 to 6 Portions

Sukuma Wiki, Swahili for "stretch the week," is a ubiquitous Kenyan dish. Nutritious and tasty, it is a way of "stretching" out kitchen resources. Served with ugali (see previous recipe) and perhaps some roasted meat or fish, sukuma wiki makes a typical Kenyan meal.

Ingredients

- Oil or fat -- 3 tablespoons
- Onion, chopped or minced -- 1
- Kale or collard greens, destemmed and finely chopped -- 2 pounds
- Tomatoes, chopped -- 2 cups
- Water or stock -- 1 cup
- Salt and pepper -- to taste

Method

1. Heat the oil or fat over medium-high flame in a large, heavy-bottomed pot. Add the onion and sauté until translucent. Add the greens in batches, sautéing each addition until wilted.
2. Add the tomatoes, water or stock, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer gently until tender, from 20 to 30 minutes.
3. Adjust seasoning and serve with a little bit of the broth.

Variations

- Add a chopped chili pepper or two with the onions if you like.
- Some recipes call for thickening the dish with a flour-lemon juice mixture. Here's how: mix 2 tablespoons of flour well with the juice of 1 lemon and a little water. Stir into the greens after they have been simmering for about 10 minutes. Continue simmering for another 15 to 20 minutes until the dish is slightly thickened.
- If you like, add some leftover meat for more flavour. Kenyans would most likely use goat or beef.



Mandazi (Kenyan donuts)

Mandazi (also known as Maandazi or Ndao and sometimes called Mahamri or Mamri) are East African donuts. You can find these delicious donuts in large urban areas and also among the Swahili people of East Africa. Most small restaurants, called hotelis in Kenya, serve mandazi. You can also find mandazi being sold by street vendors. Usually mandazi are eaten with tea (chai) or coffee. Serve them warm for breakfast or for snack.

Ingredients

- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 cups white flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder



Method

1. Bring all ingredients to room temperature before mixing them together. Mix all the ingredients together, adding more flour if necessary. The dough should be soft, but not sticky.
2. Roll the dough on a lightly floured board until it is about 1/4 inch thick.
3. Cut into triangles and fry in hot oil. Fry until both sides are golden brown.
4. Remove mandazi from oil and drain on paper towels or newspaper. Mandazi are best served warm.

Variations

- Sprinkle some powdered sugar over the hot mandazi
- Put some white sugar into a bag, add a couple mandazi, and shake the bag to cover the mandazi with sugar.
- Add about a 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon, ginger, all-spice, or cardamom to the dough or a combination of these spices to total a 1/2 teaspoon
- Use a circular donut cutter to make mandazi in the shape of traditional donuts
- Substitute pineapple, orange, or lemon juice for the milk
- Add some shredded coconut, ground peanuts or ground almonds to the dough
- You may substitute 1 teaspoon dry yeast for the 2 teaspoons baking powder. You will want to allow the mandazi to rise before cutting shapes and frying