

Ghanaian Nkatenkwan

From *A Year in Chicken Soup* by Hattie Garlick on Talking of Food.

Ingredients

1 whole	chicken
about 300 g	groundnuts (or use peanut butter)
about 10	Okro (okra)
	scotch bonnet peppers (or milder chillies to taste)
	palm oil
	stock cube (in Ghana, the ubiquitous Maggi is essential!)
1 tin	tomatoes
3	onions
	root ginger
	water
	rice, to serve

Method

Chop the chicken into pieces (not necessary to joint it neatly).

Grind the peppers in a pestle and mortar. Use chillis to taste, removing seeds if desired [note from Hattie Garlick: I used one whole scotch bonnet and found it packed a powerful punch, just the right side of eye watering].

Peel the onions, chop into large pieces. Peel and chop ginger. Add chicken, onion, chilli peppers, ginger, okro to a large heavy based saucepan. Crumble over stock cube, stir to combine and coat chicken. Add a little palm oil, (or a lot if you're west African) when it starts to sizzle stir again. Add a little water, cover and steam for about 10-15mins.

Make your groundnut paste: this involves very rigorous grinding of toasted ground/peanuts, or pulse blending until oils are released. I recommend you to use premade peanut butter...

Put peanut butter in a bowl, add a little boiling water, a few drops at a time, to loosen it. stir continuously to make a smooth thick paste.

Heat a little palm oil in a pan over a low heat, then add the peanut butter paste. Stir continuously until oils start to separate: you will notice orangey oil collecting on the surface. Once the oils have separated, add about a litre of hot water and bring to a simmer. Add to the steamed chicken and veg mix. Add the can of tomatoes, mashed.

Cook at a low simmer for 30 mins. Use a slotted spoon to remove all veg, grind till smooth and return to the pot. The soup should be creamy and smooth apart from the chicken pieces. Continue cooking until the chicken is very tender and the peanut and palm oils start to collect on the surface of the soup. Season to taste (if you used salted peanut butter it probably won't require any further salt).

You can serve with plain rice, or for more authenticity make some rice balls. Cook unwashed white rice until sticky, then form into large balls. You can do this by shaking rice between two cereal bowls to form a compressed ball. Properly, they are shaped using bowls made from half a gourd. The ball should sit like an island in the soup. Eat with your fingers and enjoy!