

AFRICAN WORDS IN AMERICAN CULINARY USAGE

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America's language of food is a vibrant mix of the world's gastronomic terms, from *sauté* to *sushi*. We have borrowed words and techniques from virtually all of the world's continents. Much of Africa's food remains unknown to most of us, but the continent itself lends its vocabulary to the pot in expressions that speak of its rich culinary heritage. The couscous and *tagines* of Northern Africa are common currency, while the *brais* and *sosaties* of the south await discovery. The most-used culinary terms, though, came from West Africa in the memories of the millions of its sons and daughters who arrived in chains. It is from them that we get the Bantu term *nguba*, which gave us our nickname for peanut—goober. The Twi language of Ghana gave us the word *nkrama*, which was corrupted into okra. The word *benne* used in South Carolina to mean sesame changes not one whit and still means sesame among the Wolof of Senegal. *Nyam* remains a verb and means "to eat" in the Gullah of the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, but becomes *yam*, a noun mistakenly applied to varieties of sweet potatoes, in the rest of the country. The best-known and most-used word that harks back to the African motherland is a variant of the Bantu language's word for okra. It has given us the name of the uniquely American stew—gumbo.

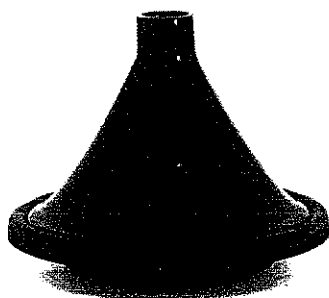
SPECIALTY CASSEROLES

TAGINES

The word *tagine* refers to both a dish and a pot for making it. The dish is a savory stew native to North African countries, particularly Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and it may be any combination of fish, meat, poultry, vegetables, or fruit. As long as it is cooked in a special casserole, it is a *tagine*. The casserole is a flat-bottomed, shallow dish made of earthenware, stoneware, or cast iron with a tall, conical lid. The lid fits snugly inside the dish so that steam (as well as nutrients and flavor) doesn't escape during cooking. Vapors condense on the tall sidewalls and moisten the ingredients below, keeping them juicy and succulent.

To serve a meal from the *tagine*, lift the cover. It is the custom for guests to use fingers (only the first three fingers of the right hand) to lift food from the dish, but you may use serving utensils if you like!

9.120 LE CREUSET TAGINE



Tagines have such a fascinating shape that it is no wonder so many of them

are used only as serving pieces, while the cooking is done in a different pot. This one is attractive and also fully functional. It is easy on the home cook too. While classic *tagines* are cooked on a brazier over hot charcoal, this one can go on your stovetop or in your oven. The bottom pan is black, heavy cast iron. It holds heat exceptionally well for the long cooking period required and it is large, with plenty of room for a variety of interesting ingredients

TAGINE EL LAHM FELFLA MATISHA (TAGINE OF LAMB WITH GREEN PEPPERS AND TOMATOES)

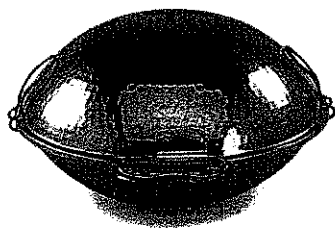
5 to 6 servings

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| 3 pounds shoulder of lamb, cut into 1½" chunks | ¼ cup chopped parsley |
| 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped | ¼ cup salad oil or less |
| pinch of pulverized saffron | 2½ pounds fresh, ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped |
| salt to taste | 1 pound sweet green peppers, grilled, peeled, seeded, and chopped |
| 1 teaspoon ground ginger | juice of one lemon |
| 1 tablespoon sweet paprika | |

Trim the lamb of excess fat. Place in the casserole, along with a mixture of garlic, saffron, salt, spices, and parsley pounded to a paste in the mortar. Pour in the oil to make a sauce and toss with the meat. Add 2 cups water, bring to boil, then reduce the heat and simmer 30 minutes. Add the tomatoes and continue simmering for 2 more hours, stirring from time to time while the tomatoes cook down to a thick purée. Add the green peppers 10 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with the lemon juice and serve hot or warm.

(the dimensions are 12" diameter, 2" deep, with a 1½-quart capacity). The lid is 9" tall, glazed lightly on the inside and with a rich, earthy red glaze on the outside surface.

9.121 THE SPANISH TABLE COPPER CATAPLANA



From the southern province of Algarve comes the *cataplana*, a large, lightweight metal pan inspired, perhaps, by the humble clam. It has the

curved shape of that close-mouthed mollusk—except that its two halves are perfectly round—and the top and bottom are hinged together. This beautiful *cataplana*, made of hammered copper lined with tin, has copper nail heads, hinge, and handles, and two clamps on the sides to anchor the top securely to the bottom. The pan is 9" across and each half is 3" deep; the lower half will hold 6 cups. Although the *cataplana* is used for the cooking of a number of Portuguese dishes and brings out the fullest flavor of whatever it cooks—from fish to lamb or pork—we especially like the idea of using it for *amêijoas na cataplana*, a casserole of clams with *chouriço* sausages, *presunto* ham, tomatoes, onions, hot pep-

pers, garlic, and wine. Imagine the effect of throwing open your handsome copper bivalve to a cloud of steam redolent of herbs and shellfish and a splendid array of open clams.

9.122 JAPANESE BLACK-IRON SUKIYAKI-NABE



Thin slices of meat (usually beef, but also chicken or pork), various vegetables, noodles, and bean curd, simmered together in a *sake-shoyu* broth, usually at the table over a heat source—that is a brief description of *sukiyaki*. But it cannot begin to convey the succulence of this best known of the *nabemono* (one-pot dishes). The proof is in the tasting—and the cooking is in this heavy, matte black-enameled, cast-iron pan, or *nabe*, which sits on three little feet. It has a broad downward-sloping lip covered with a faint raised design to which two rings are attached. It is 11½" in diameter, 1" deep, and it will hold 6 cups of meat, vegetables, and sauce. Use it at the table over a *hibachi* or any tabletop heat source.

9.123 JAPANESE COVERED NABE



Nabe is a Japanese word for "pot," and *nabemono* (literally, "pot things") are one-pot dishes cooked at the table. This enameled cast-iron pot (called a *tetsu-nabe*) is 8¾" in diameter and 3¾" deep, with a 2-quart capacity—

PIRI-PIRI

✧ DAVID LEITE ✧

Piri-piri is the Swahili word for the incendiary red peppers of Africa—primarily those of Angola and Mozambique, former Portuguese colonies. Because of the seafaring nature of the Portuguese, it didn't take long for these bite-size pods of fire to make their way to Lisbon aboard spice ships returning from the East.

Mainlanders wasted no time in turning the torrid chiles into a versatile sauce. Cooks use it as a marinade, a basting liquid, and a condiment. In fact, take a walk down an esplanade in Lisbon and you'll find bottles of *piri-piri* sauce dotting restaurant tables everywhere. And no wonder: it's perfect with shrimp, chicken, and fish.

PIRI-PIRI SAUCE

Makes 1½ cups

Although *piri-piri* peppers aren't available in this country, you can substitute any hot chiles, such as cayenne, *piquins*, or *santaka*.

- 3 to 6 hot chiles, depending on the heat
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- juice of 1 lemon
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

- 1 Coarsely chop peppers. Discard stems.
- 2 Place all ingredients (including seeds) in a small glass jar, cover tightly, and shake well. Let steep for at least 24 hours at room temperature. Sauce will keep in refrigerator for one month.