

# THE TASTE OF SURINAME



With  
**100**  
today popular,  
never published,  
and long-forgotten  
*Afro-Surinamese, European,  
Lebanese, Jewish, Chinese,  
Hindustani, Javanese and  
Amerindian recipes*

Diana Dubois



*The Taste of Suriname* isn't just another Surinamese cookbook.

It is not only the first Surinamese cookbook especially written for English-speaking audiences, it also contains an unique collection of 100 long-forgotten, unknown and today popular recipes, seasoned with a good sprinkle of historical culinary anecdotes.

In this book you will find recipes which are passed down orally from generation to generation and are now finally set into permanent form.

For example: Amerindian *Peprewatra*, *Roasted Toad legs* and *Cassava bread*, Afro-Surinamese *Afingi*, *Pinda Alesi*, *Asogrie* and *Sukr'irtji*, Chinese *Fachong* and *Caramel Apples* and Lebanese *Mehsmi Malfouf*.

Off course recipes for today popular dishes such as *Roti*, *Saoto Soup*, *Peanut Soup*, *Pom*, *Brown Beans with Rice* and *Chicken Pasty* are also inserted. And many more!

*The Taste of Suriname* is a cookbook for people who remember with nostalgia the dishes from their childhood, as well for people who long for a good introduction into the Surinamese cuisine: which this book certainly is!

# SURINAME IN A NUTSHELL

Suriname (also known as *Switi Sranan*) is a country in northern South America and officially known as the Republic of Suriname. It is bordered by French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, Brazil to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the north. Over ninety percent of the country consists of forests with a breathtaking wealth in flora and fauna.

Suriname is the only independent entity in the Americas where Dutch is spoken and the smallest sovereign state in South America. The population, approximately 560.157, is of one of the most ethnically diverse in the region. The country is divided in ten districts, but most inhabitants live on the country's north coast, where the capital city Paramaribo is located.

The official language is Dutch, but many people along the coast speak English too. The mostly spoken local language is Sranan Tongo, which is a English-based Creole language.

Other local languages are: Sarnami, Bhojpuri, Javanese Surinamese, Hakka and Cantonese (Chinese) and several Maroon and native languages. Altogether, twenty-two languages are spoken.

The Suriname dollar, denoted by SRD, is the official currency of Suriname.

The main religion in Suriname is Christianity, followed by Hinduism and Islam. Judaism, Winti, Baha'i and Shamanism are also represented, though on a smaller scale.

Suriname is a country with an unique blend of different peoples and cultures. They have a wide range of festivals, national holidays and rituals, which all imply culinary traditions.

# INDEX

## AMERINDIAN CUISINE

Aromatic Favoring Sauce ~ Kasripo  
Cassava Bread ~ Khali or Baka-Kesaba  
Cassava Cakes ~ Lolo Casaba or Cassava Dukun  
Cassava Coconut Cake ~ Bojo  
Corn Cakes ~ Marisi Dukun  
Cornmeal Porridge ~ Marisi Pap or Sakura  
Pepper Pot ~ Kadykyra or Pepprepatoe  
Roasted Fish ~ Wotho Purupo  
Roasted Toad Legs ~ Geroosterde Kikkerbiljetjes  
Spicy Fish Soup ~ Pepre Watra or Adjupo

## EUROPEAN & JEWISH CUISINE

About Plantains and bananas  
Almond and Raisin Cake ~ Keksi Kuku  
Almond Syrup ~ Orgeade  
Brown Beans with Rice ~ BB met R  
Cherry Syrup ~ Kersenstroop  
Chicken Pasty ~ Kippenpastei  
Colostrum Cakes ~ Biestmelkkoekjes  
Cornmeal Cookies ~ Maizenakoekjes  
Crab Pasty ~ Krabbenpastei  
Ginger Beer ~ Gemberbier or Ginga Biri  
Hermits (cookies) ~ Hernhutttertjes  
Jawbreaker ~ Blokmout  
Kisses (meringues) ~ Soentjes  
Pineapple Pie ~ Polka Taart  
Pomtayer based oven dish with Chicken ~ Pom  
Raisin Rum Cake ~ Fiadu  
Rice and chicken Oven stew ~ Popido Estella  
Rich Layer Cake ~ Lapis Legit or Spekkoek  
Russian Salad ~ Surinaams Huzarensalade

Sponge Cake ~ Ingris Buru or Engelse Bol

Tamarind Syrup ~ Tamarindestroop

## AFRO-SURINAMESE CUISINE

African White Eggplant with Bush-meat ~ Antroewa met Boesmeti

All-in-one dish with Codfish ~ Her'Heri

Almond Ice-cubes ~ Orgeadeblokjes

Banana meal Porridge with Pork ~ Atutu

Banana Soup ~ Adompri or Grit'Bana Supu

Boiled Corn cobs ~ Bori Karu

Breadfruit Croquettes ~ Broodvruchtkroketten

Cassava balls with Codfish ~ Bakkeljauwballetjes

Cassava soup ~ Afingi

Corn Cookies ~ Karu Kuku

Corn flour Dumplings ~ Adompri

Cornmeal Cakes ~ Akansa

Cornmeal delicacy ~ Asogri

Dish of Plantains & Peanuts ~ Bana Afufu

Fried Ripe Plantains ~ Baka Bana

Mixed Meat, Rice & Black Eyed Peas ~ Moksi Meti

Okra Salad ~ Oker salade

Okra Soup ~ Okra Bravu

Peanut Soup with Tom-Tom ~ Pinda Bravu

Peanut & Rice stew ~ Pinda Alesi

Pickled Cucumbers ~ Zuurgoed

Plantain Dumplings ~ Tom-Tom

Polenta Porridge ~ Adompri

Pomtayer based oven dish with Fish ~ Vis Pom

Stir-fried Taro Leaves ~ Gestoofde Tajarblad

Stuffed Eggplant ~ Stofu Bulansyéi

Sugared Corn Kernels ~ Sukr'erti

## CHINESE CUISINE

Chinese cabbage ~ Amsoi, Paksoi & Kaisoi

Chinese Cucumber ~ Son Wonka

Chinese Sausages ~ Fachong



Chinese Spiced Chicken ~ Tja Kai  
Chinese Yard long beans ~ Thewkok  
Fried Chicken I ~ Sauw Kai I  
Fried Chicken II ~ Sauw Kai II  
Prawn Rolls ~ Kit Kiat Twa Hee  
Roasted Pork ~ Char Siu  
Salted Eggs ~ Ham Than  
Scrambled Eggs with Shrimps ~ Fu Yong Ha  
Stir-Fried Yard long beans ~ Tja Thewkok  
Stuffed Bitter melon ~ Ngiong Fuka  
Toffee Apples ~ Tanghulu

## **HINDUSTANI CUISINE**

Banana chips ~ Bananenchips  
Breadfruit chips ~ Broodvruchtchips  
Deep fried Split-peas Balls ~ Phulauri  
Flat Bread I ~ Roti I  
Flat Bread II ~ Roti II  
Fried Bitter melon ~ Sopropo or Karaila  
Fried Chicken Livers ~ Gebakken Kippenlevertjes  
Fried Peas Donuts ~ Bara  
Pickled Mangos ~ Chow Chow  
Plain cooked White Rice ~ Uble Chawal or Alesi  
Roti Filling: Chicken Masala ~ Kerrie Kip  
Spicy Mango Chutney ~ Manja Chutney  
Tomato Chutney ~ Tomatenchutney

## **JAVANESE CUISINE**

Cassava Cakes ~ Cassave Dukun  
Cassava Chips ~ Krau-Krau  
Fried Banana ~ Pisang Goreng or Bakabana  
Fried Cassava ~ Teloh  
Fried Plantain Chips ~ Bananenchips  
Leafy Vegetables ~ Bladgroenten  
Noodles with chicken ~ Bami met kip  
Rice Cakes ~ Lontong

Sour-sop Syrup ~ Zuurzakstroop

Spicy Peanut Sauce ~ Pindasaus

Sweet Coconut Drink~ Tjendol

Vegetable Salad with Peanut Sauce ~ Petjil

Yard-long beans with Dried Shrimps ~ Gestoofde Kousenband met Garnalen

## LEBANESE CUISINE

Fried Spicy Meat Balls ~ Kebie or Kibbeh

Lebanese Salad ~ Tabbouléh

Okra Stew ~ Bemieh

Small Meat Pastries ~ Sambousek

Stuffed Cabbage Rolls ~ Mehshi Malfouf

# FOREWORD

Let's get straight to the point - Surinamese people may speak Dutch, but they don't eat Dutch. The Surinamese cuisine is a culinary passport to countries of four continents in one go. It is an unique explosion of culinary treats unrivalled by any other cuisine in the world. Influences are wide-ranging and exotic, the legacy of many cultures ~ Amerindian, West-African, European, Jewish, Chinese, Javanese, Lebanese, Hindustani ~ fused and stewed in a South American cooking pot. Surinamese people know what good food is, which is why you will find a wide range of restaurants and eateries in Paramaribo. Here you can enjoy a *Broodje Pom*<sup>1</sup> for breakfast or for lunch have the country's most popular soup *Saoto*<sup>2</sup>. For dinner, the famous *Roti*<sup>3</sup> is a must. After dinner you might take a walk to the riverside and choose to drink a refreshing soft-drink or a cold bottle of Surinamese beer. With this book you can now get the taste of Suriname at home!

*The Taste of Suriname* isn't just another Surinamese cookbook. It is the first Surinamese cookbook especially written for English-speaking readers and it contains an unique collection of 100 today popular, never published and long-forgotten recipes, seasoned with a good sprinkle of historical culinary anecdotes.

The sources of the material for compiling *The Taste of Suriname* include my private collection of recipes. Many of the recipes were presented to me by Surinamese relatives and friends; others I gathered from Surinamese men and women that I've met in Suriname or Holland. Besides these recipes, I managed to find the recipes for dishes I have read about in old Surinamese and Dutch newspapers. Much to my surprise I even discovered three Afro-Surinamese cornmeal recipes, for *Asogrie*, *Bori Karu* and *Karu Kuku*, in the cooking section of two Dutch newspapers, published in 1918! These recipes were derived, without being mentioned, from Suriname's first cookbook<sup>4</sup>. Other sources are old travelogues, novels and diaries, some of which date back from as early as the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. Also Surinamese writers of more recent published novels mention about food and drinks in everyday's life. They dish up a wealth of culinary images which make you long for a good introduction into the Surinamese cuisine: which this book certainly is!



Don't expect culinary arts *à la Urbain Dubois*<sup>5</sup> that you can impress your family or guests with in this book. French Haute cuisine didn't quite make it all the way up into Suriname. What you will find are recipes for wonderful dishes that have been created and tested by the home cooks of Surinamese origin. Thanks to them, you will now be able to prepare and taste them yourself. To meet the request of many, I also included some recipes from the *Groot Surinaams Kookboek*<sup>6</sup>. Together they will take you on an unforgettable culinary trip through colonial history up until the present day.

Lastly, I want to mention that in the Surinamese kitchen we cook "by hand and memory", which means: no measuring, weighing or timing. I have therefore used the imperial system, because it is easier to get the quantities – *a little bit of this and a little bit of that* - in the right proportion to each other. Apart from writing the instructions in such a way that each recipe is easy to follow, I also sorted them by the origin of the cooks and included the names of the dishes both in their original Surinamese as well as their English translation. To make the book clear and complete, I dotted photos of the ingredients, so you'll recognize in the store what to buy. I hope that you, from gourmet chefs to diletantes, will now prepare and enjoy the dishes I consider the best in the world.

Let's step into the kitchen!

# NATIVE AMERINDIAN CUISINE

Your journey through the Suriname cuisine starts with the Amerindians. They were the first natives the Spanish explorers encountered after they discovered Suriname in 1499. Two tribes are the mother and the father of today's Surinamese cuisine: the Arawak and the Warau. Prior to European contact, they settled about 1000 BC in the swampy area on the coast. Around 1100 AD they were joined by the Caribs, a tribe from the Amazon region. Other known tribes are the Akurio, Trio and Wayana. They all cultivated a variety of crops like cassava, sweet potato, maize, beans, pineapple, peanut and peppers and beside bush meat, they ate fish, shellfish, turtle and manatee (seacow). One of the favorite methods of cooking and preserving was invented by the Arawaks: slow-grilling on a wooden rack over a fire pit. This rack was named *barbacot*, the forerunner of today's modern day barbecue. The Arawaks further developed the *samalhi*, a cassava grater, for making cassava cakes. It is thought the Caribs began the tradition of spicing food with chili peppers, since *Kasripo* – a thick black spicy liquid to marinate meat - is of Carib origin. The cassava flour is used by both the native Amerindians as well as the Maroons.

## Cassava Coconut Cake - BOJO

Ingredients: 4 cassavas ~ 2 cups grated coconut ~ ¼ cup coconut milk ~ 1¼ cups sugar ~ 1 tablespoon cinnamon ~ 2 teaspoons almond-flavoring ~ ½ to 1 teaspoon salt ~ ¼ cup raisins ~ ¼ cup currants ~ 1 glass water ~ 3 tablespoons melted butter or coconut oil ~ mini rainbow sprinkles.

Optional: ⅓ cup rum.

Method: Soak the raisins (in the rum). Preheat oven to 350°F/180°C. Peel, wash cassava (remove the grains) and grate. Combine cassava with grated coconut and cinnamon. Add melted butter to cassava mixture and put aside. Whisk eggs, coconut milk, almond extract and salt. Add the raisins to cassava mixture. Combine all ingredients. Add more sugar if necessary.

Spoon the butter into a 9-inch buttered round cake tin and flatten with a spatula. Drizzle with some melted butter. Bake in the oven 1 to 1½ hours, until golden brown on top. Decorate with sprinkles and cut into small squares (or slices). Serve warm or cold.

## **Meat Stew or PEPPER POT - KADYKYRA (KADAKYRA) or PEPREPATOE or PEPPERPOT**

This dish is an Amerindian stew, originally from the neighbouring country of Guyana.

Ingredients: 2 lbs of shin of beef (ask the butcher to cut the beef leg into pieces) ~ 1 lb oxtails ~ 1 lb boneless leg of lamb, trimmed and cut into bite-sized pieces ~ 1 cup *Kasripo* ~ 2 hot peppers (Madam Jeanette) ~ 2 sticks cinnamon ~ 8 pimentos (Lontai) ~ 16-18 cups water.

Method: Rub the meat with salt, wash well, (cut into pieces), and bring with water to the boil on medium heat. Add *Kasripo*, cinnamon, pimentos and whole peppers. Reduce heat and let simmer for 3-4 hours, or until meat is tender and falls off the bones, stirring occasionally. Serve hot with bread, cooked green plantain or boiled rice. Pepper pot is never refrigerated and lasts for some time provided it is boiled every day.

## **Aromatic Flavoring Sauce - KASRIPO**

In Suriname they call Chinese soy sauce *Kasripo*. It is not the same though, because the original *Kasripo* is made from cassava and the Chinese soy from soybeans. Do not use this liquid uncooked as it is poisonous. Cooking destroys the poison.



Ingredients: 4 lbs bitter cassava ~ 8 cups cold water ~ salt to taste.

Method: Peel the cassava, wash under cold running water and grate. Place in a clean cheese cloth or matapi (braided cassava press). Twist and squeeze a cupful at a time over a large saucepan to extract as much liquid as possible. Leave to settle for one hour in a large bowl. Pour the pressed liquid into a large cooking-pan, making sure not to pour the sediment. Combine the liquid with salt to taste. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for two or three hours, stirring continuously, until liquid becomes a thick syrup. If you can smell a sweet fragrance, taste to check the *kasripo* is ready (if so, you'll get a sweet-salty taste in the mouth). Store in a tightly sealed glass container and keep refrigerated.

This *kasripo* can be kept for 2-3 days. *Brown kasripo* is obtained when boiled until golden brown (4-6 hours) and can be stored for 3-4 years.

## **Cassava Bread - KHALI or BAKA-KESABA or Cassavebrood**

Ingredients: 6 bitter cassava ~ salt to taste.

Method: Peel and wash the cassava tubers well. Grate with the finest side of the grater. Spoon the mass in a two-layer cheese-cloth and squeeze the moisture out, extracting as much liquid as possible. Discard the liquid. Spread the mass on large plates and leave for one hour in the refrigerator. Remove any lumps and discard them. Grind the cassava in a food processor for a couple of minutes; add salt to taste and mix well. Divide the cassava mixture into equal portions (about a cup). Heat a *bodali* (native cassava baking plate) or a cast iron skillet. When hot, place a one portion in the centre of the skillet. Spread out with a spatula into a very thin pancake. Bake until bottom is golden brown, flip over and bake the other side in the same way. Eat *Khali* warm or al-

low it to cool for storage. Once cooled, it can be served plain, as croutons in soup or as a side-dish.

## **Cassava Cakes - LOLO CASABA or CASSAVE DUKUN**

Ingredients: 4 sweet cassavas ~ 2½ cups water ~ 1 cup sugar ~ ½ cup grated coconut ~ ½-1 teaspoon salt ~ 1 package banana leaves ~ cooking twine.

Method: Wash the banana leaves. Blanch in boiling water from the kettle (this cleans them and also softens the fibers which helps prevent splitting when you wrap the cassava mixture). Cut them with scissors into square pieces (approx. 8-10 inch rectangle). Peel, wash and grate cassavas. Combine with all ingredients. Add more sugar if necessary. Take the banana leaves and cut out all the hard stems. Place two tablespoons cassava mixture in the centre of each leaf. Wrap carefully, secure with cooking twine. Place the steamer rack in a large saucepan and cover the top of the steam rack with a piece of banana leaf. Place the parcels in the pan and cover them with water. Bring to the boil, reduce heat to low, cover pan with the lid and cook *dukuns* in steam for about 30 minutes. When necessary, add water to keep from sticking. Then remove parcels from pan. *Dukuns* are done when colour has changed.