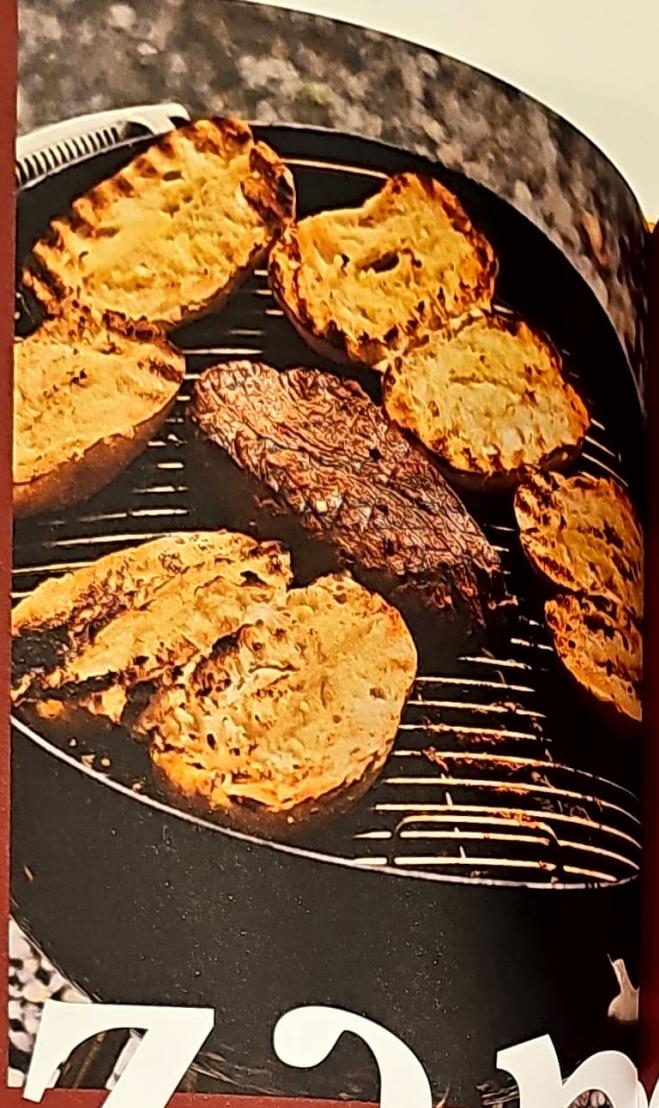


Chapter Five

Mozam



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Tseke com Peix Frito

(LOCAL SPINACH WITH CURRY SAUCE AND CRISPY FRIED FISH)

This fish, marinated with garlic and lime and fried in a simple egg-and-flour batter, is served with curry-infused spinach and is a testament to Ma Maria's beautiful way of preparing food that's simple yet layered with flavor. Enjoy this dish with some cooked rice.

SERVES 4

- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- 4 small whole mackerel (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds each), cleaned and cut in half crosswise
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg
- Canola oil, for frying
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 2 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon curry powder or Xawaash Spice Mix (page 74)
- 1 pound mature (not baby) spinach, coarsely chopped
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

Stir together the garlic, lime juice, and salt in a shallow bowl. Add the mackerel and, using your hands, coat the mackerel with the marinade. Set the mackerel aside.

Place the flour on a large plate and the egg in a shallow bowl; beat the egg well with a fork or a whisk. Coat each piece of marinated fish first in the flour (knock off any excess), then in the egg, then in the flour one last time.

Meanwhile, line a plate with paper towels and set aside. Heat 1 inch 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 fish sizzles on contact. Carefully place the fish in the hot oil, working in batches as necessary, depending on the size of your pot, then fry, turning the fish with a slotted spoon as they cook, until they are golden brown all over, about 8 minutes. Carefully transfer the fish to the prepared plate to drain and then sprinkle with a little bit of salt. Set the fish aside.

Carefully transfer 3 tablespoons of the oil you cooked the fish to a separate large pot and set it over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until just beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, curry powder, spinach, bouillon, and water to the pot and mix well to combine. Cover and simmer until the spinach is very tender, about 10 minutes. Season the spinach to taste with salt. Transfer the spinach to a serving dish, top with the fried fish, and serve immediately.

Coril de Peix com Coco

(MARINATED FISH IN COCONUT SAUCE)

Just like Ma Maria's Tseke com Peix Frito (Local Spinach with Curry Sauce and Crispy Fried Fish, opposite), this fish dish takes advantage of all the local flavors in Mozambique. Serve with Ma Maria's Xima (Smooth Cornmeal Porridge, page 182) or plain rice to soak up all of the sauce.

SERVES 4

- 2 large tomatoes
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 small whole mackerel (about 1½ pounds each), cleaned
- Canola oil for frying
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon curry powder or Xawaash Spice Mix (page 74)
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 2 large carrots, coarsely chopped
- 2 cups full-fat unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 cup water
- 2 jalapeños, stemmed and thinly sliced (use less or leave out if you don't want things too spicy)
- Kosher salt

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. Set the grated tomatoes aside.

Line a plate with paper towels and set aside. Rub half the minced garlic all over the fish. Heat ½ inch of oil in a large nonstick skillet set over high heat until it reaches 375°F or until a piece of fish sizzles on contact. Carefully add the fish to the skillet and cook, turning once, until dark brown and crisp on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer the fish to the prepared plate and set aside.

Meanwhile, place the 3 tablespoons oil in a Dutch oven or other large heavy pot set over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining minced garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the grated tomatoes, curry powder, and bouillon. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is almost dry, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots, coconut milk, and water and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the jalapeños. Season the sauce to taste with salt and then add the fish to the sauce. Simmer until the fish has absorbed some of the sauce, about 5 minutes per side. Serve immediately, spooning the sauce over the fish.

Rum with Homemade Berry Soda

Rum is the most popular spirit in Mozambique, and it's usually mixed with a berry-flavored soda. We opted to make our own soda, so it's not too sweet. While we mix the soda with dark rum, per Mozambican tradition, you could substitute tequila, gin, or vodka. You could also skip the rum and substitute sparkling wine for the seltzer, or just leave out the alcohol altogether and just enjoy the soda on its own over ice with a splash of lime or lemon juice.

SERVES 4

- One 10-ounce package frozen mixed berries, thawed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark rum
- 2 cups seltzer
- Ice, for serving

Place the berries (and whatever defrosted juice is in the package with them), honey, and lemon juice in the jar of a blender and puree until smooth. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a pitcher and press down to extract all the flavor from the berries (discard the contents of the sieve). Stir in the rum and seltzer. Fill four glasses with ice and divide the drink among the glasses. Serve immediately.



Xima

(SMOOTH CORNMEAL PORRIDGE)

A staple of Mozambican tables, xima is a smooth porridge made of ground cornmeal, salt, and water. Similar to grits in America and polenta in Italy, xima served with nothing more than a little butter or ghee is a smooth and comforting dish—the perfect thing to warm you up. Ma Maria serves it with her dishes just as she would rice: it absorbs sauces and gravies beautifully.

SERVES 4

5 cups water

1 cup finely ground white cornmeal (see page 18 for more about finely ground white cornmeal)

2 teaspoons kosher salt

Place the water in a medium pot set over high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and slowly whisk in the cornmeal and salt. Cook, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until the mixture is thick and creamy and the cornmeal is no longer grainy, about 15 minutes. If the cornmeal gets too thick or too dry, simply add more boiling water. Serve hot. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a pot set over low heat (stir while you heat and add splashes of water as needed to return the porridge to its original soft texture).

Mbowa

(LEAFY GREENS IN COCONUT SAUCE)

While Ma Maria uses wild pumpkin leaves in this dish (which are readily available in Mozambique), any dark leafy green will do. We like a mix of mature spinach and thinly sliced collard greens. A rich yet totally vegan side dish, these greens complement just about any meal, whether it's a simple bowl of Xima (Smooth Cornmeal Porridge, page 182) or roast chicken.

SERVES 4

- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 small yellow onions, thinly sliced
- 2 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 1½ cups full-fat unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 cup water
- ½ pound mature (not baby) spinach, coarsely chopped
- ½ pound dark leafy greens (like collards or kale), tough stems discarded, leaves thinly sliced
- Kosher salt

Warm the oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot set over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until just beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook just until fragrant and hot, about 1 minute. Add the coconut milk and water and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and add the spinach and greens in large handfuls, seasoning each handful with a pinch of salt as you add it to the pot (this helps to distribute the salt evenly). Cover and simmer until the greens collapse and begin to become tender, about 5 minutes. Uncover the pot and stir everything well to combine. Simmer, uncovered, until the greens lose their brightness and become extremely tender, another 10 minutes. Season the greens to taste with salt. Serve hot. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).





Piri Piri Sauce

It's hard to go a day in Mozambique without eating something that's touched with piri piri sauce (sometimes written as peri peri). The sauce, made with chiles, citrus, and oil, is Portuguese in origin, but *peri* is actually the Swahili word for "chile" and refers to a specific type of chile pepper that is said to have been first cultivated in Africa. While the sauce is traditionally made with piri piri chiles, all different kinds of hot peppers work well. We found that red Fresno chiles, readily available in the United States and not quite as hot as jalapeños, work really well. However, if you can only find jalapeños, just use three fresh ones in place of the red Fresno chiles. Use the sauce anywhere you would use sriracha. Try it on grilled chicken, toss it with raw cashews and then roast them for a great snack with cocktails, stir it into a seafood stew, or use it for Prego Rolls (Steak and Piri Piri Sandwiches, page 186).

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

10 red Fresno chiles, stemmed,
seeded, and coarsely chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 tablespoons minced ginger

½ cup freshly squeezed lime juice

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon granulated sugar,
plus more as needed

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus
more as needed

In the jar of a blender, combine the chiles, garlic, ginger, lime juice, oil, sugar, and salt and puree until smooth.

Season to taste with more salt or sugar if you'd like.

Transfer to a jar and store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Prego Rolls

(STEAK AND PIRI PIRI SANDWICHES)

These sandwiches are best made by grilling the steak outside, but you can still make this recipe if you don't have an outdoor grill. Just cook the steak in a ripping-hot cast-iron pan (turn on your exhaust fan and open your windows!). Look for Portuguese rolls at your local grocery store (they're usually near the kaiser rolls), and if you can't find them, a soft bread roll like a ciabatta roll or other flour-dusted roll will work well.

SERVES 4

1 pound skirt steak or flank steak, trimmed of excess fat

1 cup Piri Piri Sauce (page 185)

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

4 garlic cloves, minced

Pinch of kosher salt

4 Portuguese rolls, halved horizontally

Place the steak and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the Piri Piri Sauce in a large resealable plastic bag. Using your hands, rub the sauce all over the steak and then seal the bag. Allow the steak to marinate for as little as 15 minutes at room temperature or put it in the refrigerator and let it marinate for up to 24 hours.

When you're ready to grill the steak, prepare an outdoor grill (charcoal or gas, whatever you've got) for medium heat. Remove the steak from the marinade (let any excess drip back in the bag and then discard the bag) and place it on the grill. Grill the steak, turning it every so often, until charred in spots and cooked to your liking (about 3 minutes per side for medium-rare). Transfer the steak to a cutting board and allow it to rest for 10 minutes. Keep your grill on for your rolls.

While the steak is resting, mix the melted butter, garlic, and salt together in a small bowl. Spoon the garlic butter over the cut sides of the rolls and grill them on their cut sides until golden brown, about 1 minute. Transfer the rolls to a serving platter, cut-sides up.

Thinly slice the rested steak and divide it among the bottom halves of the rolls. Drizzle each portion with 2 tablespoons of the Piri Piri Sauce (use up the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) and close the sandwiches with the top halves of the rolls. Serve immediately.



Plantains with Coconut and Prawns

"Coconut is one of the most important ingredients in our food," Ma Josefina told us in her kitchen, as she squeezed handful after handful of grated coconut mixed with hot water to make her own coconut milk. The coconut milk would soon be poured over plantains she had cut into thick coins, plus some chopped onion and prawns. Simmered together, this simple dish is something her mother used to make for her and her seven siblings. "It's a dish that we used to eat at home. You can have it for breakfast, for lunch, for dinner," she told us. It stretches a small amount of prawns (you can substitute large shrimp) into a dish that can feed a big family. She used about a dozen small green plantains, a variety that we can't find here, so we call for four green plantains, since the ones here are larger. Serve with cooked rice and feel free to top with a little chopped cilantro and/or thinly sliced hot chile peppers, plus some lime wedges for squeezing over.

SERVES 4

- 4 large green plantains
- Two 13-ounce cans full-fat unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- ½ pound uncooked prawns or large shrimp, peeled, deveined, and cut in half crosswise

Prepare the plantains by first putting on a pair of disposable gloves to keep your hands from getting too sticky while you peel them. Using a paring knife to help you trim the ends and skins, peel the plantains. Cut the plantains into 1-inch-thick coins and place them in a bowl of cold water (this will help them release some of their starch). Drain the plantains and place them in a large heavy pot. Stir in the coconut milk, onion, garlic, and salt. Add enough water so the liquid just covers the plantains (it will take 2 cups or so, depending on the size of your pot). Set the pot over high heat and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the prawns. Place a lid on the pot but leave it slightly ajar (so steam can escape and the liquid does not boil over) and simmer until the plantains are tender when pierced with a paring knife, about 10 minutes. "When the banana is done, it's done," says Ma Josefina. Season to taste with salt and serve immediately.

Bolo Polana

(CASHEW AND POTATO CAKE)

A popular Mozambican dessert, this cake features ground cashews (local to Mozambique) and cooked potatoes (used in some Portuguese baked goods), both of which come together to make an undeniably decadent cake. *Bolo* means “cake” in Portuguese, and Polana is the name of a neighborhood in Mozambique’s capital city, Maputo. Don’t skip the orange zest and juice and the vanilla in this recipe—they’re essential for balancing the richness of the cashews and potatoes in the batter. This cake is regularly served for special occasions.

SERVES 10

- 1 large baking potato, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 cup raw cashews
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs, separated
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract (preferably from Madagascar or Comoros)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream, half-and-half, or whole milk
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- Confectioners’ sugar, for serving

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick spray.

Place the potato in a small saucepan and cover with cold water. Set the saucepan over high heat and bring the water to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until the potato is tender, about 20 minutes. Drain the potato and mash the flesh with a potato masher until smooth. Set the potato aside.

Place the cashews in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely ground. Set the cashews aside.

Meanwhile, in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or in a large bowl using a handheld mixer (or a whisk and a lot of elbow grease), combine the butter and granulated sugar and beat until fluffy. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, whisking until each is incorporated before adding the next. Whisk in the cashews, orange zest, orange juice, vanilla, salt, and cream. Using a rubber spatula, stir the mixture to make sure everything is well combined and then gently fold in the flour and mashed potato.

CONTINUED

Bolo Polana

CONTINUED

Clean the mixer bowl and whisk attachment, return them to the mixer, and whisk the egg whites until they form stiff peaks (or clean your handheld mixer beaters and use those to beat the egg whites in a large bowl). With your rubber spatula, stir a third of the egg whites into the batter to loosen the batter, then gently fold in the remaining egg whites. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan.

Bake the cake until it is golden brown, a toothpick tests clean when inserted into the center of the cake, and the top is firm to the touch, about 1 hour 10 minutes. Let the cake cool completely in the pan on a wire rack. Turn the cake out of the pan and set it right-side up on a serving plate. Dust liberally with the confectioners' sugar, then cut into wedges and serve. Leftover cake can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and stored at room temperature for up to a few days.

