

Exotic Recipes



YUCA CHIPS

1 1/2 lbs yucca root
2 cups vegetable or olive oil for frying
Salt and Pepper to taste

Peel the yucca root & cut into very thin strips, no more than 3/16" thick. Place the strips in ice water for ½ hr. Dry strips on paper towels. Pour the oil to a depth of 2-3 inches in a deep fat fryer, wok or heavy skillet and deep the oil to 350-375 degrees. Add yucca root strips & fry until crispy. Remove yucca root strips with slotted spoon & drain on paper towels. Salt & Pepper to taste. Serve while warm. Serves 6.

MANGO AND STARFRUIT SMOOTHIE

8 ounces plain yogurt, drained
1 cup fresh orange juice
3 large star fruit
2 large mangoes, peeled and seeded

In a blender, purée all ingredients until smooth. Chill.
Makes 6-8 cups.

SHRIMP STAR FRY

2 tbsp. cornstarch
2 tbsp. lime juice
2 tbsp. water
2 tbsp. oil
1/2 lbs of shrimp (steamed or boiled)
1/4 cup sesame seeds
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped
1 cup chayote cut into cubes
1 medium sweet onion, diced
2 tbsp. fresh ginger, grated
2 star fruit, cut in stars
Soy sauce, salt & pepper to taste

Combine cornstarch, lime juice and water. Set aside. Heat oil on medium in a skillet or wok. Add sweet onions, peppers and chayote. Stir until vegetables are slightly wilted. Add sesame seeds, shrimp and cornstarch mixture and continue to cook until sauce is thick and clear. Turn off heat; add star fruit slices and seasoning. Serve immediately over fluffy rice.

STEAMED CHICKEN BREASTS WITH CHAYOTE

2 scallions, sliced
1 carrot, peeled and cut into julienne
1 chayote, peeled and cut into julienne
4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Place scallions, carrot, and chayote in a medium-size mixing bowl and mix together.

Slice the chicken breasts open lengthwise without cutting through. Season with salt and pepper

Cover half of each chicken breast with the vegetables. Fold the top half of the breast over the stuffing. Seal in the stuffing by pressing the two edges together. Season with salt and pepper. Place the chicken breast into a steamer for about 15 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Serve with hot mango sauce.

CHAYOTE PRAWN SALAD

1 large avocado, peeled and halved
juice of one lime
grated zest of lime, set aside
1 medium chayote, peeled and sliced thin
12 medium, fresh-cooked prawns, chilled
1/2 bunch cilantro, washed, trimmed with two sprigs reserved for garnish
2/3 cup yogurt
4 tbsp. prepared fresh or bottled salsa
1/2 tsp. grated nutmeg

Slice half the avocado into long, thin strips. Place avocado slices on the bottom of a large salad platter. Brush with one tablespoon of lime juice. Arrange chayote slices and prawns on top.

For sauce: Use blender or mix together well the remaining avocado, cilantro, one tablespoon lime juice and yogurt. Stir in salsa, nutmeg and grated lime zest. Spoon sauce over salad. Garnish with cilantro.

Serves 4

GRILLED SNAPPER with MANGO SAUCE

Don't rub your eyes or touch your face when handling chile peppers, and wash your hands thoroughly when you are done.

4 fillets of red snapper (about 2 lbs)
1/3 cup of olive oil
1/4 cup of lime juice
1/2 tbsp. ginger root finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Sprinkle fish with salt and pepper and place skin down in a shallow baking pan. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over fish. Refrigerate, covered turning occasionally, for one hour. Grill fish skin side up 4 inches from hot coals for 3-4 minutes, basting with marinade. Flip fillets and cook an additional 2-3 minutes, until the flesh is opaque all the way through and the top surface has a light golden crust. Serve with hot Mango Sauce. Serves 4.

MANGO SAUCE

1 mango
1 habanero pepper, seeds and ribs removed
1/2 cup chicken broth, homemade or canned
1/4 tsp. ginger root, grated
1/2 tbsp. honey
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Cut the mango on both sides of the pit. Reserve a few slices for decoration. Scoop out the rest of the flesh and puree in a blender or food processor. Add the habanero pepper, chicken broth, ginger root and honey. Blend until smooth. Pour the mixture into a medium-size saucepan and heat on medium-low for about 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve hot.

CARIBBEAN PAPAYA MILKSHAKE

3 Caribbean Sunrise papayas or 1 Caribbean Red papaya, peeled, seeded and diced
1 ripe banana, diced
3/4 cup milk
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 cup crushed ice

In a blender, purée the papaya, banana, milk, cream and crushed ice. Pour into four tall glasses and serve.

AVOCADO and CRAB SALAD

This cool salad is good year-round but seems most appropriate during summer. As a variation you may substitute cooked shrimp for the crabmeat.

Juice of 3 limes
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup olive oil
1 pound lump or back fin crabmeat, picked over carefully to remove any stray cartilage
2 avocados
1/2 tsp. lime zest
chopped parsley for garnish

In a small mixing bowl combine lime juice, mustard, salt and pepper. Gradually whisk in olive oil until smooth and blended. Pour over the crabmeat and let stand for 10 minutes.

Drain excess dressing from crabmeat. Just before serving, cut avocados in half. Remove and discard pits. Cut avocados into thin slices. Mound the crabmeat in the center of a serving platter. Arrange avocado slices in a fan shape around the crabmeat. Sprinkle with lime zest, chopped parsley and red caviar (optional). Serves 4.

KUMQUAT CHICKEN ORIENTAL

2 tbsp. oil
1 pound chicken breasts (2 large halves)
1/2 cup celery, diagonally cut
1/2 cup green onion, sliced into 1 inch diagonal pieces
1/2 tsp. dry ginger
1/2 cup kumquats, sliced and seeded
1 cup loosely packed snow pea pods
1/2 cup chicken broth or 1 bouillon cube and 1/2 cup water
2 tbsp. cornstarch mixed with 1/2 cup water
1 tbsp. orange juice concentrate
1/2 cup toasted whole almonds
2-3 cups cooked wild rice

Heat oil in skillet. Add chicken and cook until chicken is almost done. Add celery, onion, ginger, kumquats, snow pea pods, chicken broth, and orange juice concentrate. Stir and cook 1 to 2 minutes until vegetables look bright green. Add cornstarch and water mixture, stirring constantly until juices are clear. Top with almonds and serve on a bed of wild rice. Serves 4.

Quince Pound Cake

For cooking quince

2 medium quinces (about 1 pound total)

2 cups water

3/4 cup sugar

1/2 cup honey

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1 3/4 cups cake flour (not self-rising)

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, softened

1 1/2 cups sugar

1 large egg yolk

3 whole large eggs

1/2 cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon vanilla

Cook quince:

Peel, quarter, and core quinces. Cut quarters crosswise into 1/8-inch-thick slices. In a 3-quart heavy saucepan bring quince, water, sugar, honey, lemon juice, and cinnamon to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer mixture, stirring occasionally, 2 1/2 hours (quince will be deep pinkish orange). Drain quince in a large sieve and transfer to paper towels. Pat quince dry and cool. Chill quince, covered, at least 1 hour and up to 3 days.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour a 9- by 2-inch round cake pan, knocking out excess flour.

Into a bowl sift together twice flour, cinnamon, and salt. In another bowl with an electric mixer beat together butter and sugar until combined well. Add yolk and whole eggs, 1 at a time, to butter mixture, beating well after each addition. Beat in half of flour mixture and all of cream until just combined. Add remaining flour mixture and vanilla, beating until just combined. Fold quince slices into batter until combined well and spread batter evenly in pan.

Bake cake in middle of oven 1 1/4 hours, or until a tester comes out clean, and cool in pan on a rack 20 minutes. Turn cake out onto rack and cool completely. (Cake keeps, in an airtight container at room temperature, 4 days.)

Serves 10 to 12

Mashed Yuca with Garlic

Active time: 15 min Start to finish: 1 1/2 hr

4 lb fresh yuca (also called cassava; preferably 2 inches in diameter) or 3 lb frozen
1 3/4 to 2 1/4 cups hot milk
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
2 teaspoons salt

Trim ends from fresh yuca and peel remainder, removing all waxy brown skin and pinkish layer underneath.

Cut yuca into 3-inch-thick pieces.

Boil yuca in salted water to cover by 2 inches until tender and starting to fall apart, 50 minutes to 1 1/4 hours.

Drain and transfer to a cutting board. Carefully halve hot yuca pieces lengthwise and remove thin woody cores. Return yuca to pot with 1 3/4 cups milk, garlic, juice, and salt. Coarsely mash yuca, adding additional milk if desired, and serve immediately.

Serves 6

Spinach with Bamboo Shoots

1 lb. fresh spinach
1/2 cup peanut, vegetable, or corn oil
1/4 cup finely shredded bamboo shoots
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons sugar

1. Wash spinach leaves thoroughly under cold running water, drain well.
2. Heat the oil in a wok or skillet. Using a medium-high flame, cook the bamboo shoots in the oil approximately 45 seconds, stirring constantly.
3. Add spinach and stir until wilted.
4. Add salt and sugar, and cook, stirring, about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes longer.

5. Transfer to a hot platter, but do not add the liquid from the pan.

Makes 4 servings

Pumpkin Flan with Gingersnap Crust

This flan is my variation of a classic Cuban dessert that's usually made with calabaza (also known as West Indian pumpkin). I've added a crunchy gingersnap crust, and the overall effect is like a cheesecake with a crispy crust. Use canned pumpkin if calabaza is unavailable.

Flan

8 ounces calabaza or pumpkin, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/2-inch dice
1 can (14 1/2 ounces) condensed milk
1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
8 eggs
3 tablespoons sugar

Caramel

1 cup sugar

Crust

1 pound gingersnap cookies
1/2 cup melted butter

To prepare the flan, bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add the calabaza and cook until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain the calabaza and let cool. Transfer to a food processor, add the condensed and evaporated milk, eggs, and the 3 tablespoons of sugar and purée until smooth. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

To make the caramel, place the cup of sugar in a heavy-bottomed saucepan and cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat until the sugar is a light amber color, about 20 minutes. Pour the caramel into a 9 by 4-inch loaf pan or into 6 individual 8-ounce ramekins or molds. Pour the reserved flan mixture on top of the caramel and place in a water bath. Bake for 15 minutes.

Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F, and bake until set (a knife inserted will come out clean), about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool completely.

To prepare the crust, place the cookies and butter in a food processor and process until well blended. Pack the crust mixture on top of the cooled flan, and transfer to the refrigerator to chill overnight.

To serve, run a knife around the inside edges of the loaf pan or molds and invert onto a serving platter or individual plates.

Makes 6 servings

Jicama, Radish, and Pepita Salad

For a main-course salad, add some grilled shrimp or chicken and diced papaya.

1/2 cup olive oil
1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 1/2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
1 1/4 teaspoons ground cumin

1 5-ounce package butter lettuce mix or baby spinach leaves
2 cups diced peeled jicama
1 scant cup thinly sliced radishes (about 8)
1/3 cup natural shelled pumpkin seeds (pepitas), lightly toasted
1/2 cup coarsely crumbled queso fresco or Cotija cheese

Whisk first 5 ingredients in small bowl. Season dressing with salt and pepper. Toss lettuce, jicama, and radishes in large bowl. Add dressing and toss to coat. Divide salad among 4 plates. Sprinkle with pumpkin seeds and cheese and serve.

Makes 4 servings

Jicama Slaw

Active time: 30 min Start to finish: 30 min

1 medium red onion, finely chopped (3/4 cup)
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 1/2 lb jicama, peeled and cut into julienne strips (9 to 10 cups)
1/3 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

Soak onion in 1 cup cold water with 1/2 teaspoon salt 15 minutes (to make onion flavor milder). Drain in a sieve, then rinse under cold water and pat dry.

Whisk together lime juice, oil, sugar, pepper, and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt in a large bowl until combined well. Add onion, jicama, cilantro, and salt to taste and toss well.

Cooks' note:

- Jicama can be cut into julienne strips 6 hours ahead and chilled, covered.

Makes 8 servings

Kohlrabi and Apple Salad with Creamy Mustard Dressing

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

1/2 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon coarse-grained mustard
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley leaves
1/2 teaspoon sugar
2 bunches kohlrabi (about 2 pounds), bulbs peeled and cut into julienne strips, stems discarded, and the leaves reserved for another use
1 Granny Smith apple

In a bowl whisk the cream until it holds soft peaks and whisk in the lemon juice, the mustard, the parsley, the sugar, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the kohlrabi strips and the apple, peeled, cored, and diced, and combine the salad well.

Serves 8

Lo Bok with Sichuan Peppercorns and Fresh Red Chiles

This is a coleslaw-style salad — its sweet, spicy, and crunchy elements make it a terrific accompaniment to anything fried. Sichuan peppercorns, sometimes called *fagara*, can be found at many Asian markets (though they're technically banned from import because they come from a plant that is susceptible to citrus canker, a disease that devastates citrus orchards). There's no substitute for their flavor, but if you can't find them, the recipe works perfectly well without them.

Active time: 45 min Start to finish: 2 1/2 hr

3 lb *lo bok** (Chinese white radish, also called daikon), peeled
1 1/2 medium carrots
2 tablespoons plus 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/3 cup red-wine vinegar
1/3 cup rice vinegar (not seasoned)

3/4 cup sugar
3 tablespoons peanut oil
5 (1 1/2-inch-long) dried red chiles*
1 teaspoon sichuan peppercorn* (optional)
1 tablespoon fine julienne of peeled fresh ginger
6 small (2-inch) fresh red chiles* such as Thai, seeded and cut into fine julienne (1
tablespoon)
1/4 cup thinly sliced scallion
1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves
2 teaspoons Asian sesame oil

Special equipment: a mandoline or other manual slicer

Cut radish and carrots into fine julienne with mandoline, then toss with 2 tablespoons kosher salt in a bowl and let stand 1 hour. Drain in a colander, then squeeze handfuls in a kitchen towel to remove moisture and transfer to a bowl.

While vegetables are standing, heat vinegars, sugar, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt in a small nonreactive saucepan over moderate heat, stirring, until sugar is dissolved.

Meanwhile, heat peanut oil in a small heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté dried chiles and Sichuan peppercorns, stirring, until chiles are blackened, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in ginger and fresh chiles, then stir into vinegar mixture. Cool sauce.

Pour sauce through a fine sieve into bowl with radish and carrots. Add scallion, cilantro, and sesame oil and marinate, tossing occasionally, 30 minutes.

* Available at Asian markets and Uwajimaya (800-889-1928).

Makes 8 side-dish servings

Spicy Tamarind Shrimp

The best way to enjoy this Vietnamese delicacy is first to savor the sauce, shallots, and garlic tucked in and around the shells of the shrimp, then eat the succulent meat with steamed rice. Serve with ice-cold beer or a crisp Viognier or Pinot Gris.

1 3-inch block tamarind with seeds,* cut into 4 pieces

12 uncooked large shrimp

1/3 cup chopped shallots
4 garlic cloves, minced

1/4 cup chicken broth or water
2 1/2 tablespoons fish sauce (nam pla or nuoc nam)*
2 tablespoons Chinese rice wine or dry Sherry
1 1/2 tablespoons (packed) light brown sugar
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 small onion, cut into thin wedges
2 green onions, cut into 2-inch lengths
1 jalapeño chile, cut into thin rings
Chopped fresh cilantro

Place tamarind in metal bowl; add enough boiling water to cover. Let stand 15 minutes to soften. Drain. Press pulp through sieve, reserving 3 tablespoons strained pulp.

Using scissors, cut shell of each shrimp all the way to tail end, exposing vein. Remove vein. Loosen shrimp shells but do not remove.

Mix shallots and garlic in small bowl; set aside 1 tablespoon shallot mixture. Tuck remaining shallot mixture under shrimp shells.

Mix 3 tablespoons tamarind, broth, fish sauce, wine, and sugar in small bowl. Heat oil in heavy large skillet over high heat. Add reserved 1 tablespoon shallot mixture and onion wedges and sauté 1 minute. Add shrimp and sauté 1 minute. Add tamarind mixture and sauté until shrimp are opaque in center and sauce coats shrimp thickly, about 3 minutes longer. Mix in green onions and chile. Transfer to platter. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve.

*Available at Asian markets.

Makes 4 servings

Fried Plantains

Ripe plantains have peels that are almost completely black whereas the firm-ripe ones called for in this recipe are mottled black and yellow.

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

4 firm-ripe plantains*
vegetable oil for deep-frying

*available at Hispanic markets and some specialty produce markets and supermarkets

With a small sharp knife cut ends from each plantain and halve crosswise. Cut a lengthwise slit through skin along inside curve. Beginning in center of slit pry skin from

plantain and with rippled blade of a *mandoline* or decorating knife cut flesh crosswise into 1/8-inch-thick slices.

In a deep fryer or large deep skillet heat 1 1/2 inches oil to 375°F. on a deep-fat thermometer and fry 12 to 15 plantain slices at a time, turning them, 2 to 3 minutes, or until golden, transferring as fried with a skimmer or slotted spoon to paper towels to drain. Season plantain slices with salt. (Plantain slices should be slightly crisp on outside but soft on inside.) Plantain slices are best served immediately but may be made 1 day ahead, cooled completely, and kept in an air-tight container. Reheat plantain slices on a rack in a shallow baking pan in a preheated 350°F. oven 5 minutes, or until heated through.

Serves 8

Sweet Plantain Fritters

Inspired by *American Adobo*

In this 2001 film, a group of Filipino-American college friends get together to eat and share stories about their loves and lives. Their experiences of assimilating to American society vary, but all of the characters recognize their need for the comfort derived from friendship and familiar foods.

For this dish, be sure your plantains are completely black, since the fruit becomes sweeter as it ripens. (Yellow or mottled brown plantains are very starchy and usually take about a week to fully ripen.) Serve these fritters as a snack or pair them with ice cream for a delicious dessert.

1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup water
1 large egg, lightly beaten
4 very ripe (completely black) plantains (2 1/2 lb)
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
About 2 cups vegetable oil

Special equipment: a deep-fat thermometer

Whisk together flour, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl, then add water and egg and whisk until batter is smooth.

Peel plantains and cut on a slight diagonal into 1/2-inch pieces. Stir into batter to coat well.

Stir together granulated sugar and cinnamon in a shallow bowl.

Heat 1/2 inch oil in a 10-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat until thermometer registers 340°F. (See cooks' note, below.) Fry plantain slices in batches of 6 (don't crowd them) until bottoms are golden, about 45 seconds, then turn over and fry until other side of each is golden, 30 to 45 seconds more. Transfer with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain.

While still warm, toss each batch in sugar mixture until coated, then transfer to a platter. Serve hot or warm.

Cooks' note:

To take the temperature of a shallow amount of oil with a metal flat-framed deep-fat thermometer, put bulb of thermometer in skillet and turn thermometer facedown, resting other end (not plastic handle) against rim of skillet. Check temperature frequently.

Makes 6 dessert or 12 snack servings

Plantain Chips

Active time: 30 min Start to finish: 30 min

1 1/2 teaspoons finely grated fresh lime zest, chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
6 cups vegetable oil
4 green plantains (1 1/2 lb)

Stir together zest, salt, and cayenne.

Heat oil in a 5-quart heavy pot over moderate heat until a deep-fat thermometer registers 375°F. While oil is heating, cut ends from plantains and score skin of each plantain 5 times lengthwise, avoiding ridges. Soak in hot tap water 5 minutes and peel. Cut plantains lengthwise with a U-shaped peeler or manual slicer into very thin strips (about 1/16 inch thick). Fry strips, 6 at a time, turning frequently, until golden, 30 to 45 seconds. Transfer with tongs to paper towels and sprinkle crisps immediately with salt mixture.

Cooks' note:

- You can make plantain crisps 2 days ahead and keep in an airtight container at room temperature.

Serves 6