



Cooking with Greg – 8:40AM Wednesdays

Brazil's culinary influences include not only Amerindian and Portuguese foods, but the cooking styles of immigrants from many other parts of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Each of the country's five geographic regions offer cuisines that are distinctly different yet recognizably Brazilian.

Brazilian cooking history is in every bite of the country's food. Native Indians developed corn porridge, cassava meal, sweet potatoes, many roots, hearts of palm, many species of game and fish, and the preservation of meats by smoking and drying.

In 1533, the Portuguese colonized Brazil. After a lengthy Moorish occupation, Portugal had adapted a variety of North African cooking traditions, among them coffee, dried fruits and pastries. These culinary customs were in turn exported to Brazil, with the twist of being prepared using local ingredients.

The largest single influence on Brazilian cuisine came with African slaves. Dende, peppers and coconut milk, staples of West African cooking, became firmly established on the Brazilian palate.

During the Nineteenth Century, slavery ended and an independent Brazil became a melting pot for immigrants from all over the world. Waves of new arrivals from Asia, Western and Eastern Europe and the Middle East brought kitchen traditions with them that put a truly eclectic spin on Brazilian cuisine. The nation's multiethnic and multifaceted cooking is always unique and delicious

Brazil

What To Eat

Perhaps Brazil's greatest treasure is her bounty of fruits. Many varieties of tropical fruit are not cultivated but grow freely in the wetland areas or in the uplands. Some are palm fruits. Even today, some of these exotic fruits are only known in the region in which they grow. To the tourist, the sheer variety of new and unusual types can be an overwhelming experience.

A beverage made from the fruit called **guarana** is the nation's favorite.

An assortment of amazing fish tempt the palate. Menus in the north feature the mammoth pirarucu, whose delicious flesh is quite meaty, almost like chicken; and the tasty tambaqui, a fruit and seed-eating fish equipped with powerful, molar-like teeth adapted for crushing its food. Other notable fish are the salmon-like dourado in the center-west and the tucunare, the beautifully-colored peacock bass.

Meat reigns in the south. One must experience the popular churrasco, a showy orgy featuring grilled meats of all kinds. In certain restaurants, it is served rodizio style, on skewers from which select pieces are chosen in an all-you-can-eat setting. In the southeast, the Cariocas (inhabitants of the city of Rio de Janeiro) have adopted it as a specialty of their own. For pork, the southeast features delicious roast suckling pig and cracklings of fried pork skin.

Vegetables and edible tubers abound, but leafy green vegetables lag in popularity. Menus feature yams, sweet potatoes, squash, peppers, beans and peanuts, to name a few. A hot, red pepper named malagueta is one of three characteristic ingredients of Bahian cookery in the northeast. The other two are coconut milk and a palm oil called dende. **Manioc** (cassava), however, is the main staple, both as a vegetable and as a condiment.

In the breads and rolls category, an outstanding entry is pao de queijo, cheese rolls made with tapioca starch and grated cheese. They are especially popular in the center-west, southeast and south.

A rich Portuguese heritage is evident in desserts characterized by lavish use of eggs and sugar. The slaves in the colonial sugar plantation mansions often modified them by adding indigenous ingredients. A representative

confection is the irresistible egg and grated coconut upside-down dessert known as quindim.

There is an infinite variety of fruit juices. Try them all, and if you like, mix in some Brazilian brandy, or cachaca, made from sugar cane to make a batida. If you mix some crushed lemon, they're small, green and tart like our limes, you have the caipirinha, Brazil's national cocktail.

Menu Guide

coxinhas: an appetizer of breaded "mock" chicken legs. It is also a pastry filled with chicken.

siri recheado: crab shells stuffed with a mixture of minced crabmeat, cilantro and hot peppers, topped with grated cheese.

rabada ensopada: oxtail stew.

feijoada: Brazil's spectacular national dish. It is an elaborate stew with black beans and many different smoked and sun-dried meats, especially pork, and smoked sausages. It is served with several traditional side dishes, including orange slices, shredded kale, rice, manioc (cassava) meal browned in butter and a hot pepper and lemon sauce.

picanha com batata doce frita: a popular cut of steak served with fried sweet potatoes.

bobo de camarao: fresh shrimp in a purée of dried shrimp, manioc (cassava) meal, coconut milk and nuts, flavored with a palm oil called dende.

peixe na telha: fish grilled and served on a tile.

couve a mineira: shredded kale sautéed briefly in oil, onion and garlic.

abacaxi assado: baked pineapple.

doce de leite: a rich, soft caramel mixture made from thickened milk and sugar. It is sometimes put in small pastry shells.

siri recheado: crab shells stuffed with a mixture of minced crabmeat, cilantro and hot peppers, topped with grated cheese.

Brazilian Stuffed Crabs (Siri Recheado) Recipe

Serves/Makes: 2 - 3

Ingredients:

- 6 small, live hard-shelled crabs
- Olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lime or lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- salt, freshly ground pepper
- 1 medium onion, grated
- 2 scallions, chopped, using white and green parts
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh coriander (cilantro), chopped
- 1 or 2 fresh hot red peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1 egg, beaten
- Fine bulgar wheat
- Lettuce leaves
- Small black and green olives

How to cook Brazilian Stuffed Crabs (Siri Recheado):

1. Plunge the crabs into boiling water and boil for 10 minutes. Lift out and cool. Carefully remove the meat from the shells and claws, and chop. Discard the spongy fiber.
2. Scrub the empty shells, dry them, and brush the insides with a little olive oil.
3. Season the crab meat with the lime or lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper to taste, and set aside.
4. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a skillet and saute the onion, scallions, and tomatoes until the mixture is soft and well blended.
5. Cool to room temperature and combine it with the crab mixture.
6. Add the coriander leaves, the hot peppers, and the bread crumbs, and mix well.
7. Stuff the crab shells with the mixture, brush with beaten egg, and sprinkle with a little bulgar wheat.

8. Bake in a preheated moderate 350°F (180°C) oven for 30 minutes, or until lightly browned.
9. Garnish serving plates with the lettuce leaves and olives.
10. Serve as a first course.

feijoada: Brazil's spectacular national dish. It is an elaborate stew with black beans and many different smoked and sun-dried meats, especially pork, and smoked sausages. It is served with several traditional side dishes, including orange slices, shredded kale, rice, manioc (cassava) meal browned in butter and a hot pepper and lemon sauce.

It's a traditional Brazilian stew made with pork and black beans. The slaves in colonial Brazil created the Feijoada when they started cooking the pork meats that farmland owners discarded, such as ear, tails and feet, in a big pot with the black beans.

Serves 4

- 1 lb black bean dried - not from a tin
 - 1 lb salted pork ribs
 - 1 lb salted Bacon
 - 8 tablespoons Olive Oil
 - 2 Onions peeled and finely chopped
 - 6 Cloves Garlic finely chopped
 - 2 large smoked Sausages cut into big chunks
 - 1 lb smoked pork ribs, cut into chunks
 - 1 lb smoked Bacon cut into chunks
 - 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
 - 5 Bay leaves
1. Soak the beans in cold water overnight, making sure they are completely covered. Also soak the salted ribs and bacon in cold water overnight.

2. Drain the beans and put them into a large saucepan of cold water. Bring to the boil over a medium heat, then simmer for 30 minutes until tender.
3. Rinse the soaked salted ribs and bacon well, add to the beans and cook for 30 minutes over a medium heat. Heat a very large saucepan and pour in the olive oil so it covers the bottom. Add the onions and garlic and cook until softened. Add the sausages, smoked ribs and bacon, pepper and bay leaves. Pour in the cooked beans and meat and top up with water. Simmer for about 1 hour, until the meat falls off the bone.
4. Serve the Feijoada with boiled white rice, slices of orange, and very finely sliced spring greens fried in olive oil with finely chopped onion and garlic.