# MIZIZI MAGAZINE

ROOTED STORIES OF FOOD, LAND AND LIFE

December 2025

## A Homely, Heritage Recipe Collection Inspired by Africa's Festive Traditions – 28 Recipes from Across the Continent



# About MIZIZI Magazine

Mizizi (meaning 'roots' in Swahili) Magazine was born as ISAN Magazine in 2021 through the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa (KHSA), part of the continent-wide Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa funded by BMZ and implemented by GIZ and African partners.

In 2026, we shifted to Mizizi Magazine, published by Mycelium Media Colab and supported by KHSA. We work in partnership with civil society organisations, networks, institutions and ethical brands to share place-based stories and knowledge that strengthen just and resilient food and farming systems.

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# Contents


**Foreword and festive greetings**

**Starters and small plates**

- West African Spiced Puff-Puff with Nutmeg & Cinnamon 3
- South African Snoek Pâté & Rooibos-Melba Toast 5
- Kenyan Kachumbari with Pomegranate & Lime 7
- Moroccan Harira Soup 9
- South African Traditional Chicken Liver Pâté 11
- Homemade Christmas Mustard 13

**Mains**

- Southern African Karoo Lamb Roast 16
- West African Jollof Rice 18
- Mozambican Peri-Peri Roast Chicken 20
- Ethiopian Doro Wat (Spiced Chicken Stew) 23
- Zanzibari Festive Coconut Fish Curry 26
- Moroccan lamb tagine with Pitted Prunes and Chickpeas 28
- Traditional Festive Gammon (in Brown Paper) 30
- Ugandan Groundnut Stew 32
- South African Butternut & Chickpea Bobotie 34
- North African Spiced Whole Roasted Cauliflower 37

**Sides & accompaniments**

- South African Yellow Rice with Raisins 40
- Ethiopian Ye'abasha Gomen (Festive Collard Greens) 42
- Yuca Asado (Cassava Roasties) 44
- Malawian Nkhwani – Mashed Pumpkin 46
- African Christmas Slaw with Mango & Mint 48
- Wild Herb Crispy Baby Potatoes 50
- Spekboom and Sea Pumpkin Salsa 52

**Desserts & sweet treats**

- Traditional South African Malva Pudding 55
- Ghanaian Chin Chin adjusted with Christmas Spices 57
- Zimbabwean Orange & Cardamom Honey Cake 59
- Easy Moist Fruit Cake 64
- Flavor King (plum) Baked Cheesecake 68




# Festive greetings

Food has been one of the great threads running through my life — long before I ever realised it would also become my work. As a student, I cooked simply because I loved feeding people. Nothing brought me more joy than filling a table with friends, laughter and something warm from the oven. Those early years taught me one of life's most enduring truths: food gathers us, softens us, and reminds us we belong to one another.

In my thirties, that quiet passion grew into something deeper and I returned to study as a chef. Cooking became not just an act of care, but a craft — a way of honouring ingredients, stories and the rich cultural heritage carried in every pot. I cooked in people's homes, at long wooden tables and kitchen counters, watching how meals can create community even among strangers. Later, my journey led me to Stellenbosch University, where I studied sustainable food systems and learned how food is not only delicious and comforting — it is also deeply political. It shapes economies, landscapes and the dignity of those who grow and harvest it.

Today, through my work leading the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa, I see every day how food reflects both our challenges and our possibilities. Across the continent, families nurture traditions that have survived generations, farmers steward knowledge older than any institution and communities continue to resist systems that undermine their sovereignty.

**This cookbook honours that heritage. It celebrates African flavours, African stories and the way African families — from the Cape to Cairo — gather around food to make meaning, memories and magic.**

A Christmas table, perhaps more than any other, shows who we are. It is abundance shared, recipes whispered through generations, hands working together in kitchens fragrant with spice. It is elders remembering, children learning and everyone finding a place in the circle. My hope is that this book brings some of that spirit into your home: the joy of warm, simple cooking; the pride of our continent's incredible culinary traditions; and the reminder that every meal can be an act of love, of resistance and of hope for a more sovereign and just food system. May these recipes nourish not only the body but also a deeper connection — to land, to heritage and to one another.

Special thanks to Isadora Bishop, Ester Lupafya and Loubier Rouch for their recipe contributions!

**With warmth,**
**Angela Coetzee**
KHSA Project Director

# STARTERS & SMALL PLATES

VEGAN

# WEST AFRICAN SPICED PUFF-PUFF WITH NUTMEG & CINNAMON

Puff-puff (flour-based flavoured batter) is woven into childhood memories across West Africa — sold on busy street corners, shared after church and made in large bowls during festive seasons. For special occasions, families enrich the batter with warm spices like nutmeg and cinnamon, transforming this everyday treat into something celebratory. The sound of dough sizzling in hot oil and the smell of sweet spices drifting through the home are, for many, the first signs that the holiday season has begun.

Across the African continent, fried dough has long been a symbol of comfort, joy and togetherness. While puff-puff remains the star in West Africa, many regions have their own beloved variations — Ghana's bofrot, Cameroon's beignets, Congo's mikate and Benin and Togo's botokoin. Further east, coconut-rich mandazi and mahamri fill the role of festive fried treats along the Swahili Coast, shaped by African, Arab and Indian influences.

Though the names, flavours and shapes differ — from airy balls to triangular pastries — these traditions share a common spirit: simple ingredients transformed with care, enjoyed by children and elders alike and prepared for moments of celebration, hospitality and connection.

## Ingredients

- 2 cups flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp instant yeast
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- Pinch of salt
- 1–1¼ cups warm water
- Oil for deep frying
- Icing sugar to dust

## Method

- Mix all dry ingredients, including the spices.
- Add warm water slowly to form a thick, sticky batter.
- Cover and let rise 45–60 minutes.
- Heat oil. Scoop small balls of batter and fry until golden.
- Drain on paper towel and dust with icing sugar.

**Serving suggestion:** Serve warm with honey, spiced syrup or dipped in melted chocolate.



# SOUTH AFRICAN SNOEK PÂTÉ & ROOIBOS-MELBA TOAST

In coastal Cape communities of South Africa, snoek has long been a symbol of abundance, resilience and family gathering. The scent of snoek smoking over open coals is woven into the sensory memory of countless households, marking holidays, long weekends and moments of communal celebration. Families often come together around the fire, sharing stories while the fish gently smokes, its rich aroma drifting through neighbourhoods.

Turning it into pâté brings a softness and elegance to this traditionally rustic fish, highlighting its versatility and offering a refined counterpoint to the familiar charred and salty flavours of the braai. The rooibos melba toast anchors the dish in place and landscape, tying the dish to the fynbos-covered mountains of the Cape — a uniquely South African pairing.

Snoek is a fish deeply rooted in the waters and culture of South Africa's west coast. From Cape Town to St Helena Bay, snoek fishing has shaped local foodways and holiday traditions for generations. Snoek can also be caught off the coast of Namibia.

## Ingredients

- 250g smoked snoek, flaked
- 4 tbsp cream cheese
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp garlic
- Pinch cayenne
- Chives
- Salt & pepper
- Coriander for garnish
- Slices of bread
- Strong rooibos tea (for brushing)

## Method

- Blend the pâté ingredients until creamy. Add more salt, pepper and lemon to taste
- Garnish with fresh coriander when serving
- For toast: Brush bread lightly with rooibos tea, toast until crisp, then cut into triangles.

**Serving suggestion:** Garnish with chopped parsley and lemon zest.



VEGAN

# KENYAN KACHUMBARI WITH POMEGRANATE & LIME

Many African countries have their own variation of fresh, vibrant tomato-onion salad, often used to bring brightness and freshness to rich festive meals. In Uganda, the simple tomato-onion salad is made with adding avocado, coriander or cabbage. In Rwanda, the Isombe side salad is tomato-onion mixed with cassava leaves. In Ethiopia, the Timatim salad adds berbere, lemon and jalapeños (for those who like a spicy fresh addition) and in Sudan the tomato-onion salad called Salatat Banadoura is dressed with lime and sprinkled with peanuts. In Mozambique the tomato-onion salad referred to as a Matapa side often accompanies richer and spicier dishes. Kachumbari, also made in Tanzania, is Kenya's celebration salad — vibrant, sharp, refreshing and always prepared at moments of joy. Traditionally served at weddings, holidays and communal feasts, each family adapts it in their own way. Adding pomegranate gives it festive sparkle and a sense of abundance.

Across the continent, these salads are more than accompaniments. They are expressions of regional identity and the ingenuity of home cooks who work with what is seasonal and abundant. Whether enriched with leafy greens, brightened with citrus or lifted with heat and spice, each variation reflects local landscapes and tastes shaped over generations.

## Ingredients

- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 1/2 cucumber, chopped
- Handful fresh pomagranates
- 1 ripe avocado, chopped (optional and if in season)
- Handful fresh coriander, chopped
- 1 habanero pepper, seeded and finely chopped (spicy optional, adjust to taste)

## Method

- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar (optional)
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Serving suggestion:** Serve chilled with spicy foods. Also common side to hearty meals such as nyama choma (grilled meat) and rice pilaf



VEGAN

# MOROCCAN HARIRA SOUP

Harira, Morocco's national comfort soup, is a nourishing bowl often served at breakfast and as a welcome to guests and for warm bodies during winter evenings. Although strongly associated with Ramadan, its spiced warmth also makes it perfect for festive gatherings in Morocco's cooler months. Saffron elevates the soup for special occasions, symbolising hospitality and generosity.

Although Harira is the quintessential Moroccan soup, many African regions have their own cultural equivalents — warm, spiced, communal soups eaten during celebrations or religious holidays. In Egypt they make Lentil Shorbat Ads and in Mauritania Marqa, usually served over couscous. In other countries they add lamb to the soup; in Algeria it's called Chorba Frik, in Tunisia Shorba (or Chorba) and in Libya Sharba Libye.

Across these regions, such soups offer more than nourishment. They create a sense of togetherness, marking moments when families gather around a shared pot and honour long-standing traditions. Each version carries the flavours of its landscape, shaped by the spices available, the grains grown locally and the rhythms of religious and seasonal observance.

## Ingredients

- Vegetable or olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can tomatoes or 4 fresh
- 1 cup cooked chickpeas
- 1 cup lentils (or lamb)
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 3 tbs of tomato paste
- Pinch saffron (if available)
- Handful coriander and lemon wedges

## Method

- Fry onion and celery with spices.
- Add carrots, garlic, tomatoes, lentils, chickpeas, stock; simmer 30–35 minutes.
- Add tomato paste and saffron.
- Simmer for another 15 minutes.
- Finish with coriander and lemon



**Serving suggestion:** Serve hot. A fresh lemon squeeze brightens flavours.

# SOUTH AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CHICKEN LIVER PÂTÉ

Homemade mustard has a quiet but cherished place in many Southern African festive traditions, especially in families with European or Cape Dutch heritage. Long before store-bought condiments were common, households prepared their own preserves, pickles, chutneys and mustards during the festive season, often setting aside entire afternoons for bottling and spicing. This was more than practical kitchen work. It marked the start of the holiday period, when the pace of the year finally eased and families turned their attention to hospitality and celebration.

Mustard was always made in readiness for long holiday spreads, where cold meats such as gammon, roast lamb, leftover chicken and pickled tongue were served alongside vibrant relishes and sauces. The condiment offered a sharp, lively counterpoint to the richness of these dishes, and over time became indispensable at Christmas lunches, New Year gatherings and extended family meals under the trees. Each household guarded its own recipe, passed down through generations. Some preferred a smoother, sweeter blend, while others favoured a fiery version that delivered a warming kick in the height of summer. Turmeric was sometimes added for colour, and gardens contributed sprigs of rosemary, thyme or wild fennel to lend fragrance.

## Ingredients

- 500g chicken liver chopped
- 200g butter
- 3 onions coarsely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves crushed
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- One cap of brandy

## Method

- Ensure chicken livers are fully thawed and check there are no green-bile sacs.
- Melt butter in a pan and gently cook the chopped onions, but do not brown.
- Add chicken liver, bay-leaves, salt and pepper.
- Add garlic while stirring occasionally.
- Do not overcook, liver must still be pink.
- Let it cool down slightly and add brandy.
- Remove bay leaves. Add to blender till smooth and pour into ramekins.
- Refrigerate till ready for use.

**Serving suggestion:** For a sweeter taste, add brandy while cooking and set alight to flambe the pâté, removing the alcohol and keeping the brandy's sweetness



# HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS MUSTARD

Homemade mustard has a quiet but cherished place in many Southern African festive traditions, especially in families with European or Cape Dutch heritage. Long before store-bought condiments were common, households prepared their own preserves, pickles, chutneys and mustards during the festive season, often setting aside entire afternoons for bottling and spicing. This was more than practical kitchen work. It marked the start of the holiday period, when the pace of the year finally eased and families turned their attention to hospitality and celebration. Mustard-making sat comfortably alongside the preparation of jams, koeksisters and baked goods, creating a sense of anticipation as pantries filled with jars destined for shared tables.

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## Ingredients

- 100ml mustard powder
- 200ml white sugar
- 10ml cake flour
- Pinch of salt
- 4 eggs whisked
- 250ml white vinegar

## Method

- Mix mustard powder, sugar, flour and salt in a glass bowl.
- Add eggs and mix till blended.
- Add vinegar and blend till smooth.
- Cook a pot of water on the stove and bring to the boil.
- Place glass bowl over boiling water and stir mixture over boiling water for 10 minutes, till mixture becomes thick, do not stop stirring else the egg might curdle. (Can use a double boiler if you have one)
- Once the mustard is a thick consistency, remove from heat and let it cool.
- Pour into sterilised glass jars and refrigerate. (Makes 500ml)



**Serving suggestion:** Serve chilled with any cold or hot meats.

# Mains

# SOUTHERN AFRICAN KAROO LAMB ROAST

Karoo lamb carries the essence of the South African interior — a vast, rugged landscape where sheep roam freely and graze on wild herbs like renosterbos, kapokbos and wild rosemary. This natural diet infuses the meat with a delicate, unmistakable flavour that has become celebrated both locally and abroad. For generations, Karoo farming families have centred their festive meals around a slow-roasted leg of lamb, often prepared at dawn so the aroma could drift through the farmhouse long before guests arrived. The dish is more than a meal; it is a symbol of hospitality, abundance and the deep agricultural heritage of the region.

Some prefer to dry roast their lamb and add a rooibos (or mint) glaze at the end of the cooking process. This ties the dish to another beloved South African tradition. Rooibos — indigenous to the Cederberg mountains — has long been used not only as tea but as a cooking ingredient that imparts a gentle earthiness and a hint of sweetness. It is made by reducing a strong rooibos tea mixture with ingredients like honey, brown sugar, orange, soy sauce and spices. When served at Christmas, this dish evokes a sense of place and lineage: the dry Karoo winds, the scent of fynbos, the rhythm of farm life and the joy of generations gathering around a table to share food, stories and connection.

## Ingredients

- 6 to 8 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt
- 2 tbsp chopped rosemary, plus several sprigs
- 2 tbsp chopped thyme, plus several sprigs
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- A large leg of lamb (about 2-2.25kg)
- 150ml white wine or 1 large lemon and/or orange (depending on the taste you want; orange goes well with Moroccan meat rub)
- 1 cup of chicken stock
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 bunch of celery sticks chopped

## Method

- Stuff lamb with garlic by making holes with a sharp knife and inserting full garlic cloves.
- Rub lamb with rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper (or any of your favourite meet rubs)
- Place in roasting pan; drizzle with olive oil.
- Add wine / lemon juice, chicken stock to pan (Take care if using stock cubes as they already contain salt). Add chopped vegetables and remaining herbs.
- Roast at 160°C for 3–4 hours. Cover lamb with tin foil. Remove foil to crisp under the grill once softly cooked.



**Serving suggestion:** Serve with crispy potatoes, sweet pumpkin and string green beans.

VEGAN

# WEST AFRICAN JOLLOF RICE

Jollof is more than a dish — it is identity, pride and joy across West Africa. Whether Nigerian, Ghanaian, Sierra Leonean or Senegalese, every country (and every aunty) swears theirs is the best. Families prepare extra-large pots, sometimes outdoors over firewood, infusing the rice with smoky flavour. It is often the first dish to run out at a festive gathering, symbolising togetherness, celebration and the vibrant culinary soul of the region.

Other parts of the continent, whether central, east, north or south, also pride themselves on their beautifully seasoned rice dishes. In East Africa, pilau and biryani—especially in Tanzania, Kenya and Zanzibar—carry rich spice influences and are often prepared for weddings and holidays. Central Africa enjoys fragrant peanut rice and palm-oil rice variations in countries like Cameroon and the DRC. North Africa is known for its aromatic saffron and almond-studded rice dishes and festive couscous traditions in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In Southern Africa, yellow rice with cinnamon and raisins is a cherished celebration dish in Cape Malay communities. Though each region has its own signature flavours, these dishes, like jollof, reflect a shared African love for transforming simple grains into festive meals filled with history, family and cultural pride.

## Ingredients

**Base sauce**

- 1 large red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 red onion & 2 red chilies, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 25g fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 100ml water

**Rice**

- 150ml vegetable oil
- 1 red or white onion, finely chopped
- 150g tomato purée
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 2 tsp thyme, dried or fresh
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 2 cups of chicken stock (1-2 cubes; replace with vegetable stock for vegan option)
- Salt and pepper to tase
- 500ml water
- 500g white rice (basmati or long grain)

## Method

- Blend sauce ingredients and put aside.
- Fry onion for 3 mins. Then add puree and spice stirring frequently till dark.
- Add base sauce and simmer for 15mins.
- Add thyme, bay leaves, stock and water, salt and pepper and bring to boil.
- Add rinsed rice to simmer for 25 mins.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoy with grilled meats or fish, or add to rich curries.

# MOZAMBICAN PERI-PERI ROAST CHICKEN

Peri-peri is one of Mozambique's most vibrant culinary gifts, born from the meeting of Portuguese settlers, African growers and the fiery African bird's eye chilli that has long flourished along the East African coast. Over generations, families blended local peppers with lemon, garlic and oil to create the iconic peri-peri sauce — a bright, bold expression of Mozambique's layered food history shaped by spice routes, coastal trade and cultural exchange. Each household has its own version: some fiercely hot, some deeply smoky, some mellowed with citrus, but all carrying the unmistakable heat that defines Mozambican hospitality.

In many Mozambican homes, peri-peri chicken is a celebration food — cooked for gatherings, holidays, weddings and Sunday feasts. At feasts, whole chickens are marinated overnight, then roasted or grilled over charcoal, filling the air with the scent of chilli, lemon, garlic and open fire. The dish brings people together around shared plates and laughter, its flavour both comforting and exuberant. A peri-peri roast is more than a meal; it is a festive moment — a reminder of Mozambique's coastal generosity, the joy of family cooking and the lively, soulful heat that marks African celebrations.

## Step 1: Peri-peri sauce base

### Ingredients

- 8–12 African bird's eye chillies (fresh or dried — adjust to heat preference)
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1 small red onion
- ½ cup lemon juice (freshly squeezed)
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp white vinegar (or apple cider vinegar)
- ½ cup olive oil (traditional) or sunflower oil (more neutral)
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp dried or fresh oregano
- 1 bay leaf (added later for infusion)

**Optional enhancements**

- 1 tsp sugar or honey (balances the heat)
- 1 tsp peri-peri powder (if you want an extra kick)
- Fresh coriander or parsley for a green peri-peri (blitzed in at the end)

### Method

- Prepare the chillies, remove stems, for less heat: remove seeds from half the chillies or for true Mozambican heat, keep all seeds in!
- Blend the sauce base in a blender or food processor, combine all ingredients except bay leaf.
- Blend until smooth (or leave slightly coarse for rustic style).
- Cook the sauce (traditional step). In a saucepan warm the oil over low–medium heat. Add the blended mixture and the bay leaf. Simmer gently for 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cooking helps deepen flavour and soften the raw chilli bite — very Mozambican.
- Taste and adjust. Add more lemon if you want it brighter; add salt to round it out; add honey/sugar if it's too sharp; and add extra chilli if it needs fire.
- Cool and store – it is important to let sauce cool completely before storing in a clean glass jar. It lasts 3 weeks in the fridge.

## Step 2: Roast chicken

### Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken
- 2 tbsp peri-peri sauce
- 1 lemon (zested and juiced)
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp olive oil

### Marinade & roasting

- Using ½ of the peri-peri sauce, rub all over the chicken, inside and under the skin.
- Marinade in pan overnight if possible.
- Before putting in oven, add extra lemon wedges and garlic cloves in the pan.
- Roast 1 hour at 180°C until crispy.
- Use reserved peri-peri sauce to baste during final stages of roasting.
- Pour a spoonful of the roasting juices over the chicken before serving.



**Serving suggestion:** Serve with crispy roast potatoes or cassava, a fresh mango slaw or grilled vegetables.

# ETHIOPIAN DORO WAT (SPICED CHICKEN STEW)

Doro Wat is Ethiopia's ceremonial dish — slow-cooked for hours, richly spiced with berbere and traditionally served at religious holidays such as Genna (Ethiopian Christmas). Preparing Doro Wat is a communal effort, often involving mothers, aunties and daughters working together. The dish embodies warmth, hospitality and deep-rooted tradition.

Across the continent, many other cultures also prepare spicy, richly seasoned chicken stews for holidays, family gatherings or festive meals — each reflecting local ingredients, traditions and flavour profiles. In Nigeria, they serve spicy tomato chicken stew made with local spices ehuru and uda; in Kenya, Kuku Paka, a beloved Swahili coast dish of grilled chicken simmered in a spicy coconut curry; Tanzania is known for its Mchuzi wa Kuku a rich spiced chicken stew made with tomatoes, curry powder and coconut milk; South Africa's Cape Malay Chicken Curry and Tunisia's Chicken with Harissa and Chickpeas also makes it to the table during festive times. And lastly, in Cameroon, Poulet DG (Director-General Chicken) a luxurious, celebratory stew with chicken, plantains, tomatoes, peppers and spices is also tied to festive occasions.

## Ingredients

- 8-10 bone-in chicken thighs (1 - 1.5kgs)
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 to 5 tbsp Niter Kibbeh (a spiced, clarified butter, made by simmering butter with onions, garlic, ginger with a blend of blend of herbs and spices like cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, fenugreek, coriander, oregano, nutmeg, cumin, turmeric, besobela and kosseret)
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil / butter
- 6 medium red or yellow onions finely chopped (about 6 cups or 900g - can combine red and yellow onions)
- 10 cloves garlic minced
- 50g ginger minced
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- ½ to ¼ cup of berbere spice
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup Tej (Ethiopian honey wine - alternatively use white with a teaspoon of honey)
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 6 hard boiled eggs

**Berbere spice mix**

- 2 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp green cardamom pods (about 12 pods)
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp allspice berries (about 10)
- ½ tsp whole cloves (about 10)
- 2 tsp cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 2 tbsp onion powder
- 1 tsp ginger powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 4 tbsp sweet paprika

## Method

- Cover chicken in lemon juice and rest.
- Slowly saute onions in Niter Kibbeh over low heat for about 25mins until onions are caramelised. (Do not rush this step, it is key to the dish's flavour).
- Add ginger, garlic, tomato paste and oil/butter. Cook slowly stirring occasionally for 3-5 mins.
- Add berbere and continue slow cooking for another 3 mins. Add Tej (or wine), chicken stock and salt and pepper to taste. Increase the heat to medium, bring the pot to a low simmer for about 5 mins.
- Add the chicken. Reduce heat, cover and cook until the chicken is very tender. This takes about 45 mins to 1 hour. If the sauce starts to thicken and sputter a bit too much while cooking, you can add a little extra water. (Searing the chicken in a separate pan before adding to sauce will allow for more flavour)
- Add the hard-boiled eggs and continue to simmer gently for about 10 more minutes. (If you prefer soft-boiled eggs, add eggs to sauce just before serving; if you want a thinner/soupier sauce, you can add a little bit of water.
- Add salt to taste and could also add more berbere according to heat preference.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoy with hot Injera (Ethiopian flat bread) or rice.

# ZANZIBARI FESTIVE COCONUT FISH CURRY

Zanzibar's culinary heritage is shaped by the gentle rhythm of the Indian Ocean and the centuries-old spice routes that brought Arab, Persian, Indian and African cultures together. Nowhere is this blending more beautifully expressed than in the island's coconut fish curries — fragrant, simmered gently and layered with turmeric, ginger and cardamom. For generations, Zanzibari families have relied on the ocean for their Christmas bounty. Fishermen return early in the morning with the freshest catch, women gather in open-air kitchens to grate coconuts by hand and spices are pounded in heavy wooden mortars, releasing aromas that drift through courtyards and narrow stone alleyways.

During the festive season, these curries become more celebratory, often richer and more aromatic than everyday meals. Families choose the sweetest coconut milk, finish the curry with fresh lime and serve it alongside pilau rice, chapati or fried plantains. A Zanzibari festive coconut fish curry is more than a meal; it is a reflection of island abundance, the spirit of hospitality and the long history of spice-driven creativity that makes Zanzibar's food some of the most iconic on the African coast.

## Ingredients

- 1 tbsp coconut oil or vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1-inch ginger, grated
- 2 tomatoes, blended or chopped
- 1 tsp mild curry powder
- 1 tsp cumin (can also add 1tsp coriander)
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 can coconut milk / cream
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 1 green chili (optional, for spice)
- 500g fresh firm white fish
- Fresh coriander (for garnish)
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp tamarind concentrate or lime juice

## Method

- Heat oil in pan; sauté onions until golden.
- Add garlic and ginger, then stir in curry powder, cumin and turmeric. Let the spices simmer for 1 minute.
- Add tomatoes and cook until it forms a thickish sauce. Add coconut milk, reduce heat and simmer till sauce is creamy
- Add peppers and gently add fish pieces to simmer in the sauce for 5  to 10mins.
- Add salt, tamarind and lime juice to taste.
- Garnish with coriander before serving.



**Note:** Feel free to chop up some peppers and add it to the onion mix. It will enrich and flavours and colours of your dish! String green beans will also be amazing with this dish. **This recipe works well with shellfish as well.**

# MOROCCAN LAMB TAGINE WITH PITTED PRUNES AND CHICKPEAS

Moroccan tagines are at the heart of family gatherings, slow cooked in clay pots that coax deep flavour from simple ingredients. This style of cooking reflects centuries of Berber tradition blended with Arab, Alusian and Mediterranean influences, creating dishes that are both comforting and elegant. Lamb tagines are especially cherished during holidays and festive seasons, when families gather around low tables to share meals served from a communal pot. The fragrant steam that escapes when a tagine lid is lifted is a symbol of hospitality — an invitation to warmth, generosity and connection.

While some festive tagines are made with apricots and almonds, symbolising sweetness and prosperity, others—like this version with prunes and chickpeas—carry an equally rich heritage. Prunes, long prized in Moroccan cuisine, lend a deep, velvety sweetness that balances the savoury lamb and earthy spices, while chickpeas add heartiness and comfort. Together, they create a dish traditionally enjoyed at special occasions, family celebrations and winter feasts. Served over couscous or warm flatbreads, this tagine embodies the essence of Moroccan holiday cooking: slow, fragrant, richly layered and shared with the people you love.

## Ingredients

- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp fennel seeds
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic finely sliced
- 10-12 sliced lamb neck bones or 500g lamb goulash
- 1 tbsp of grated ginger root
- 1 chilli finely chopped (optional)
- 2 cans of chopped tomatoes
- 1 cup meat stock
- 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
- 1½ cup cooked chickpeas
- 1 cup pitted prunes
- 1 hand chopped parsley
- 1 hand chopped coriander
- Salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste

## Method

- Dry-toast seeds in heavy-based pan until lightly browned. Then remove from pan and grind.
- Brown lamb neck with spices and garlic in oil.
- Add ginger and chilli and then cook for 2 mins.
- Add tomatoes, stock and vinegar, bring to boil and then reduce heat to gentle simmer. Cover and cook for 1 hour, stirring the pot occasionally.
- Add chickpeas (rinsed if canned) and prunes. Cook for further 30 mins.
- Season and add chopped herbs.



**Serving suggestion:** Serve on a bed of couscous or brown rice with steamed garden vegetables. Can also garnish with almonds.

# TRADITIONAL FESTIVE GAMMON (DONE IN BROWN PAPER)

In many South African homes, the festive season isn't complete without a beautifully glazed gammon, slow cooked until tender and shared as the centrepiece of a long summer lunch. While the dish itself has European origins, the uniquely South African tradition of cooking gammon wrapped in brown paper has become a deeply nostalgic ritual handed down through generations. Families who grew up on farms or in small towns recall parents and grandparents making their December trips to the local butcher, returning with a large cut of gammon carefully wrapped in thick brown butcher's paper — the kind that signalled something special was about to be prepared.

Simmering the gammon directly in its brown paper parcel was a clever and homely technique: the paper sealed in moisture, softened the brine and infused the meat with a gentle, smoky warmth long before the glaze was added. It was a method born from practicality but embraced for the incredible tenderness it created. By the time the paper was unwrapped — often an event in itself — the kitchen was filled with savoury, festive aromas and the excitement of Christmas lunch. Today, cooking gammon in brown paper remains a cherished South African memory, a blend of old-fashioned thrift, local butcher culture and family tradition.

## Ingredients

- Large de-boned gammon
- Roll of brown paper (used to cover schoolbooks)
- 2 tbsp apricot jam
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp of water
- 10 cloves

## Method

- Preheat oven to 180C
- Remove plastic, but leave gammon in string, wrap the gammon in 7 layers of brown paper and place in the oven – cook gammon for 30 minutes for every 500g of gammon.
- Remove from oven and remove paper, cut off string and remove hard skin from fat layer.
- Score fat layer in diamond shapes, without cutting into meat.
- Mix apricot jam and sugar with water and brush layer over the scored fat.
- Pin a clove in the centre of each diamond.
- Place back into the oven for about 30 minutes to brown.
- Remove from oven and slice.



**Serving suggestion:** Serve with mustard (see recipe in starter secion), potato salad and other fresh salads.

# UGANDAN GROUNDNUT STEW

Groundnuts hold a cherished place in East and Central African cooking, where they are more than just an ingredient — they are a symbol of nourishment, comfort and home. In Uganda, groundnut stew (known locally as ebinyebwa) is one of the country's most beloved dishes, slow simmered until thick, creamy and deeply flavourful. It is prepared for visitors as a gesture of welcome, for family gatherings as a sign of abundance and for holidays when the table must be full and generous. The aroma of roasting peanuts or the sound of a bubbling pot often signals that a celebration is near.

During the Christmas season, groundnut stew becomes especially meaningful. Many households prepare it alongside sweet potatoes, matoke or leafy greens, creating a colourful, nourishing feast. The dish brings together ingredients that are both humble and widely accessible — peanuts grown in rural fields, vegetables from backyard gardens and staples like matoke that anchor Ugandan identity. Its richness replaces the need for meat, making it a cherished choice for families hosting large gatherings or marking Christmas with a simpler, plant-based meal. Warm, filling and deeply tied to local tradition, groundnut stew embodies the spirit of Ugandan hospitality and the joy of sharing food with loved ones during the festive season.

## Ingredients

- 1 medium-sized yellow onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 piece ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled & cubed
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- ¾ cup natural creamy peanut butter - if unsalted add another ¼ teaspoon of salt
- 1 bunch kale, de-stemmed and chopped
- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

## Method

- In a large pot sauté onions in oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes, until soft. Add a splash of vegetable broth if onion starts to stick.
- Add garlic, ginger, cumin, salt, cayenne pepper and pepper. Stir and cook 30 seconds.
- Add potatoes, broth, tomatoes and peanut butter. Bring to boil, then simmer for 15 minutes, until the sweet potatoes are tender.
- Use the back of a spoon to mash some of the sweet potatoes against the side of the pot.
- Add the kale and chickpeas. Cook for 5 minutes more, until the kale is soft.



**Serving suggestion:** Garnish with chopped peanuts and parsley and serve with rice and / or naan

# SOUTH AFRICAN BUTTERNUT & CHICKPEA BOBOTIE

Bobotie is one of South Africa's most cherished dishes, tracing its roots to the Cape Malay community whose cuisine blends influences from Southeast Asia, East Africa and the colonial spice routes. Traditionally prepared with minced meat and gently sweetened with dried fruit, bobotie has long been a centrepiece at family gatherings, Sunday lunches and festive tables. Its warm curry spices, golden custard topping and comforting aroma evoke a deep sense of home for many South Africans. Prepared slowly and shared generously, bobotie represents the layered history of the Cape and the spirit of hospitality that defines the region.

In recent years, families across the country have begun adapting this classic dish to suit changing diets and modern celebrations. The vegetarian version — made with roasted butternut and hearty chickpeas — maintains all the familiar flavours while bringing a lighter, more plant-forward approach to the festive season. The natural sweetness of the butternut mirrors the dried fruit of the traditional recipe, while the chickpeas add satisfying richness. This adaptation honours heritage while embracing new ways of cooking, making it a perfect addition to Christmas meals where diverse dietary traditions come together at one table.

## Ingredients

### Main dish

- 500 g brown lentils (cooked)
- 500 g butternut squash (cubed and roasted)
- 2 slices bread
- 2 medium-sized onions
- 3 tbsp olive oil, butter, ghee or avocado oil
- 6 cloves garlic (crushed or finely minced)
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger (crushed or finely minced)
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp salt (or more to taste)
- 1 tsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 2 tbsp fruit chutney
- 8 bay leaves

### Custard

- 4 large eggs
- 2 tablespoon milk
- A pinch of salt and black pepper to taste

## Method

- Cook lentils until soft, according to packaging. Roast cubed butternut squash at 180°C until fork tender.
- In a bowl, soak the bread in water until soft. Once soft, drain any excess water and set aside.
- Heat the oil in a medium-sized, heavy-bottomed pot or pan. Stir in the onions and fry until translucent. **Continued on next page...**

## Method continued

- Add the garlic and ginger and fry until fragrant. Next, add the curry powder, black pepper, salt, tomato paste, half of the bay leaves and apple cider vinegar, then combine.
- Add the cubed butternut squash, lentils, soaked bread, chutney and diced tomatoes, then combine.
- Cook over medium heat until much of the liquid has evaporated, then transfer to a baking dish (or, if using an oven-safe cast-iron skillet, keep it in there!)
- To make the custard, whisk egg, milk, salt and pepper in a bowl.
- Pour the custard mixture on top of the lentils and butternut mixture.
- Decorate with the rest of the bay leaves and bake for 20 minutes or until the custard is properly cooked through and set. Serve your vegetarian lentil bobotie warm.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoy with traditional South African yellow rice

VEGAN

# NORTH AFRICAN SPICED WHOLE ROASTED CAULIFLOWER

Whole roasted cauliflower has become a modern festive favourite across North Africa and the Mediterranean, but its flavours draw deeply from traditional Maghrebi cooking. Chermoula — a fragrant blend of herbs, lemon, garlic, cumin and paprika — has been used for centuries in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia to season vegetables, fish and festive dishes.

During winter celebrations, families often prepare large vegetable platters alongside lamb or chicken, showcasing the region's rich spice heritage and its deep appreciation for shared, abundant meals. Adding pomegranate seeds and toasted almonds brings a symbolic festive touch: pomegranate represents blessing and life in many North African cultures, while almonds echo the long-standing tradition of pairing nuts with celebratory foods.

This dish feels both ancient and modern — a colourful, aromatic centrepiece worthy of a festive table.

## Ingredients

**Cauliflower**

- 1 large whole cauliflower, leaves trimmed but core intact
- 3–4 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

**Chermoula paste**

- 1 cup fresh coriander (packed)
- ½ cup fresh parsley
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp paprika (or smoked paprika)
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp chilli flakes (optional)
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt

## Method

- Preheat oven to 200°C.
- Simmer cauliflower in a pot of salted boiling water for 5–7 mins. Drain well and pat dry.
- Blend all chermoula ingredients into a thick, vibrant paste.
- Rub the cauliflower generously with olive oil, then coat it thickly with chermoula.
- Roast 45–60 minutes, until golden and tender.
- Baste with any pan juices halfway through.



**Serving suggestion:** Scatter with pomegranate seeds, toasted almonds and fresh herbs. Serve whole as a festive centrepiece or cut into wedges.

# Sides & Accompaniments

VEGAN

# SOUTH AFRICAN YELLOW RICE WITH RAISINS

Yellow rice holds a special place at Cape Malay Christmas tables, where its sunny colour and gentle sweetness have become symbols of celebration, blessing and togetherness. Its origins trace back to the kitchens of enslaved and exiled communities brought to the Cape from Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Indian Ocean islands in the 17th and 18th centuries. These communities carried with them their knowledge of spiced rice dishes — early cousins of pilau and pilaf — which slowly blended with local ingredients and Cape Dutch cooking traditions. Over time, the Cape Malay version evolved into a uniquely South African festive staple: fragrant with cinnamon, lightly sweetened with sugar or raisins and coloured golden with turmeric, a spice that historically held both culinary and cultural significance.

Today, yellow rice continues to echo this heritage of culinary exchange and adaptation. Much like the pilau dishes prepared across East Africa or the celebratory spiced rice meals found throughout the Indian Ocean world, South African yellow rice is more than a side dish — it is a marker of festive identity. It brings warmth and brightness to the table, pairing effortlessly with curries, roasted meats and traditional Cape Malay favourites. Each spoonful carries a story of global journeying, local ingenuity and the enduring comfort of shared meals across generations.

## Ingredients

- 1.5 cups water
- 1 cup basmati rice or any white rice
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp salt

## Method

- Rinse the rice well under running water until the water runs clear.
- Put the rinsed rice in a pot with water.
- Add the oil, sugar, turmeric and raisins and mix everything together.
- Cover pot and place on a medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Then reduce heat to a simmer and allow to cook until all of the water has been absorbed.
- Stir to mix before serving.

**Serving suggestion:** Serve warm with Cape Malay dishes



# ETHIOPIAN YE'ABASHA GOMEN (FESTIVE COLLARD GREENS)

Gomen is a beloved Ethiopian side dish made from slow-cooked collard greens, onions, garlic and ginger — simple ingredients transformed into something deeply comforting. In Ethiopia, greens hold special significance, especially during fasting periods and Genna (Ethiopian Christmas), where plant-based dishes are central to celebration. Gomen is often served alongside doro wat, tibs or injera as part of a generous communal feast, reflecting Ethiopia's long-standing reverence for vegetables and shared eating.

Across the continent, many African cultures share this tradition of preparing festive leafy greens. In Malawi, dishes like bonongwe, rape or mustard greens cooked with tomatoes and groundnuts accompany festive meals and family gatherings. In Zambia, sautéed chibwabwa (pumpkin leaves) or impwa greens appear on celebratory tables, often cooked slowly with onions and a touch of oil to honour seasonal harvests. Similar preparations can be found in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya, where greens are a symbol of nourishment, simplicity and home. Though the exact leaves and seasonings vary from place to place, these dishes share the same spirit: wholesome greens cooked with love, served generously and enjoyed alongside family as part of festive meals that celebrate abundance, gratitude and togetherness.

## Ingredients

- 2 bunches collard greens or kale roughly
- chopped
- 4 tbsp Niter (Ethiopian spiced clarified butter) or cooking oil
- 1 ½ tsp ginger minced
- 1 tbsp garlic minced
- 1 red onion medium size, chopped
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon cardamom spice
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 ripe tomato finely chopped
- 1-2 Jalapeno pepper deseeded and diced

## Method

- In a large skillet, add the onion, tomatoes, garlic and salt. Cook until the moisture is absorbed. About 5 minutes.
- Add the oil minced ginger, garlic, paprika, cumin, cardamom and sauté for about a minute.
- Stir in the collard greens and cook on medium heat until the collard greens become softened and most of the water evaporates. About 10 to 15 minutes.
- Adjust the seasoning if necessary.



**Serving suggestion:** Serve with injera and other mains such as Doro Wat.



VEGAN

# YUCA ASADO (CASSAVA ROASTIES)

Cassava is one of Africa's most deeply rooted staple foods — a crop that has nourished communities for generations across West, Central, East and Southern Africa. From Nigeria to the Democratic Republic of Congo, from Uganda to Mozambique, cassava is relied upon not only for daily sustenance but also for moments of celebration. Its versatility is legendary: pounded into fufu, fermented into gari, simmered into stews or fried into golden chips sold at street stalls. During festive seasons, cassava often appears in its simplest and most communal form — peeled, cut and shared around smoky outdoor fires as families gather, talk and laugh under the summer sky.

Turning cassava into roasties is a modern twist that honours these long-standing traditions. The method may be contemporary, but the spirit remains the same: transforming a humble root into something warm, comforting and made to share. The addition of garlic enriches its natural earthiness, while sea salt echoes the rustic flavours of open-fire cooking found in many African households. Served alongside festive mains, these cassava roasties bridge past and present, celebrating both the resilience of African food cultures and the joyful creativity of today's Christmas tables.

## Ingredients

- 2 cups cassava cut into chunks or strips
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- Sea salt

## Method

- Boil cassava until soft.
- Cover cubes in oil and garlic and bake until crispy.
- Finish off with salt (and pepper or any other spicy salt you desire).



**Serving suggestion:** Eat as is, or serve with any main dish of your choice.

VEGAN

# MALAWIAN NKHWANI – MASHED PUMPKIN

Nkhwani is a comforting rural Malawian dish that reflects the resourcefulness and generosity of local cooking. Pumpkin grows abundantly across Malawi during the hot season and families often harvest and cook it in large pots for visitors, celebrations and holiday meals. Blending pumpkin with peanut butter — another treasured ingredient in Malawian kitchens — creates a rich, creamy and nourishing mash that feels both simple and deeply satisfying. For many households, this dish carries memories of grandparents stirring big pots over open fires, children helping with shelling peanuts and the slow, warm rhythm of family cooking during December gatherings.

Across Africa, mashed pumpkin and squash dishes hold a long and meaningful place at communal tables. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, nhopi is a beloved mashed pumpkin side, often made with peanut butter or milk and served at family celebrations. In South Africa, pumpkin is frequently cooked with cinnamon and butter for festive lunches, while in East Africa, pumpkin mash appears alongside coconut-based curries and stews. These dishes share a continent-wide tradition of transforming humble, home-grown crops into comforting festive foods.

## Ingredients

- 3 cups pumpkin cubes
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- Salt

## Method

- Boil pumpkin until soft.
- Remove from water and mash.
- Blend in peanut butter.
- Add salt to flavour.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoy as is, or serve with any main dish of your choice.

VEGAN

# AFRICAN CHRISTMAS SLAW WITH MANGO & MINT

Across much of Africa, the long holidays arrive in the heart of summer — a season of bright fruit, warm evenings and outdoor feasting. Fresh salads have therefore become an essential part of festive meals, offering a cool, vibrant balance to richer dishes like roasts, curries, stews or rice feasts. Mango, ginger and mint are flavours shared across East, West and Southern Africa, where mango trees are heavy with fruit in December and herbs grow abundantly in home gardens. These ingredients echo the continent's love of fresh, fragrant, sun-ripened produce and the tradition of combining sweet fruit with savoury dishes on celebratory tables.

Variations of this Christmas slaw appear in many African families, each adding their own touch depending on what is grown locally or available at the market. In South Africa, bright salads often include grated carrot, apple slices or even a splash of orange juice for natural sweetness — a nod to the country's citrus-growing regions. In Zambia and Malawi, cabbage-based salads frequently feature pineapple, cucumber or roasted peanuts for crunch. Along the East African coast, shaved coconut or lime juice is popular, reflecting the influence of tropical flavours. No matter the variation, these festive salads share the same spirit: freshness, colour and a sense of abundance, bringing brightness and life to the Christmas table under wide African skies.

## Ingredients

- 2 mangoes, peeled, pitted and julienned
- 500g shredded cabbage
- 1 red pepper, julienned
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 6 tbsp of fresh lime juice, from about 2 limes
- ¼ cup rice vinegar (or any white or brown vinegar you have available)
- 2 tbsp oil of your choice
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes or to taste
- ¼ cup thinly sliced fresh mint leaves.
- ¼ cup toasted cashews, coarsely chopped.

## Method

- Prepare dressing – mix lime, vinegar, oil, salt, pepper flakes and mint together.
- Mix mango, cabbage, red pepper and red onion into one bowl.
- Add dressing and toss till all ingredients are covered.



**Serving suggestion:** Chill before serving. Enjoy with grilled fish, chicken, meat, or vegan main alternative.

VEGAN

# WILD HERB CRISPY BABY POTATOES

Across Southern Africa, herbs have long been gathered from the wild — from hardy fynbos shrubs in the Cape to aromatic savanna herbs used in rural kitchens across Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. Before store-bought seasoning blends existed, cooks flavoured roast vegetables with whatever grew naturally around them: wildeals (wild garlic), buchu, spekboom leaves, African basil, rosemary-like renosterbos or even crushed termite mound herbs prized for their fragrance. Baby potatoes, introduced through early trade and farming, quickly became a favourite canvas for these foraged flavours, especially during festive outdoor cooking when families prepared meals over coals or clay ovens.

Today, wild herbs remain deeply rooted in Southern African culinary heritage, celebrated for their earthy, untamed aromas and connection to the land. Tossing baby potatoes in wild or home-grown herbs — whether rosemary, thyme, wild basil, buchu or a touch of African sage — brings that heritage to the table in a simple but meaningful way. Crisp, golden and fragrant, these potatoes honour the region's traditions of gathering, sharing and making the most of nature's abundance during the festive season.

## Ingredients

- 6 baby potatoes
- 1 large sprig of wild rosemary, destalked into individual leaves
- 1 small sprig of African sage, destalked, leaves lightly chopped (optional)
- Freshly ground salt and pepper
- Olive oil

## Method

- Cook baby potatoes till parboiled (so not too hard, not too soft).
- Drain unpeeled potatoes and cut into sized chunks and let them air dry for a while.
- Lay the potatoes evenly spread on the tray.
- Drizzle olive oil, sprinkle wild rosemary and African sage leaves and some freshly ground pepper and salt.
- Set oven to grill (about 180C to 200C) and roast till edge are crispy.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoyed as a stand alone snack or as a side to any of your favourite main dishes.

VEGAN

# SPEKBOOM AND SEA PUMPKIN SALSA

Spekboom, a hardy succulent native to the Eastern and Western Cape, has long been part of Southern African ecological and cultural heritage. Traditionally browsed by livestock and respected for its medicinal and nutritional qualities, it has recently regained prominence as a proudly South African ingredient — celebrated for its refreshing lemony crunch and its deep connection to local landscapes. Paired with sea pumpkin, an indigenous coastal vegetable prized by communities along South Africa's shoreline, this salsa becomes a celebration of place: a meeting of veld and sea, rooted in the resilience and abundance of the region's wild foods.

In many coastal and rural communities, festive meals highlight ingredients gathered from the land — herbs, wild greens, sea vegetables and fruits that reflect the diversity of local ecosystems. Combining spekboom and sea pumpkin in a bright, zesty salsa brings ancient food traditions into modern Christmas cooking. The dish honours indigenous knowledge, sustainable harvesting and the unique flavours of South Africa's coastline. Fresh, vibrant and deeply local, it offers a refreshing counterbalance to richer festive dishes and carries the spirit of a festive meal shaped by nature, community and the land itself.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup roughly chopped spekboom leaves
- 1 cup sea pumpkin chopped similarly to the spekboom
- 2-4 green chillies, finely chopped (seeds removed if you want to reduce the heat)
- 1 to 2 apples, peeled and grated
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped, green tops included
- 1 inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
- Zest of half a lemon finely grated
- Juice of half a lemon
- Salt to taste
- A glug of olive oil or any preferred oil

## Method

- Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and salt to your liking.
- If you don't have access to sea pumpkin, double the spekboom quantity. This is a very versatile and forgiving salsa, so if you would like to make it milder, add more grated apple. If you would like more heat, up the number of chillies. And if you want to add yet more flavour, add some chopped fresh coriander or some finely chopped pineapple.



**Serving suggestion:** Served as a topping for grilled meats and fish, as a dip with tortilla chips, or as an accompaniment to various dishes.

# Desserts & sweet treats

# TRADITIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN MALVA PUDDING

Malva pudding is one of South Africa's most beloved desserts, woven into family memories and festive traditions across generations. Although its exact origins are debated, it is widely embraced as a Cape Dutch classic — a warm, comforting pudding made from ingredients that were readily available in early farm kitchens: apricot jam, sugar, milk and pantry staples. Its unique character comes from its deeply soaked, caramel-like texture: soft, spongy and rich, perfect for long Sunday lunches and celebratory meals.

By the early 20th century, Malva pudding had become a fixture at holiday tables throughout the country. At Christmas, it holds a special place: served warm after a long midday feast, offering sweetness and comfort while the summer heat lingers outdoors. Families often pass down their own variations — some using more apricot jam, some adding extra cream or a thicker sauce — but all share the essence of a dish made with love, generosity and a sense of home. Today, Malva pudding remains a dessert that brings people together, a nostalgic reminder of shared stories, full tables and the simple pleasure of something warm and sweet at the end of a festive meal.

## Ingredients: Pudding

- 1 tbsp butter at room temperature
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 tbsp apricot jam
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt

## Ingredients: Sauce

- 2 tbsp butter
- 125 ml cream
- 4 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tbsp water

## Method: Pudding

- Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F). Ovens are temperamental, so if you know yours needs a bit more (or less) of a push, feel free to adjust.

**Continued on next page...**



**Serving suggestion:** Serve pudding with thick cream, vanilla ice cream or custard.

## Method: Pudding continued

- In a large mixing bowl add your first 4 ingredients - butter, sugar, jam and egg. Beat until it lightens and gets a bit fluffier. If you only have a fork, the fluffy part isn't make-or-break. In a large measuring cup or a bowl, add milk, then vinegar and vanilla essence. Whisk lightly.
- In another measuring cup/bowl, add bicarb to flour and give it a quick stir.
- Alternating between the milk mixture and the flour, add to the large mixing bowl and mix well as you go along.
- Pour into a lightly greased oven-proof dish (around 30x15cm or a bit smaller.
- Bake for 45 minutes or until a knife comes out with spongy crumbs stuck to it (it's not likely to come out clean) rather than uncooked batter. The pudding will stay in its mould and rest for a bit once the sauce is poured over.

## Method: Sauce

- Add all sauce ingredients together in a pot and bring to a boil.
- Let it simmer, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. This time will give the sauce a richer, deeper taste.
- Stab the pudding a few times with a fork to help the sauce sink in so that it doesn't pool at the sides and soak in only there. Then pour the sauce over slowly, being sure you're not leaving any part dry.
- Serve pudding with thick cream, vanilla ice cream or custard.

# GHANAIAN CHIN CHIN ADJUSTED WITH CHRISTMAS SPICES

Chin Chin — known as Achomo in parts of Ghana — is a beloved West African snack that brings joy to festive seasons, weddings and family gatherings. Many households add warm spices like nutmeg, cinnamon and ginger to the dough, filling kitchens with aromas that signal the start of the holiday celebrations. These crunchy, golden bites are often made in big batches, stored in tins and placed on tables for guests to snack on between meals. In many Ghanaian homes, preparing Chin Chin becomes a family activity, with children cutting shapes from the dough while elders fry and season them — a tradition that blends togetherness, laughter and delicious anticipation.

Across Africa, similar festive fried snacks appear in December, each carrying its own cultural touch. In Nigeria, Chin Chin is nearly identical — though sometimes sweeter or flavoured with vanilla — and is a favourite treat for visitors during the holidays. In Cameroon and Congo, Beignets Africains and Mikate mirror the same idea of small fried dough pieces shared at celebrations. In East Africa, coconut mandazi or mahamri offer a softer, more fragrant version, while in North Africa, sweet pastries like zlabia and loqmet el qadi are prepared for feast days. Though the names and flavours differ, the tradition is the same: simple dough transformed into festive bites, made to be shared generously with family, friends and neighbours.

## Ingredients

- 4 cups (500g) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (100g) granulated sugar (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger (optional)
- 7 tablespoons (100g) cold margarine/ butter
- 2 medium eggs (optional)
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk or water
- Vegetable oil, for deep frying

## Method

- Combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl.
- Cut in the cold margarine or butter until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs.
- Combine the wet ingredients separately, then gradually add to the dry ingredients to form a smooth, firm dough.
- Knead and rest the dough for 10-15 minutes.
- Roll out the dough thinly (about ¼-inch) and cut into desired shapes.
- Fry the chin chin in batches in hot vegetable oil until golden brown.
- Drain on paper towels and let cool completely before storing.



**Serving suggestion:** Enjoy as is!

# ZIMBABWEAN ORANGE & CARDAMOM HONEY CAKE

Citrus-spice cakes have a long history in Zimbabwean households, especially where family gardens overflow with oranges during the warm festive season. In many communities, honey is a treasured ingredient — not only for its natural sweetness but also for its cultural symbolism of blessing, prosperity and health for the year ahead. Blending oranges, cardamom and honey brings together Zimbabwe's agricultural richness with the layered spice influences that travelled down the continent through trade routes connecting East Africa, the Indian Ocean coast and Southern Africa.

Across the continent, similar cakes appear in festive traditions: citrus-and-spice loaves in South Africa, honey-scented semolina cakes in North Africa, cardamom-infused bakes in Tanzania and Kenya and orange blossom desserts in Morocco. Zimbabwe's orange and cardamom honey cake carries echoes of all these influences, yet remains distinctly local — simple to prepare, deeply fragrant and shared generously with neighbours, extended family and visitors during Christmas. Served with tea under a shaded veranda or brought out after a long festive lunch, this cake captures the warmth of Southern African hospitality and the sweetness of gathering together.

## Ingredients: Cake

- 1 cup (200g) pitted dates, chopped
- 1 cup (240ml) boiling water
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 cup (115g) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup (150g) light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Zest of 2 oranges
- 1/2 cup (120ml) fresh orange juice
- 1-1/2 cups (190g) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom
- 1/4 tsp salt

## Method: Cake

- Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line 20cm round or square cake tin with parchment paper.
- Place chopped dates in a bowl, sprinkle with baking soda and pour boiling water over them. Let sit for 10 minutes, then mash lightly.
- In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, then stir in vanilla orange zest and orange juice.
- In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cardamom and salt.
- Fold dry ingredients into the wet mixture, alternating with the mashed dates, until just combined.
- Pour batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top. Bake for 40–45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.

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## Ingredients: Honey drizzle

- 1/4 cup (60ml) honey
- 1 tbsp fresh orange juice

## Method: Honey drizzle

- For the honey drizzle, combine honey and orange juice in a small saucepan. Warm gently until smooth and runny.
- Once the cake is baked, remove from oven and while still warm, drizzle generously with the honey-orange mixture.
- Allow to cool for 10–15 minutes before serving.

**Serving suggestion:** Can sprinkle with almond flakes and serve with thick cream or ice cream



# SENEGALESE THIAKRY – SWEET SPICED COUSCOUS DESSERT

Thiakry, also known as Degue, is one of West Africa's most beloved sweet dishes — a cool, creamy dessert enjoyed at celebrations, holidays and community gatherings across Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Traditionally made with small millet grains called lakh and later couscous, Thiakry brings together the warmth of local spices with the freshness of yoghurt or milk. It is a dish that reflects the gentle sweetness of Sahelian cuisine, where grains and dairy have long been at the heart of daily nourishment.

During festive seasons, families often prepare large bowls of Thiakry to share with visitors, neighbours and children returning home for the holidays. The addition of vanilla, nutmeg, raisins or citrus zest varies from household to household, turning a simple grain pudding into a treasured treat. Much like rice puddings, milk tarts or semolina desserts found in other parts of Africa, Thiakry captures a universal tradition: transforming everyday staples into something celebratory, comforting and meant to be shared. Its soothing creaminess and delicate spice make it a beautiful finale to a festive African meal — cooling, familiar and deeply rooted in heritage.

## Ingredients

- 1¾ cup water
- 1½ cup couscous
- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ¾ cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- chopped nuts optional for garnish

## Method

- In a medium saucepan, bring the water to a boil. Stir in the couscous and cover tightly with a lid. Remove the pan from the heat and let the couscous steam for five minutes. Use a fork to fluff the mixture.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the condensed milk, yogurt and half-and-half. Add the vanilla extract, ground cinnamon and ground nutmeg and whisk until combined.
- Stir in the couscous and mix until well combined. Ensure that all chunks of couscous are broken up and evenly distributed in the mixture.
- Cover and chill in the refrigerator for 20 minutes. Serve topped with raisins and chopped nuts.



# EASY MOIST FRUIT CAKE

Christmas fruit cake is one of the most enduring holiday traditions across many African homes, carried forward from European influences but lovingly transformed through local ingredients, family customs and generations of storytelling. In countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Malawi, the ritual of making fruit cake often begins weeks before Christmas. Mothers and grandmothers soak dried fruit in brandy, sherry or rooibos tea; stir heavy wooden spoons through thick, fragrant batter; and bake dense, dark loaves that will mature until Christmas Day. These cakes were once essential for long journeys or hot summers because they kept well — a practical delight that evolved into a beloved festive staple.

Over time, fruit cake became deeply localised. Families added ingredients from their own landscapes: Cape sultanas, Mpumalanga peaches, Zimbabwean candied citrus, Malawian raisins, West African spices or even tropical touches like pineapple and mango. In many homes, the fruit cake is more than dessert — it's a symbol of abundance, patience and celebration, cut and shared only when everyone is gathered. Whether served with tea after church, wrapped as a gift or kept for New Year's, the fruit cake carries the unmistakable flavour of African festive traditions: warm, generous, richly spiced and made with love long before the festivities even begin.

## Ingredients: Cake

- ¾ cups unsalted butter
- ¾ cups soft brown sugar
- 2 cups dried fruits – can use a combination of sultanas, raisins, currants, red and green glace cherries and citrus peel
- ½ cup dates - pitted and cut into small pieces
- ⅔ cups store bought sweetened orange juice - like Just Juice, Tropicana etc.
- 1½ tbsp orange zest (the zest of about 1 medium-sized orange). The juice of the orange will be used later in the syrup.
- 2 tbsp molasses
- 1¾ cups all purpose flour
- 1½ tsps baking powder
- ½ tsp salt, omit if using salted butter
- 1½ tsps cinnamon powder
- ½ tsp ground ginger powder
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp all spice
- ¼ cup (52 g) unflavoured vegetable oil - I use canola oil
- 3 large eggs - room temperature
- 1 cup (100 g) walnuts – halved

## Ingredients: Orange Syrup

- 3 tbsp (50 g) freshly squeezed orange juice
- 1¾ tbsp (20 g) white granulated sugar

## Method: Boiled fruit mixture

- Add unsalted butter, soft brown sugar, dried fruits, dates, orange juice, orange zest and molasses to a large saucepan.
- Bring that to a simmer over a medium heat and once simmering, continue to let it simmer for a few more minutes.
- Once done, pour the mixture in a large shallow dish to cool. To speed up the process, place the mixture into the freezer for about 45 minutes. Once ready it should have thickened up in consistency. Make sure it's at room temperature (not hot or cold) before moving onto the next step.

## Method: Fruit cake

- Preheat oven to 140°C with the fan on and grease an 8x3 inch cake tin and line the bottom with baking paper.
- Sift together flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon powder, ground ginger powder, nutmeg and all spice. Mix together with a whisk or fork and set aside.
- In a small bowl, combine the unflavoured vegetable oil and eggs. Whisk with a fork and set aside.
- In a large bowl, add in the boiled fruit mixture from earlier (make sure it's at room temperature) and add in the oil/egg mixture. Using a spatula, fold until it's well combined. The mixture is quite thick so may take a bit of mixing to get it all combined properly.
- Next add in the walnuts (and dates if you didn't add them to the boiled fruit mixture) and fold until well combined.
- Next add in the sifted dry ingredients from earlier and fold until just combined. Do not overmix, so only mix until you can't see any more streaks of flour.
- Pour the batter into the cake tin and spread it out evenly. Drop the cake tin lightly on the counter to remove any large air bubbles and then bake for 75-85 minutes or until a skewer or knife inserted into the centre comes out clean.
- Allow the cake to cool in the cake tin for 30 minutes and then run a thin knife around the edges of the cake tin to release the cake and then turn it out onto a wire rack (right side up) to cool.

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## Method: Orange syrup

- While the cake is cooling, prepare the orange syrup. Combine the orange juice and sugar in a bowl and then heat it up (in the microwave or on the stove top) until the sugar is completely dissolved.
- Using a pastry brush, brush the orange syrup all over the top and sides of the cake while the cake is still warm. Use all of the syrup.
- Wrap the cake in two layers of foil and place it into an airtight container. Leave it in a cool dry place for 48 hours before serving.



# FLAVOR KING (PLUM) BAKED CHEESECAKE

Flavor King plums are one of Southern Africa's most beloved summer fruits, ripening just in time for the festive season. In regions like Stellenbosch, Ceres and the Langkloof Valley orchards overflow with deep-red, sun-warmed plums in December, making them a familiar sight at farm stalls and family gatherings. For generations, fresh or stewed plums have appeared in Christmas kitchens — folded into tarts, simmered into sauces or served simply with custard after long holiday lunches. Using them in a baked cheesecake is a modern celebration of place: the sweetness of South African stone fruit meeting a classic dessert to create something deeply local and beautifully seasonal.

Marrying the traditional creaminess of a baked cheesecake with the tart-sweet richness of Flavor King plums reflects the way South African families blend heritage with contemporary cooking. The plums' vibrant ruby colour becomes a festive topping, echoing summer sunsets and holiday abundance. Served cold on a warm December afternoon, the cheesecake brings together the joy of the orchards, the rhythm of summer harvests and the spirit of gathering with loved ones under wide African skies.



## Ingredients

**Crust**

- 2 x 200g tennis biscuits
- 160 ml melted butter

**Filling**

- 2 x 230g cream cheese
- 50ml sour cream
- 1 x 397g condensed milk
- 4 eggs (lightly beaten)
- 100 ml freshly squeezed lemon juice

**Flavour king sauce**

- 1 cup water
- 3 tbls Demerara sugar
- 6 medium Flavor King Plums

## Method

- Preheat the oven to 160°C.
- Spread a 24cm loose bottom pan with butter.
- Crumb your tennis biscuits in a food processor until fine and add your melted butter. Pulse until the crumbs start to stick together.
- Use a silicone scraper to line your base and sides of the pan with crumbs, pushing the crumb right to the top edge. Cool in the fridge until needed.
- Beat the cream cheese, sour cream, condensed milk and lemon juice until smooth. Add the eggs and mix through. Chill in the fridge for about an hour.
- Pour the mixture into the crust and spread evenly. Put in the centre of the oven and bake for 1 hour. Put the oven off, open the oven door and let cool in the oven.
- Melt the sugar and water on medium heat to make syrup. Cut the plums in half and cook in the syrup for a couple of minutes. Leave to cool.
- Serve the cheesecake at room temperature.
- Pour the plum syrup over just before serving.

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