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# Africa







# Chakalaka

(SPICY VEGETABLE RELISH)

Like chutney in India or salsa in Mexico, no one in South Africa prepares *chakalaka*, a spicy vegetable relish, the same way. And if you ask anyone who makes the best version, they will likely name their own mother or grandmother. Here is our version, full of vegetables and spices. It's akin to *giardiniera* (the Italian mix of pickled vegetables that includes cauliflower and carrots) and also to English *piccalilli* relish, whose roots are in South Asian pickled vegetables, which is to say that cultures all across the world have some version of preserved vegetables that enhance many meals. Serve the *chakalaka* with bread, rice, grilled meats or fish, stews . . . anything. It's particularly delicious with grilled sausages or tucked into a grilled cheese sandwich (see page 210).

MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS

2 tablespoons canola oil  
 1 small yellow onion, finely diced  
 2 garlic cloves, minced  
 1 jalapeño, stemmed and minced  
 1 tablespoon minced ginger  
 2 teaspoons ground turmeric  
 1 teaspoon ground cumin  
 1 teaspoon ground coriander  
 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed  
 1 small red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and finely diced  
 1 small yellow bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and finely diced  
 3 large carrots, coarsely grated  
 ½ small green cabbage, finely chopped (about 3 cups)  
 One 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes  
 2 tablespoons white vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice

Warm the oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot set over medium heat. Stir in the onion, garlic, jalapeño, and ginger. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the turmeric, cumin, coriander, and salt. Cook, stirring, just until the spices are wonderfully fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the bell peppers, carrots, cabbage, and tomatoes. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, giving the mixture a stir every so often, until all the vegetables are tender and most of the liquid has evaporated, about 30 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the vinegar, and season the *chakalaka* to taste with salt. Let the *chakalaka* cool to room temperature and season it to taste one final time. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week, then serve it either cold or at room temperature.



# Denningvleis

(SWEET-AND-SOUR BRAISED LAMB WITH TAMARIND)

The tamarind and other dominant flavors in this braised lamb come from the Cape Malay community (see page 195 for more information). If you can't find tamarind paste, you can substitute an equal amount of sherry vinegar or fresh lemon juice in the stew. The taste won't be *exactly* the same, but you will get the nice sweet-and-sour effect along with the brown sugar. Serve with cooked rice and a vegetable such as Sukuma Wiki (Greens with Tomatoes, page 121). You can make this stew up to a week in advance. Just refrigerate it in an airtight container and rewarm it in a pot set over low heat before serving. It's actually one of those dishes that's even better if you make it ahead.

SERVES 4

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 pounds lamb stew meat, preferably with bones, cut into 2-inch pieces (it's best to have your butcher do this so they can cut through the bones)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- 1 large yellow onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 whole cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3 tablespoons tamarind paste
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water

Preheat the oven to 300°F.

Warm the oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy ovenproof pot set over medium heat. Season the lamb generously with salt and cook in the oil, in batches as necessary, until browned on all sides, about 10 minutes per batch. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the browned lamb to a plate and set it aside. Once all the lamb is browned, add the onion and garlic to the empty pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the bay leaves, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, tamarind paste, sugar, and water to the pot and stir well to combine. Return the lamb (and whatever juices have collected on the plate) to the pot and stir well to combine. Cover the pot and place it in the oven. Cook until the meat is wonderfully tender, about 1½ hours. Be sure to uncover the pot and give the mixture a stir halfway through the cooking time. Season the lamb to taste with salt and serve hot.







# Chakalaka and Cheddar Braaibroodjies

(GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH)

These grilled cheese sandwiches are typically truly *grilled*, meaning they are thrown on an outdoor grill over open coals, and are usually served as a sort of snack after a big barbecue (known as a braai in South Africa). They're a perfect midnight snack and the best way to make use of still-hot coals if you get a second wave of hunger after you've eaten a meal and the party is still going. The liberal spoonful of Chakalaka (Spicy Vegetable Relish) makes these extra special. If you don't have a jar of it in your fridge, you can use any type of relish or chutney. Since we don't want you to have to wait until you have an outdoor grill going just to make these, we simply call for a hot cast-iron pan. The mayonnaise spread on the outside of the sandwiches means every single bit of the bread will get browned and caramelized (remember, mayonnaise is basically just oil).

MAKES 1 SANDWICH  
(EASILY MULTIPLIED)

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

2 slices good-quality sandwich  
bread

¼ cup grated sharp white  
Cheddar cheese

¼ cup Chakalaka (Spicy Vegetable  
Relish, page 207) or any relish or  
chutney of your choice

2 thin slices onion (any type)

Set a cast-iron pan or other heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Spread 1 tablespoon of the mayonnaise on one side of each slice of bread. Place one slice of bread mayonnaise-side down in the skillet and top it with half the cheese, then top with the chakalaka and onion. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top of the onion, then place the second piece of bread, mayonnaise-side up, on top. Cover the pan and cook until the bottom of the sandwich is browned, about 2 minutes. Give the sandwich a good press with a spatula and then carefully flip it over, cover, and cook until the second side is browned and the cheese has melted, about 2 minutes. Serve immediately.



MA KHANYISA'S

# Imifino

(WILD GREENS WITH CORN PORRIDGE)

*Imifino* is a word in the Xhosa and Zulu languages that translates to “leafy greens” and usually refers to greens that grow wild. Imifino also refers to a cooked meal of those greens, typically with some onions and seasonings, and served with corn porridge. It’s also Ma Khanyisa’s favorite food from childhood. “It’s a traditional dish usually eaten by women,” Ma Khanyisa told us. “For some reason, back in the day, men were not aware of the nutritional value of green vegetables, and they didn’t eat them because there was a myth that they made [men] weak. So that might be why African women are so strong—we’ve always had these traditional meals for ourselves and our children.” A healthy, affordable, filling meal, imifino is eaten throughout South Africa. Many older women are passionate about teaching younger generations to identify the greens that grow wild throughout South Africa, whether they’re poking out from cracks in the pavement or in fields, so that everyone will always be able to access nutritious food. Ma Khanyisa now makes her imifino with cultivated vegetables and says any mixture of green vegetables works well. Serve it on its own as a meal or a snack, alongside other vegetables or cooked meat, or topped with a fried egg. If you enjoy extra spice, sprinkle it with dried chile flakes, pickled chiles, or a few dashes of hot sauce.

SERVES 4

2½ cups water

½ cup finely ground white or yellow cornmeal

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large yellow onion, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 jalapeño, stemmed and minced

1 small green cabbage, finely chopped (about 6 cups)

2 large or 4 small zucchini, cut into ½-inch-thick slices

One 5-ounce package baby spinach

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 mixture gets too thick or too dry, simply add more boiling water. Set the cornmeal aside.

Meanwhile, place 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 garlic and jalapeño and stir just until they sizzle, about 30 seconds. Add the cabbage, zucchini, and spinach and season with a large pinch of salt. Cover and cook, uncovering to stir occasionally, until the vegetables are softened and just tender, about 15 minutes. Transfer the porridge to the pot with the vegetables and mix everything well to combine. Season one final time to taste with salt and serve immediately.







# Malva Pudding Cake

Similar to a tres leches cake, this sweet dessert consists of a spongy cake, flavored with apricot jam and cloves, that gets saturated with a syrupy mixture of evaporated milk, brown sugar, and butter while still warm from the oven. Hugely popular throughout South Africa, malva pudding cake became more widely known outside of the country when Art Smith, the celebrity chef who used to cook for Oprah Winfrey, served it for the students of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa following Christmas dinner in 2006.

SERVES 12

## Cake

1½ cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground cloves

2 large eggs

½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup apricot jam

¾ cup whole milk

## Sauce

¾ cup evaporated milk

½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract (preferably from Madagascar or Comoros)

½ teaspoon kosher salt

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

Place the flour, baking powder, salt, and cloves in a large bowl and whisk well to combine.

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), whisk together the eggs, granulated sugar, and jam until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes of aggressive whisking. Whisk the milk into the egg mixture and then gently fold the flour mixture into the liquid mixture. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan and bake until the cake is springy to the touch, a toothpick tests clean when inserted into the center of the cake, and the top is golden brown, about 30 minutes.

**Meanwhile, make the sauce:** Place the evaporated milk, brown sugar, butter, vanilla, and salt in a small saucepan set over medium heat. Cook, stirring to dissolve the sugar, until the mixture is smooth and bubbles form around the edges of the pan, about 3 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the sauce sit while the cake finishes baking.

When the cake is done baking, place the pan on a wire rack and use a skewer or chopstick to poke holes all over the surface of the cake (be sure to poke all the way to the bottom of the pan). Carefully and evenly pour the sauce over the surface of the cake. It might seem like a lot of sauce, but it gets absorbed. Let the cake cool to room temperature. Cut into twelve pieces and serve. Spoon any extra sauce from the baking pan over the pieces.



## Iced Rooibos Tea with Orange, Cloves, and Cinnamon

Rooibos, which translates to “red bush,” is a plant indigenous to South Africa that's used to make herbal tea. The tea has a rusty hue and tastes like a cross between earthy yerba mate tea and flowery hibiscus tea. While many serve it hot with cream and sugar, we like to steep it with cloves and cinnamon, cool it down, mix it with orange juice, and serve it as a refreshing iced tea. Rooibos tea bags are widely available, especially in health food stores, and online from retailers such as [rishi-tea.com](http://rishi-tea.com). If you have extra cinnamon sticks, feel free to use them for garnish.

### SERVES 4

2 tablespoons granulated sugar  
4 whole cloves  
One 2-inch piece cinnamon stick  
3 cups water  
4 rooibos tea bags  
1 cup orange juice  
Ice, for serving  
1 orange, sliced, for serving

Place the sugar, cloves, cinnamon, and water in a small pot set over high heat and bring to a boil. Stir to dissolve the sugar, turn off the heat, add the tea bags, and let the mixture sit until it cools to room temperature. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a large pitcher (discard the contents of the sieve) and stir in the orange juice. Fill four glasses with ice and orange slices and divide the drink among the glasses. Serve immediately.



