

KALINAGO CUISINE

By Raymond Breton, Dictionnaire Français-Caraïbe

At the day break the Kalinago women bring to their husband in the kabet a small canari full of hot ouicou. Then crabs and fish with some tomali sauce. Half an hour later they are served with fresh cassava bread with crab and fish. They apply themselves to eating as to some important work and in deep silence (Raymond Breton Dictionary Français Caraïbe 1635-1656).

The above excerpt clearly demonstrates the importance of a meal to the Kalinago people. The cuisine of the Kalinago depends on where they live and what is available at the time of the year. The diet is largely based on fish. And meat, this is complemented with greens, root crops and local herbs and spices.

In today's cuisine fish is the number one choice followed by meat both domestic and imported and to a lesser extent wildlife which include crabs, crayfish, manicou, and agouti. The other delicacies are bwigo, chaloup, viyo, and chatou water which are considered boosters. A traditional breakfast is a vizou kann (cane juice) with cocoa and cinnamon and lèt koko (cocoa nut milk) roast plantain or breadfruit with roast meat or pweson boukanné with hot pepper and shieve.

For lunch a sòs koko (cocoa nut cream) with pweson boukanné seasoned with local herbs and spices coloured with roucou and a good ton ton and hot pepper. The fastest and most common meal is the one pot, this includes root crops such as dasheen, yams, tannia, green bananas, fresh fish or smoked meat in coconut cream with local herbs and spices and a little bit of hot pepper. This type of cooking is very popular with the farmers in koudmen or young boys having a cook up by the beach or river side.

Herbal teas is still common in some facilities but is gradually being replaced by canned chocolate, and milk. Depending on the economic status family can afford to buy more imported food and ingredients. Persons who live outside the territory are exposed to and learn new method of cooking. It is interesting to note that within the territory cooking methods varies in different hamlets for example in some hamlet you get a lot of sauce while in the other a lot of food colouring is used.

Sadly though, most of these delicacies and delicious dishes are reserved for and cooked within the family at home. Traditional holidays and festive seasons have a lot of influence on what is cooked during the year depending on what is available. In November to December there is a lot of fish. During the Christmas season animals are being slaughtered so for Boxing Day you have the favourite smoked pork red beans and ground provision. During February which is carnival festive season, one can enjoy dried meat and pigeon peas or calalou tishou and pumpkin with dry beef. Cassava and arrowroot toloman are also available during that time.

Over the years a number of individuals have been trained in food preparation to cater for visitors and functions that are being held in the territory. However no emphasis was placed in to presenting something Kalinago. So there was no difference from what you would get from a regular food place on the rest of the island. Therefore Karifuna Cultural Group has taken steps to address this problem and facilitated a Kalinago Cuisine workshop where 18 people were trained in Kalinago cuisine. The group has also documented the recipes and has produced a Kalinago traditional cook book. Here are a few recipes.

TOMALI

(Fish-Ao to/Chicken-ka yu)



Ingredients:

- ✓ 2lbs smoked meat/fish (salted)
- ✓ 2 large onions
- ✓ ¾ cup oil
- ✓ 3 tins Goya tomato sauce
- ✓ 4 cups water
- ✓ 5lbs cassava
- ✓ 2 cubes (Maggi chicken Bouillon)
- ✓ Seasoning (all green herbs)

Procedure:

- ✓ Shred or blend smoked chicken or fish
- ✓ Chop seasoning very finely - grate onions and garlic.
- ✓ Place oil in pan and when heated, add seasonings, stir up for one minute. Add the shredded chicken or fish and stir. Add tomato paste and keep stirring. Add water and boil for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.

WURAI BA

(Crab Callaloo)



Ingredients:

- ✓ 8 crabs
- ✓ A portion of dasheen stems and leaves
- ✓ 1 cup coconut cream
- ✓ 2 cubes

Procedure:

- ✓ Clean dasheen leaves and stems and places in pot to boil
- ✓ Clean crabs
- ✓ Blend all seasonings – onion, garlic, parsley, thyme and chives
- ✓ Put coconut cream to boil; add blended seasonings and crabs.
- ✓ Crush boiled dasheen leaves and stems finely and add to crabs.
- ✓ Add 2 more cups of water and allow to boil for 1 hour.