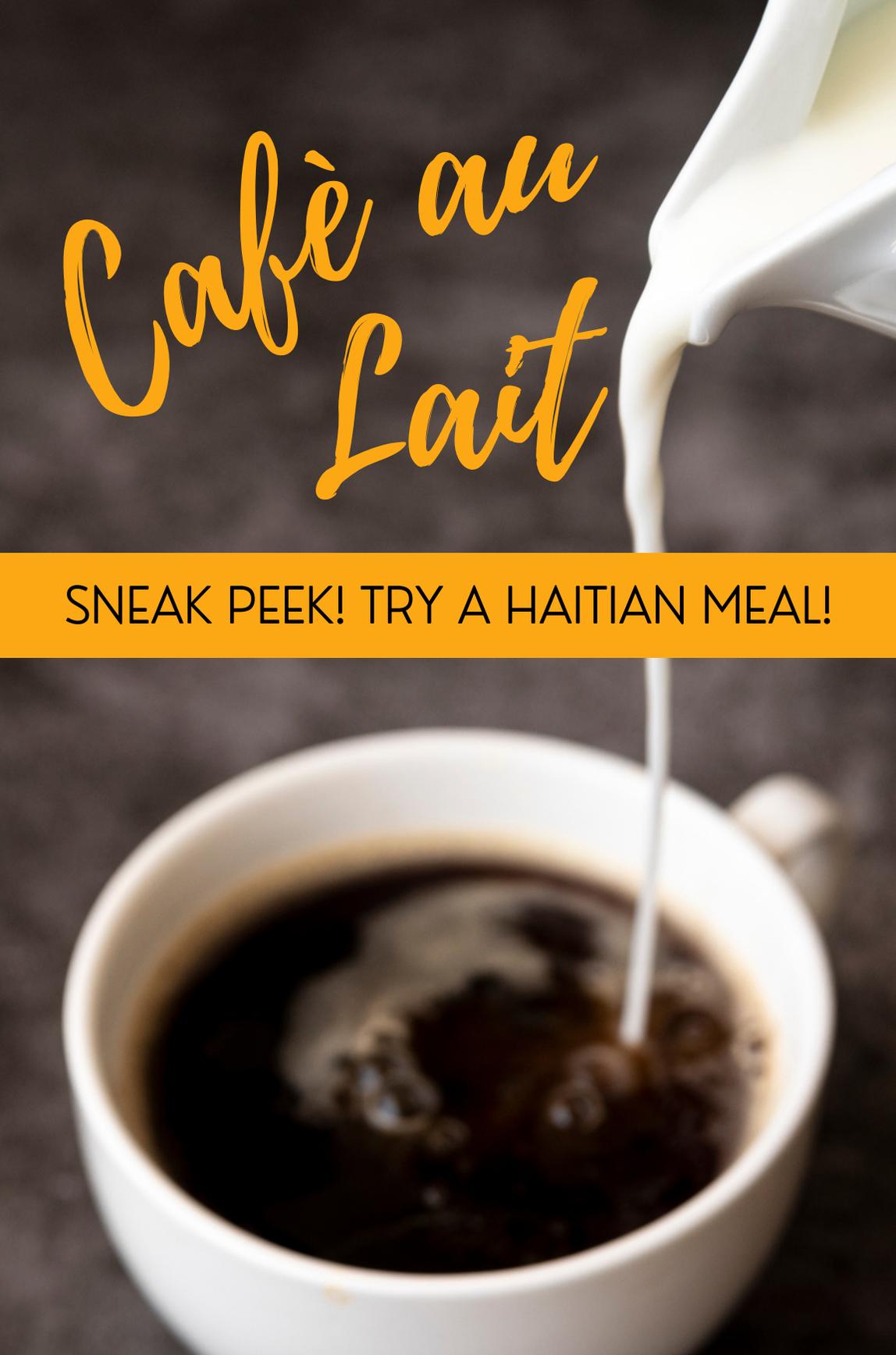


Café au Lait

A close-up photograph of a white ceramic pitcher pouring a stream of white milk into a white ceramic cup filled with dark coffee. The background is dark and out of focus. The text 'Café au Lait' is written in a golden-yellow, cursive font in the upper left quadrant. A yellow banner with black text is positioned horizontally across the middle of the image.

SNEAK PEEK! TRY A HAITIAN MEAL!

let's start with the basics..

EPIS: 'e-pees / **spice**

the very foundation of Haitian food;
traditionally made in a mortar & pestle;
may be made in a blender and
refrigerated for a couple of weeks
because everyone needs a jar of fragrant,
ready-to-go flavor in their fridge

In Haiti, epis is never far away. Just take a little walk and you will soon find a lady selling vegetables, and she will probably have the essentials, which are parsley (usually bundled with a bit of thyme), green onion, garlic, bell pepper, and a scotch bonnet pepper. You can find your oil, vinegar, cloves and Maggi in a boutik.

Some things to know if you're not

making your epis in Haiti: Haitians actually use leeks, which are bigger and tougher, instead of green onions. Scotch bonnet peppers can be replaced with habaneros or any super spicy pepper.





TRADITIONAL EPIS

2 green onions 1/4 c fresh parsley
4 cloves garlic 1/2 tsp ground thyme
Hot pepper to taste

Pound in a mortar and pestle, or blend in a mini chopper. May add a bit of liquid if necessary. You want to end up with a thick, smooth paste.

BLENDED EPIS

This is never measured! Mix and match...

2 c fresh parsley	Small chunk ginger root
4 sprigs thyme	10 whole cloves
1 scotch bonnet pepper	1 tsp black pepper
3-4 green onions	1 tsp turmeric
1 small bell pepper	1/2 c oil
1 small onion	1/2 c vinegar
2-3 heads garlic	Salt & Maggi*

Pour oil and vinegar into blender first. This helps it to blend everything more easily. Add chunked veggies and blend. Store in a quart jar in the fridge for up to a month. *Some people prefer to leave the salt and Maggi out of their epis and add it later when they make their food.

meat preparation...

Haitian cuisine is not meat-centric. However, Haitians love meat and definitely eat it as frequently as the budget allows. In the mountain markets, still bleating goats and squawking chickens are tied on the outskirts, waiting for someone to haggle a prize and take them home to butcher. City market merchants start every morning with frozen, imported chicken legs and thighs. These are probably the most affordable meat option and are commonly served at parties. Live chickens are also readily available and commonly gifted. If you want the best pork, goat, or beef chunks, or ground beef, get up early and visit a local butcher shop. You'll see a cow hanging in the dimly lit back room, freshly killed with a knife to its neck – and so many flies buzzing. Your meat will be hacked into small chunks: bones, skin, and all, with a large machete, then stuffed into a plastic bag. In the markets, large piles of various cuts are piled on wooden tables in front of the merchants. Again, flies are everywhere! Haitians are particular about washing and cooking their meat well, though, so don't worry, you'll be none the worse for it!

Beef, pork, goat, chicken, and even fish are cooked using the same basic process. Ground beef is usually mixed with epis, lime or vinegar, seasonings, and a bit of tomato paste. It's mashed until fine with a pestle, then simmered with a bit of water in a covered kettle.

The washing process for chicken usually starts on a low, woven chair, huge knife in hand, the tub of chicken legs at your feet. Some people like to skin their chicken legs, but some leave the skin on and just cut off the thick, fatty pieces. Then cut out the big muscles or veins along the end of the drumsticks. Make a couple deep slashes where the meat is thickest just so it can soak up more flavor. Then it's time to sprinkle with salt and rub vigorously with zoranj si, or sour orange. You can use lime or lemon for chicken, or vinegar in a pinch. Let the meat sit a few minutes then pour boiling water over it. After a minute or two, drain. The boiling water is to clean the meat, so you can skip that step if you have good, fresh meat and are in a hurry. To your drained chicken, add some big spoonfuls of epis, and really massage it into the meat with your hands. Ginger and turmeric are good epis

ingredients for well- flavored meat. Squeeze some more citrus juice on and add a good amount of salt and Maggi.

Sometimes, this is all that's done to season the meat, but it's also common to make a bit of a marinade with any ingredients you have on hand (sample recipe below), stir it into the pot of chicken, and let it season for a few hours. You can also leave it in the fridge overnight.

To cook, add a bit of water, but not enough to cover the meat. You can add a scotch bonnet pepper with some cloves poked in, a bundle of fresh herbs, or a bit of thinly sliced onion. All this is optional. The big three flavors should be the epis, Maggi or salt, and a bit of a sour, acid taste. Put a lid on your kettle and let the meat simmer away on low. It should make plenty of its own juice but if not, add water, a little at a time as needed. You don't want to add too much, as it will dilute the flavor. Once it's boiling, taste the broth and add salt or vinegar as needed. Now just simmer until the meat is cooked through. Stir it at least a few times so the pieces cook evenly. At this point, the chicken can be used in sauce or removed and deep fried. Don't throw away the broth! It's vital for the sauce.

CHICKEN

from Deborah & Sallie

Rub 12 chicken legs (3-4 lbs bone in chicken) vigorously with limes, lemons, or sour oranges (may substitute 1/4 c vinegar) and 1/4 c epis.

Then add:

2 Tbsp soy/Worcestershire sauce

2 Tbsp mustard

1-2 tsp season salt

1-2 Tbsp mayo

1 tsp Maggi

Tabasco to taste

Marinade as long as you like, then add water and salt as needed and cook on the stove on low until tender. Or for an American twist, you can grill it!



DIRI KOLE: 'dze-re 'ko-lay

Diri kole ak pwa, rice stuck with beans, is probably the most common meal across Haiti. It's the weekday meal for most families, but also the base food for a Haitian party or wedding. Diri kole is typically made with pinto or black beans. When they're in season, no one can get enough of green pwa kongo, or pigeon peas. They are a favorite at parties, maybe with added Maggi djondjon, bouillon cubes made from Haitian black mushrooms.

DIRI KOLE - RICE WITH BEANS

from Quiara & Sallie

1 c cooked beans with
juice (or 1/3 c dry)
2 c rice
2 Tbsp epis
3 Tbsp oil
1/2-1 c coconut milk*

1 scotch bonnet pepper
6 whole cloves
2 tsp chicken bouillon
Salt and pepper
1 Tbsp butter*

Cook beans in lots of water. Drain, but save liquid. Fry beans with oil and epis, until fragrant and slightly browned. Add optional coconut milk, bean juice, and water to make 3 1/2 c liquid. Add Maggi, salt, and black pepper to taste. Rinse rice well. When water boils, add rice and butter.



SAUCES

In Haiti, you just don't eat rice without sauce. Meat is used whenever possible, but some days it maybe just a bit of canned salmon, aransò, or a tomato sauce with a few veggies. Veggies commonly added to either of the sauce recipes below are potatoes, carrots, onions, bell peppers, green beans, and okra.

MEAT SAUCE

from Sallie

Cook chicken, pork, or beef according to directions on pg 9-10. Fry a few Tbsp tomato paste in oil. Add your meat and some sliced onions and peppers. Stir and sauté to coat the meat with tomato paste. Then strain the cooking liquid and add. It probably won't be a lot but should be very potent. Now taste and add water as needed if it's very salty. It should not quite cover the meat. You can add more seasoning if it tastes bland. Boil all together for just a few minutes. *This sauce can also be made with a bit of ground beef cooked with epis.

SIMPLE SAUCE

from Quiara

3 Tbsp tomato paste	4 whole cloves
1-2 Tbsp epis	1 tsp chicken bouillon
2-3 Tbsp oil	Squirt of lime juice or
1 scotch bonnet pepper	vinegar
Veggies of choice*	Salt and pepper

This is a quick sauce for when you have no meat. Fry your epis in oil. Stir in tomato paste. Add 1-2 c water, poke cloves into pepper and add with rest of ingredients. Add any of the veggies listed above and cook. Peppers and onions are usually very thinly sliced and added at the very end.



BANNANN PEZE - FRIED PLANTAINS

from Quiara & Heather

Make sure you start with hard, green plantains! Peel them by scoring them lengthwise with a knife, then opening and pulling off the skin in one piece. Slice diagonally in 1-2 in chunks, put in a bowl with very salty water and optional chicken bouillon. Heat oil and fry plantain chunks for several min. They should change color a bit and get crispy on the outside. When they are finished, press them, either with a plantain press or just a cup. They should press easily and stay in one piece if you fried them long enough. Dip in salt water again (Don't forget this step!) and fry again until crispy. Eat with pikliz or ketchup. *Use this same process for frying lam veritab, or breadfruit. If you buy a lot of plantains, you can fry them, press them, then freeze them. Thaw and fry the 2nd time when you're ready! *If plantains are hard to find in your area, Haitian food is commonly served with french fries.



CABBAGE PIKLIZ

from Marie Vena & Quiara

1 medium carrot

1/4 c onion*

Bell pepper*

1 scotch bonnet pepper

1/2 tsp chicken bouillon

Pinch salt

Vinegar

1/2 head cabbage

Juice of 1-2 limes

Thinly shred cabbage and carrot (you can use a grater or buy bagged angel hair cabbage). Add bell pepper and onion for more color, if desired. Slice paper thin! Finely chop your scotch bonnet pepper and add a little bit at a time to control spice. Add seasonings and fresh squeezed lime juice if you have it. If not you can use vinegar. You want it to have a spicy, sour, flavor, and also be able to taste the chicken bouillon. Let sit a bit before serving so it can season through. Serve as a topping for fried plantains, french fries, etc.

how to serve...

Top your diri kole with a sauce - meat or veggie, and serve fried plantains with pikliz and a simple garnish of sliced tomatoes and lettuce for a side. You can put all your meat in the sauce, grill your chicken legs, or fry them in oil and serve them on the side. For a drink, may we suggest fresh-squeezed fruit juice or Coca-Cola?

Haiti is full of color...

We've tried to show you all of its brightness on these pages. But we cannot leave out the dark side, friends. There is the cry of "Jezi!" as a mother watches her baby take its last breath in a dirty, crowded hospital. There are the grown men with businesses destroyed from voodoo curses. There is the mother, limp and wailing, at her son's funeral. He was killed as an innocent passerby during a gang fight. There is the mountain farmer, praying for rain, not only for crops, but for water to drink. The streets look different to the person driving through in a private car than they do when you're trying to keep your dress shirt clean while riding a tap-tap, or if you're pushing a wheelbarrow with sweat in your eyes. The ocean looks different when you're sitting on the beach under an umbrella with a plate of fresh grilled fish than when you're the fisherman out in your wooden boat, pulling at the oars with calloused hands. The steep mountainside full of tiny farms looks different from an airplane than it does to the man who goes out everyday with a hoe. And the night feels different when you're sitting on your gallery behind a locked gate than when you're hurrying through a bad part of town, eyes peeled for anything unusual. Haiti is hard. We admire our friends and family here, for always smiling and saying "Bonjou;" for throwing that party for their graduating child even when they really don't have the money; for singing in the back of the vehicle when we go through a dangerous spot in the road; and for just coming over, pulling up a plastic lawn chair, and sharing a cup of cold water and a few words. We leave you with enchantment for the beauty of Haiti, but hopefully too with respect for the hardness. So as you cook this country's delicious food, keep a prayer in your hearts for its people.



FROM PUMPKIN SOUP

TO PASSION FRUIT JUICE,

Haitian cuisine is full of hidden gems.

It's so much more than rice and beans served on a tin plate, though we all agree that diri kole is very delicious. By cooking the food from this Caribbean island, we hope to make you feel closer to your brothers and sisters there.

This book is full of recipes, stories, and scenes from real life in Haiti. Our lifestyles and cooking styles have become full of diversity because of who we married, and we want to share our North American and Brazilian recipes with you too. Some have a Haitian twist, and some are just simple, delicious recipes that are easy and cheap to make anywhere in the world. The recipes in the baking section have simple ingredients too, and would be valuable to anyone moving to another country. God has given us a gift: this life of diversity, sharing, and learning to be open-minded, and we want to give you a "ti goutte," or little taste!

Did you love your taste of Haiti?!

THERE IS SO MUCH MORE!

For recipes for Haitian spaghetti, fried meatballs, spicy ginger tea, pasta dishes, plus two other sections: simple basic and cross-cultural and American everyday recipes - order the Cafe au Lait Cookbook or download the digital version.

Go to www.quiarapinchina.com/cafe-au-lait-cookbook and get ready for a fun cooking adventure!

