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## Melting pot: New citizens share food of their native countries [recipes]

STAFF 22 hrs ago



Chef Fernando Garcia's ropa vieja, braised beef served over polenta and sauce, is adapted from a family recipe from his native Cuba.

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DAN MARSCHKA | Staff Photographer

One of the best ways to get to know our Lancaster County neighbors who have recently become new citizens is through the food of their native cultures.

Whether they're from Africa, Asia or Latin America, those who have made Lancaster County their home have lots of interesting dishes and culinary culture to share.

Here's a sampling of recipes from the new citizens who are profiled on pages A1 and B1 of today's Sunday LNP.

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This recipe for braised beef over polenta comes from Chef Fernando Garcia, the catering chef for the Willow Valley Communities.

Before Garcia studied to become a chef in his native Cuba, he learned to cook at home when he was asked to make meals for his two brothers while his parents were working.

"In every house, they have their own twist" on the braised beef dish, Garcia says.

"There are people who add tomato to it. Other people add tomato sauce or tomato paste to the mix of it," he says. "And it consists of the flank steak or the brisket. You pretty much braise it with some fresh ingredients to the point that it starts coming apart."



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"The sweet plantain gives it sweetness," he says. "It's almost savory, but then you get the sweetness from the sweet plantain. It's a really rich flavor."

"I learned this recipe from my family, but I put my own twist on it" he adds. "There are a lot of spices (in Cuba) that you won't be able to get here. So I go to the Spanish market and find something that's similar."

"Some people use white wine. I use red wine," he says. "Some people don't use cilantro but they use bay leaf. I use both."

You can cook the polenta, which he calls harina de maiz, with water or stock. You can also serve the beef over white rice.





Chef Fernando Garcia prepares ropa vieja, braised beef served over polenta and sauce, adapted from a family recipe from his native Cuba.

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## CHEF FERNANDO GARCIA'S ROPA VIEJA

### Ingredients:

- 3 pounds chuck roast, brisket or flank steak
- 1 whole ripe plantain, sliced a half-inch thick
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (or more if using flank steak)
- 2 cups beef stock
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 5 ajicito peppers; remove the seeds before chopping
- 2 tablespoons sea salt
- 8 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 4 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste
- 3 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
- 3/4 cup pimento-stuffed Spanish olives, halved crosswise
- 2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar
- 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
- 2 cups of harina de maiz (stone-ground polenta)

### Directions:

Heat oven to 250 F. Heat oil in a large heat-proof pot over high on stove top. Sear beef, turning occasionally, until browned on both sides, 5 to 7 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

In the same pan that was used for searing beef, add olive oil and brown the sweet plantain.

Once golden brown, put to the side with beef.

Return to searing pan, add onions peppers and salt (add oil if needed), stirring occasionally, until softened and begins to brown.

Add garlic and cook, stirring frequently and scraping bottom of pan until ingredients are golden brown.

Add tomato paste and stir in red wine, stirring occasionally, simmering for 4 to 5 minutes.

Add beef stock. Stir in paprika, oregano, cumin, black pepper and half of the cilantro until all are coated. Bring to a boil and cook, stirring occasionally until liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes.

Put roast into tomato mixture and tuck in bay leaves on either side.

Cover and transfer to oven. Braise roasted vegetables until meat is very tender and shreds easily, 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Let cool 15 minutes.

Strain all ingredients and skim excess fat from sauce. Using two forks, tear beef until shredded and incorporated into sauce.

Add in olives and sweet plantains. Stir together and serve with polenta or white rice, allowing to soak up rich sauce.

Garnish with cilantro.



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One of Nenah Kabba-Conteh's favorite recipes is jollof rice, a stew that is popular throughout Western Africa. The family has it on special occasions and for many Sunday dinners.

Like most seasoned cooks, Kabba-Conteh doesn't use a specific recipe.

## JOLLOF RICE

### Directions:

First, cook rice (about 1/2 cup for each serving). Kabba-Conteh likes to bake her rice, noting that is fluffier. She also chooses white rice.

She makes her stew on top of the oven, cooking onions and sweet peppers until they are soft. Then she adds tomato paste (about an ounce per serving) and a "little bit" of water.

Then she adds thyme, parsley, hot pepper and salt and pepper, all to taste. And then she adds pureed tomatoes.

Some jollof rice recipes include green beans, carrots or other vegetables. Some cooks include curry.

Meat or fish can be added to the stew. Kabba-Conteh cooks the stew for 2 to 3 hours.

Then add the rice to the stew, stir it all together and enjoy.

Jollof rice is traditionally served with salad and fried plantains on the side.



FOOD + LIVING

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EARLE CORNELIUS | Staff Writer  2 min to read

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These two recipes come from Diveidys Guerra-Acosta.

## CONGRI



**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups of water
- 2 cups of long-grain rice
- 1/2 pound of black beans
- 3 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1/4 chopped green pepper
- 1 chopped green onion
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 tablespoon of salt

**Directions:**

Boil water with half a pound of black beans for about 15 minutes. Rinse rice with clean water.

Heat pan with the olive oil at medium temperature. Add the green pepper, onion and garlic to the oil.

Let it fry and stir for about 2 minutes.

Add the rice (no water) and stir about 3 minutes. Add a portion of the water from the beans. Add the rice and then add a cup of the boiled black beans.

Stir and add salt.

Cover the pan and heat at medium temperature for approximately 10 minutes or until the rice dries up, then stir and lower temperature to medium low.

Serve.

## **TOSTONES**

**Ingredients:**

- 1 whole green plantain; chop in 5 or 6 even round pieces and peel.
- 3 ounces of cooking oil
- Sprinkle of salt

## Directions:

Cut and peel green plantains.

Deep-fry with cooking oil with level over the top of plantains for approximately 5 minutes to golden brown.

Scoop out oil, and let them sit for about 2 minutes, draining excess oil. Smash them individually and fry again on medium temperature for 5 minutes. Remove from pan. Add salt.

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Pan Puri is an Indian snack is made with fried crisps (left) filled with ingredients like potatoes and onion (center, bottom) and then drenched in flavored water (center, top). Bishnu Biswa, who is from Bhutan, served them with samosas (right).

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ERIN NEGLEY | Staff

This recipe comes from Bishnu Biswa, originally of Bhutan.



This Indian snack is made from fried crisps filled with ingredients like potatoes and onions and then drenched in flavored water.

## PANI PURI

### Directions:

Boil potatoes and mash. Add chopped onions, cilantro, white salt and black salt. Mix and set aside.

Fill ready-made puri puffs with potato mixture.

Serve with spicy pani puri water. A fast option is buying instant pani puri mix and mixing with water.



FOOD + LIVING

**'I'm feeling I'm home': Building a new life, from Congo to America**

JENNIFER KOPF | Staff Writer

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Sweet potato leaves form the base of this recipe for Matembele (pronounced MAH-tem-bell) from Democratic Republic of Congo.

If you don't have access to sweet potato leaves, Rachel Bofuasini Bunkete says, kale can be substituted. Measurements aren't precise, so experiment with proportions until you reach the balance of flavors you like.

## MATEMBELE

### Ingredients:

- A big handful of sweet potato leaves (or kale)
- Onion, chopped
- Garlic, chopped
- Fresh ginger, minced
- Oil, for cooking
- Chopped tomatoes (optional)

### Directions:

Rinse sweet potato leaves well, and remove the tough center stem. Chop roughly.

Heat a small amount of oil in a pan. Add chopped onion, garlic and ginger, and cook perhaps 5 minutes.

Add chopped tomatoes, if using. Add chopped sweet potato leaves; mix all ingredients and cook 5 or 10 more minutes. Add small amount of water if you like. Finish with salt and pepper to taste.

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EARLE CORNELIUS | Staff Writer Jun 30, 2019  2 min to read

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