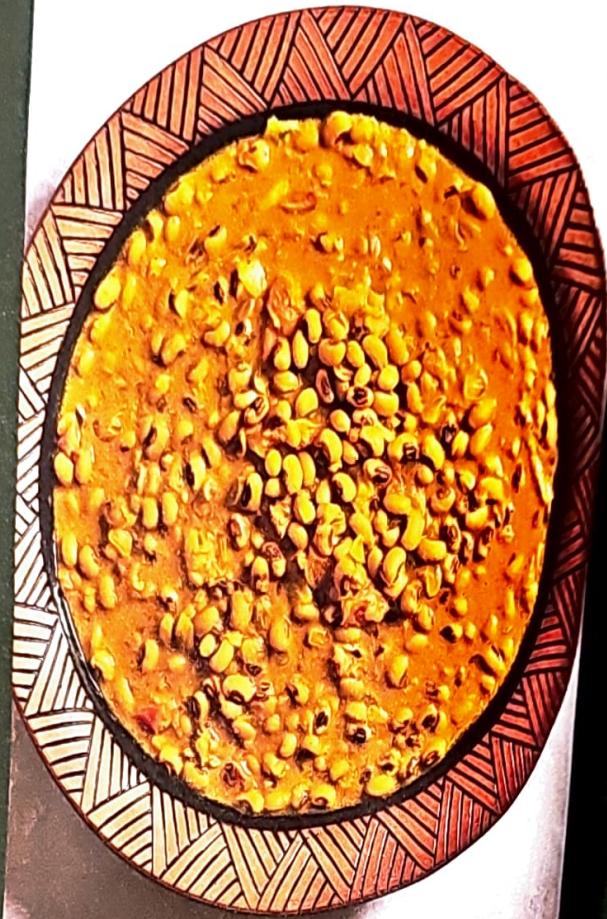
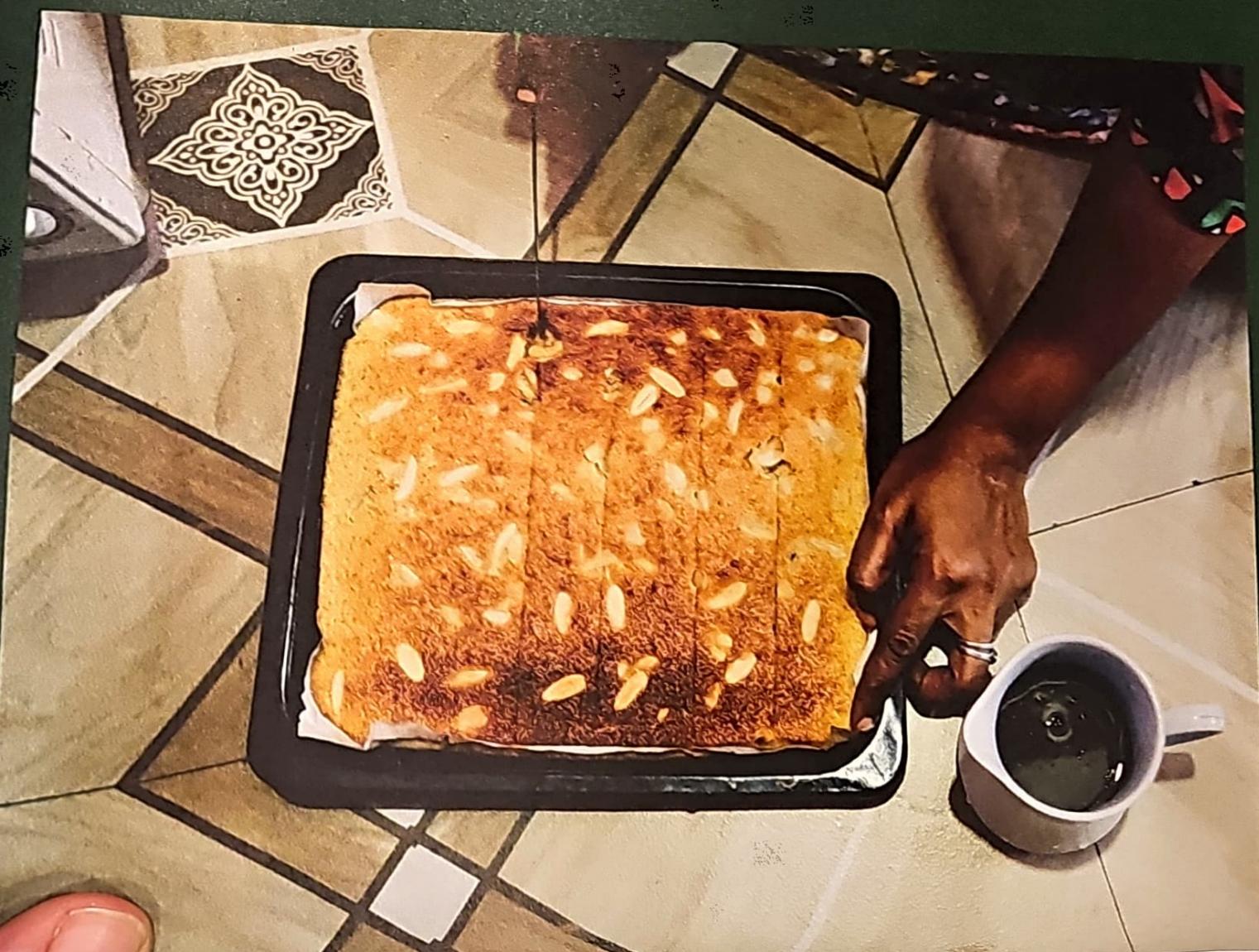
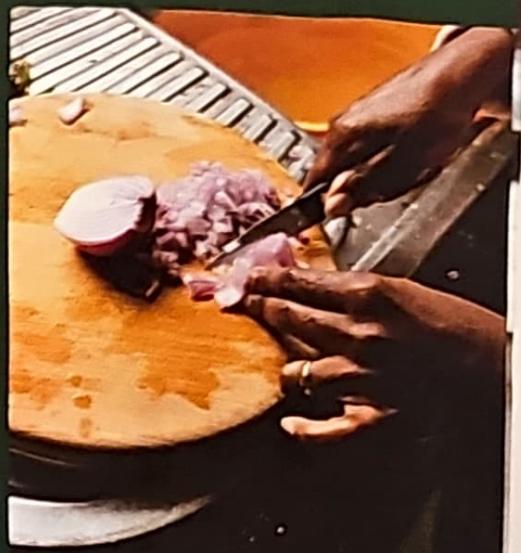


## Chapter Three

# Kenya



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# Kachumbari

(TOMATO AND ONION SALAD)

This crunchy, fresh salad is popular in Kenya but is also eaten throughout East Africa. You'll find similar versions in Tanzania and beyond. Its main components are tomatoes and onions, but cucumbers and avocado are regular additions, so we went with them here, since we are the-more-the-merrier types. You can also add some minced fresh chiles if you'd like. Serve with just about anything you can think of, from fish like Roti ya Houma Pampa (Salt Cod with Tomatoes and Onions, page 264) to chicken like Doro Wat (Stewed Chicken Legs with Berbere and Eggs, page 53) or alongside legumes or beans like Kunde (Black-Eyed Peas and Tomatoes in Peanut Sauce, page 127) with some rice for a vegan meal. If you wait to add the avocado until you serve, you can make the salad up to a few hours in advance and just keep it covered at room temperature. Stir in the avocado just before serving.

SERVES 4

- 1 tablespoon kosher salt,  
plus more as needed
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced  
into half-moons
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded  
and diced
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed  
lime juice
- 1 ripe avocado, pitted, peeled,  
and diced

Dissolve the salt in the boiling water in a small bowl. Add the onion and mix well. Let the onion soak while you chop the rest of your vegetables. This soaking will reduce the intensity of the raw onion.

Once the onion has soaked for at least 10 minutes, drain and transfer it to a medium bowl. Add the tomatoes, cucumber, and lime juice and stir well to combine. Season the vegetables to taste with salt if needed (it will depend on how much salt the onions held on to). Gently stir in the avocado and serve immediately.



# Mango Chile Sauce

Ma Kauthar told us that this chile sauce is served with every main dish, from her Chicken Biryani (page 122) to stews, curries, and more. It's also delicious on eggs. Like all hot sauces, this one can be adjusted by adding more chiles to make it spicier or using fewer to make it milder. We find that two jalapeños give it zip without being too overwhelming. Also note that this sauce thickens considerably as it cools (mango has a good amount of natural pectin in it), so no worries if it seems a little loose while it's still hot.

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

- 1 unripe mango (it should be incredibly firm to the touch), pitted, peeled, and coarsely chopped
- 4 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 2 jalapeños, stemmed and coarsely chopped (use less or leave out if you don't want things too spicy)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus more as needed
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- ½ cup water

In the jar of a blender, combine the mango, tomatoes, jalapeños, tomato paste, lemon juice, oil, salt, and water and puree until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a small saucepan and set it uncovered over high heat. Bring the sauce to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally to keep the sauce from burning, until the sauce is thick enough to coat a spoon, about 20 minutes. Let the sauce cool to room temperature, then season to taste with additional salt and/or lemon juice if needed. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

# Sautéed Cabbage

When Ma Penny prepared her signature dish, Mukimo (Mashed Green Split Peas, Corn, and Potatoes, page 118), she also quickly sautéed this green cabbage to serve with it. She says she always serves mukimo with green cabbage because the mukimo can dry out quickly as it cools down and the cabbage retains moisture and keeps the meal more balanced. It's also a wonderfully quick, healthy, and easy side dish. Her husband, the main cook in the kitchen, walked in as she was cooking it, and she told us that he makes it better than she does. He said he adds sweet white onions to his cabbage and then added, "We try many ways." The best home kitchens are indeed the flexible ones.

SERVES 6

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 green cabbage, thinly sliced  
2 teaspoons seasoned salt (such as Lawry's), or 1 teaspoon kosher salt plus 1 teaspoon sweet paprika

Warm the oil in a large skillet set over medium heat. Add the cabbage, sprinkle with the seasoned salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until just softened and a tiny bit brown in spots, about 10 minutes. Serve immediately, while hot. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator and rewarmed in a skillet set over low heat.



# Mukimo

(MASHED GREEN SPLIT PEAS, CORN, AND POTATOES)

As Ma Penny explained, she chose to share this traditional dish of mashed split peas, potatoes, and corn with us because it's convenient, healthy, fast, and her most favorite food. It's also a lesson in using what's available in America to mimic the flavors left behind in Kenya. As she said, "It's not a food we abandoned when we came here. In Kenya, we'd go to the garden and pick the peas and peel them, but here in America we use what we have, which is Goya dried split peas." Then she continued, "And potatoes are just potatoes everywhere." Mukimo is an affordable dish, but she says it's even more so in Kenya, because you "just go to your backyard." Ma Penny is also unabashed about her love for her handheld electric mixer. "In Kenya, we'd use a pot made of clay and a stick to mix up the mukimo. Here I use an electric mixer! We have different things, but it's the same meal no matter what." Be sure to cook the peas and potatoes in separate pots, since they have different cooking times. This is best served with Ma Penny's Sautéed Cabbage (page 117) and any type of stewed or roasted meat, such as Ma Halima's Beef Suqaar (page 84).

SERVES 6

- One 16-ounce package dried green split peas, rinsed well and drained
- 1 pound red potatoes, coarsely chopped and rinsed well
- Half a 500-gram/8-ounce bag frozen jumbo corn kernels (often labeled Choclo Desgranado), or one 15-ounce can hominy, drained and rinsed well
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more as needed

Place the split peas in a large pot, cover with water, set over high heat, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the peas are soft and tender and have burst, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Carefully drain them in a fine-mesh sieve. (Ma Penny says that in Africa, people have "kitchen hands," so they don't have to use oven mitts or towels—but, she says, you should.) Make sure the peas are very well drained (you don't want the mukimo to be watery). Set the peas aside.

Meanwhile, place the potatoes in a separate large pot, cover with water, set over high heat, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes in a colander, shaking the colander a few times to make sure you've gotten rid of all the excess water. Set the potatoes aside.



Fill a medium pot (the last pot, promise!) with water, bring to a boil, and add the corn. Cook just until the kernels are warmed through, about 5 minutes. Drain the corn and set aside.

Place the well-drained peas and potatoes in one of the empty pots and use a handheld mixer ("every kitchen should have one of these," says Ma Penny) or a potato masher to thoroughly blend the peas and potatoes together until they're completely combined and quite smooth, almost like green mashed potatoes. Whip in the butter and salt and then season to taste with more salt if needed. Stir in the corn. Serve immediately, while hot. Leftovers can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week and rewarmed in the microwave or in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).



# Sukuma Wiki

(GREENS WITH TOMATOES)

These well-seasoned greens are similar to collards, which, with their fragrant potlikker, are popular in the American South and are a reminder of the undeniably deep threads that tie together African and African American cooking. *Sukuma wiki* means “to stretch the week”—in other words, using these greens, which are affordable and readily available, can help stretch any meal a bit further. Greens are a staple in Kenyan cooking and in most East African cooking in general. Serve this dish with rice for a traditional, healthy, and completely vegan meal.

SERVES 4

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 large yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 large tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 1 pound kale and/or collards (or any dark leafy greens), tough stems discarded, leaves coarsely chopped
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Warm the oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot set over medium heat. Add the onion, cumin, coriander, and turmeric and cook, stirring, until the onion begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, greens, a large pinch of salt, and the water. Stir everything well to combine, cover, and simmer until the greens are very tender and soft, about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the lemon juice, season the greens to taste with salt, and serve immediately. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).

# Chicken Biryani

Making biryani is a labor of love, and the layering of flavor pays off. When Ma Kauthar showed us how she prepares this, she did the whole thing outdoors and included an option that infused the dish with a big dose of smoky flavor. She put a small metal container with oil directly in the pot, nestled right into the layers of rice and chicken, and then placed a hot coal directly in the container with the oil. She covered the pot, and the smoke from that little container wove its way into the whole dish. She then placed more hot coals on top of the lid of the pot, as in true Dutch oven cooking. "This is real barbecue!" she told us. In an effort to make the biryani easier to make indoors, we opted to just put the covered pot in the oven.

SERVES 4 TO 6

3 medium vine-ripened tomatoes  
 Canola oil, for frying  
 2 large red onions, thinly sliced into half-moons  
 1 pound Yukon gold potatoes, quartered  
 4 green bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and coarsely chopped  
 1 cup long-grain white rice (preferably basmati)  
 4 cups water  
 2 star anise pods (optional)  
 One 2-inch piece cinnamon stick  
 3 green cardamom pods  
 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt  
 3 garlic cloves, minced  
 One 2-inch piece ginger, peeled and minced  
 1 tablespoon tomato paste  
 3 large carrots, coarsely grated

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Cut off and discard a thin slice from the stem end of each tomato and then coarsely grate the tomatoes on a box grater directly into a bowl. Discard the skins.

Heat 2 inches of oil in a Dutch oven or other heavy pot set over medium-high heat until it reaches 375°F on an instant-read thermometer or until a piece of onion sizzles on contact. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and crisp, about 15 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the onion to a colander set over a bowl to drain.

Carefully add the potatoes to the hot oil and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are crisp on the outside, about 8 minutes (they won't be completely cooked through). Transfer the potatoes to the colander with the onion and let them drain.

Add the bell peppers to the hot oil and cook, stirring occasionally, until the peppers are tender and go from bright green to more of a khaki, about 3 minutes. Transfer the peppers to the colander with the potatoes and onion and let them drain.

Reserve 5 tablespoons of the cooking oil and allow the rest to cool before storing it for another use or discarding it.

**2 tablespoons Xawaash Spice Mix  
(page 74)**

**1 chicken or vegetable bouillon cube**

**2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs and/or breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces**

**Large handful of cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped**

Place the rice in a fine-mesh sieve and rinse with cold tap water, stirring the rice gently with your hands, until the water runs clear, about 1 minute.

Fill a medium pot with water. Bring the water to a boil and add the star anise (if using), the cinnamon, cardamom, and 1 tablespoon of the salt. Add the rice to the pot and cook, uncovered, until it is barely tender, about 10 minutes.

Drain the cooked rice in a colander or fine-mesh sieve (if using a colander, make sure the holes aren't too big), rinse with cool water to stop the cooking, then set it aside.

Place 4 tablespoons of the reserved cooking oil in a large heavy pot set over high heat. Add the garlic and ginger and cook, stirring, until they're sizzling and fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomato paste and stir, until it's incorporated with the oil, about 30 seconds. Add the grated tomatoes and cook, stirring, until most of the moisture from the tomatoes has evaporated, about 2 minutes. Add half the grated carrot and the spice mix, then use your fingers to crumble in the bouillon cube. Stir well to combine and then stir in the chicken and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Cover the pot and cook until the chicken is just opaque on the outside and about halfway cooked through, about 10 minutes.

Spread the remaining 1 tablespoon oil over the surface of a large oven-safe pot and add half the rice (remove and discard any whole spices you see). Stir together the peppers, potatoes, and onion in the colander and place half the mixture over the rice. Evenly sprinkle half the remaining carrot and half the cilantro on top. Place half the chicken with its cooking juices on top of everything. Repeat the layering process one more time. Cover the pot and place in the oven. Bake until the chicken, rice, and potatoes are completely cooked through and incredibly fragrant, about 30 minutes. Remove the biryani from the oven and let it sit, covered, for 10 minutes before uncovering. Mix everything together and serve immediately. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).

## Mukimo with Onions and Greens

Two recipes for mukimo in one book might seem like overkill, but we found it fascinating to see the difference between Ma Penny's version, made at home in Massachusetts, and Ma Wambui's, made at home in Kenya. Whereas Ma Penny uses green split peas, potatoes, and corn, Ma Wambui uses beans instead of split peas and makes her mukimo green with a vibrant puree of cooked greens, adding sweet sautéed onions for another layer of flavor. We like both versions equally, and including them both in this book serves as a reminder that there's no one right way to make anything and that multiple perspectives and choices are what make cooking so endlessly interesting. "This dish on its own is wholesome and can be served by itself as a meal, if need be," Ma Wambui says, "or serve in scoops with beef or chicken stew."

SERVES 6

2 tablespoons canola oil

1 red onion, finely chopped

Kosher salt

1 pound dark leafy greens (like kale or collards), tough stems discarded, leaves finely chopped

1½ pounds Yukon gold potatoes, coarsely chopped

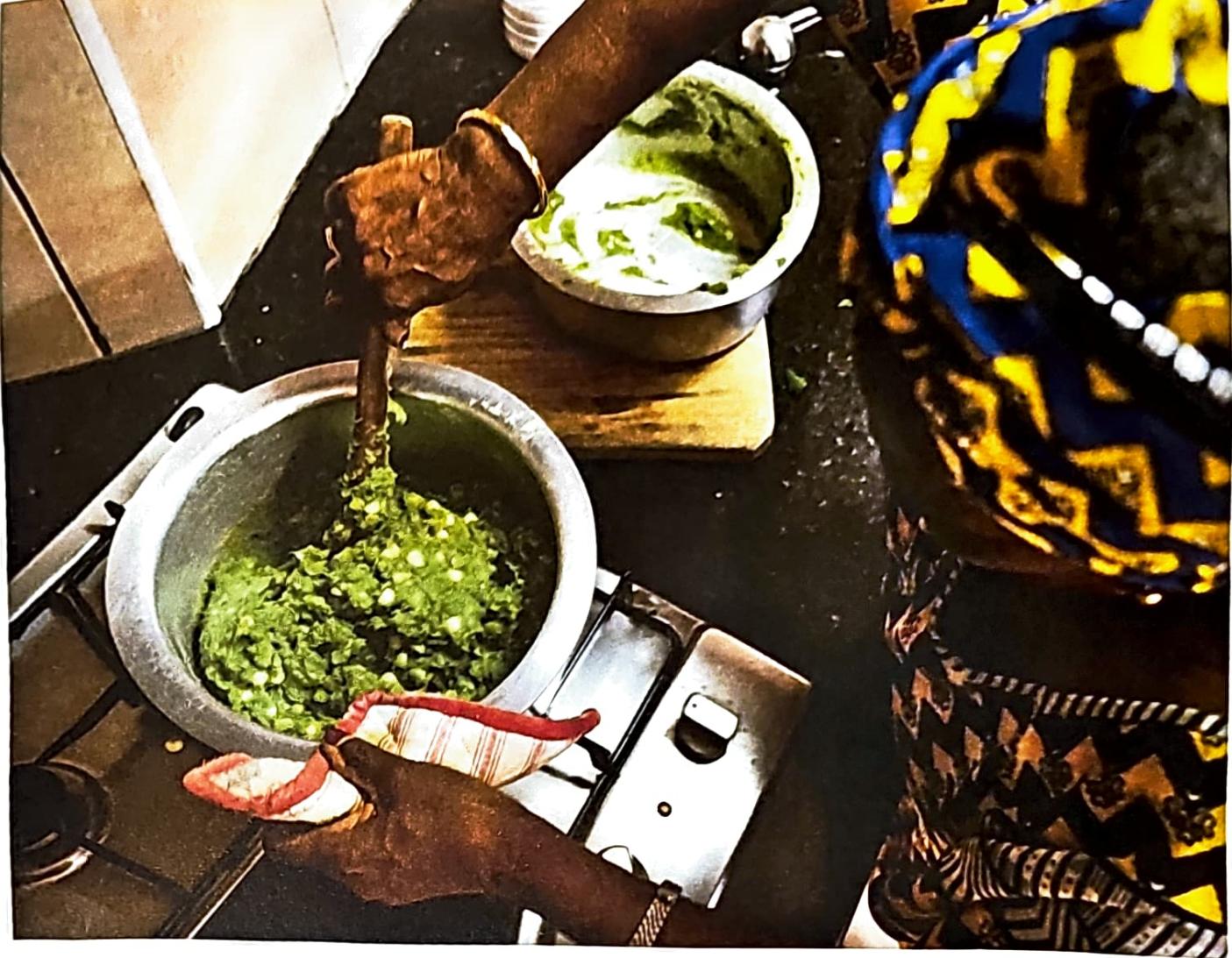
One 15-ounce can butter, broad, fava, or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

Half a 500-gram/8-ounce bag frozen jumbo corn kernels (often labeled Choclo Desgranado), or one 15-ounce can hominy, drained and rinsed well

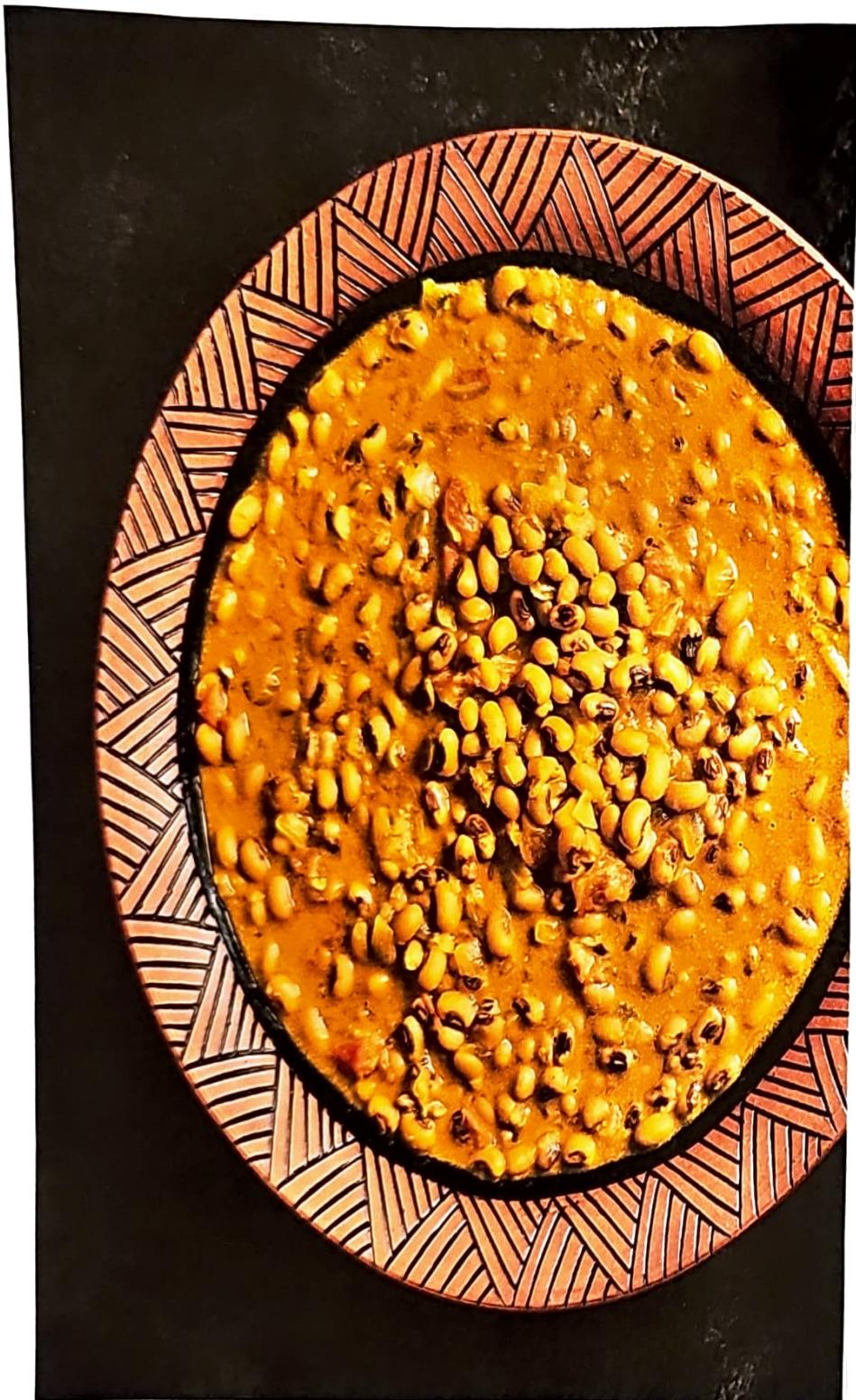
Warm the oil in a large skillet set over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent, about 10 minutes. Season the onion with a large sprinkle of salt, turn off the heat, and set the skillet aside.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add the greens. Cook, stirring occasionally, until very tender, about 15 minutes. Use a handheld strainer to remove the greens from the pot and transfer them, along with ½ cup of the cooking liquid, to the jar of a blender or to a food processor. Leave the rest of the cooking water in the pot. Add 1 teaspoon of the salt to the blender or food processor and puree until smooth (take caution when pureeing the hot mixture). Set the mixture aside.

Place the potatoes in the pot of hot water you used to cook the greens and add 1 tablespoon salt. Bring the water to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer until the potatoes are just beginning to get tender, about 8 minutes. Add the beans and cook until both the potatoes and beans are soft enough to mash, about 10 minutes. During the last minute of cooking, add the corn, just to warm the kernels. Use a teacup or measuring pitcher to collect about 1 cup of the cooking liquid and reserve it. Drain the potatoes, beans, and corn and return them to the empty pot. Use a potato masher



to crush the mixture together until it's very smooth. Add the cooked onion and pureed greens to the potato mixture. If the mixture is too thick for your liking, thin it out with some of the reserved potato cooking liquid (depending on how thick you like it, you might not use the entire cup). Stir very well to combine and season the mukimo to taste with salt. Transfer the mukimo to a serving dish. If you'd like, use the tines of a fork to make a decorative pattern on the surface of the mukimo. Serve immediately. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week and warmed in the microwave or in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).



# Kunde

(BLACK-EYED PEAS AND TOMATOES IN PEANUT SAUCE)

**Kunde** is the Swahili word for black-eyed peas or cowpeas. Serve these stewed peas, fragrant with tomatoes and peanuts, with cooked rice for a quick, affordable, very filling, and totally vegan meal. Feel free to add some diced sweet potatoes or peeled and chopped winter squash to the pot, along with some chopped dark leafy greens (like kale or collards), if you want to stretch the beans into a heartier and even healthier dish. Just simmer until the vegetables are tender.

SERVES 4 AS A MAIN DISH,  
6 AS A SIDE DISH

**1/4 cup unsalted roasted peanuts,  
or 3 tablespoons creamy peanut  
butter**  
**2 tablespoons canola oil**  
**1 yellow onion, finely chopped**  
**1 teaspoon ground coriander**  
**1 teaspoon ground turmeric**  
**1 large tomato, finely chopped**  
**Kosher salt**  
**Two 15.5-ounce cans black-eyed  
peas, drained and rinsed**  
**1/2 cup water**

If using whole peanuts, place them in a food processor and pulse until finely ground, almost like sand. Set the peanuts aside.

Warm the oil in a medium saucepan set over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until it begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the coriander and turmeric and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomato and a large pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid from the tomato has evaporated and the mixture is quite dry, about 5 minutes. Add the peas, peanuts (or peanut butter, if using), and water, increase the heat to high, and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer just until the peas have absorbed some of the wonderful flavor, about 5 minutes. Season the peas to taste with salt and serve immediately, while hot. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).

# Basboosa

(SEMOLINA CAKE)

Basboosa (sometimes spelled 'basbousa' and sometimes called 'nammoura' throughout the Middle East) is a very sweet and moist cake made with semolina flour, with the addition of a sugar syrup that can be flavored with anything from orange flower water to cardamom or rose water. This cake is popular in Middle Eastern countries, in Arab, Turkish, and Greek kitchens, and also in East African countries that have a Middle Eastern influence (which is most of them). Ma Kauthar's version uses plenty of cardamom, coconut, vanilla, and almonds for texture and flavor. Serve with hot coffee or tea.

SERVES 12

1 cup water  
 1½ cups granulated sugar  
 1 teaspoon ground cardamom  
 1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice  
 4 large eggs  
 1 teaspoon baking powder  
 ½ cup canola oil  
 1 cup all-purpose flour  
 1 cup buttermilk (or ¾ cup plain yogurt and ¼ cup water whisked together)  
 ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract (preferably from Madagascar or Comoros)  
 1 cup semolina flour  
 1 cup unsweetened coconut flakes  
 ½ cup blanched slivered almonds

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a 9 by 13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray and line the dish with parchment paper.

Place the water, ¾ cup of the sugar, and ½ teaspoon of the cardamom in a small pot set over high heat. Bring to a boil and stir until the sugar is dissolved, about 1 minute, then boil the syrup until slightly thickened and reduced to about ¾ cup, about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the lime juice, and set the syrup aside.

Place the eggs in a large bowl and whisk together. Add the remaining 1 cup sugar and the baking powder and, using a handheld mixer (or a whisk and a lot of elbow grease), blend them together on high speed until the sugar is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Add the oil and all-purpose flour and beat until smooth and thick, about 1 minute. Beat in the buttermilk, vanilla, and remaining ½ teaspoon cardamom. Stir in the semolina flour and coconut flakes.

Transfer the batter to the prepared baking dish and, using a spoon, spread it into an even layer. Evenly sprinkle the almonds on top of the batter. Bake the basboosa until it is firm to the touch, a toothpick tests clean, and the top is a light golden brown, 25 to 35 minutes.

Cut the basboosa into twelve even pieces and then evenly pour the syrup over them. Let the basboosa cool and serve at room temperature. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to a few days.

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MA KAUTHAR'S

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## Fresh Carrot Drink

Ma Kauthar blends carrots with water and sugar, strains the mixture, and then adds lemon juice to create a refreshing drink that she refers to as her own version of Fanta soda. We love it for its color and sweet flavor. To turn it into a cocktail, add a splash of whatever spirit you most enjoy. Spiced rum would complement the carrot flavor well.

SERVES 4

4 large carrots (about 1½ pounds), coarsely grated or finely chopped  
¼ cup granulated sugar, plus more if needed  
4 cups water  
3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus more if needed  
Ice, for serving

Place the carrots, sugar, and water in the jar of a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve set over a pitcher and press down to extract all the liquid from the solids. Whisk in the lemon juice. Taste the mixture and add more lemon if you prefer it more tart or more sugar if you prefer it sweeter. Fill four tall glasses with ice and divide the drink among them. Serve immediately.

