KitchenBooQ

Ackee and Saltfish

Serves: 4 | Cooking Time 1 hour 10 minutes | Level: Capable



INGREDIENTS

1 can (8 oz [225 g]) ackee fruit in water, drained and rinsed
1 lb (450 g) salt cod fish, soaked overnight and boiled until tender
3 tbsp (45 ml) unsalted butter or cooking oil
1 medium yellow bell pepper, finely chopped
1 medium red bell pepper, finely chopped
1 large onion, diced
4 scallions, thinly sliced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 fresh Scotch bonnet peppers, halved (seeds removed) or 1 tsp [5 g] crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup (120 ml) chicken or vegetable broth
1 tsp dried thyme leaves
1/2 tsp ground allspice
1 medium tomato, diced
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
Salt to taste (optional, depending on fish saltiness)

Notes
Soaking salt cod overnight is essential to remove excess brine; skip this step only if using pre-desalinated fish. Ackee must be heated gently to preserve its signature custard texture and shape. Never store cooked ackee and saltfish at room temperature for more than 2 hours due to food safety guidelines; cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container within 2 hours of cooking. It will keep in the fridge for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Reheat slowly on the stovetop with a splash of water to restore moisture.

PREPARATION

1. Drain the canned ackee in a colander and gently rinse under cold water to remove any residual brine. Carefully separate the arils from the seeds and pith if still attached, taking care not to break them apart. Pat them dry with paper towels.

2. If using fresh salt cod, soak it in cold water for 24 hours, changing the water every 8 hours. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add the fish, and simmer for 15-20 minutes until tender but not falling apart. Drain, let cool slightly, then flake into bite-sized pieces, discarding any skin or bones. Reserve about 1/4 cup of the cooking liquid.

3. Heat butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion and bell peppers, sautéing for 5 minutes until softened. Stir in scallions, garlic, and Scotch bonnet peppers, cooking for another minute until fragrant.

4. Pour in broth, thyme, allspice, black pepper, and reserved fish cooking liquid. Bring to a gentle simmer and let it reduce by half, about 3 minutes.

5. Gently fold the flaked saltfish into the skillet, pressing down lightly to coat with the aromatics. Simmer uncovered for 5 minutes to meld flavors.

6. Carefully add the ackee arils to the skillet. Using a spatula, gently fold and press them just enough to warm through, about 2-3 minutes. Do not overmix or stir vigorously, as the ackee will turn mushy. Remove from heat immediately once heated through. Discard the Scotch bonnet peppers before serving.

7. Serve hot alongside boiled green bananas, fried dumplings, or toasted bread, with extra black pepper and hot sauce on the side.