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South African Bobotie from Chef Becker

April 11, 2008

By [Saeyoon Baik](#)

Last Tuesday at lunch time, finding a table in the Language and Dining Center (LDC) was much more difficult than usual. Chef Johann Becker was invited to our campus and introduced delicious dishes from his country, South Africa. After the popularity of Thai food last year, the Global Chef Program Sodexho again offered students an opportunity to taste and learn about a cuisine that has not been common in our dining halls. Although not comprehensive at its first encounter, food certainly tells a lot about the people who cook and eat it. I believe that it was a truly educational and rewarding experience for many Carleton students, especially for their palates and curious minds.

One of the dishes Chef Becker prepared for Carls was bobotie, arguably the most popular dish of South Africa. He learned how to cook this meat pie dish, which he refers to as a Malay improvement on the cottage pie from his grandmother at his age 12, and since then this recipe remained his favorite. It deserves to have the national status not only because of its deliciousness but also because of its background reflecting the country's culinary history. The best known South African cooking style is called "Cape Malay Cooking," meaning that it originated from South Asia and then modified to the taste of the European settlers and native people in South Africa. In the 17th Century, the Dutch East India Company found South Africa's geographical location extremely convenient. On the way to Java, the sailors could stop and recharge themselves there. Then the Dutch brought slaves from Malaysia, Java, and Bengal to cultivate plants in South Africa. The various South Asian cuisines arrived in this region, and later for the palates of the colonizers. The use of spices has been toned down a bit and other cooking techniques and tradition of Europeans (first the Dutch and later the French and the British) or South Africans were added, creating this fusion-style South African cuisine.

Bobotie

Serves 6

Ingredients:

5 White bread slices, crusts removed
1 1/2 cups milk
2 Tbsp oil
2 tsp butter
2 medium onions, peeled and sliced
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
2 Tbsp curry powder or masala
2 tsp salt
2 Tbsp chutney
3 tsp fine apricot jam
3 tsp worcestershire sauce
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 Tbsp brown vinegar
2 lb beef, minced
1/2 cup sutanas or seedless raisons
3 large eggs
pinch of salt and turmeric
3 bay leaves

Directions:

1. Soak the bread in the milk
2. Heat butter and oil in a large frying pan. Add onions and garlic and fry until onions are soft. Add curry powder, salt, chutney, jam, worcestershire sauce, turmeric and vinegar and mix well. Remove from heat and keep aside.
3. Drain the bread from the milk (keep the milk!) and mash.
4. Add the bread and mince of the onion and masala mix. Return to the heat and cook over a low heat, stirring frequently until the meat loses its pinkness. Remove from the heat.
5. Add one egg to the mince mixture and mix thoroughly.
6. Spoon this mixture into a greased oven-proof dish and level.
7. Beat the remaining eggs and reserved milk together with the pinch of salt and turmeric. Gently pour this egg mixture over the mince and stick a few bay leaves in the dish.
8. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 F (180 C) for 30 to 45 minutes, or until the egg has set and it is cooked through.
9. Serve hot with yellow raisin rice, coconut, sliced bananas, chutney and a sambal.