

Maffé

By Roman Barry

Sensational! What is this mouthwatering, peanut buttery, spicy, carnivorous smell? My tongue is starting to fight my teeth to escape to this delightful waft of heaven. What could it be, this smell that makes me feel like a blade of grass in a field over vast plains? Relaxation, yet such excitement!

I enter the kitchen after a frantic running of my whole house in search of this heavenly smell, and there it is: the food of my dreams. It must have been passed down from the Gods to my people. Maffé! Peanut butter, meat from a goat or chicken (this time it's goat), hot sauce, rice! Let me humble myself. A delicacy in my book, no other food is above it. At last my life has a purpose.

Maffé is a dish made in Senegal. It comes from the many tribes and is made not only there but also in Gambia, Mauritania, and other surrounding areas in West Africa close to the Atlantic. It's a family dish, and it is traditionally served in a big bowl like all Senegalese foods. It's not a special event type of dish; it's a dish to converse to and have time with your family.

Now I have never made Maffé ever in my life, but I've watched my auntie make it. She grabs two big pots out of the kitchen cupboard, one for the rice and the other for the sauce. She fills the rice pot about one-third away from the top and lets it sit on the stove above an inch high flame. She fills the second pot with enormous amounts of peanut butter, and then she squirts in the hot sauce. She mixes it with a thick wooden spoon and then dumps about three pounds of meat into the concoction. She places it on the stove at about the same temperature as the rice and stirs occasionally.

An hour and a half later, she sprinkles the white rice in a big two by two foot bowl and spreads it out neatly. Now, la pièce de resistance. She pours the sauce lightly over the rice and adds spritzes of lemon all over. She wipes her face off, and her blue eyes widen. Finally, showing her exhaustion, she smiles with her huge African lips and is ready to serve dinner.

No smell on earth matches the intensity of the mixture of spices, lemon, meat and peanut butter all in one. Just one sniff takes me from the living room to a feeling of being high in the sky. I look at this prized possession of Senegal: Oily and sticky sauce with red and brownish spots of roasted peanut butter blanketing the rice. The taste makes me want to do two back flips and a cartwheel. The lemon makes me pucker while the hot sauce burns the inside of my mouth. Luscious goat meat, juicy goat meat — this is the greatest dish alive.

My auntie is overjoyed and is thanked by everyone in the family for her hard work. All right, I've got my spoon. Everybody is gathered around ready to devastate this immense bowl of delight. We pray first, say our blessings, and then everyone digs in. I start to carve my part of the bowl out as I take bite after bite of this... this... wonderful dish. It starts to use my taste buds to its advantage, and now I can only think of eating this food right here. As we eat, the smell attracts wandering people in the street to our open window just to get a glimpse of this wondrous aroma.

My family is huge, you know, BIG! We have twelve people sitting around a two foot bowl. Men mostly wear T-shirts and blue jeans as well as traditional clothing called Kaftans. They're long-sleeved, colorful shirt-like suits with no buttons with matching pants. They are

baggy and have many curvy designs on them and resemble traditional clothing worn at the Mosque. Women wear clothing that covers most of their body except their face and feet, a Muslim type look. We're ready to start conversation, gossip about people next door. Who is ready to see these gluttons? Who clears farms like locusts? My family does! But when our family eats together there is an ambiance of love and mellowness. This is obvious that it is because of the delicious taste of Maffé! Smacking, just all around good eating. Savor it while it lasts, because it's almost gone, gone...sniff, gone.

My escapade to this world of great foods has come to an end. We have tasted a little bit of life in Senegal and the warmth of family. Until another day when we will savor this together: The love of food. The love of cultures. And most importantly, the love of Maffé.

Ingredients

3 pounds cubed meat (goat or chicken)
5 pounds rice
2 jars peanut butter
½ bottle hot sauce
20 mL lemon juice
cooking oil

Directions

Get two large pots 1 foot wide by 1 foot tall. One will serve as the sauce pot and the other as the rice pot. In the sauce pot, add enough cooking oil to grease up the entire surface of the interior. About half a centimeter of oil should be left at the bottom. Now scoop out the peanut butter from the two jars and put it into the pot. Add half a bottle of hot sauce to the concoction and a thin layer of oil. Stir for 2-5 minutes. Place the pot on the stove for 90 minutes on medium heat. Once the sauce starts to simmer, it is done.

Fill the second pot 2/5 to the top with water and ½ of the pot with rice. Heat on high for 20 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes. Start this process close to the end of the simmering of the sauce.

Once all is done, spread the rice evenly over a 2 by 2 foot bowl. Pour the sauce lightly all over to make a thick blanket. Add light spritzes of lemon juice all over the sauce, and it is ready to serve. Bon appétit.

Serves 10

Water-132.30g, Energy-1221kcal, Energy-5109kJ, Protein-41.10g, Total lipid-112.89g, Ash-6.66g, Carbohydrate-7.08g, Calcium-45mg, Iron-3.36mg, Magnesium-42mg, Phosphorous-348mg, Potassium-636mg, Sodium-2067mg, Zinc-4.35mg, Copper-0.198mg, Manganese-0.237mg, Selenium-49.8mcg, Thiamin- 1.440mg, Riboflavin-0.360mg, Niacin-10.050mg, Vitamin B6-0.600mg, Folate-36mcg, Vitamin B12-3.90mcg, Vitamin E-0.66mg, Vitamin K-10.2mcg, Saturated fats-45.948, Cholesterol-198mg