

Cooking with Chef BJ



Caribbean Recipes

Tastes of Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba

Spanish and African cultures wield great influence on the cuisine of this expansive region. Like elsewhere in Latin America, Caribbean food and cooking methods differ and often depend on access to the sea or mountains. One unifying characteristic, however, is the passion for celebration, and in this region, there's an endless amount of food-focused festivities.

Depending on the country, you'll find variations on savory dishes such as Mofongo, a tripe stew, and Mondongo, a mashed fried plantain dish made with garlic and pork rind. The Cuban classic, Ropa Vieja, a delicious and tender stewed beef, is prepared throughout these islands. Two secrets to cooking flavorful Caribbean fare are sofrito, a mixture of sautéed garlic, onions, peppers and tomatoes that's used as a base for soups, stews and rice dishes, and recaito, a green version made with cilantro.

Other popular foods include Cuban Sandwiches, Black Bean Soup, Arroz con Leche (rice pudding), Tostones (fried plantains), Mojitos (a refreshing cocktail) and much more. Of course, rice, both yellow and white, and beans, both black and red, are a mealtime must. Although less common, Alcapurrias (meat- or seafood-stuffed banana croquettes), Bacalaitos (codfish fritters) and Chicharrón de Pollo (fried chicken) are also favorites.