

Banku and fried tilapia with "shito" (black pepper sauce) and chopped vegetables

- *A favourite recipe by Benia, a front desk volunteer at South House*



Banku is a universal Ghanaian dish eaten as a staple food throughout Ghana, but mostly enjoyed by the Ewe, Fante and Ga people in the southern parts of Ghana. Traditionally, banku is made from a combination of fermented corn and cassava dough but around the world, ready prepared fermented corn dough can be purchased online or in African shops and cooked to make banku.

Banku is usually eaten with okoro stew or soups but is very popular with grilled or fried fish and salsa-like sauce and "shito", a spicy black pepper sauce.

In this newsletter, a recipe for banku with fried tilapia and shito (black pepper sauce) with chopped tomatoes/onions/cucumber/celery is described. This banku combination is best eaten as lunch and with no cutlery.

Recipe

Banku Ingredients

Corn flour (4 cups)
Salt to taste

Instructions: Already prepared, corn flour purchased from an African shop is mixed with a small amount of water enough to make a dough.

This is covered in an airtight container and kept at room temperature for 2-4 days to allow fermentation of the dough.

The fermented dough is cooked with salted water in a sturdy pot, with continuous stirring, using a solid wooden spoon. The dough clumps up and transforms into a gloopy pulp fairly quickly. It is then allowed to steam surrounded by a little water for 30 minutes in order to cook through thoroughly. Thereafter it is given a final mix. Once cooked, the banku is dished out and traditionally shaped by hand, quickly dipping fingers into cold water then folding portion of it into a ball. A safer method of forming the banku balls is to wet the surface of a round ceramic bowl with a little water (prevent stickiness). Dip a serving spoon in cool water and scoop out the desired amount of banku into the wet bowl. Now shake the bowl in a circular motion until the round shape is formed. The banku is now ready to be served and is best eaten hot.

Shito (black pepper sauce)

This is the famous Ghanaian hot chilli condiment, which can be made in a variety of ways and every household has its own recipe. It goes really well with both fish and meat, and can be served as a side to most dishes. It can also be used for marinating or as a dressing, dip, spread or topping.

Ingredients:

10 scotch bonnet peppers or 2 teaspoons dried chilli flakes (can be reduced to your taste)
3 large onions
3 cloves of garlic
3- inch piece fresh ginger
5-6 tablespoons tomato paste
Powdered dried shrimps (50g)
Powdered dried herrings (50g)
1 teaspoon salt/seasoning, optional (1 teaspoon rosemary or thyme)
Vegetable oil (0.5L)

Instructions: Chop all ingredients (pepper, onion, seasoning and ginger) and blend with the oil into a smooth paste.

Pour the mixture into a saucepan and cook until brown with constant stirring.

Stir in the tomato paste and keep stirring to avoid the mixture sticking to the pot.

Finally, add the shrimp and herrings powder, then cook over a low heat for 30-40 minutes, stirring almost continuously to prevent the mixture sticking to the pan. The contents should transform from deep red to very dark brown and the oil will rise to the surface when the sauce is ready. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary.

Salsa-like sauce

Ingredients:

2 Fresh tomatoes
1 Red onions
1 Pepper, optional

Instructions: These ingredients can be chopped into small cubes or blended roughly together and salt added to taste. Other vegetables like cucumber and celery can be chopped and added which tames the hotness of the salsa while providing extra nutritional benefits.

Fried Tilapia

Ingredients:

1 large fresh tilapia thoroughly cleaned and gutted.
Salt

1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon ginger powder
1 teaspoon black pepper powder
1 teaspoon coriander powder

Instructions: Marinate the fish with the seasoning and allow to sit in the fridge for at least 3hours. The seasoned fish is fried in oil until thoroughly cooked. Alternatively, the marinated fish can be grilled for 1-1.5h at 180 degree celsius for a similar result.

Remember to check out the handmade pottery bowls at www.burnabynh.ca/shop and support the BNH Food Hubs.

