

Dear Friends,

In last month's article (June), I talked about the Independence Day of Ghana (March 6, 1957) and the main activities that go on mainly in the schools in the country, in commemoration of that event, to celebrate the day when Ghana (then, Gold Coast) gained independence from Great Britain, the last colonial administrators of the country.

Ghana, just like every other nation of the world, has one day in the year that is recognized by the entire nation as Independence Day, which every year falls on March 6th. Then on July 1st of every year, we celebrate what we describe as Republic Day, when Ghana became fully autonomous, from the British.

Ghanaians don't have one food that is eaten **only** during the time we are celebrating **Independence Day**, or the **Republic Day**. The Ghanaian community is made up of different ethnic groups with their distinctive cultural and linguistic characteristics. Traditionally, each ethnic/cultural grouping has its own authentic language and foods **specific** to it. People in the northern part have their own language specific to them. Similarly, those in the southern (coastal), western and eastern, and the mid-belt areas, also have their traditional language(s) and foods. Notwithstanding, the **Akan** language has become the main acceptable national language, in addition to the **English language**, which is taught and spoken nationally.

Below are some foods which are distinctive to particular communities and cultural groupings that are now becoming **Ghanaian**. These foods, apart from being eaten daily, are specially chosen and eaten on the two Ghanaian national celebrations which are set aside as holidays; Independence Day & Republic Day.

I'd like to share with you some detailed descriptions of popular Ghanaian foods, and photos also so that you will have an opportunity to '*experience*' some of our culture. I'll cover 5 of our most popular foods in this article. Please keep scrolling to read and see the photos.

Descriptions of the Foods & Photos:

1). Fufu & Soup:

Fufu is a favorite of ninety percent of AKAN people of Ghana. It is made by boiling and pounding starchy vegetables together; such as cassava, plantain, & yam into a sticky dough and eaten with vegetable soup. The soups eaten with the FUFU are these: 1). Groundnut soup, 2). **Palmnut** soup, 3). **Light** soup, 4). **Green Leaf** soup, 5) **Groundnut & Palmnut mix** soup, 6). **Okra** soup. The soups are so named, after the primary ingredient. The choice of soup depends on the family or the personal taste of the individual. The PALMNUT SOUP is from the fruit of the palm tree. The GROUNDNUT soup is from the paste of the groundnut. Pulp/paste (groundnut) from the palm nut is mixed with water till it becomes very diluted. Tomatoes, peppers, onions and other seasonings are added to this solution with a choice of fish and meats. Most often the FUFU is served in an earthenware bowl, and the soup is added to it and eaten with the fingers. Meats, chicken, and fish are also added to the soup.

2). Jollof Rice

Jollof Rice is a rice dish made from long-grain rice, tomatoes, chilis, onions, spices and sometimes other vegetables and/or meat in a single pot. The stew is made first with all of the ingredients and when that is almost done, the rice, which has been already washed/cleaned, is added and stirred till it turns golden.

Jollof Rice is normally served on plates and eaten with cutlery, but most homes prefer using fingers to eat it. Vegetable oil (olive, sunflower, etc.) can be used to make the stew which mainly would have chicken as the meat.



1). Fufu & Soup



2). Jollof Rice with chicken

3). Ampesi

The Ampesi is the name given to any Vegetable Stew that is made from any of the following: **spinach**, **nkontomire** (cocoyam leaves that taste like spinach), **garden eggs** (eggplant), **Okro** (Okra) with tomatoes, peppers, onion, and any seasoning to taste, and eaten with **Plantain**, **Yam**, **Cassava**, and other root foods like **Potatoes**. Some people choose to eat the vegetable stew with Banku or Gari (Farina). The Farina is the grain-like substance made from Cassava. Vegetable oil, especially Palmnut oil is mainly used.

4). Gari (Farina) Fotor

The Gari (Farina) are **grains** that are grated and fried from Cassava, a root crop. Interestingly, the tender leaves of the cassava tree form the main ingredient in the stew that's prepared from it, a favorite of Liberians. Julie & I learned to like it ourselves while we lived in Liberia when we were doing Missionary work (this was before I began working with First Lutheran). Tomato stew is the main ingredient, and the Gari (Farina) grain is added to it. Meats and fish are part of the meal. Any vegetable oil may be used to make the stew.

.... {next page, for photos of Ampesi, and Gari (Farina) Fotor}



3). Ampesi



4). Gari (Farina) Fotor

5). Banku and Okro (Okra)

Banku is a fermented corn dough (cooked in a big pot) and mashed, like one does with potatoes. The Banku is formed into a round, ball-like substance and eaten with stew that is full of OKRO (okra), hence its name. The stew is basically tomatoes, peppers, onion and other seasonings, with red palm oil. The amount of Okro in the stew is quite substantial.



5). Banku and Okro (Okra)

Conclusion:

As reiterated earlier, Ghanaians don't have any particular foods that are specifically designated to be eaten for Independence Day or Republic Day celebrations. Such choices are the prerogative of individuals and homes to enhance their celebrations, but will often include many of the dishes shown in this article. I hope that you have enjoyed this look into Ghanaian food culture.

Blessings, Pastor Ben Wilson