Modern Caribbean Cuisine
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The Caribbean islands boast some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world, the friendliest of peoples and the most colourful of cuisines. Our deep turquoise blue waters provide us with a vast assortment of fresh seafood on a daily basis, the rich soil in some of our tropical rainforested countries gives us all our fresh vegetables and herbs, and our delicious and intriguing ground or root provisions. Our tropical fruits, delightfully juicy and sugary sweet, can be likened to the splendour of a Caribbean sunset with their vibrant hues of brilliant yellow and orange. Our cane sugar is rated the best in the world for both white and brown sugars and our rums are always placed top of the ratings. We are indeed a richly endowed set of islands and thereby largely self-sufficient in agriculture. The longer I live in the Caribbean the more amazed I become not only at the deliciousness of our local ingredients and food, but at the versatility of our indigenous ingredients.

Traditional Caribbean food has gained the reputation for being a little heavy and high in fat content, though very tasty all the same! It is a cuisine, historically, comprised of rich brown stews, rice and peas dishes sometimes simmered in coconut milk, provisions and starches enveloped in sauces, spicy curries and rotis, vegetables cooked with butter, flaky pastries, tender mouth-watering breads and, of course, butter cakes and creamy desserts.

These represent a rich inheritance from our African, Indian and European ancestors respectively. They are all foods infused with our own locally grown fresh herbs and embellished with each island’s own version of pepper sauce or salsas made from fresh hot peppers and fruits.

Globalization has made our world a smaller place to live in, with influences from everywhere touching our lives with respect to music, culture and, of course, food. The challenge then becomes both to maintain our own integrity and to integrate other influences as well into our cooking. This is what Modern Caribbean Cuisine is all about.

There are some traditional recipes within these pages, but the main emphasis of this book is about embracing our own indigenous ingredients and using them in such a way as to create a fresher, tastier, spicy and delicious cuisine – a true celebration of Caribbean flavours as they are today. The dishes use fresh foods, enhanced with our own blend of herbs, spiced up with our local peppers and infused with our dried spices. They all come together to make a Caribbean fusion cuisine that is, in the best sense, addictive!
Conversion Tables

Weights

1 ounce              30 grams
8 ounces or ½ pound  250 grams or ¼ kilogram
16 ounces or 1 pound 500 grams or ½ kilogram

Volumes

1 teaspoon          5 ml
1 tablespoon        15 ml
½ cup               125 ml
1 cup               250 ml or ½ pint
2 cups              500 ml or 1 pint

Oven Temperatures

250°F = 120°C
300°F = 150°C
350°F = 180°C
400°F = 200°C
snacks & appetizers
Caribbean people love to enjoy a good party or ‘lime’ (informal gathering), and always present are drinks and, of course, food. On the islands formal plated appetizers or hors d’oeuvres are not very popular, though you’ll find them at smart dinner parties and fine dining restaurants. However, there are no boundaries where light tasty snack foods are concerned! This section gives you some of those portable and delightful snacks that you would encounter on a visit to any of the islands, with each contributing its own distinct flavour. Some of the recipes here would traditionally be fried but I’ve adjusted them to allow for baked versions as well. There are lots of delicious seafood snacks and elegant appetizers, such as shrimp cocktail, smoked herring dip, shrimp pâté and a savoury sponge roll with shrimp filling. There are also great cutters (tapas) to enjoy while on a ‘lime’, like fish fritters, Mexican empanadas, Jamaican beef patties, lambie fritters and lambie souse, just to name a few. All are distinctly Caribbean, infused with hot peppers and flavoured with our aromatic and indigenous fresh herbs.
Mexican Empanadas

Mexican empanadas are traditionally fried pies. This version is baked, which gives a delicious pie with longer staying power! Serve as a light snack or as an appetizer.

FOR THE DOUGH
- 4 cups flour
- 2 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup shortening
- ½ cup water

FOR THE FILLING
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped fresh herbs
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 pimento peppers, seeded and chopped
- ½ hot pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 lb ground chicken or beef
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup sliced green olives
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 egg, beaten

To make the dough: combine the flour with the paprika and salt. Cut in the shortening until it’s the size of small peas. Add the water and bring the mixture together. Refrigerate until ready for use.

- Preheat oven to 400ºF.
- Heat the oil in a frying pan, and add the chopped herbs, garlic, peppers and onion. Sauté until tender, about 4 minutes, then add the meat and cook until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. If the meat seems lumpy, put it into a food processor bowl and process for 30 seconds, just until fine.
- Remove from the heat and add the raisins and olives. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Divide the dough into 20 equal pieces and roll each piece of dough into a 4 inch circle. Place about 1 tablespoon of filling in the centre of the lower half. Fold over and seal, using a little water if necessary.

- Place on a greased baking sheet and brush with beaten egg. Repeat until all the dough and filling are used up.
- Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden. Serve with spicy tomato salsa (page 311).

Makes 20
Lambie Souse

Souse is enjoyed all through the Caribbean and can be likened to a ceviche. Lots of lip-puckering fresh lime juice is used, along with hot peppers and fresh herbs. Pigs’ trotters are traditionally soused, so too are chicken feet. I love this version made with conch or lambie. It can be served in small glasses as an appetizer.

- 2 lb lambie (conch), cleaned, tenderized and chopped (see page 63)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cucumber, chopped
- juice of 2 large limes
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 lime, sliced
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Steam the lambie for about 3–4 minutes, then remove from the steamer and drain.
Place in a glass bowl, add the rest of the ingredients and cover and refrigerate for about 3–4 hours.
Serve cold.

Serves 4–6
Breadfruit Pies

- 2 lb breadfruit, peeled and cut into quarters
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup melted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 small onion, minced
- ½ carrot, finely chopped
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh herbs
- ½ lb ground chicken
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup fine toasted bread crumbs

Boil the breadfruit with the salt in plenty of water until tender, about 20–30 minutes. While still hot, crush the breadfruit and add the melted butter and ¼ cup of flour. Combine until the mixture starts to stay together. Knead for a few minutes, cover and set aside.

Heat the oil in a sauté pan and add the garlic and onion. Sauté for a few minutes, then add the carrot and mixed fresh herbs. Add the ground chicken and cook until tender. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cook for about 15 minutes, remove from the heat, add the parsley and leave mixture to cool.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Flour a work surface and roll out breadfruit dough to about ¼ inch thickness. Stamp out circles with a 3 inch cutter.

Place about 1 tablespoon of filling on the lower portion of each circle. Fold over, and seal with a fork. Dust with the remaining flour, brush with beaten egg and roll in bread crumbs.

Bake for about 15 minutes until golden.

Makes about 10
Jamaican Beef Patties

- 1 egg, beaten

**FOR THE PASTRY**
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 cup vegetable shortening
- a few drops of yellow food colouring or annatto oil
- 1 cup iced water

**FOR THE FILLING**
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 large sprig of French thyme
- ½ cup chopped chives
- 2 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- ¼ tsp allspice powder
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbs tomato paste
- 2 cups bread crumbs

- To make the filling: heat the oil in a sauté pan with a lid. Add the garlic and onion and cook until fragrant. Add the beef and stir. Add the thyme, chives, hot pepper, allspice, sugar, and salt to taste.
- Stir in the tomato paste and cook until the meat is brown in colour. Cover and simmer for about 15 minutes, adding a little water to prevent sticking. Stir in the bread crumbs and adjust seasoning to taste.
- Leave to cool.
- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Roll out the pastry to about ¼ inch thickness and stamp out circles about 4 inches in diameter.
- Place about 2 teaspoons of the filling on the lower half of each pastry circle. Fold top over bottom to form a half moon. Seal with a fork. Brush with beaten egg. Repeat until all the pastry and filling is used up.
- Place the patties on a baking sheet and bake for about 15–20 minutes until golden brown.

Makes about 25

*For a lighter dish*
*Use ground chicken.*
Shrimp & Mushroom Thermidor with Parsley & Parmesan Gratin

A traditional French appetizer that has made a comeback.

- 2 lb fresh medium white shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

FOR THE SAUCE
- 3 tbs unsalted butter
- 3 tbs all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- 2 egg yolks
- ½ cup white wine
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp powdered mustard

FOR THE GRATIN
- ½ cup dry bread crumbs
- 2 tbs butter
- 2 tbs chopped parsley
- 2 tbs grated Parmesan cheese
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

- Combine the shrimp with the garlic and salt and set aside.
- To make the sauce: melt the butter in a heavy medium-sized saucepan, stir in the flour and cook until smooth and almost liquid. Add the milk and cook, stirring well until the mixture thickens.
- Add the shrimp and mushrooms, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the egg yolks and wine. Stir to combine.
- Place on a low heat to warm the mixture only. Do not boil or else the eggs will curdle. Add the Parmesan cheese, cayenne pepper and mustard.
- Preheat broiler or grill.
- Spoon the shrimp mixture into buttered Thermidor dishes or shallow ramekins.
- Combine all the ingredients for the gratin. Sprinkle on top of the shrimp and place under broiler until golden on top.

Serves 4–6

For a lighter dish
Omit the eggs and use skimmed milk.
Spicy Tobago Crab Fritters with Cocktail Sauce

- 2 x 4 oz cans crab meat, drained
- 1 medium potato, boiled and crushed
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tbs softened butter
- 1 pimento pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 tbs chopped chives
- 3 tbs chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 2 tbs chopped parsley
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbs fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp pepper sauce
- 1 cup soft bread crumbs
- 1 cup flour
- vegetable oil for frying

Place the crab in a large mixing bowl. Remove any cartilage and add the potato, half the beaten egg, the softened butter, pepper, herbs, garlic, lime juice and pepper sauce. Combine well.

Add enough bread crumbs to hold the mixture together.

Form the mixture into 2 inch patties, dip in the remaining egg and then in the flour to coat evenly.

Heat some oil in a frying pan or wok. Fry the fritters until golden brown, drain, and serve hot with cocktail dipping sauce.

Makes about 12–15

Cocktail Sauce

- 1 cup tomato ketchup
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbs horseradish sauce
- 1 tsp pepper sauce

Combine all the ingredients. Stir together, then add salt to taste.

Makes 1 cup

For a lighter dish
Brush the patties with vegetable oil and bake in a preheated oven at 375°F for 20 minutes until golden brown.
Caribbean Fish Balls with Pink Sauce

- 1 lb boneless fresh fish, cubed
- ½ cup cornstarch
- ¼ cup chopped chives
- ¼ cup chopped basil
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice
- vegetable oil for frying

Place the fish, ¼ cup cornstarch, the chives, basil, cayenne, lime juice and salt and freshly ground black pepper into a food processor and process to a paste.

Put the rest of the cornstarch on a plate. Form the fish paste into small balls about 1 inch in diameter, and dredge in the cornstarch.

Heat some oil in a frying pan or wok and fry the fish balls until golden. Drain on paper towels.

Makes 15–20

Pink Sauce

- ½ cup low fat mayonnaise
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- 2 tbs horseradish sauce
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 2 tbs tomato ketchup

To make the dip, combine all the ingredients except the ketchup. Mix in the ketchup, taste and adjust seasonings.

Makes about 1 cup
Bene-crusted Shrimp Balls

Bene seeds are much liked in the Caribbean, where we make bene squares and bene balls—both popular candies. They are quite similar to sesame seeds, so you can easily make the substitution. Serve the shrimp balls with plum sauce.

- 1 lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tbs cornstarch
- 1 tbs soy sauce
- 2 tbs minced chives
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 inch piece of ginger
- ½ tsp sesame oil
- ½ cup water chestnuts
- ½ cup flour
- ½ tsp white pepper
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup bene or sesame seeds
- vegetable oil for deep frying

- In a food processor combine the shrimp, cornstarch, soy sauce, chives, garlic, ginger, sesame oil, and salt and pepper to taste. Process to a smooth texture, then add the chestnuts and process just until they are chopped. Taste the mixture and adjust seasoning.
- Form the shrimp mixture into 1 inch balls.
- Mix the flour and pepper. Dredge the shrimp balls in flour, then dip in the egg and roll in the bene or sesame seeds to coat.
- Deep fry until golden.

Makes about 15–20

Tip
Deep frying these appetizers works better for all-round browning of the shrimp balls.
French Onion Tartlets

This is a French Caribbean speciality

FOR THE PASTRY
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- pinch of salt
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- ⅓ cup ice cold water

FOR THE FILLING
- 4 tbs olive oil
- 3 lb onions, peeled and sliced
- ¼ cup French thyme
- 2 tbs evaporated milk
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

To make the pastry: put the flour, salt, paprika, oregano and butter into the bowl of a food processor and process for 10 seconds until the mixture resembles fine bread crumbs. Add the water and combine.
- Remove from the processor and bring the dough together with your hands. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.
- Roll out the dough to about ¼ inch thickness and stamp out 3 inch circles. Place on a lined baking sheet and refrigerate.
- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- To make the filling: heat the olive oil in a sauté pan, add the onions, and cook until tender on a low heat for about 20–25 minutes, stirring often.
- Add the thyme and cook for a few minutes more. Stir in the evaporated milk and cook until creamy. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper, remove from the heat and leave to cool.
- Spoon the cooled filling onto the pastry rounds and bake for 15 minutes. Sprinkle with the Parmesan and bake for 5 minutes more.

Makes 24
Crispy Cornmeal & Chili Coated Wings with Cilantro Dip

- 3 lb chicken wings (about 20 wings)
- 2 tbs ground chives
- 1 tbs minced garlic
- 1 tbs olive oil
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 tbs ground roasted cumin (geera)
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp black pepper
- 2 tsp chili powder
- 2 eggs

FOR THE DIP
- 1½ cups sour cream
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- ½ cup chopped chives
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- salt to taste

- Preheat oven to 375ºF.
- Discard the wing tips and cut the chicken wings in half. Pat dry with paper towels. Mix the ground chives with the garlic and olive oil, and rub the mixture over the wings.
- In a flat dish, combine the flour with the cornmeal, cumin, salt, pepper and chili powder.
- Beat the eggs in another flat dish.
- Dip the halved chicken wings first into the flour mixture, then into the beaten eggs, then again into the flour.
- Place on an oiled baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Turn, and continue baking for 30 minutes.
- Combine all the ingredients for the dip.
- Serve the crispy wings on a platter with the dip.

Makes about 40
Coo Coo Strips

Coo coo in the Caribbean is similar to Italian polenta. Here, we toss in some flavouring agents and often add ochroes as well. Some islands also add coconut milk. In this version I have omitted the ochroes and the result makes a delicious appetizer!

- 6 cups chicken stock or water
- 2 pimento peppers, seeded and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp paprika
- vegetable oil for frying

Boil the stock or water in a large saucepan and add the peppers, garlic, and salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Pour in the cornmeal, whisking vigorously to prevent lumping, stir well and cook until the mixture becomes stiff and smooth and moves away from the sides of the pan.

Generously butter a shallow cake pan or baking tray. Spread the mixture smoothly onto the tray, so that it is about 1 inch thick. Chill until very stiff.

Combine the flour, paprika and some salt and pepper.

Cut the polenta into strips, 2 inches x 1 inch.

Coat the strips in the flour mixture and fry in hot oil until golden.

Drain and serve immediately with spicy tomato salsa (page 311).

Serves 6-8
Arepa Coins
with Creamy Crab

- ½ cup butter
- 2 cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup grated cheese
- ½ cup chopped chives
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 cups hot water
- vegetable oil for frying

• Combine the butter and cornmeal and rub into the flour. Mix in the cheese, chives and salt. Add the hot water and knead to a soft dough.
• Roll to ½ inch thickness and stamp out 1½ inch diameter pieces.
• Heat the oil in a frying pan and shallow fry until golden and cooked, about 5 minutes.
• Drain and serve spread with your choice of topping, for example salsa, spicy shrimp, creamy crab.

Makes 32

Creamy Crab

- 1 cup crab meat, picked over
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ tsp pepper sauce
- 1 tsp fresh lime juice
- salt to taste
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh herbs (cilantro, chives, parsley)

• Combine all the ingredients. Spoon onto the arepa coins and serve immediately.

Makes about 1½ cups

For a lighter dish
Use low fat mayonnaise.
Shrimp Accras of Martinique

Accras are traditionally French Caribbean in origin and are usually made with salted cod. This version uses shrimp, which gives a delicious new twist!

- 1 lb shrimp, cleaned
- ½ cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup chopped chives
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tbs thyme
- ½ tsp salt
- vegetable oil for frying

- Heat a large non-stick frying pan, add the shrimp and dry roast on the pan. Turn and cook until the shrimp are pink and curled.
- Remove shrimp from pan and chop finely.
- Combine with the flour, baking powder, hot pepper, chives, onion, garlic, thyme and salt. Add enough water (about ½ cup) to make a soft batter-like dough.
- Heat the oil. Drop the batter by spoonfuls into the hot oil and fry until golden brown and puffed.
- Serve with green mango and thyme chutney (page 312).

Makes 15–20
Savoury Sponge Roll with Shrimp Filling

FOR THE SPONGE
• ¼ cup butter
• ½ cup all-purpose flour
• 2 cups milk
• 4 eggs, separated

FOR THE FILLING
• 1 lb fresh shrimp, steamed and finely chopped
• ½ cup sour cream or thick plain yogurt
• 2 tbs finely chopped parsley
• ½ cup mayonnaise
• 1 tsp pepper sauce
• 2 tbs chopped chives
• 2 tbs fresh lime juice
• salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

• Preheat oven to 375ºF.
• To make the sponge: line then grease and flour a 10 x 15 inch jellyroll pan or shallow baking tray.
• Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan, add the flour and stir until smooth. Add the milk and cook until smooth and thick.
• Beat the egg yolks. Add half to the milk mixture, stir, then add this to the remaining yolks.
• Beat the egg whites until peaks form and fold into the sauce. Pour into the prepared tin and bake for 12–15 minutes or until the sponge is golden and springs back when touched.

• Remove from the oven and invert onto a clean tea towel. Remove from pan and peel off the lining paper. Roll up, using the towel to help, and set aside until ready for use.
• To make the filling: combine all the ingredients and taste and adjust seasoning.
• Unroll the sponge and spread filling on top. Roll up jellyroll style. If you want a fuller roll start at the short end; if you want smaller slices, roll up from the long side.
• Wrap tightly in plastic and refrigerate for 1–2 hours.
• Remove and slice on the diagonal. Serve on a bed of fresh salad greens.

Makes 12 slices

For a lighter dish
Use low fat mayonnaise and sour cream or yogurt.
Baked Potato Pies

Traditional potato pies are fried and are a popular street food in Trinidad. This version is baked in a tender dough.

- 1 lb potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
- ½ tbs vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped chives
- 2 tbs chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pimento pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ Congo pepper or hot pepper, seeded and chopped (optional)
- 2 tsp ground roasted cumin (geera)
- pepper sauce to taste
- 1 quantity pie dough (page 30)
- 1 egg, beaten

- Boil the potatoes with a little salt until tender. When cooked, drain and crush well with a potato masher.
- Heat the oil in a small frying pan. Add the onion, chives, cilantro, garlic and peppers. Fry for just 1 minute then pour into the mashed potato. Stir to combine. Add the cumin and pepper sauce, salt and freshly ground black pepper.
- Taste and adjust seasoning.
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Divide the dough into 24 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 4 inch circle. Place about 1 tablespoon of filling in the centre of the lower half. Fold over and seal, using a little water if necessary. Place on a greased baking sheet and brush with beaten egg.
- Bake for 15–20 minutes until lightly browned.

Makes 24
Shrimp Arepas with Spicy Tomato & Cheese

As you travel through the Spanish Caribbean the word ‘arepas’ means a fried cornmeal cake. In other parts it is more like a turnover, the pastry made from cornmeal, and stuffed with a spicy meat filling and fried. This version is made with shrimp and can be baked or fried.

- oil for brushing

**FOR THE PASTRY**
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- ½ cup butter

**FOR THE FILLING**
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 lb shrimp, cleaned and finely chopped
- 1 cup chopped chives
- ¼ cup French thyme
- ¼ cup cilantro (chadon beni)
- 2 cups grated Cheddar cheese (optional)

- To make the filling: heat the oil in a sauté pan with a lid and add the garlic, pepper and onion. Cook until fragrant, add the shrimp and cook for a few seconds, then add the chives and thyme and cook for a few minutes more. Add the tomato sauce and season with salt. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, then add the chopped cilantro and leave to cool.
- Preheat oven to 375ºF.
- Form the pieces of dough into balls. Press down on the balls to form 4–5 inch circles. Fill with the cooled shrimp mixture and sprinkle with cheese, if using.
- Fold into a half moon shape and place on a lined baking sheet. Brush the arepas with oil and bake for 20 minutes.
- Cool on a wire rack. Serve with spicy tomato salsa (page 311).

Makes 16

- To make the pastry: combine all the dry ingredients, then add the butter and rub into the mixture. Add enough warm water to make a soft dough. Divide into 16 pieces and cover with a wet tea towel.
Spicy Smoked Herring Spread

Smoked and dried fish are popular on the islands. Here smoked herring flavours up a spicy spread for a truly exotic taste!

- 1 smoked herring fillet (about 1 oz)
- 4 oz cream cheese
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp pepper sauce (or to taste)
- 1 tsp fresh lime juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh herbs (parsley, chives, basil)

• Soak the herring in hot water for 20 minutes. Rinse, and pick out the bones.
• Place in a food processor and chop finely. Add the rest of the ingredients and process to a thick paste. Refrigerate until ready for use.
• Serve on crackers or toast rounds, sprinkled with additional herbs and garnished with sweet red pepper strips.

Makes about 1 cup

For a lighter dish
Use low fat mayonnaise and cream cheese.
Broccoli & Feta Pies

- 8 oz feta cheese or sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 lb broccoli, cut into ½ inch pieces
- ½ tsp grated nutmeg
- ½ cup soft bread crumbs
- ½ quantity pie dough (see right)

Combine the feta with the broccoli. Mix in the bread crumbs, then add the nutmeg and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 375ºF.

Divide dough into 12 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 4 inch circle and place about 1 tablespoon of filling in the centre of the lower half. Fold over and seal, pinching the edges together, using a little water if necessary. Place on a greased baking sheet.

Repeat until all dough and filling are used up.

Bake for 15–20 minutes until lightly browned.

Makes 12

Pie Dough

- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 package instant yeast (1 tablespoon)
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup butter or margarine, melted
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs

In a mixer bowl combine 2 cups flour and the yeast.

Heat the milk, butter, sugar and salt to 115–120ºF. Add to the flour mixture. Add the eggs and beat slowly until incorporated.

Add as much of the remaining flour as you can, then turn onto a floured surface and knead for about 6–8 minutes to make a moderately stiff dough that is smooth and elastic.

Place in a greased bowl, cover, and leave to rise until doubled in bulk (about 45 minutes).

Punch down and let dough rest for 10 minutes before using.
Chow Mein Pies

Chow mein is a popular Chinese dish, and when made into pies and baked it makes a delicious meatless snack or light meal.

- 2 tbs low sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tbs sherry or rum (optional)
- 1 tbs oyster sauce (optional)
- 1 tsp Chinese chili sauce
- 1 tsp cornstarch or potato flour
- 1 tbs vegetable oil
- 1 tbs ginger, shredded
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 cup julienned carrots
- 1 cup julienned christophenes
- 1 cup shredded bok choy (pak choi)
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- ½ cup sliced water chestnuts
- 1 cup baby corn
- ½ cup sliced chives
- ½ quantity pie dough (opposite)

- In a small bowl combine 1 tablespoon of water, the soy sauce, sesame oil, sherry, chili sauce and oyster sauce, if using. Combine the cornstarch and ¼ cup water and set aside.
- Heat the oil in a wok or frying pan, add the ginger and garlic and stir-fry until fragrant. Add the carrots, christophenes, bok choy, mushrooms and water chestnuts and stir and fry until the vegetables are tender crisp.
- Add the corn, chives and soy sauce mixture and stir well. Add the cornstarch mixture and cook until thick. Remove from heat and leave to cool.
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 4 inch circle and place about 1 tablespoon of filling in the centre of the lower half. Fold over and seal, pinching the edges together, using a little water if necessary. Place on a greased baking sheet.
- Repeat until all dough and filling are used up.
- Bake for 15–20 minutes until lightly browned.

Makes 12
Onion Pakoras

- 1½ cups chickpea flour (besan)
- 2 tsp ground roasted cumin (geera)
- 1 tsp salt
- ¾ tsp hot pepper or cayenne
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 1 large potato, peeled and grated
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
- vegetable oil for frying

In a mixing bowl combine the chickpea flour with the cumin, salt, pepper and baking soda. Stir in ½ cup cold water.

Add the potato, onion and cilantro. Stir to combine.

Drop the batter by spoonfuls into hot oil and fry on both sides for about 2–3 minutes.

Drain well.

Makes about 18

Eggplant Pakoras

- Use 1 small eggplant, cut into cubes, and 2 tablespoons minced ginger in place of the potato and onion.
Vegetable Pakoras

- 1 cup chickpea flour (besan)
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp ground roasted cumin (geera)
- ½ tsp saffron powder
- 2 tbs finely chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- vegetable oil for frying
- 4 cups fresh vegetables, cut into bite-sized portions

Place the first eight ingredients in a bowl, add ½ cup ice cold water and stir to form a thick batter, almost the consistency of pancake batter.

- Heat oil in a wok. Dip the vegetable pieces into the batter, drop into the hot oil and quickly fry. Do not let the vegetables remain too long in the pan as they will become soggy.
- Drain on paper towels and serve immediately with a yogurt dip.

Serves 4–6
Bake or Fry

Crab ‘n’ Cassava Cakes

- 12 oz cassava (yuca), peeled
- 12 oz crab meat, picked over
- 1 cup grated red onion
- ½ cup finely chopped parsley
- ½ cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- ½ cup bread crumbs
- 1 tsp pepper sauce
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 4 tbs fresh lime juice
- salt
- vegetable oil for frying

Grate the cassava very finely. This will release some of the starchy juices, which will help the mixture to bind. Combine the cassava with all the remaining ingredients except the oil and mix well.

- Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan.
- With your hands, form the cassava mixture into cakes about 2–3 inches in diameter. Gently pan fry until golden and cooked through on each side. Drain.
- Serve with ginger orange dip.

Makes 12–15

Ginger Orange Dip

- ½ cup good quality English marmalade
- 2 tbs Chinese chili sauce
- ½ tsp grated ginger
- 2 tbs rice vinegar

Combine all the ingredients and stir.

Makes about ½ cup

For a lighter dish

To bake the crab cakes: preheat oven to 350°F. Place the crab cakes onto an oiled baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes, until crisp at the bottom. Turn and set oven to broil. Broil until golden, brush with oil and remove.
**Hot ‘n’ Spicy Wings**

The spicy sauce in this recipe will keep in the refrigerator for about a week.

**FOR THE SAUCE**
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 onions, minced
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped (or to taste)
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- ½ cup ketchup
- 2 tbs brown sugar
- 3 tbs white vinegar
- 3 tbs Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbs chili powder

**FOR THE WINGS**
- 16 chicken wings, split into wing and small drumstick
- 1 tbs minced garlic
- 1 tbs ground chives
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice

- Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add the garlic, onion, peppers and celery and sauté until fragrant. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for 10–15 minutes until thick and bubbly.
- Remove the wing tip from the wings (keep to use in stock). Marinate the wings and small drumsticks in the garlic, chives and lime juice, with some salt and freshly ground black pepper. Let stand for about 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 375ºF.
- Place the wings in an ovenproof baking tray or dish and bake for about 20 minutes, turning once, until lightly browned.
- Remove from the oven, baste with the sauce, then return to the oven for about 5 minutes more. Serve hot.

Serves 4
Shrimp Pâté with Rum & Fresh Herbs

- 2 tbs unsalted butter
- 6 slices bread, ends trimmed and cut into shapes

**FOR THE PÂTÉ**
- 1 lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¼ cup minced fresh herbs
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup cream cheese, softened
- 2 tbs lemon juice or 1 tbs lime juice
- 1 tsp pepper sauce
- 1 tbs rum
- pinch of grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp powdered mustard

- Bring ½ cup water to a boil, add the shrimp and herbs, and cook for 5 minutes or until the shrimp are pink and curled. Drain the water and purée the shrimp and herbs in a food processor.
- Combine the shrimp mixture with the remaining pâté ingredients and add salt and pepper to taste. Spoon into small bowls and refrigerate.
- To make toasts, melt the butter in a saucepan, then brown the bread shapes in the butter to toast evenly.
- Serve the pâté with the toasts.

Makes 24; serves 10 as a dip
Beef Pies

**FOR THE FILLING**
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped fresh herbs (chives, thyme, celery, parsley)
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 pimento peppers, seeded and chopped
- ½ hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 lb ground beef
- broth, if necessary (see method)
- 2 slices bread, crumbled

- To make the filling: heat the oil in a frying pan. Add the herbs, garlic, peppers and onion. Sauté until tender, about 4 minutes, then add the beef and cook until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add a little broth or water to moisten if necessary.
- If the beef seems lumpy put it into a food processor bowl and process for 30 seconds, just until fine.
- Add the crumbled bread and combine. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Leave to cool.
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Divide the dough into two. Roll each piece to about ¼ inch thickness. Cut out rounds with a 3 inch cutter.
- Place about 1 teaspoon of filling onto half the rounds. Cover with the remaining rounds and seal. Brush with beaten egg and bake for 15 minutes until golden.

Makes 24
**Lambie Fritters**

- 1 lb lambie (conch), skin removed, tenderized and chopped (see page 63)
- 2 eggs
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 pimento pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh herbs (parsley, thyme, chives)
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup milk, if necessary (see method)
- Vegetable oil for frying

Place the lambie into a food processor and mince. Add the eggs, garlic, pimento and herbs and process to incorporate all the ingredients.

Remove mixture to a bowl and add the flour, baking powder and salt. Stir well to combine: your mixture should be like a paste, but not too runny. If the mixture seems too dry, add a little milk.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and drop the mixture by teaspoonfuls into the hot oil. Fry until puffed and golden, about 5–6 minutes.

Drain and serve with chili mayo dip.

Makes about 24

**Chili Mayo Dip**

- ¾ cup low fat mayonnaise
- 1 tbs horseradish sauce
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp pepper sauce
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice

Combine all the ingredients and stir well. Serve with fritters.

Makes about 1 cup
Cassava & Salt Cod Brandade

The traditional Mediterranean classic is made with salt cod and potatoes. Here, I’ve used cassava for an earthy and delicious brandade. Serve with triangles of toast for a delicious appetizer.

- 4 oz salt cod
- ½ lime
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup milk, plus ½ cup
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 hot pepper
- 2 tbs butter
- 1 lb cassava (yuca), boiled and inner vein removed
- ¼ cup chopped chives

- Squeeze lime juice onto the salt cod and boil in enough fresh water to cover until tender, about 5–10 minutes. Remove from pan and flake.
- Heat the olive oil and ¹/₃ cup milk separately.
- Place the fish in a blender or food processor and purée. Add the garlic and pepper. With the motor running, add the warmed milk and oil alternately, and process to a creamy consistency. Remove and set aside.
- Preheat oven to 350ºF.
- Heat the butter with ½ cup milk and add to the cassava.
- Mash to a creamy consistency – a hand-held mix-master works well here. Add the chives and combine. Add salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.
- Combine the cassava with the salt fish mixture and mix well.
- Put into a shallow pie plate and bake for about 15 minutes until browned on top.

Serves 6–8
Batter-fried Cauliflower with Curry & Cumin

Serve these crisp cauliflower pieces with a spicy yogurt dip.

- vegetable oil for frying
- 1 cauliflower, cut into segments

**FOR THE BATTER**
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 egg
- ½ cup water
- 1 tsp cumin (geera)
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ⅓ cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni)
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

- Combine all the ingredients for the batter and stir well to a smooth consistency.
- Heat the oil in a deep pot.
- Dip the cauliflower pieces into the batter and fry in the hot oil until golden and tender.
- Drain and serve.

Serves 4–6
Roasted Eggplant Dip

The Syrian Lebanese population in the Caribbean has brought in an Eastern Mediterranean influence to our shores, as in this dip, which can be served with pita bread.

- 1 large eggplant
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice
- 1 tbs plain yogurt
- ½ tsp ground roasted cumin (geera)

GARNISH
- chopped parsley
- olive oil

- Roast the eggplant over an open flame until tender, about 8–10 minutes.
- Remove the pulp and place in a food processor. Add the garlic, sesame oil, lime juice, yogurt, cumin, and salt and freshly ground black pepper. Process until blended.
- Place on a platter, sprinkle with chopped parsley and drizzle with oil.

Serves 4–6
Carnival Fish Pies

- lotus oil for frying

FOR THE DOUGH
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 4 tbs shortening

FOR THE FILLING
- 1 lb fish fillets, steamed
- 1 tsp hot pepper sauce
- 1 tsp fresh lime juice
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh herbs (parsley, thyme, cilantro, chives)
- 1 large potato, peeled, boiled and crushed
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

- To make the dough: combine the flour, baking powder, salt and shortening. Add water to make a soft but pliable and non-sticky dough. Knead into a ball and leave to rest for 15 minutes.
- Divide the dough into 10 pieces, and roll each piece into a ball. Rest for 5 minutes.
- To make the filling: flake the fish and remove any bones. Add all the other ingredients and mix well. Taste and adjust seasoning.
- Roll each piece of dough into a 5 inch circle. Place about 1–2 tablespoons of the filling onto the lower portion of each circle, and bring the upper portion over the lower portion to cover in a half moon shape. Seal.
- Heat the oil in a frying pan and shallow fry the pies until golden brown.
- Drain and serve with chadon beni pesto (page 311)

Makes 10
Fish Fritters

- 4 cups steamed fish
- ⅓ cup chopped cilantro (chadon beni) (optional)
- ⅓ cup chopped chives
- 2 pimento peppers, seeded and chopped
- 3 tbs fresh lime juice
- 1 ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1½–2 cups milk
- vegetable oil for frying

- Place the fish in a large mixing bowl. Pick out any bones and add the herbs, peppers, lime juice, salt and pepper.
- Add the flour and baking powder. Stir in the milk gradually to make a stiff but soft batter, being careful not to crush the fish.
- Heat the oil in a deep frying pan and drop the batter by teaspoonfuls into the hot oil. Fry until golden and puffed.
- Serve hot.

Makes about 24–30
Caribbean Shrimp Cocktail

- 24 medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 tsp ground Spanish thyme
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- lime slices to garnish

FOR THE SAUCE
- ½ cup tomato ketchup
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp pepper sauce
- ¼ tsp allspice powder
- ¼ tsp sugar
- 1 tsp minced onion
- 1 tbs minced cilantro (chadon beni)
- salt to taste

• Marinate the shrimp in the Spanish thyme and salt for 15 minutes.
• Steam the shrimp in about ½ cup water. When they are pink and curled, drain and refrigerate.
• Combine all the ingredients for the sauce.
• Place the lettuce into four stemmed glasses.
• Combine the shrimp with the sauce and divide equally between the glasses. Garnish with lime slices.
• Serve immediately or refrigerate until required.

Serves 4
Seafood Cheesecake with Fresh Herbs

This cheesecake may be baked without the crust and served with crackers.

- 2 x 8 oz packages cream cheese
- 3 eggs
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ lb cooked crab meat, picked over
- ⅓ cup chopped chives
- ¼ cup chopped fresh herbs (thyme, parsley, basil)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp hot pepper sauce
- 1 cup sour cream or yogurt

FOR THE CRUST
- ¾ cup crackers, crushed
- 2 tbs melted butter

Preheat oven to 325°F.
- To make the crust: process the cracker crumbs to a fine consistency and add the butter. Press into the bottom of an 8 inch springform cheesecake pan.
- Bake for 5 minutes, remove and refrigerate.
- Cream the cheese in a mixer bowl until smooth. Add the eggs one at a time and beat until smooth. Add the flour and combine, then fold in the crab, herbs, garlic, pepper sauce and salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Fold in the sour cream and mix.
- Pour into the prepared crust and bake for about 45–55 minutes until firm and lightly browned.
- Refrigerate until chilled.

Serves 10
Stuffed Crab Backs with Parsley Parmesan Gratin

- 1 tbs fresh lime juice
- 1 lb fresh crab meat, picked over
- 2 tbs butter
- 2 onions, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup finely chopped chives, white and green parts
- 2 tbs fresh French thyme
- 1 tbs chopped celery
- 2 pimento peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 hot pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1½ cups soft bread crumbs
- 6 crab shells

FOR THE GRATIN
- 1 cup toasted bread crumbs
- 2 tbs chopped celery
- 2 tbs Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbs softened butter

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Add the lime juice to the crab meat and combine.
- Melt the butter in a sauté pan, add the onion and garlic and cook until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the chives, thyme, celery, pimentos and hot pepper and cook for a further 4 minutes.
- Turn off the heat, add the crab meat and turn into a large bowl. Mix to combine, add the bread crumbs and stir. Season with salt.
- To make the gratin: combine all the ingredients until the crumbs become coated with the butter.
- Spoon the crab meat into the crab shells and top with the gratin.
- Bake for about 15 minutes, until the gratin is lightly browned.

Serves 6