

Physics 2000

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**Caribbean
Cookbook**



physics2000.com

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Chapter 0

A Short Caribbean Cookbook



A Callilou leaf



Coconut Milk

“I add coconut milk,” said Miss Esme as I finished a great tasting bowl of callilou soup in her small food stand. Later, on our trip back from Tobago to Bequia where the textbook is being written, my wife and I are stranded in Granada by LIAT airlines (not an uncommon occurrence). In a small store, Anne exclaimed, “I have to buy this for you. It’s jerk seasoning”. I got the point, but we bought it anyway. It turned out that both coconut milk and jerk seasoning made excellent additions to callilou soup and are included in one of the recipes that follow.



Jerk Seasoning

WHY BEQUIA?

Our experience with writing physics textbooks in the Caribbean began in 1964 when I got a letter from the W.A. Benjamin Publishing Company, suggesting that I needed uninterrupted time to finish the non-calculus introductory physics text *Physics 1*. They suggested that they should send us (myself, my wife, Anne, and the two kids) to somewhere, perhaps Europe, to do the writing. I thought the letter was a joke and brought it home that night to show Anne. The next day Anne rented a house on the island of Bequia, a house complete with a cook who had been written up in *Holiday* magazine.

Bequia is a small island approximately 3 miles by 8 miles, located about 60 miles north of Granada and 8 miles south of St. Vincent. At that time I had not heard of any of these islands, but soon I found that Bequia was the northern most of the Grenadines, and that all of these islands are within 200 miles of Venezuela. During four months on Bequia in 1965, we finished rewriting about half of *Physics 1* and gained a lot of weight. The cook was great, but I never got into the kitchen to see how the local dishes were cooked.

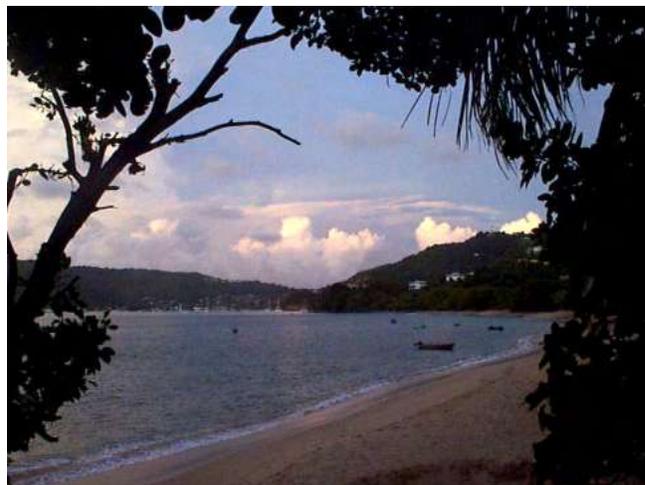


Bequia Outer Harbor

In the spring of 1990 we went back to Bequia for the first time, and discovered that our friends were still there, including Shirley Lulley whose kids played with our kids on the beach in 1965, and Kelvin Bunyon who, with infinite patience, taught me to play the cuatro (almost). Shirley pointed out an adorable cottage on the beach that was available during the off season for a reasonable rent. Seeing that cottage, we decided to write the *Physics 2000* text. To avoid the pressure and interference from commercial publishers, we decided to do the whole thing ourselves, spending two months a year in Bequia for 10 years. The rest of the time was primarily class testing the text at Dartmouth College.



Marie Kingston's Cottage



View from the cottage

WHAT TO COOK

Tourists, visiting the Caribbean for a week's vacation, eat typical American food at high priced restaurants. But go into a local market or grocery store, and you haven't the faintest clue where the restaurants get the food they serve. A few things are familiar like eggs, English butter and English cheese, but you will not find hamburger, and tomatoes and heads of lettuce are scrawny and expensive. So are carrots. What you will find are big sacks of rice, 5 pound blocks of frozen and refrozen chicken parts from Alabama, various kinds of fruit depending on the season, avocados, and bundles of strange looking leaves called *calalou* leaves.

Your choice, if you are spending any time on a Caribbean island, is to blow your budget in expensive restaurants, or learn to cook with what is available in the local stores. To learn to cook, you need help. We had Shirley Lulley and other friends who gave us various cooking lessons. We have tried to import some of the wisdom of these lessons in this cookbook. Trying not to leave anything to chance, I used a digital camera to capture every step of the process. This cookbook is for those who do not know much about cooking, but wish to survive in the Caribbean. We include a few basic recipes, other recipes you should learn from friends.

Before we get into the details, first an overview.



Starting to brown the sugar

Rice Pilau

Learning to cook rice pilau is like taking introductory physics for an engineering major. It seems that half of all Caribbean dishes start out with the basic rice pilau formula. In that formula, you first chop up some onions, then put a couple of tablespoons of oil in a frying pan, and then in the center of the pan, place a small pile of brown sugar, about 3 tablespoonsful. Then you heat the frying pan until the sugar starts to melt. Continue heating, without stirring, until the sugar starts to boil. Continue heating until the sugar starts to darken. Continue heating until the sugar starts to foam. At that *instant*, add the onions to cool the sugar down and keep it from burning. If you have to walk across the room to get the onions, the sugar will burn, the room will fill with smoke, and you will spend an hour cleaning the frying pan. I know because that is what happened to me the first time I tried making pilau. Just being told about browning the sugar does not work, you really need to see what the sugar looks like at the precise moment the onions are added to stop the browning process. That is why I used the digital camera to catch these stages.

After you have added the onions and simmered them, you can go on and create a number of different dishes. The recipe we photographed leads to a reasonably good pilau.



Just before adding the onions

Callilou Soup

A really good Caribbean meal begins with callilou soup. The soup begins with a bundle of folded up and often wilting leaves you will find in the market. You would never guess, on your own, how to make soup from these leaves. First of all, if you do not cook them enough, they will make you sick. A sailor once described eating under-cooked callilou as having the same effect as eating fiberglass insulation. I will take his word for it. I am not about to try it myself.

The time consuming part of cooking callilou soup is peeling all the stems. That is where a lot of the flavor is, but the skin of the stems has to be removed. Any pieces left in will show up as unchewable pieces in the finished soup.

Most Caribbean cooks add chicken or some other meat to the soup. I make a better tasting soup without the meat. I may not have the best pilau yet, but I think I have the best callilou soup, thanks to help from cooks like Miss Esme, and Anne's discovering jerk seasoning.



Callilou leaves as you find them in the market.

Chicken

The chicken in the frozen 5 pound blocks from Alabama is real cheap and generally adequate. When I get back home, I thaw it just enough to separate the pieces, and then refreeze them in separate plastic bags. This chicken is not too bad if you grill it or hide it in a recipe. If you are real lucky, someone will get you a fresh chicken which you can roast and enjoy as a very special treat.

Coleslaw

While lettuce is an expensive luxury, cabbage is a somewhat expensive staple. The cabbage you find in the Caribbean has a lot more flavor than American cabbage. The Caribbean cabbage has such good flavor, that you do not have to add much seasoning to make a really good tasting coleslaw. Because lettuce heads and tomatoes are so puny and expensive, you will find yourself using coleslaw as your main salad dish.

We cannot find our pictures of this coleslaw, so we will tell you here how to make it. Cut half a cabbage into thin slices, break up the slices and put them in a bowl. Add 2 rounded tablespoons of mayonnaise, one rounded tablespoon of brown sugar, and one small minced clove of garlic. Let it sit in the refrigerator for half an hour, salt to taste, and then enjoy.



Peeling the stems

Vitamine

Bananas and papayas are the most common fruit, and also mangos when they are in season. There is almost nothing better tasting than a good ripe mango. You can combine these fruits with milk and ice in a blender to make a great breakfast drink. We got the name *vitamine* from similar drinks served in Brazil.



Small bananas that the natives call figs

Breadfruit

Captain Bligh's present to the Caribbean.

You are on your own

Wean yourself from the high price restaurants, and start by following the step-by-step pictures in the cookbook.



The ever present papaya



Put it in the blender



Enjoy



End of the day in Bequia



**Moose Mountain
Digital Press
Back in New
Hampshire**

West Indian Pilau (almost)



MY PILAU INGREDIENTS

Browning the sugar

- 4 small onions, chopped
- 2 to 3 rounded tablespoons of brown sugar
- 2 to 3 tablespoons cooking oil

Add the oil to a frying pan, and place the sugar in a pile at the center of the pan. Brown the sugar as shown on the next page. Add the onions just as the sugar is about to burn. Be sure that the onions are right there to add, because you have only a few seconds before the sugar turns to carbon. However, do not add the onions too early, or you will not get the rich brown flavor. I use high heat for this step, and pay close attention.

After the onions are added, simmer them as shown on page (Pilau-4). At this point you can make a variety of Caribbean dishes, using this as a base. We will go on with my simplified pilau. Suzanne's more traditional pilau is discussed at the end of this section.

Vegetables

This is where I clean out the refrigerator. On the day I photographed this recipe, I happened to have a couple of carrots. You can add in that half of a leftover tomato, or celery stalk. However the two vegetables I always try to include are okra and eggplant.

- 5 or so okra, cut into short sections
- 1/2 eggplant, chopped

You have to cut the okra into short sections, because it is stringy. The eggplant cooks down and virtually disappears. It leaves behind a good flavor, and sort of thickens the pilau. Carrots do not cook down, so cut them into small pieces if you use them.

Chicken

- 3 chicken thighs (frozen is OK)

I have had a lot of trouble dealing with the chicken in the pilau recipe. Most cooks cook the chicken in the sugar and onion mixture (see Suzanne's pilau). I find it easier to cook the vegetables with the onions and sugar, and cook the chicken separately. I used a boat grill to cook the chicken, and then added the cut up chicken meat to the cooked vegetables. Then I simmered the chicken and vegetables together for about 15 minutes.

Seasoning

Once the chicken and the vegetables have simmered, add the following seasoning:

- About 1/2 teaspoon Adobo seasoned salt (to taste)
- 3 medium cloves of garlic, minced
- Other seasonings like a tablespoon of Caribbean green sauce, teaspoon of mustard powder or chilli powder, 1/2 teaspoon of oregano, or a dash of jerk seasoning.

Be very careful with jerk seasoning, it is a powerhouse! 1/8 of a level teaspoon may be too much.

Rice

There are two ways to handle the rice. One is to cook it separately, add it to the simmered vegetables and chicken, and simmer some more. (If it gets to dry, add water so that you can simmer for around 15 minutes, or until well blended.)

The other way is to add the simmered vegetables and chicken to the uncooked rice and water, and cook until the rice is done. I have tried both ways, and cannot tell the difference.

To cook the rice, use a ratio of 2 to 3 parts water to 1 part rice, add rice to boiling water, and simmer until the rice is cooked. How much water you use can depend on the kind of rice you are using. For this pilau recipe, we used:

- 1 cup rice
- 2 cups of water

Some cooks insist on rinsing the rice several times to remove the starch coating. I do that when someone is watching me, but not otherwise.

As we said earlier, I have had better pilau, but this one is fairly easy to cook, and not bad. Heidi cooks a good pilau for the sailboat *Passion*, using chicken wings. I may try experimenting in that direction.



Place the oil in the pan, the sugar in the center, and heat on high heat.



The sugar melts



And starts to spread out. But not ready yet!



NOW!



Add the onions quickly!



Simmer the onions and then add the vegetables, cut up as shown.



You can see how much the onions cooked down before the vegetables were added.



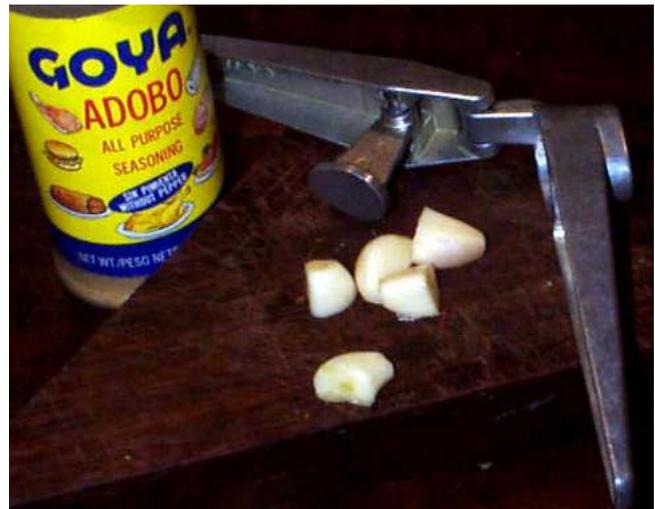
I cook the chicken separately, because it does not cook well in the onion and vegetable mixture. The boat grill makes even Alabama chicken taste good.



Onions and vegetables ready for chicken



Add cut up chicken and seasoning



This is just the basic seasoning



Simmer the chicken



Put it in a bigger pot



Add cooked rice



Simmer 'till blended



It actually tastes good

SUZANNE'S CHICKEN PILAU

Recipe for 3 chicken thighs:

Start with 3 chicken thighs (frozen is OK). Remove skin, fat and small bone pieces. Cut meat into 3/4 inch chunks, and keep the big bones. Wash chicken and bones in vinegar (about 1/4 cup), then water. Squeeze water out.

Add to chicken:

- 1 chopped onion
- 3 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon curry
- 1/2 teaspoon of Adobo seasoning
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- (mustard powder—not prepared mustard)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 to 2 small tomatoes or 2 Tablespoons catsup
- 1 Tablespoon Caribbean green sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano

Mix chicken and above spices in a bowl and let sit for a while. (Not too long in the heat)

Vegetables to add later (optional):

- Cut up sweet pepper (good) (1/2 to 1 pepper—they are small in the West Indies)
- Shredded carrot (1/2 large carrot)
- 3-4 cut up okra (not too many, okra is a strong vegetable)
- Celery (1 stalk cut up) (celery is small in the West Indies)

While the chicken is marinating in the spices, take a medium sized sauce pan, add 2 Tablespoons of vegetable oil and start heating.

Spread oil over bottom of pan, and then put 2 Tablespoons of brown sugar (Caribbean or raw sugar preferably) in a mound at the center of the pan. (Equal amounts of oil and sugar). Continue heating over high heat. The sugar will melt and start to spread out into the oil. Continue to heat. The sugar starts getting dark and smokes a bit. Continue to heat but watch very carefully. The sugar then starts to froth and turn a dark brown.

There are 1 or 2 seconds between the time the sugar is dark and frothing, and when it has burned. Add onions, chicken and seasoning quickly while still in froth, before burned.

A debate: As you are heating the sugar, some will inevitably get off to one side and start to turn black before the rest of the sugar has melted. I simply stir the hot sugar in so that all the sugar heats evenly. Several cooks down here say don't stir the sugar, just let it froth. I think you want to avoid burning some of it, because that gives the dish a bitter taste. In any case the sugar should be dark brown and frothing before the chicken is added.

Once the chicken is added, quickly stir so that the brown sugar is thoroughly mixed in with the chicken and onions. Cook this until the chicken begins to brown—about 10 minutes over a relatively hot flame. Then add the optional vegetables and let the mixture cook for a couple of minutes.

Wash 1 cup of rice three times to remove the starch coating. Then add the 1 cup of rice and 2 cups of water and heat until the mixture boils. Then simmer until the rice is done—about 20 minutes. Then you have Suzanne's Pilau.

Calalou Soup



Peel off steams and chop steams of the calalou plant

Saute onions (4 small) in vegetable oil (2 tablespoons)

Saute garlic with the onions (2 cloves)

Set aside

In separate pan boil 2-3 packets of calalou in 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water

Okra (about 5 to 6)

Boil for 20 minutes

Near the end of boiling add the Adobo seasoning (1/2 teaspoon)

Jerk seasoning (1/4 teaspoon)

Salt (1/2 teaspoon)

Put in blender (not the sauteed onions) and blend

Put all back in the pot and add 1/4 cup of coconut milk

Cook

DELICIOUS!



Start with onions, okra, and calalou. Chop the onions and cut the okra into short pieces.



This is what calalou leaves look like in the market.



The calalou leaf



The first step is to strip the green part of the leaf. We use the green part.



Put the green part of the leaves in a pot.



Here are the stems we saved.



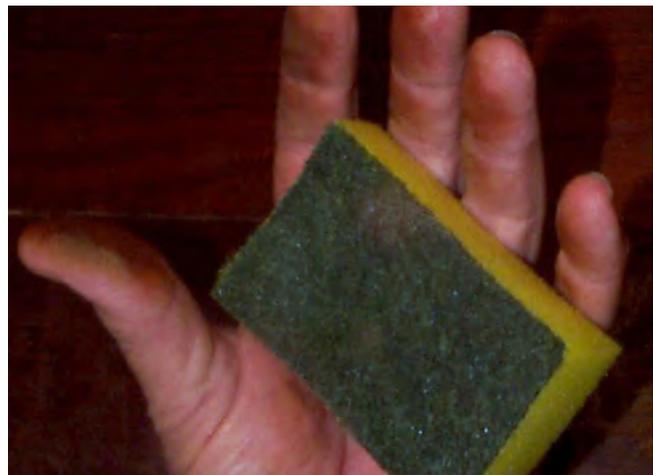
Next, peel the tough skin off the main part of the stem.



You throw away the curly skin and keep the insides.



Close-up of the skin and inner part of one stem.



Once you have finished peeling the stems, your hands are stained. A green scrub pad will remove the stains.



Add the stems to the green part of the leaves in the pot.



Add 1 to 2 inches of water and boil for 20 minutes.



Use a blender to Blend the boiled calalou and the water that the calalou was cooked in. This is a bit messy, at least when I do it. It takes about 3 loads to blend it all, which means you need a second pot.



Simmered onions



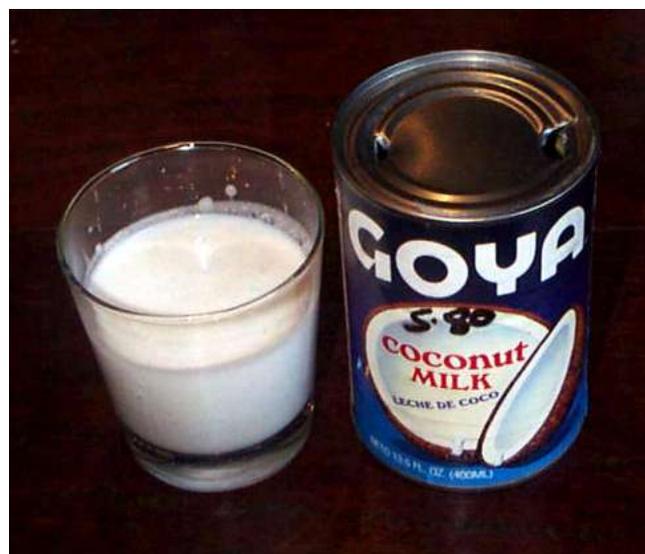
Chop and simmer the onions in 2 tablespoons of oil. Then chop up a small eggplant, if you have one, and chop the okra as shown.



Add the okra and eggplant to the simmered onions.



Cook until the eggplant essentially becomes a brown sauce. Don't burn!



To the blended calalou, add

1/2 teaspoon of Adobo seasoning salt

1/2 teaspoon of regular salt

1/4 teaspoon of jerk seasoning

1/4 cup of unsweetened coconut milk

The sauteed onion, okra, eggplant mixture

Cook on low heat for about half an hour or longer. Add water if necessary, but I like mine fairly thick.



Ready to serve

The Breakfast Drink Vitamine



Bananas and papayas are the most common fruit, and also mangos when they are in season. There is almost nothing better tasting than a good ripe mango. You can combine these fruits with milk and ice in a blender to make a great breakfast drink. The fruit you use can be stored frozen. We got the name *vitamine* from similar drinks served in Brazil.



This is a Papaya



Small bananas that the locals call "figs"



Papaya from the inside



It's good served with lime



We freeze the bananas and papaya



What we need to make a vitamin. You see frozen bananas, frozen papaya, guava jelly brown sugar, and powdered milk. (You cannot buy fresh milk on the island.) Caribbean brown sugar tastes best.



Slice up the frozen bananas. Fresh ones work also, but require more ice.



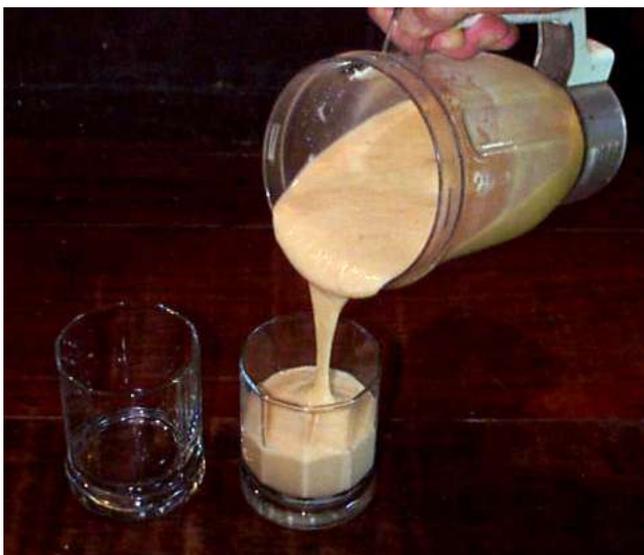
Break or cut up the papaya. It was frozen as flat packages in ziplock bags.



The fruit in the blender. It is up to you if you want to add sugar or a sugar substitute.



Add powdered milk, jelly, and water. Use ice if fruit not frozen.



Pour



Serve with grated nutmeg.

Breadfruit



Captain Bligh was sailing the ship *Bounty* from Tahiti to St. Vincent in 1789, to bring breadfruit trees to the Caribbean, when the famous mutiny occurred. Having survived a 4,000 mile ocean voyage in an open boat, he later returned to Tahiti and successfully completed his mission of bringing breadfruit trees to St. Vincent, where a descendent of Bligh's original trees can be seen in the Botanical garden.

I finally learned how to cook a breadfruit by watching a picnic on the beach outside our cottage. The picnickers built a fire, and when the coals were hot, they put the breadfruit right in the coals and left it there until it was black. They said it was done when they could stick a straw into it. As you will see, I used my boat grill to blacken the breadfruit.



The breadfruit



If I were more ambitious, I would build a fire on the beach to cook the breadfruit. Instead I cut it in half, and cooked it on the boat grill. We show two pictures of the cooked breadfruit to convince you that you should burn the outside black.



Cut in half and on the grill.



Cooking



Done



It's black



Ready to trim



It's really not bad inside



The crust peeled off



Breadfruit sliced

Fried Breadfruit



One of the best tasting ways to eat breadfruit is fried. It beats fried potatoes. First soak the breadfruit slices in water for about 15 minutes, then fry in a pan with about a tablespoon of cooking oil, 'till golden brown. Salt to taste.



Breadfruit Salad

You essentially make a potato salad, using breadfruit instead of potatoes



Cooked breadfruit



Cut the breadfruit into small chunks



Add mayonnaise, chopped onion, and garlic salt



Stir and garnish with slices of bell pepper.

Or use your own favorite potato salad recipe