

Definitely feel like food is love. That's the basic equation that I grew up with. Even when you're at a funeral. It's a little bit morbid, but with Haitian funerals, we have parties after. The reception at a funeral home is like the reception at a wedding. So food is how we grieve. It's how we love. It's how we cry. How we laugh. We do all that around the dinner table. All of it.



Chef Marc Kusitor, a George Brown culinary grad, is interested in exploring the possibilities in the space between tradition and innovation in Afro-Caribbean cuisine. @choptimecatering

MARC KUSITOR

BOUYON AK LEGUME

Vegan Haitian Soup

Politics, identity, culture, and history all meet in the kitchen. Marc explores them all, reaching out from his own Haitian and African roots deep into a cuisine densely entangled with colonialism and slavery, resistance and revolt, creativity and celebration.

Hearty soup-stews like this *bouyon* can be found across the Caribbean, but just like its distinctive music, fashion, and lyrical Krèyol dialect, Haiti's take is infused with a style all its own.

Prep: 25 min

Cook: 35 min

Makes: 4 to 6 servings

Vegan

Epis

(see Tips):

1 medium green bell pepper, roughly chopped

1 small leek, roughly chopped

½ clove garlic, peeled

½ green onion, cut into pieces

4 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

2 tbsp vegetable oil

Salt

Soup Base:

1 tbsp olive oil

½ cup epis (see Tips)

2 bay leaves

3 sprigs thyme

2¼ tsp smoked paprika

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 tbsp liquid Maggi seasoning (see Tips), plus more to taste

10 cups/2.4 L vegetable stock

1 Scotch bonnet pepper, whole

Dumplings

(aka doumbrey):

2 cups/260 g all-purpose flour

1½ tsp salt

½ cup/125 mL water

Soup Vegetables:

1 medium cassava, peeled and finely diced

1 medium white sweet potato, peeled and medium-diced

1 green plantain, peeled and cut into 1¼-inch/3 cm rounds

1 small yellow yam, peeled and finely diced

1 chayote squash, peeled and medium-diced

½ large carrot, peeled and medium-diced

3 cups packed/90 g spinach (see Tips)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

TIPS:

Epis serves as the flavour base for many Haitian dishes; every Caribbean island has its own variation, so feel free to experiment. Bottled Green Seasoning, available in most West Indian grocery stores, can be substituted.

Maggi seasoning is readily available in most Caribbean, African, or Asian grocery stores. Other bouillon liquid or cubes could be substituted, but Maggi is the Haitian choice.

The root vegetables called for in this soup are available in most West Indian grocery stores. Because they cook at different rates, it is important to add them separately.

Frozen spinach can be substituted if fresh is not available.

Make the epis: In a food processor, combine the bell pepper, leek, garlic, green onion, and parsley and pulse until a chunky paste forms. Pulse in the vegetable oil and salt to taste until well combined. Measure out ½ cup/125 mL to use in the soup and set aside. (Store the remaining epis in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks; just add enough neutral-tasting oil to cover the top of the mixture.)

Make the soup base: In a medium soup pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the reserved ½ cup epis and sauté, stirring constantly, until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the bay leaves, thyme, and smoked paprika. Continue to cook, while stirring, for another minute. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture is a deep red colour, about 5 minutes. Add the Maggi seasoning and vegetable stock. Stir well, scraping up any browned bits sticking to the bottom of the pot. Increase the heat and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and add the whole Scotch bonnet pepper.

Meanwhile, make the dumplings: In a medium bowl, combine the flour and salt. Add the water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and knead until it comes together and forms a smooth dough. (It should not be sticky.)

Transfer the dough to a cutting board and shape into a flat rectangle. Cut into 8 equal strips. Cut each strip in half, to get 16 pieces of dough.

With your palms, roll the dough into rough cylinders, stretching lengthwise until about the diameter of a pinky finger; they will soak up the soup and grow slightly while cooking.

Add the soup vegetables: As the soup simmers, add each of the vegetables, allowing 3 minutes between additions, starting with the cassava, followed by the sweet potato, green plantain, yellow yam, chayote, carrot, and spinach. Once all the vegetables have been added, increase the heat to medium and cook until the vegetables are softened but retain their texture, about 5 minutes.

Add the dumplings and cook until they are fluffy and cooked through, about 5 minutes.

Remove the Scotch bonnet. If you want more heat, you can burst it and leave in the soup. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and black pepper.



ADOPT A RECIPE Lisa Kates