

# AUTHENTIC JAMAICAN RECIPES





# JAMAICAN CROPS

Typically, when you think of Jamaican food the first things that to mind are Jerk and Patty. Surprisingly enough, those are Jamaican Staples! Congratulations you thought right. You will rarely find a Jamaican who does not eat Patties or some form of Jerked meat.

Agriculture is the basic industry of Jamaica. As the island possesses a wide variety of soil and climate, nearly every tropical product can be grown here. The chief economic crops are sugar, bananas, citrus, cocoa and coconuts, each of which is dealt with below in detail. Not one of the major crops of the island is indigenous. Sugar cane, coconut, rice and ginger were introduced into the island from Far Eastern countries, bananas from the Canary Islands, cocoa from South America, limes and mangoes from India, the breadfruit from Tahiti and ackee from Africa.

## **Staple Foods**

Beans: a side with many dishes and often served with rice

Plantains: often a side dish or an ingredient in the main course

Rice: a common base to meals or simply a side dish



# HISTORY OF JAMAICAN CUISINE

## **Historic Diet**

Jamaica's historic diet was based on what the island naturally grew and since the island is quite lush and rainy that meant there was no shortage of fruits and vegetables. Most of these foods were the same as the fruits and vegetables found throughout the Caribbean, including plantains, pineapples, sweet potatoes, maize (corn), cassava (yuca), bananas, coconuts, beans, and numerous other foods. The island was also home to a few animals that provided food to the earliest people, although few mammals and other edible land animals are present in great numbers. The waters off the coast though provide a huge number of seafood, including angelfish, barracudas, grouper, lobsters, and snapper.

## **Cultural Influences**

The first great change to the historic diet arrived with the Spanish. The Spanish brought new foods, animals, and spices to the island, giving the food an entirely new dynamic. The most important aspects the Spanish introduced were their spices, animals including cattle, fruits including oranges and lemons, and rice also arrived.

Later, the British took control of the island and brought with them their foods. This included the introduction of new cooking techniques and numerous dishes. Today there are aspects of British cuisine that can still be seen in the local diet. The most lasting affect was the introduction of tea, which is still a popular beverage in Jamaica.

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# TRADITIONAL JERK CHICKEN

JERK CHICKEN IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED WHEN THE MAROONS INTRODUCED AFRICAN MEAT COOKING TECHNIQUES TO JAMAICA WHICH WERE COMBINED WITH NATIVE JAMAICAN INGREDIENTS AND SEASONINGS USED BY THE ARAWAK. THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF SMOKING MEAT FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME SERVED TWO PRACTICAL PURPOSES, KEEPING INSECTS AWAY FROM THE RAW MEAT AND PRESERVING IT FOR LONGER ONCE IT HAS BEEN COOKED. THIS PROCESS ALSO INTRODUCES A STRONG SMOKY FLAVOUR TO THE MEAT.

THERE ARE TWO COMMONLY HELD THEORIES REGARDING HOW THE NAME "JERK" CAME TO BE USED. ONE IS THAT IT ORIGINATES FROM THE SPANISH WORD "CHARQUI", USED TO DESCRIBE DRIED MEAT. OVER TIME THIS TERM EVOLVED FROM "CHARQUI" TO "JERKY" TO "JERK". ANOTHER THEORY IS THAT THE NAME DERIVES FROM THE PRACTICE OF JERKING (POKING) HOLES IN THE MEAT TO FILL WITH SPICES PRIOR TO COOKING. NOWADAYS, THE WORD "JERK" IS USED AS A NOUN TO DESCRIBE THE SEASONING APPLIED TO JERKED FOOD AND AS A VERB TO DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF COOKING USED.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS VISITED JAMAICA MULTIPLE TIMES TOWARDS THE END OF THE 15TH CENTURY AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 16TH CENTURY, ONCE EVEN SHIPWRECKED ON THE NORTH COAST FOR TWELVE MONTHS (1503-1504).

DURING THESE VISITS HE DESCRIBED A WAY THE ARAWAKS (THE INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS OF JAMAICA) PRESERVED MEAT BY ADDING PEPPERS, ALLSPICE AND SEA SALT TO MAKE WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS JAMAICAN JERK SPICE



# TRADITIONAL JERK CHICKEN

## INGREDIENTS:

- One 3 1/2 lb chicken (3lb of chicken breasts may be used if preferred)
- 6 sliced scotch bonnet peppers (jalapenos may be used if scotch bonnet peppers are unavailable)
- 2 Tbsp. thyme
- 2 Tbsp. ground allspice
- 8 Cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 Medium onions, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. salt
- 2 Tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 to 2 Tsp of the following (to taste):ground cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- Juice of one lime
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 cup white vinegar

## DIRECTIONS:

Chop the onions, garlic and peppers. These do not need to be chopped too fine as they will be liquidised by the blender.

Blend all of the ingredients (excluding the chicken) in a blender to make the jerk sauce.

Cut the chicken up in to 4 pieces.

Rub the sauce in to the meat, saving some for basting and dipping later.

Leave the chicken in the fridge to marinade overnight.

Bake in the oven for 30 minutes, turn the meat then bake for a further 30 minutes.

or

Grill the meat slowly until cooked, turning regularly. Baste with some of the remaining marinade whilst cooking. For best results, cook over a charcoal barbeque (ideally over a rack of pimento wood).

Chop each quarter chicken portion in to 5 or 6 smaller pieces using a heavy cleaver.

Use a wooden spoon (or something similar) to hold the chicken in place whilst chopping and **NOT YOUR HAND** (you will be chopping with enough pressure to cut through bone!!!)

Serve with festival and salad or rice and peas or hardy bread and the jerk sauce left over for dipping.

# JAMAICAN PATTY

A Jamaican patty is a pastry that contains various fillings and spices baked inside a flaky shell, often tinted golden yellow with an egg yolk mixture or turmeric. It is made like a turnover but is more savoury. It is traditionally filled with seasoned ground beef, but fillings can include chicken, vegetables, shrimp, lobster, fish, soy, ackee, mixed vegetables or cheese. In Jamaica, the patty is often eaten as a full meal, especially when paired with coco bread.

The beef patty is a product of colonialism and migration developed after the introduction of the English pastry in the Caribbean, mixed with cumin and curry seasonings of Indian indentured servants in Jamaica and cayenne pepper from African slaves. The firecracker taste of the Scotch bonnet, a hot pepper indigenous to Jamaica, sealed the flavour.

JAMAICANS BROUGHT RECIPES FOR THE PATTIES NORTHWARD IN THE 1960S AND 1970S WHEN MANY CAME TO THE UNITED STATES AS HOSPITAL ORDERLIES, HOME HEALTH AIDES AND NURSES.

PATTIES WERE THEN FOUND IN RESTAURANTS IN AREAS OF THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA. PATTIES ARE EQUALLY POPULAR IN UK CITIES SUCH AS BIRMINGHAM AND LONDON. THEIR POPULARITY IS SPREADING AND THEY ARE BECOMING AVAILABLE IN TORONTO AND NUMEROUS OTHER AREAS.



# JAMAICAN PATTY

## INGREDIENTS:

### PASTRY DOUGH:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 heaping teaspoon of fine grain sea salt
- ¾ cup butter (12 tablespoons or 1 ½ sticks), chilled and cubed
- ½ cup ice water

### FILLING:

- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme or ¾ teaspoons fresh, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary or ½ tablespoon fresh, finely chopped
- 1 ½ tablespoons hot sauce (can use less)
- ½ pound ground beef
- 1 tablespoon vegetable, canola, or olive oil
- ¼ cup diced red bell pepper
- ¼ cup diced onion
- ~ ½ cup water (enough just to cover the meat)
- Salt to taste

## DIRECTIONS

### Make the Pastry Dough:

Combine the flour, turmeric powder, and salt in a large bowl. Add butter. Using your fingertips, rub the butter and flour together. When the butter is the size of chickpeas, add the ice water just until the dough comes together. Drop the dough (it will be a shaggy mess with many large chunks of butter coated in flour) onto a floured work surface.

Using the palm of your hand, smear the butter and flour from one end of the pile of dough to the opposite end. Repeat this step until a structured dough forms (shouldn't have chunks of butter showing, and it should not be a shaggy mess). Form the dough into a disk, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate, while you make the filling (procedure follows).

### Make the Filling:

Mix thyme, chili powder, rosemary and hot sauce in a small bowl. Add to the ground beef and mix. Heat oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. Add bell pepper and onions. Cook, stirring until softened, but not browned. Add beef, breaking up any clumps. Add enough water just to cover the meat (kamran note: I used ½ cup). Mix in salt. Simmer for 24 minutes to ½ hour, until the meat is soft and the water has reduced to a sauce. Set meat mixture aside and cool.

### Assemble the Patties:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Remove the disk of dough from the refrigerator, and divide it in half. Roll out the dough on a floured surface until there is enough space for 6 circles to be cut (each about 5 inches across). You may need to re-roll the scraps to make all 6 patties. Once the filling has cooled completely, have a bowl of water and a fork on hand. Place about 1 ½ tablespoons of filling on the lower half of each circle of dough. Dip a finger into the water, and moisten the edge of the dough. Fold the top half over, pulling the dough gently. Crimp the edge with a fork, and transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough and filling. Brush each pastry (optional) with an egg wash. Bake for 22 to 25 minutes, until top crust is firm and golden. Serve warm.

## ITAL STEW

The Jamaican cuisine is quite diverse and mention must be made of the Rastafarian influence. Rastafarians have a vegetarian approach to preparing food, cooking, and eating, and have introduced a host of unique vegetarian dishes to the Jamaican cuisine. They do not eat pork, and the strict ones do not eat meat, including poultry and fish. There are even some who believe in cooking with little or no salt and cooking in an 'Ital' way.

Ital cooking is essentially traditional Jamaican cooking without salt, meat, and additives. Therefore, a good ital cook has to be skilled at using available herbs and spices to produce food that is palatable and tasty -- indeed ital food is often as tasty as traditional Jamaican cooking.



MANY EXPRESSIONS OF THE ITAL DIET INCLUDE ADHERENCE TO A STRICT VEGETARIAN DIET. THIS IS BASED IN PART ON THE BELIEF THAT SINCE MEAT IS DEAD, EATING IT WOULD THEREFORE WORK AGAINST LIVING ELEVATION.

IT IS ALSO PRACTICED BECAUSE AS STRICT ADHERENTS TO NATURAL LIVING, RASTAFARI OFTEN BELIEVE THE HUMAN BEING IS A NATURAL VEGETARIAN.

# ITAL STEW

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups dried beans (any kind)
- 2 medium Idaho potatoes
- 1 cup diced yellow yams
- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 12 medium okra
- 2 cups fresh corn (cut kernels off cob)
- 3 medium carrots
- 3 stalks of scallions
- 3 cloves fresh garlic
- 1 small green Scotch bonnet (habanero) pepper
- 3 cups natural coconut milk
- 1 tablespoons soya margarine
- 7-12 pimento seeds (allspice)
- 3 pieces fresh thyme
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- Fresh cilantro (garnish)

## DIRECTIONS

Soak beans in distilled water overnight to remove the gas. Chop garlic and thyme and dice remaining vegetables. Put beans to boil with scallions, pimento seeds, thyme, garlic, and pepper. Add coconut milk to boil along with beans until fully cooked, then add vegetables to the pot. Knead flour with a little water to make small dumplings (spinners). Add spinners to pot and boil until cooked. When stew starts to thicken, add soya margarine and simmer to flavor. Garnish with cilantro. Serve with brown rice and a salad.

COCOUNT, PIMENTO AND SCOTCH BONNET ARE ALL TYPICAL IN ITAL COOKING. THYME IS ALSO IMPORTANT, AS IT ACTS AS A SUBSTITURE FOR SALT.



ANOTHER TRADITIONAL FAVOURITE COMES FROM ONE OF OUR MAIN FOOD STAPLES, THE PLANTAIN. PLANTAIN TARTS ARE SMALL PASTRY SHELLS FILLED WITH MASHED RIPE PLANTAIN AND SPICES AND BAKED.

## PLANTAIN TART

The plantain tart is a traditional Jamaican dessert that has nowadays become popular around the world. It is a delicious pastry with a spiced filling made from plantains.

The authentic Jamaican plantain tarts are not difficult to make. The dough is made with butter, flour and water. The filling is prepared by mixing ripe plantains, sugar, vanilla and nutmeg to flavor, and red food coloring is added. The plantain mixture is folded inside the dough in a triangular form. They are baked till golden brown.

Plantain tarts are especially delicious if served cooled with vanilla ice cream.

## INGREDIENTS:

## PASTRY DOUGH:

- 3 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cup shortening (vegetable)
- 4 cups iced water

## FILLING:

- 1 1/2 cup ripe plantain (peeled, cut in small cubes)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon margarine or butter
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- Red food colouring (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

Always pre-heat oven. Preheat oven at 400F  
Combine plantain, sugar, and water in a saucepan and cook over low heat until plantain is cooked. Remove from heat and add vanilla, nutmeg, margarine or butter, and 1 tablespoon of red food colouring (optional) Stir and set aside to cool.

Combine flour, salt, and shortening and cut with pastry blender until flaky. Add ice water to bond together, Roll dough to form a ball shape, wrap in plastic wrapper and put in the cooler section of the fridge for three hours or possible over-night. Roll out dough about 1/8 inch thick, on lightly floured board. Cut dough into 6 inch rounds. Spoon cooled filling in the centre of each 4 inch round, fold over and seal with crimper or the prongs of fork. Place on a baking sheet, brush tops with small amount of milk and prick top with a fork. Bake at 400F for 10 minutes and reduced heat to 300F and bake for further 30 minutes or so.