



OXTAIL PEPPERPOT

Featured on February 15, 2017, for “Food and the Great Migration”

What impact did the Great Migration have on American foodways? From 1915 to 1960, more than five million African-Americans migrated from the deep South to the northern and western United States in search of new opportunities for work and community. On February 25th we prepared a few dishes that reflect the culinary changes that emerged from that migration and help us consider how African-Americans preserved some Southern roots as “soul food” tradition while adapting and creating new dishes for their neighborhoods.

This oxtail pepperpot is an iconic dish of Caribbean—most specifically Guyanese—cooking, made by stewing meat with savory spices, hot peppers, and cassareep (a syrup made from the root cassava.) During the Great Migration, African-Americans in northern cities like Philadelphia and New York often found themselves in contact with migrants from around the world, many from the Caribbean who had migrated after political upheavals and revolutions of the 19th century. In these cities, migrants found each other and adopted each other’s culinary traditions, including this variation on a traditional pepperpot using oxtail rather than offal. As a 1928 New York Times article about the community of Harlem noted, “In what it eats, Harlem shows itself less a locality than an international rallying cry.”

OXTAIL PEPPERPOT (2017)

Courtesy of Chef Jerome Grant, National Museum of African-American History and Culture

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 1 ½ tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon granulated garlic
- ¼ cup vegetable oil, for cooking
- 3 pounds oxtail
- 1 yellow onion, medium-diced
- 2 carrots, medium-diced
- 1 stalk celery, medium-diced
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 cup red wine (slightly sweeter/fruitier is better)
- 3 bay leaves
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 4 whole cloves
- 1 bunch fresh thyme
- 3 scotch bonnet peppers
- 1 cup of cassareep or browning liquid
- 3 quarts beef stock

Directions

1. Mix the salt, brown sugar, cayenne and granulated garlic in a small bowl. Mix spiced together then season oxtail and let sit for 30 minutes.
2. In a large cast iron Dutch oven, heat the oil and sear the oxtails on both sides. Remove the oxtail from pot and add the onion, carrots, celery and garlic cloves and continue to sauté vegetables.
3. Once the vegetables begin to caramelize, add the tomato paste and continue to cook over medium heat until the tomato paste browns. (If the mixture becomes dry, add water as needed.) Once the mixture is brown, deglaze the pot with red wine and cook until the liquid reduces by half.
4. Return the oxtail to the pot and add the bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves, thyme, whole scotch bonnets, cassareep and beef stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce to medium heat, cover, and let braise for 3 hours, or until the meat is tender. Remove the thyme stems and bay leaf, season to taste with salt, and serve hot in bowls.



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