

# chakula chetu

Indigenous Recipes from  
the Lake Region of Kenya



INTER REGION ECONOMIC NETWORK





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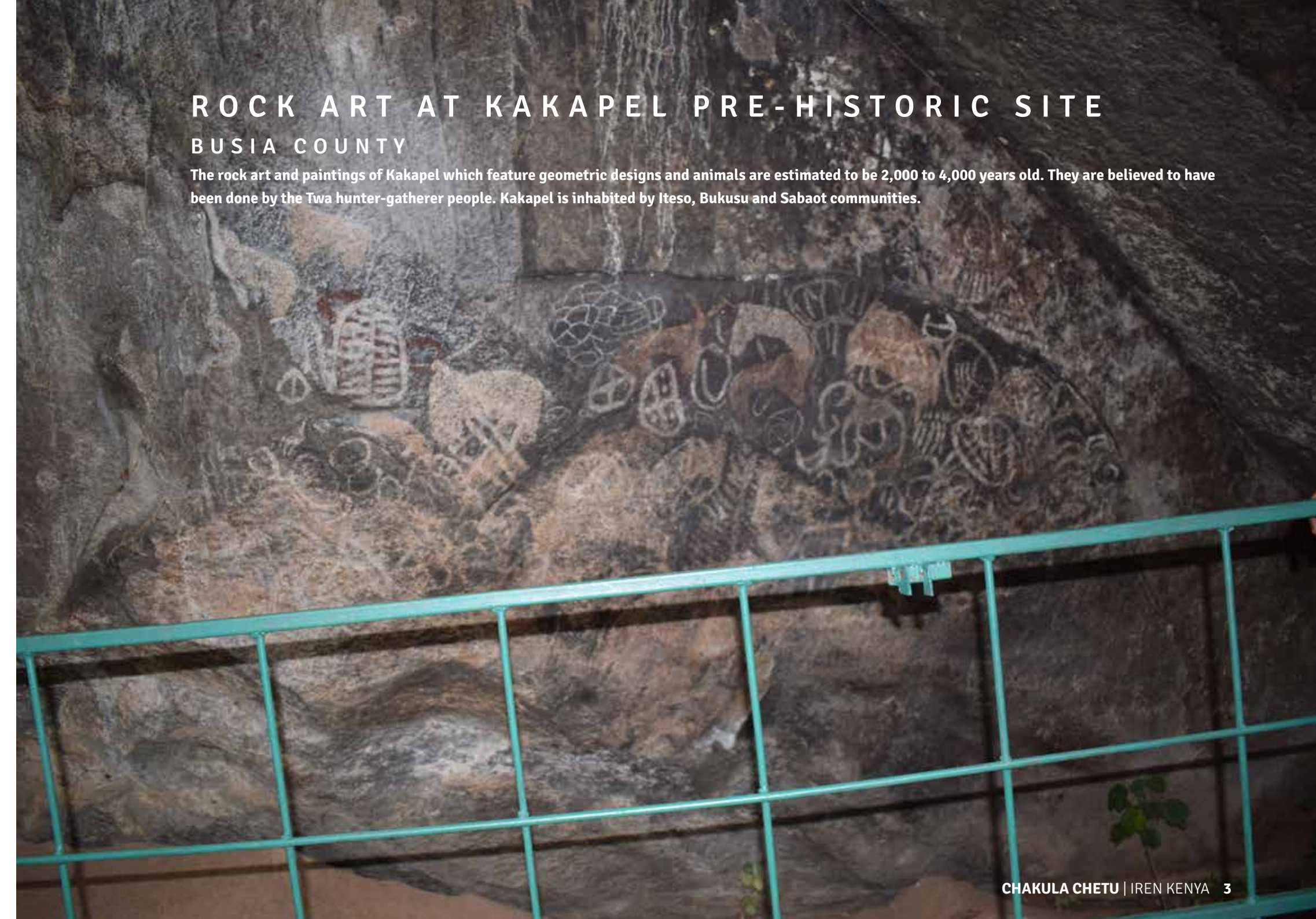
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## ROCK ART AT KAKAPEL PRE-HISTORIC SITE BUSIA COUNTY

The rock art and paintings of Kakapel which feature geometric designs and animals are estimated to be 2,000 to 4,000 years old. They are believed to have been done by the Twa hunter-gatherer people. Kakapel is inhabited by Iteso, Bukusu and Sabaot communities.







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# Foreword

## Back to the Future

*Indigenous Foods can catalyse Rural Economies*

Rural economies have a lot to offer their constituents and urbanized counterparts. The situation of rural economies in rich agricultural zones does not necessarily translate to access to cash. Individuals with cash in urban areas may not necessarily have the knowledge on how to prepare indigenous dishes.

This book is meant to activate conversation between rural producers, experts and the urbanite on how to prepare best cuisines from their produce and eat healthy. The production of “Chakula Chetu” is part of the Inter Region Economic Network’s (IREN) wider strategy to narrow the gap between smallholder farmer producers and markets. Other activities in support of these are the annual IREN Bukura Trade and Culture Fair now in its 15th year, the IREN Growthpad App and the IREN Innovations Technologies Platform.

I highly appreciate the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) for making this publication possible.

I welcome you to join this journey to position Africa’s indigenous foods on everyone’s daily menu as part of the food security strategy. Your feedback is very important to us.

*James Shikwati,  
Founder Director, Inter Region Economic Network (IREN)*

# THE CRYING STONE OF KAKAMEGA KAKAMEGA COUNTY

Also known as the Crying Stone of Ilesi, the stone holds a great cultural and spiritual importance to the Luhya community and the Isukha sub-tribe in particular. It is believed that when the stone cries, it is a good omen signaling bumper harvest. During drought spells, the surrounding community carries out rituals around the stone to persuade the gods to bring rain. It is believed that the Crying stone fought wars for the Luhya community. The Nandis allegedly tried to pull it down to rid the Luhya of immense supernatural powers, without success.





## Message from Nabongo of Wanga Kingdom

All living creatures, man not being an exception, survive on different kinds of foods in the quest to attain a balanced diet.

African societies have for centuries depended on farming of crops, hunting of animals as well as collecting and gathering of fruits. All these contributed to indigenous foods that supplied the ingredients needed to maintain a healthy body.

Today people who visit hospitals with lifestyle diseases get a prescription to revisit and consume indigenous or traditional foodstuffs ideal for a healthy body.

In conclusion, contents of this vital cookbook should not be treated as a primitive undertaking. The book constitutes a wide range of foods consumed by people of Western and Lake Region of Kenya. I recommend it for readership and actual practice.

I am grateful to everybody who took part in the production of this great piece of work.

*His Royal Highness,  
Maurice Rapando Wambani,  
Nabongo of Wanga Kingdom*



ELIJAH MASINDE MAUSOLEUM  
BUNGOMA COUNTY







## Mushroom Stew (*Obwoba*)

by Lilian Chitavi

### INGREDIENTS

- 100 gms of dried mushroom
- 1 Bunch of spring onions
- 25 mls of *musherekha* (Indigenous Tenderizer)
- 250 mls of fresh milk
- 250 mls of cream
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of pepper (optional)

### PREPARATION

1. Soak the dried mushroom in warm water
2. Wash for 20 minutes
3. Boil for 1hour and add *musherekha* to soften it
4. While boiling, add the fresh milk as you stir.
5. Allow it to boil for 20 minutes
6. Add the cream, salt
7. Add pepper for seasoning (optional)

### *Nutritional Benefits:*

#### **Mushroom:**

Fiber, proteins and vitamins

#### **Milk:**

Proteins, carbohydrates, sugar and fat



## Green Grams & Sweet Potatoes (*Omushenye*)

By Bibianne Situma

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup of greengrams
- 6 sizeable sweet potatoes
- 3 litres of Water
- Salt to taste

### PREPARATION

1. Boil the green grams for 40 minutes
2. When almost cooked, add peeled sweet potatoes
3. Boil until cooked.
4. Remove any excess water.
5. Pound or mash until you get a smooth paste
6. Serve with fermented milk

### *Nutritional Benefits:*

#### **Green grams:**

Potassium, protein, iron, magnesium, vitamin B6, calcium

#### **Sweet potatoes:**

Vitamin A, B6, C, iron, protein, magnesium, carbohydrates and dietary fiber



## LAKE SIMBI NYAIMA | HOMA BAY COUNTY

*Simbi Nyaima* (literally ‘the village that sank’) is found in Karachuonyo, Homabay County. While geologists argue it is a volcanic lake, the Luo community trace its origin to many years ago when an entire village sank as a result of a curse occasioned by turning away an old woman who sought refuge in the village. The woman unleashed a vicious storm that submerged the entire area.







## Dried Termites (*Tsiswa*)

by Derrick Awir

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups of live termites
- 1/4 cup of musherekha (Indigenous tenderizer)
- 1/4 cup of water
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt

### PREPARATION

1. Soak the termites in a bowl of water for 5 minutes then wash to clean
2. Put the termites on a hot pan with moderate supply of heat and stir until dry.
3. Dry the termites in the sun on a tray for 3-4 hours
4. Winnow to remove any dirt
5. Put the termites on a pan, add 1/4 cup of water and 1/4 cup of *musherekha* then heat to dry while stirring.
6. Add salt while stirring then put out the heat
7. Serve hot with ugali made from millet

### *Nutritional Benefits:*

**Termites:** Vitamin A, protein, lipid, carbohydrates





## KEERA FALLS | NYAMIRA COUNTY





## Boiled Black Nightshade (*Esufuwa*)

by Florence Situma

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 bunches of black nightshade vegetables
- 300 mls of water
- 200 mls of milk
- 50 gms of cream

### PREPARATION

1. Wash the vegetables in clean water
2. Boil them in a pot of water for 20 minutes
3. Add cream and boil for 15 minutes
4. Add water and simmer for 10 minutes
5. Serve with ugali or any other carbohydrate

### *Nutritional Benefits:*

**Black nightshade:** Vitamin B, C, folic acid, magnesium, potassium, calcium, iron, sodium, zinc

**Milk/cream:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat





## Beans and Sweet Potatoes Composite (*Omushenye*)

by Elizabeth Irusa

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg of beans
- 2 cobs of maize
- 10 medium sized sweet potatoes
- A pinch of salt

### PREPARATION

1. Shell the maize,
2. Wash the beans
3. Mix the maize and beans and boil in water until tender
4. Peel the sweet potatoes and chop into sizeable pieces
5. Add the sweet potatoes to tender maize and beans mixture, add salt, and boil again until the potatoes are ready.
6. Drain excess water
7. Simmer and mix
8. Allow it to cool before serving

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Sweet potatoes:** Vitamin A, B6, C, iron, protein, magnesium, carbohydrates and dietary fiber

**Beans:** Potassium, protein, calcium, magnesium, iron and carbohydrates



TEA HARVESTING  
KERICHO COUNTY







# Smoked Beef (*Shihango*)

by David Keya

## INGREDIENTS

- 1kg of meat
- 1/4 cup of *musherekha* (indigenous tenderizer)
- 2 bulb onions
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 3 tablespoons of salt
- 3 cups of water

## PREPARATION

1. Wash the meat and sprinkle with salt
2. Dry using low heat for seven days
3. Cut into small pieces
4. Put in a cooking pan and add water
5. Boil for 1 1/2 hrs.
6. Cut the onions and add to the meat while still damp.
7. Add cooking oil and *musherekha* at a go
8. Boil for 10 minutes
9. Remove and serve hot with ugali

## *Nutritional Benefits*

**Beef:** Vitamin B6, Iron, magnesium and fat





## Jute & Cowpeas Leaves Mix (*Omurere* and *Likhubi*)

by Mercy Akinyi

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 bunches *omurere*
- 2 bunches *likhubi* (cowpeas leaves)
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1/2 litre milk
- 2 tablespoons of cooking oil
- Onions leaves
- 1/2 cup of water
- 1/2 cup of *musherekha* (indigenous tenderizer)

### PREPARATION

1. Wash the vegetables together and cut
2. Pour 1 1/2 cups of water in a sufuria or cooking pot and heat
3. Allow the water to boil for 5 mins and then add *musherekha*
4. After 1 minute, add the vegetables and cover.
5. Allow to simmer for 10 minutes while stirring from time to time until it cooks.
6. Put oil in cooking pot or sufuria and add onion slices
7. Put over medium heat untill the onion slices are golden brown in colour
8. Add the cooked vegetables and pinch of salt
9. Stir the mixture and leave to cook for 5 mins
10. Add milk and let it boil for 5 minutes
11. Serve with ugali

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Jute Mallow:** Beta carotene, iron, calcium, vitamin B, C and E, folate, fiber  
**Cowpeas leaves:** Dietary fiber, protein, iron, magnesium, vitamin B6

**Milk:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat





## Free Range Chicken (*Ingokho*)

by Margret Kahenda

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 pieces of chicken
- 1 bunch of spring onions
- 3 medium sized tomatoes
- 1 litre of water
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/4 cup of *musherekha* (indigenous tenderizer)

### PREPARATION

1. Wash the chicken pieces and place in a sufuria
2. Add onions
3. Stir till brown
4. Add tomatoes and stir
5. Add *musherekha*, then water
6. Reduce heat and allow it to simmer for 25 minutes to cook.

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Chicken:** Protein, fats, cholesterol sodium, Iron





ILESI POTTERY CENTRE  
KAKAMEGA COUNTY





## Sorghum Porridge (*Obusera obwa Amabele*)

by Evans Asira

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 teaspoons of sorghum flour
- 4 teacups of water
- 1/2 cup of fresh milk
- 4 teaspoons of sugar
- 4 teaspoons of lemon syrup

### PREPARATION

1. Measure desired amount of water in a sufuria and boil
2. Make a paste of sorghum flour in a cup using cold water
3. Add the paste to boiling water and stir continuously until the starch mixes to prevent lumps
4. Add lemon syrup, sugar and milk then stir continuously
5. Allow to cook for 15 minutes while stirring to obtain a smooth paste
6. Remove from heat and allow to slightly cool then serve
7. Allow to cool slightly

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Sorghum:** carbohydrates, fiber, proteins, fats, calcium, iron

**Milk:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar& fat

**Sugar:** carbohydrates





# Spider Plant (*Chisaka*)

by Lydia Okumu

## INGREDIENTS

- A handful of *chisaka* (Spider plant)
- 2 cups of water
- 1 cup of butter from fresh milk
- 3 pinches of salt

## PREPARATION

1. Pluck and wash the *chisaka*
2. Put water in a pot to boil
3. Add vegetables to the pot to cook over moderate heat for 45 minutes
4. Add a cup of butter and mix thoroughly for 20 minutes
5. Serve

## *Nutritional Benefits*

**Spider plant:** vitamin C, A, calcium, magnesium, iron and zinc

**Milk:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat



NGEGE BEACH – KORANDO  
KISUMU COUNTY

A fisherman weighs his Nile perch catch.







## Boiled Narrow Leaf (*Emiroo*)

by Anita Omulisia

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 handfuls of *emiroo*
- 3/4 litre of water
- A pinch of salt
- 250 mls of indigenous tenderizer (*musherekha*)
- 250 mls of cream/milk
- 250 gms of ground simsim/groundnuts
- Bunch of spring onions

### PREPARATION

1. Wash the *emiroo* leaves
2. Pluck the leaves from stalks
3. Boil water and *musherekha* for 10 minutes
4. Add a pinch of salt
5. Add vegetables and cover
6. Stir, cover and boil for 15 minutes
7. Add milk, ground simsim, ground groundnuts cream
8. Cut spring onions and add to the vegetables
9. Cook for 3 minutes
10. Serve hot with ugali, sweet potatoes, cassava, arrow roots or boiled green bananas

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Narrow leaf:** Potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, phosphorous

**Milk/cream:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat





# Pumpkin Leaf Vegetables (*Lisebebe*)

by Roselyne Chemuku

## INGREDIENTS

- A handful of Vine spinach *nderema*
- 2 handfuls of pumpkin leaves
- 250 mls of milk
- 200 gms of simsim paste or flour
- A pinch of salt
- 2 medium-sized tomatoes
- 1 litre of water
- 150 mls of indigenous tenderizer (*musherekha*)

## PREPARATION

1. Wash the pumpkin leaves and detach from stalks
2. Cut leaves into small sizes
3. Put tenderizer in a *sufuria* (cooking pot)
4. Wash the leaves and add to *sufuria*
5. Boil until soft
6. Heat oil in a *sufuria*
7. Add onions
8. Fry until golden brown
9. Add vegetables
10. Simmer for 5 minutes
11. Add simsim paste and milk
12. Cook for five minutes
13. Serve with ugali

## *Nutritional Benefits*

**Vine spinach:** Vitamin C and A, plant protein, iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium and antioxidants

**Pumpkin leaves:** Niacin, dietary fiber, protein, vitamin A, E K, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6

**Milk/cream:** Protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat

**Simsim:** Fat, potassium, carbohydrates, protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin B6, magnesium





BANANA PLANT  
KISII COUNTY





## Dried fish (*Eshibambala*)

by Everlyne Sagide

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 dried fish cut into pieces
- 2 bulbs of grated onions
- A pinch of salt
- 2 grated ripe tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon of black pepper
- 1/2 glass of milk
- Indigenous tenderizer (*musherekha*)

### PREPARATION

1. Wash the fish with warm water and put in a cooking pot.
2. Add grated onions
3. Add tenderizer to soften and maintain flavour
4. Boil for 45 minutes
5. Add black pepper and salt for savoury taste
6. Add a glass of milk, stir to make broth and leave for 5 minutes
7. Simmer the cooked dried fish until it ready.
8. Serve with ugali

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Dried fish:** fats, cholesterol, sodium, potassium, proteins, vitamin A, B6, calcium, magnesium, iron

**Milk/cream:** Proteins, carbohydrates, sugar and fat





## Bamboo Shoots (*Kamalea*)

by Rose Silali

### INGREDIENTS

- 6 strips of tender bamboo shoots (*kamalea*)
- 1/4 glass of indigenous tenderizer (*musherekha*)
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 2 medium sized onions
- 3 medium sized tomatoes
- 1 glass of ground groundnuts
- 150 gms of lard (*kamafura kamesache*)

### PREPARATION

1. Boil the strips of *kamalea* for 30 minutes to remove the top layer
2. Cut the strips into small pieces
3. Fry onions until golden brown
4. Add tomatoes
5. Add ground groundnuts
6. Boil for 5 minutes
7. Serve hot with ugali (white or brown) and *bufuke* (mashed potatoes and beans)

### *Nutritional Benefits*

Vitamin C and phosphorous





## THMLICH OHINGA RUINS | MIGORI COUNTY

Thmlich Ohinga is a 14th-century stone-built complex in Migori county. According to oral history, Thmlich Ohinga was constructed by the then-inhabitants to protect them against invaders. Thmlich Ohinga loosely translates to ‘frightening dense forest.’





## Millet Ugali (*Obusuma obwa Obule*)

by Vennyverah Ivayo

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 kg of millet flour
- Water

### PREPARATION

1. Boil 3 cups of water
2. Add millet flour bit by bit while stirring until it's even and of desired texture
3. Lower the temperature while stirring
4. When it is partially hard, serve while hot with accompaniment of your choice

### *Nutritional Benefits*

**Millet:** Carbohydrates, fat, fiber, proteins, iron





# Banana Bread (*Eshitata*)

by Horace Andayi

## INGREDIENTS

- A bunch of well ripe banana
- 2 cups of maize flour
- 2 litres of water

## PREPARATION

1. Peel the bananas and mix with flour in a container
2. Mix peeled banana into dough
3. Leave for about 10-20 minutes
4. Cut the dough into sizeable pieces and tie them in banana leaves using banana fiber
5. Pour water into a pot
6. Arrange sticks on top of the water to separate the water from banana bread
7. Arrange the banana breads on top of the sticks and cover them using banana leaves
10. Cook for about 1 1/2 hrs.
11. Cook until ready and serve with black tea or coffee.

## *Nutritional Benefits*

**Ripe banana:** Fibre, Vb6, VC, carbohydrates

**Maize Flour:** Carbohydrates





# Smoked Fish (*Eshibambala*)

by Josephine Ochomo

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium sized dried fish
- 1/2 cup of *musherekha* (indigenous tenderizer)
- 1 medium sized onion
- 1/2 tablespoons of salt
- 1 1/2 litres of water
- 1 spoon of butterfat

## PREPARATION

1. Wash the fish with warm water
2. Put in a cooking pot
3. Add water and *musherekha*
4. Allow to cook for 20 minutes.
5. Add the salt
6. Slice the onion and add to the cooking pan together with butter fat
7. Allow it to cook for 20 minutes
8. Serve with ugali made from millet

## *Nutritional Benefits:*

**Fish:** fat, sodium, potassium, proteins, vitamin A, B6 calcium and magnesium



## LAKE VICTORIA | KISUMU COUNTY

Fishermen on a fishing expedition in Lake Victoria.

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