Jollof rice is a popular dish in many parts of West Africa. Its flavorful combination of rice, tomatoes, onions, and spices makes it a favorite for many occasions. Here's a basic recipe to prepare Jollof rice:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of long-grain parboiled rice

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil or palm oil

- 1 onion, finely chopped

- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced

- 1 can of diced tomatoes (or 3-4 fresh tomatoes, blended)

- 1-2 red bell peppers, blended

- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

- 2 teaspoons thyme

- 2 teaspoons curry powder

- 1 bay leaf

- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth

- 1 cup mixed vegetables (like peas, carrots, and green beans) – optional

- 2 scotch bonnet peppers (adjust to your heat preference) – optional

- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

- Salt and pepper to taste

- Protein of your choice: chicken, shrimp, or fish, etc.

Directions:

1. Rice Preparation: Wash the rice in cold water until the water runs clear. Drain the rice and set aside.

2. Cooking the Proteins: If you're using chicken, season and fry or grill them until they're golden brown. Set aside.

3. Making the Sauce:

- In a large pot or dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onions and sauté until translucent.

- Add the minced garlic and sauté for another 1-2 minutes.

- Stir in the tomato paste and let it cook for about 2-3 minutes.

- Add the blended tomatoes, red bell peppers, and optionally, the scotch bonnet peppers. Cook the mixture for about 10-15 minutes until it reduces and the oil begins to float on top.

4. Cooking the Jollof Rice:

- Stir in the thyme, curry powder, ginger, bay leaf, and the broth. Bring to a simmer.

- Add the rice to the pot, ensuring it's submerged in the sauce. Season with salt and pepper.

- Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid, and let it simmer for about 20-30 minutes. If you don't have a tight-fitting lid, you can cover the rice with foil before placing the lid to trap the steam inside.

- Halfway through the cooking, stir the rice from the bottom up. Add the mixed vegetables at this point if you're using them. Re-cover the pot and let it continue cooking.

5. Finishing: Once the rice is cooked, and the liquid is absorbed, remove from heat. Let it sit for a few minutes, then fluff with a fork.

6. Serve your Jollof rice with the fried or grilled chicken, or any other protein of your choice, and perhaps some fried plantains on the side. Enjoy!