



Tapioca with Mango Coulis

Serves 8

This refreshing dessert is perfect for a summer day. You'll need to plan ahead for this, but that's a good thing. Both components of this dessert can and should be made one day ahead of time. The tapioca will need to soak for four hours before you even get started, so make sure to factor that into your planning.

The soaking really makes a big difference in how the grains plump up. While the original instructions called for an overnight soak, I found that was too long. The tapioca dissolved in my fingertips. I then tried four hours and found that was just right. I also experimented with not soaking the tapioca before cooking, and I found that result wasn't nearly as satisfactory as the soaked tapioca, so I highly recommend that you don't skip this step.

Finally, make sure your box of tapioca is fresh, and not pulled from the dusty depths of your cupboard. You want to purchase small pearl tapioca, not the instant or large pearl variety.

Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar, divided
- 2 lemons
- 1 vanilla bean or 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup fresh-squeezed orange juice
- One 10-oz bag frozen mango chunks, pureed (makes about 1 cup puree)
- ½ cup small pearl tapioca, soaked 4 hours in 2 cups of water
- One 15-oz. can coconut milk
- Fresh berries, for garnish
- Mint sprigs, for garnish

Directions

To make the mango coulis: Put ½ cup of the sugar into a small saucepan. Grate the zest of two lemons right into the pan. Squeeze juice from the lemons into a separate bowl and reserve. If you are using a vanilla bean split the bean lengthwise and scrape seeds into the pan with sugar. Or just add vanilla extract. Add 1 cup of water and bring to a simmer, just until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and let cool. Strain syrup into a container and stir in reserved lemon juice, orange juice, and mango puree. Refrigerate overnight, or until thoroughly chilled.

Combine the pre-soaked tapioca (including the remaining soaking liquid), coconut milk, and remaining ½ cup sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring constantly; the tapioca should start to thicken almost immediately and become somewhat gloppy. When finished, the tapioca pearls should look translucent and have swollen to about twice their size. When tasting a spoonful, the texture should be gelatinous, without any crunchy bits left. The timing should be less than five minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. As the tapioca cools it will thicken considerably. Refrigerate overnight for best texture.

To serve, divide tapioca among eight shallow soup bowls. I used a 1/3 cup ice-cream scoop to dish out the tapioca in order to get nice rounded mounds. Pour mango coulis around the tapioca. Garnish with fresh berries and mint.

Recipe heavily adapted from “The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa,” by Marcus Samuelsson

Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Beef Skewers with Green Masala

Serves 8

Masala refers to a spice blend that can be as simple as two or three ingredients, or a complex blend of ten or more ingredients. Indian traders introduced masala when they settled on African shores and it is used throughout the country to flavor soups and stews and as a marinade for meats.

Ingredients

¼ cup olive oil
One 3-inch piece ginger, peeled and chopped
4 garlic cloves, chopped
1 cup cilantro leaves and tender stems
2 jalapeño peppers, remove some seeds for less heat
2 green onions, sliced, both green and white parts
1 tsp. cardamom seeds
1 tsp. coriander seeds
1 tsp. kosher salt
Juice of 1 lime
2 lb. beef, such as top sirloin or tri-tip, cut into 2-inch cubes

Directions

To make the masala paste, place all ingredients except the beef into a blender or food processor (a mini-chopper is perfect for this task) and process until everything is blended well. This will be used to marinate the meat and does not have to be fully pureed until smooth.

Place the meat cubes into a large zip-lock bag and pour in the masala paste. Massage everything around so that all the meat is covered well and refrigerate for at least four hours before using.

Thread the meat cubes onto skewers and grill over medium-high heat for about three minutes on each side, for a total of about six minutes. You can also broil the skewers if you prefer, which will take about the same amount of time. The meat should be about medium-rare when you pull it off the grill or broiler, but it will continue to cook for several more minutes and rise in temperature to medium.

Adapted from: “The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa,”
by Marcus Samuelsson

Photo credit: Linda McElroy



Cabbage and Pineapple Salad

Serves 8 to 10

This is my own personal take on what a summer salad would look like in Uganda. Cabbage and pineapple are staple foods there, as well as peanuts, or groundnuts, as they are referred to in Africa. It's light and refreshing, and the pineapple provides a great juicy contrast to the crunchy cabbage and peanuts.

Ingredients

- 1 medium head of green cabbage (about 1 ½ lb.)
- 3 green onions, sliced, both white and green parts
- 1 cup cilantro leaves and tender stems, lightly chopped
- 1 cup shredded sweetened coconut
- 4 slices fresh pineapple, each about 1/2 -inch thick (about 12 oz. total)
- Chopped peanuts for garnish (about ½ cup)

Dressing

- ½ cup buttermilk
- ½ cup plain, whole-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. powdered ginger
- 1 tsp. kosher salt

Directions

Cut the cabbage head into quarters and remove the core. Slice thinly as you would for coleslaw and put into a large bowl. Add the green onions and cilantro.

Toast the coconut. To do this, put coconut into a skillet over medium heat and stir constantly until it has taken on a warm golden color. Remove from heat and take out of the skillet to stop

the cooking. Let cool on a plate. Reserve a couple of tablespoons of the coconut to use as a garnish.

Grill the pineapple rings. This can be done on a grill heated to a medium temperature or in a stove-top grill pan. Alternatively, the rings may be broiled. Grill or broil the pineapple rings for a few minutes on each side, turning once, until the fruit has browned in spots and softened. You're not really trying to cook the pineapple. You just want to caramelize some of the sugars in the fruit. Remove the fruit from heat and let cool.

Remove the firm inner core from the pineapple rings by cutting each ring into quarters and slicing out the firm inner piece. Chop the rest of the pineapple into slivers by slicing along the "grain" of the pineapple. Set aside.

To make the dressing, combine all dressing ingredients and shake well.

About a half hour before you plan to serve the salad, add the coconut (reserve some for garnish) and the pineapple to the cabbage along with all of the dressing. You want to give the salad time to mingle with the dressing and soften the cabbage just a bit. Toss with your hands to get everything evenly coated, place into a pretty serving bowl, and garnish with a shower of chopped peanuts and toasted coconut.

Do ahead: The dressing and all of the ingredients for the salad can be prepped and stored one day ahead of time. You can store the cabbage, onions, and cilantro together, but the pineapple, coconut, and peanuts should each be stored separately.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



Uganda July 2016

Ugandan Customs and Cuisine

Ugandan cuisine is quite the melting pot, taking culinary influences from the Arabs, British, and especially India. The Indian traders left their mark on the region as they introduced their curries, spice blends, and breads. The food is not typically spicy, but seasoned with tomatoes and onions to create flavorful, pleasing dishes. Their diet is based on a combination of a starch and a “sauce” at each meal. The starch may consist of Ugali (a type of cornmeal paste) or Matooke (mashed plantain), and is always topped with a sauce or stew made of groundnuts (peanuts), vegetables, or meat.

Although Uganda is home to the largest fresh water lake in the world, the lake has been over-fished, and fresh fish is very hard to obtain unless you live near to the source. But smoked fish can be found quite readily and is often added to a dish containing meat or beans to add complexity and depth. Chicken, beef, goat and mutton are all part of the diet, although among the rural poor meat would not be eaten every day. Cattle are considered a sign of wealth, and not consumed in the everyday diet.

Other commonly found foods include bananas, pineapple, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, cabbage and spinach. Groundnuts are a vital staple and are most often turned into a sauce. Rice is expensive and not typically consumed.

Most people, except a few who live in urban centers, produce their own food and generally eat two meals a day, lunch and supper. Breakfast is often a cup of tea or porridge.

Indian samosas have been completely assimilated into the local cuisine, and in the larger cities you will find vendors selling these snacks by the roadside, as well as the more regional snack of fried grasshoppers!

Tea (chai) and coffee (kawa) are popular beverages. Alcoholic beverages are enjoyed as well, with the majority of wine coming from South Africa. The national drink is waragi, a banana gin.

Etiquette

Shaking hands is the normal form of greeting. Casual dress is considered appropriate in the daytime and evening.

Etiquette is important at family meals. When a meal is ready, all the members of the household wash their hands and sit on floor mats.

Visitors and neighbors who drop in are expected to join the family at a meal.

Normally a short prayer is said before the family starts eating.

Leaning on the left hand or stretching one's legs at a meal is a sign of disrespect.

When the meal is finished, everyone in turn gives a compliment to the mother.

Sources: <http://www.everyculture.com>

<http://muzunguinkampala.wordpress.com>

Photo credit: Linda McElroy