

World Day of Prayer 2016 • Supplemental Material

The Food of Cuba¹

Due to Cuba's early history as a Spanish colony, Cuban food has strong inspirations from Spanish cuisine but also has influences from French, African, Arabic, Chinese and Portuguese cultures.

Most of the food is sautéed or slow-cooked over a low flame. Very little is deep-fried, and there are no heavy or creamy sauces. Most Cuban cooking relies on a few basic spices: garlic, cumin, oregano and bay leaves. Many dishes use a *sofrito* as their base. The *sofrito* is made with onion, green pepper, garlic, oregano and ground pepper, quick-fried in olive oil. This gives the food a great deal of flavor. *Sofrito* is used when cooking black beans, stews, many meat dishes and tomato-based sauces. Cuban cooking also includes citrus (sour orange, lime, lemon), tomato, vinegar, onion, garlic, peppers, white wine or beer (depending on region and dish), raisins and olives/

capers to flavor almost every savory dish. This combination of flavor results in a complex mixture of sweet, salty and acidic components.

Roots and tubers such as malanga, boniatos, potatoes and yucca are very popular. Other starches commonly used in Cuban food include plantains, bananas and rice. Tamales similar to their Mexican counterpart are equally common. Cuban tamales are made with fresh ground corn, *sofrito* and pieces of pork that are then wrapped in corn leaves and tied, boiled in salted water and served in a number of different ways.

Cuban desserts are known for their sweetness. Many desserts use citrus peel, cinnamon or anise seed to add a distinct flavor. Tropical fruits are often cooked in sugar syrup, with cinnamon and citrus peel, and served on white cheese for contrasting flavor, or baked in flaky pastries.

Moors and Christians

(Black beans and rice)²

Ingredients

1 pound black beans, dried
(or 2 cups canned black beans)
1 large onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, crushed
3 teaspoons cumin, ground
½ cup green pepper, chopped
Olive oil, for frying
2 cups chicken broth
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 cup long-grain white rice
Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

If you are using canned beans, drain the water and set the beans aside.

If you are using dry beans, cover them with water. Bring to a boil, remove from heat, and let stand one hour. Drain the beans.

Use a large, covered cooking pot and sauté the onion, garlic and green pepper in the olive oil until tender.

Add the tomato paste, black beans, cumin and chicken broth.

Add rice, cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally until rice is fully cooked (about 30 minutes).

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 4 to 6.

Caribbean Coconut Chicken³

Ingredients

4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
1½ onions, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 tablespoon chopped roasted garlic
½ (14-ounce) can coconut milk
Salt and pepper to taste
1 pinch crushed red pepper flakes

Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

In a large skillet, fry chicken breast in vegetable oil until the chicken just begins to brown. Stir onions, green bell peppers and red bell peppers into the skillet with the chicken. Sauté until the onions are translucent. Stir in the garlic and coconut milk. Let the mixture cook 5 to 8 minutes before removing the skillet from the heat. Season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes.

Transfer the mixture to a 9" x 13"-inch baking dish and bake in a 425-degree oven for 45 minutes, or until the vegetables cook down and the chicken is tender.

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Coffee

The majority of Cuban families welcome their visitors with a cup of fragrant coffee. In Cuba, coffee is taken very strong, with sugar, and served in small cups.

In the past, it was prepared using a coladera. This is a cloth sieve that is used mainly in rural areas on the eastern part of the island. The coladera can be used in different ways.

Directions

1. Boil water in a pot together with sugar. Pour the liquid into the coladera where the ground coffee has been placed.
2. Boil water together with sugar and coffee, then strain through the coladera.
3. There is also the coffee known as carretero. It is very common in the far eastern part of the country. To make carretero, boil water with the coffee and sugar, then let it sit so the flavor infuses the liquid. The coladera is not used.
4. Nowadays, the majority of Cuban families prefer to use the Italian-style coffee makers, since they offer an excellent espresso coffee.

Cuban Tres Leches Cake³

Ingredients

1 cup sugar
5 large eggs, separated
1/3 cup milk
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon cream of tartar

Milk syrup

1 12-ounce can evaporated milk
1 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 cup heavy (or whipping) cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon light rum

Meringue ingredients

1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon cream of tartar
3 egg whites

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Generously butter a 13" x 9"-inch baking dish.

Cake

Beat 3/4 cup sugar and the egg yolks until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Fold in the milk, vanilla, flour and baking powder.

Beat the egg whites to soft peaks, adding the cream of tartar after 20 seconds. Gradually add the remaining 1/4 cup sugar and continue beating until the whites are glossy and firm, but not dry. Gently fold the whites into the yolk mixture. Pour this batter into the buttered baking dish.

Bake the cake until it feels firm and an inserted toothpick comes out clean, about 40 to 50 minutes. Let the cake cool completely on a wire rack. Unmold unto a large, deep platter. Pierce the cake all over with a fork, taking care to not tear it up.

Milk syrup

Combine the evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk, cream, vanilla and rum in a mixing bowl. Whisk until well blended. Pour the syrup over the cake, spooning the overflow back on top, until it is all absorbed.

Meringue

Place 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar in a heavy saucepan with 1/4 cup water. Cover and cook over high heat for 2 minutes. Uncover pan and cook the sugar to the soft ball stage, 239°F on a candy thermometer, 6 to 8 minutes.

Beat the egg whites to soft peaks with the cream of tartar. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of the sugar and continue beating to stiff peaks. Pour the boiling sugar syrup in a thin stream into the stiff egg whites and continue beating until the mixture is cool to the touch. The hot syrup "cooks" the egg whites.

Using a wet spatula, spread the top and sides of the cake with a thick layer of the meringue. Refrigerate the cake for at least 2 hours before serving.

Yields 8 to 10 servings.

1. Introductory material adapted, from "Cuban Food," *Wikipedia*, 22 September 2015.
2. www.foodbycountry.com
3. www.tasteofcuba.com
4. Ibid.