

**ALL PURPOSE**

**COOK**

**BOOK**



**BY:AMM**

# BANANAS FOSTER

New Orleans dessert and a favorite among most local consist the following ingredients:

- 4 tbsp. butter (1/2 stick)
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 2 bananas
- 2 oz. banana liqueur
- 4 oz. dark rum
- Ground cinnamon
- Vanilla ice cream (optional)

This dish cannot be prepared in the kitchen. It must be performed, in front of your guests. Use a chafing dish, and some kind of portable heat like Sterno. Don't be sloppy, and keep a fire extinguisher handy. There's no need to burn the house down just for dessert, but this really must be done right. 

First, you should make some preparations. Peel a thin strip of peel from the bananas, and use your knife to slice the banana crossways into coins. Then replace the banana peel so that it looks untouched (as best as you can, anyway). This way, you can pretend to "peel" your bananas, and dump them into the put already cut, as if by magic. Cheesy, you ask? Well, it still looks cool, particularly if you're really nonchalant when you do this in front of your guests. If you insist, you can slice the bananas the classical way, quartering them by slicing thm lengthwise and then in half. I still think the other way is cooler.

Put your ground cinnamon into some kind of non-standard container, or even a little muslin bag, the better to "convince" your guests that it is, in fact, not cinnamon but voodoo dust, scraped from the tomb of Marie Laveau at midnight on All Soul's Day ... some kind of delightfully corny crap like that. Also, I recommend taking a cinnamon stick and grinding it fresh in a spice or coffee grinder instead of using pre-ground cinnamon. Sieve the result through a tea ball strainer to remove the larger pieces which won't grind finely. This will maximize the fresh, aromatic cinnamon flavor. If you use your coffee grinder, it'll also make your coffee taste great.

Now, this is what you do:

Melt the butter and add the brown sugar to form a creamy paste. Let this mixture caramelize over the heat for about 5 minutes. Stir in the banana liqueur and rum. Heat until the liquor is warmed, about three minutes. Add the bananas, cook for about 1 - 2 minutes, and then ignite with a flourish. Here's the best way to do this:

Using a long, bent-handled ladle, scoop up some of the warm liquor. Hold it a foot or two above the chafing dish and ignite the liquor in the ladle. **VERY CAREFULLY**, pour the liquor into the dish. A column of flame will descend from the ladle into the dish, which will ignite with a marvelous \*poof\*! Keep a pal nearby, subtly wielding a fire extinguisher. Try not to become a human torch in the process.

Agitate to keep the flame burning, and add a few pinches of "voodoo dust" to the flame. The cinnamon will sparkle orange in the blue flame, and looks really neat.

Let the flames go out. Serve over ice cream if you wish, but some hard cores like me like it just like it is. Yum.

Variations: one may substitute any fruit for this dish that has a correspondingly flavored liqueur -- peaches, pears, whatever.

## ***QUICK CHICKEN STOCK***

This is a good, all-purpose stock which only takes a little over an hour to prepare, and is fine if you don't have time for the classic stock.

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- Parsley stems (about half of the stems from one bunch)
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 pounds whole chicken legs or backs and wings, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 quarts cold water

Heat the oil in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Add the onion; ] sauté until colored and softened slightly, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the celery and carrot and cook until the celery has begun to get tender, another 3-4 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl.

Add half of the chicken pieces to the pot; sauté both sides until lightly browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer the cooked chicken to the bowl with the vegetable mixture. Sauté the remaining chicken pieces. Return the vegetables and chicken pieces to the pot. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the chicken releases its juices, about 20 minutes.

Increase the heat to high; add the water, salt, and bay leaves. Bring to a simmer, then cover and barely simmer until the stock is rich and flavorful, about 30 minutes.

Strain the stock and discard the solids. Cool the stock (Ziploc bags filled with water and frozen make great stock-coolers), then place in a container in the fridge until cold, and all the fat rises to the top and sets. Skim off the fat, and then you may keep the stock in the fridge for up to 2 days and in the freezer for 6 months.

About making 2 quarts of stock.

## TURKEY STOCK

This is what you do with your leftover holiday turkey ... make a fabulous stock!

- 8 quarts cold water
- 1 turkey carcass, meat removed, leaving some crisp skin on if possible
- Mire poix:
  - 8 ounces onions, chopped
  - 4 ounces celery with tops, chopped
  - 4 ounces carrots, chopped
  - 2 small heads garlic, cut in half horizontally
  
- Sachet d'epices:
  - 1 teaspoon or so black peppercorns, cracked
  - 6-8 parsley stems, chopped
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 1/4 tsp. dried thyme leaves
  - 1/4 tsp. dried tarragon leaves
  - 1/4 tsp. dried oregano leaves
  - 1/4 tsp. dried basil leaves
  - The above ingredients are placed into a 4" square of cheesecloth and tied into a sack, or use a metal tea ball.

Break up the turkey carcass, and chop some of the larger bones in half. Put the carcass in the stockpot with the water and bring slowly to a simmer. Periodically skim off any scum that forms, and if you wish use a skimmer to skim off the fat. (This stock simmering process makes your house smell REALLY good!) Let this simmer for two hours.

Add the mire poix and sachet; tie the sachet closed with some twine and tie the long end of the twine to the handle of the pot; this makes the bag easier to retrieve. (A tea ball also works well.) Simmer for one more hour.

Remember that during the simmering process, it's best not to stir the stock. The end result will be much clearer if it is not agitated while simmering.

Strain thoroughly; the best way to do this is to ladle the stock out and pour it through a strainer which has been lined with a couple of layers of damp cheesecloth. If you're using the stock immediately, skim off as much fat as you can with a fat skimmer or a piece of paper towel, otherwise cool the stock right away by placing the container into an ice-water-filled sink, stirring to bring the hot liquid from the center to the sides of the container. Don't just put hot stock in the refrigerator; it won't cool

enough to prevent possible multiplication of harmful bacteria. To defeat the stock easily, refrigerate overnight, until the fat solidifies on the surface, then skim off.

Makes about 6 quarts of stock.

## **WHITE AND BROWN VEAL STOCKS**

### ***White veal stock***

- 8 pounds veal bones, cut into 3-inch pieces
- 6 quarts cold water
- Mire poix:
  - 8 ounces onions, chopped
  - 4 ounces carrots, chopped
  - 4 ounces celery, chopped
  - 1 head garlic, cut in half horizontally
- Sachet d'epices:
  - 3 or 4 parsley stems, chopped
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 1/2 teaspoon cracked black peppercorns
  - 1/2 teaspoon dried basil leaves
  - 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
  - 1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon leaves
  - 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
  - The above ingredients are placed into a 4" square of cheesecloth and tied into a sack.

Rinse the bones, and place in the stockpot. Cover with water and bring slowly to a boil. Skim off any scum that forms. Continue to simmer the stock for 5 hours.

Add the mire poix and sachet and continue to simmer for 1-2 more hours. Strain through a china cap lined with cheesecloth, then cool the stock properly in an ice-water bath. Refrigerate and skim off the fat that rises to the top.

### ***Brown veal stock***

Use the same procedure as above, except first brown the bones in a 400F oven for 30 minutes. Paint the bones with tomato paste thinned with a little water, and brown for another 30 minutes. Drain the fat from the roasting pan and reserve. Deglaze the pan with water and add to stockpot.

Bring slowly to a boil, and reduce heat; simmer for 5-6 hours. In the meantime, toss the mirepoix with the fat and brown in the oven. After 5-6 hours simmering time, add the browned mirepoix and 4-6 ounces tomato paste to the stockpot, and the sachet. Simmer for an additional 1-2 hours. Strain, cool and store properly.

# FISH STOCK

Also called fish fumet. Make sure the fish bones you use are from lean fish and not fatty fish (avoid salmon or trout bones, for instance).



- 6 pounds lean fish bones, heads, etc.
- 2 tablespoons butter
- White mirepoix:
  - 8 ounces onions, diced
  - 4 ounces celery, diced
  - 4 ounces parsnips, diced
  - 4 ounces mushroom trimmings
- 4 quarts cold water
- 1 cup dry white wine
- Sachet d'epices:
  - 6-8 parsley stems, chopped
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 1/4 teaspoon cracked black peppercorns
  - 1 whole clove
  - The above ingredients are placed into a 4" square of cheesecloth and tied into a sack.

Melt the butter in the bottom of a large stockpot. Add the mire poix, and place the bones on top. Cover the mixture with a piece of parchment paper cut to fit the pot. Sweet the mire poix and bones over low heat for about 5 minutes, until the bones turn opaque and release some juices. Add the wine, bring to a simmer. Add the sachet, and water to cover.

Bring to a simmer, skim any scum that forms, and continue to simmer for 45 minutes. Strain through a china cap layered with cheesecloth. Cool the stock immediately in an ice-water bath, transfer to a container and refrigerate. Skim off any fat that rises to the top.

# BARBECUE SAUCE

This was very kindly contributed by my friend and little sister Cindy McKendall, New Orleans Louisiana, whose mother Jennie Williams concocted it. She says:

"Barbecueing in southern Louisiana. We sit on the porch, swinging or rocking, with a couple fans blowing some of the 98° heat away from us. We talk, we play music, we read. Cooking outside keeps the heat out of the kitchen, so we often barbecue chicken, sausage, ribs, fish, steaks, etc., during the summer. You can't buy barbecue

sauce like this at a grocery store. This is good, hearty, chunky, tangy sauce. Often, someone will have a late-night snack of this barbecue sauce spread on bread."

- 1 cup oil
- 2 8-ounce cans tomato sauce
- 1-1/2 cups yellow onion (3 large), chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped
- 4 large cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 of a lemon, seeded and thinly sliced (including rind)
- 1 heaping tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 heaping tablespoons prepared yellow mustard
- 2 generous tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon cayenne
- Dash each salt and black pepper
- Thickly sliced homemade-style white bread

Combine all ingredients (except bread) in a very heavy, non-reactive pot. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until oil has separated from sauce and sauce is very thick (about 2 hours). Pour off the oil into a bowl and use it to baste the meat, once meat is half-cooked. Eat the remaining sauce spread on the bread.

## Café au lait

I swear, I despair of ever finding a decent cup of coffee in West Virginia.

The scenario inevitably goes like this:

Chuck (to the coffeehouse waiter): "I'd like a cafe au lait, please."

Waiter (puzzled, scanning the menu): "Oh okay, a latte."

Chuck (annoyed): "No, I didn't ask for a latte, I asked for cafe au lait."

Waiter (standoffish): "Well, they're the same thing."

Chuck (seriously annoyed): "No no no, they're **NOT** the same thing. Cafe au lait is brewed coffee, preferably dark French roast with chicory, with half scalded -- NOT steamed -- milk, poured together from two pots. Cafe latte is a shot of nasty espresso dumped into a glass of steamed milk that's all froth."

Waiter (thinking): "Jesus, what's *her* problem ..."



And so it goes ...

Real, New Orleans-style coffee must be dark roast, brewed strong, and must include chicory. In fact, most of the coffee drunk in the Crescent City is a coffee-and-chicory blend.

Brew your coffee in a drip coffeemaker only, and serve with half coffee and half scalded (**not** steamed!) milk. I like mine sweet, with two teaspoons of sugar. There is a trend among the coffeehouse/espresso bar places around the US (like the dreaded St\*rb\*cks but thumbs up for Community Coffee) of serving cafe au lait with a froth of steamed milk plopped on top. This is an abomination. Just say no.

- 6 rounded tablespoons dark roast New Orleans coffee with chicory (Community, French Market, CDM, Union, etc.)
- 6 cups water
- 6 cups milk

Bring the water almost to a boil, to a temperature of 204-208 degrees F. Using a drip-style coffeemaker with filter, pour a small amount of the water over the coffee grounds to dampen them, then wait 30 seconds. Pour more water over the grounds until the upper pot container is full. Allow to drain, then repeat until all the water is used.

Scald, do NOT boil, the milk. Pour coffee into warmed large mugs, then add the milk. For a dramatic flourish, pour them together from their individual serving pots from about 2 feet over the cup, being careful that they stream down at the same rate, and being even more careful not to pour it into the guest's lap.

YIELD: 12 cups of the best coffee in the world