



Vegetopia

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in.



Welcome to Vegetopia, Learn and Share

I was born in Ethiopia and moved to the U.S. when I was ten years old. Many fond memories from my childhood in Ethiopia remain with me, still vivid and forever engraved in my soul. My mother, grandparents and I all lived in one house. I truly cherish the experience of living with my grandparents and feel fortunate to have been raised by them and my mother. The African proverb *"It takes a village to raise a child"* really rings true in Ethiopia. Growing up so close to my grandparents had its many perks, like seeing and truly understanding what it means to have strong family support. It also saturated me with older Ethiopian cultural traditions and values, such as the art of hospitality.

One of my first culture-shocks after I moved to the States was the laissez-faire nature of hospitality on the part of the host. Let me explain. In Ethiopia, a guest dare not leave your home without having had a meal. It does not matter whether the guest was expected or had arrived unannounced; it is unacceptable for them to leave without having had something to eat, or at least a snack, like *shai be dabo* (bread with sweetened tea).

It is deemed rude for a host not to offer something to eat, and the offer shouldn't be made just once but multiple times. This is because the host shouldn't offer something and then simply say "alright then!" if the guest

declines. Culturally, it is deemed too forward of the guest to accept the offer the first time. Even if starving, the guest should never openly admit it or say, "Yes, please feed me, I'm starving!"

A lengthy exchange must take place and the host must *insist* on feeding her guest. If you are the guest, it is also deemed rude for you to leave without eventually conceding to the host's offers and accepting something to eat, even if you're as full as can be. Although this may sound like a crazy and confusing game, the main point to take away from is that

you must be modest as a guest and big-hearted and generous as a host, even if you don't have much to offer.

Another cultural shocker for me was when I witnessed the exchange that takes place when people dine out. Here in the States, when a group of friends go out to eat, it is acceptable for each individual to ask for a separate bill. In contrast, Ethiopians literally fight over who's going to take care of the entire bill! It is totally normal to see Ethiopians making a scene at coffee shops or restaurants, arguing about who will pay by snatching the bill from one another.

Despite the cultural differences between any two countries, one thing is certain – food is a big part of every culture. As a kid, I would sneak into the kitchen to watch as meals were being prepared. Traditional Ethiopian kitchens are detached from the main dwelling of the house.

Clay pots sputtering stews atop open wood and charcoal-burning fires were no place for a child, but I admired the process and would always find my way in.

I would get kicked out when I inched too close to the humming pots to take in the aromas, or tried to stir the stews over the open fire. Eventually, by the time I was 6 years old, I was allowed to

“ food is universal and a big part of every culture.



A collage of Ethiopian food and culture. In the top left, there are several red and purple chili peppers on a wooden surface. To the right, a colorful woven basket with a red, green, and yellow pattern is visible. In the center, a yellow circular frame with a red border contains the title and table of contents. To the left of the frame, a white plate with a blue polka-dot pattern holds a green bean salad with orange carrots. Below the plate, a small green square dish contains a brown paste. In the bottom left, a small bowl of yellow powder (likely turmeric) sits next to a green chili pepper. At the bottom, a black tray holds a piece of injera, a red chili pepper, and some yellow seeds. On the right side, a white cloth is draped over a patterned bag.

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My Journey to a Vegan Life

Growing up in Ethiopia

I would always find myself in the kitchen, watching in awe and taking in the aromas as food was being prepared. Cooking has always been my passion, but I did not know I could turn it into a career until I quit my 9-5 job and became a stay-at-home mother in 2011. At that time, plant-based options in non-vegan restaurants were very limited. Since I have always enjoyed cooking, I would constantly have friends and family over for all-vegan dinner parties. Eventually, my friends convinced me I could turn my passion into a career, and here I am!

How and Why I Became Vegan

I was first introduced to a vegan lifestyle when I met my husband, who had been vegan long before we met. Having been an omnivore all my life, because that is all I'd known, I initially judged him a little, simply because he was "different" and didn't eat what everyone else considered "normal" food. Despite the fact that his lifestyle was foreign to me, I could not deny that he was a unique, intriguing, intellectual (and may I add good-looking!) man. He never forced his way of eating on me - he simply lived by example. Because of him, I was inspired to change my way of eating. Due to this simple change, I was able to combat my chronic disease! Needless to say, he is my soul mate; my backbone and we make a great team! Best of all, we have been blessed with the most amazing son.

Family Life as a Vegan


One day, my son and I were at the juice bar at Whole Foods and had ordered kale juice. My son, who was 2-years-old at the time, was being totally impatient and excited to get his green juice, which is his absolute favorite. As soon as he had it in his hands, he started to gulp it down. A woman standing in line behind me was totally shocked! Seeing her reaction and hearing her gasp, I turned and asked if everything was ok. She told me she was blown away by how excited my son was to have kale juice, and wished her kids would do the same. My response to her was, "That's all he knows! He has never had added sugar and this kale juice is sweet to him because of the natural sweetness of the apples in the juice."

We have had, and continue to have, many moments like this. Parents are sometimes shocked that my son has never had candy, and that his favorite meals include lots of leafy greens and "scary" vegetables!

Not only did we introduce fruits and vegetables to our son at a young age, but we also live by what we preach - we eat our veggies! So, to new parents who want to introduce a healthy way of eating to their kids: **live by example** and introduce it at an early age.

For those who wish to make a transition, I have plenty of "kid-approved" plant-based recipes that contain "hidden" vegetables to help your child transition and ease into this lifestyle.

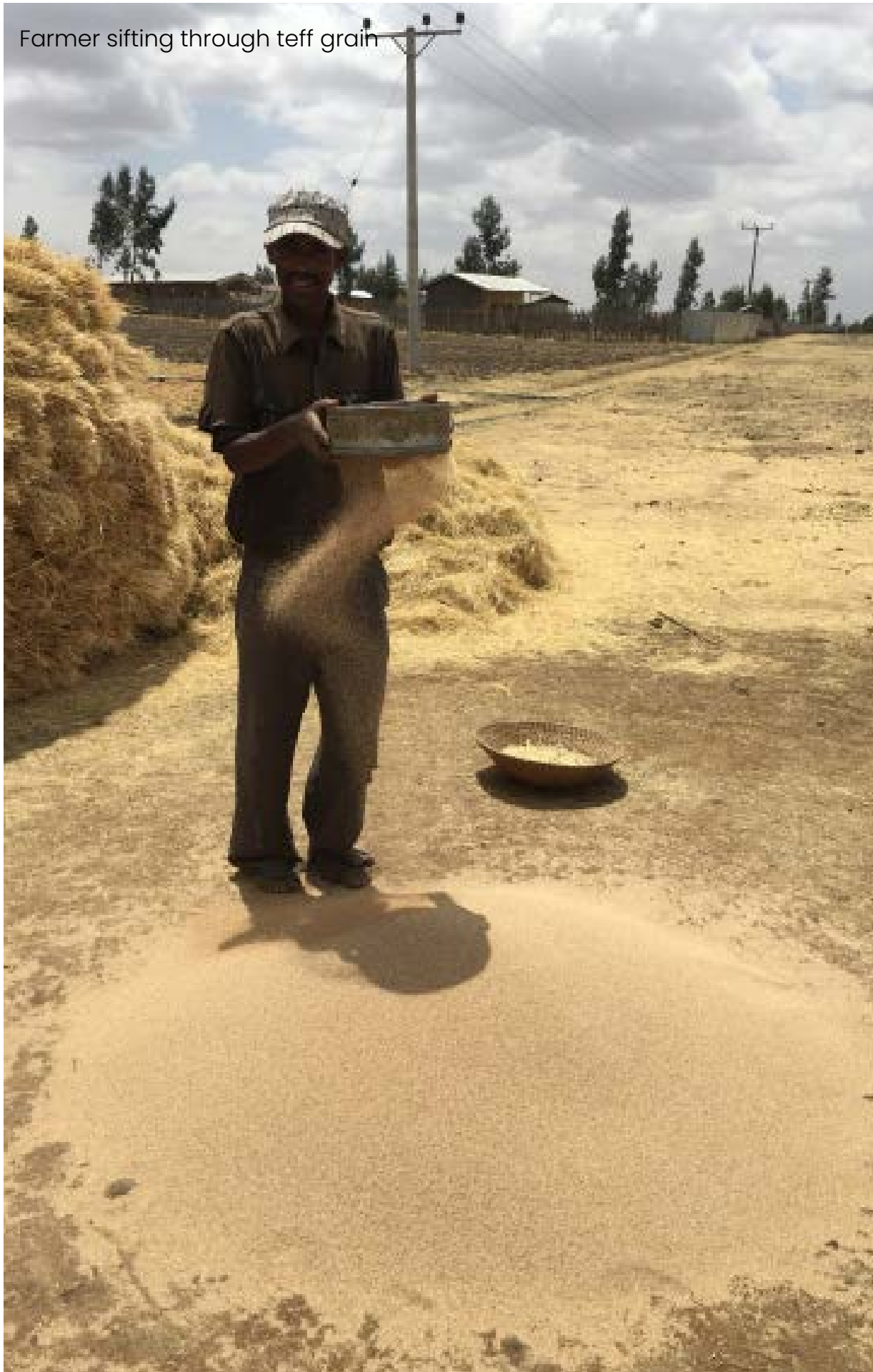


A person wearing a bright green polo shirt is holding a large, ripe red apple in their right hand. The background is dark, and a yellow geometric shape is visible in the bottom right corner.

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Farmer sifting through teff grain





Injera

Ethiopian diaspora in the U.S. have faced great difficulty in trying to reproduce the same *injera* made in Ethiopia. Until recent years, teff, which is an ancient grain native to Ethiopia and the main ingredient in *injera*, had been hard to come by in the States.

Just in the last year or two, teff has gained popularity in the U.S., Europe and Canada as a “super grain,” similar to the boom that occurred with quinoa. However, even when teff become available, no one has been able to recreate a true Ethiopian variety of *injera*.

Some theories have circulated – perhaps it is the water, or the difference in altitude.

“ Just in the last two years, I have been able to get *injera* directly imported from Ethiopia, thanks to Ethiopian Airlines’ daily direct flights!



After many years of having to resort to modified *injera* (mixed with other grains or added yeast), some have finally figured out the secret to making 100% teff *injera* (unfortunately, I am not one of them, yet!) that is similar in quality, taste and appearance as the kind made in Ethiopia.

It is abundant in Ethiopian-dense major cities like D.C., L.A, and Toronto. Just in the last two years,

I have been able to get *injera* directly imported from Ethiopia, thanks to Ethiopian Airlines’ daily direct flights!





My son and I grinding herbs by hand



Do “Vegans” Exist in Ethiopia?

Ethiopian cuisine is rich in vegan options, owing to its majority Orthodox Christian population that observes multiple fasts throughout the year. For about 200 days of the year, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians omit meat, poultry and dairy from their diet, adhering to a strictly vegan diet during these religious fasts. In addition, Ethiopia is rich in culture and ethnic diversity, with over 70 different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has a unique culture, language or dialect and food.

There are so many vegan dishes from many different ethnic groups I have yet to try. I have put together recipes of my favorite, popular and traditional vegan dishes from Ethiopia, with my own creative twist.

But first, some fun facts about Ethiopian food and dining etiquette!

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Ethiopian food is seldom eaten alone. Instead, it is served on a big, round communal plate, as a platter with various stews atop a large bed of injera that is shared with friends and family.



Ethiopian Cuisine and Dining Etiquette 101:

No Utensils!

Ethiopian food is consumed exclusively with the right hand, no utensils!

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is of the utmost importance for obvious reasons. In fact, if you ever dine in a traditional Ethiopian restaurant in Ethiopia, a server will approach your table to provide table-side hand-washing services.

Using Injera

Ethiopian cuisine consists of *wot* (various stews) and a medley of vegetables laid on a bed of *injera*, a flat sourdough-like “bread.” You’ll use your fingers to tear off a piece of *injera* and use it to grab a combination of the wot and veggies, wrap it into a small, compact and mouthful-sized morsel that you’ll put directly into your mouth.

No Finger Licking!

Licking of the fingers is not allowed! As a matter of fact, your fingers should only make contact with the *injera* and not the stews. I have to admit that I myself have not mastered this.

Benefits of Injera

Injera is made of a teff, an ancient and staple grain in Ethiopia. In recent years, it has gained popularity in the U.S. and Europe as a “super grain” because it is rich in fiber, protein, iron, and calcium.

Spongy Bread

Injera is often described as “spongy bread” or “pancake” by non-natives, and Ethiopians generally hate that description (although it is somewhat true!)

Share

Ethiopian food is seldom eaten alone and is often served on a big, round communal plate, as a platter with various stews atop a large bed of *injera* that is shared with friends and family.

Feed Each Other

Ethiopians love feeding each other. To prepare a *gursha* for another person, and then feed it to them, is an act of endearment and generosity

Using the Left Hand is a No-No

It is considered extremely impolite to eat with your left hand, even if you’re a lefty. Culturally, the left hand is deemed unclean; it is designated as the predominant hand used in the bathroom.

Now that you’re well-versed on Ethiopian cuisine fundamentals, here are a few of my recipes. They are traditionally eaten with *injera*.



Shiro Wot

Chickpea Stew

Shiro wot is a staple comfort food for Ethiopians. It is easy to make, delicious and also economical. It is a stew made from a fine powder of chickpeas or fava beans and numerous sundried herbs and spices. This makes the base for the shiro wot. In my opinion, not every shiro base is made the same, as some lack the right number and balance of herbs and spices that provide the needed flavor.

I admit I may be biased when I say that my aunt, who lives in Ethiopia, prepares the absolute best shiro mix! Homemade shiro is always preferable. So, if you have a friend that has family in Ethiopia, get on it and ask for some shiro!

Ingredients.

¼ cup shallots, finely chopped	1 and ½ cup of hot water
1 Roma tomato, finely chopped	1 teaspoon of korerima
¼ cup grape-seed oil or olive oil	Sea salt to taste
3 tablespoons of shiro powder	

Directions.

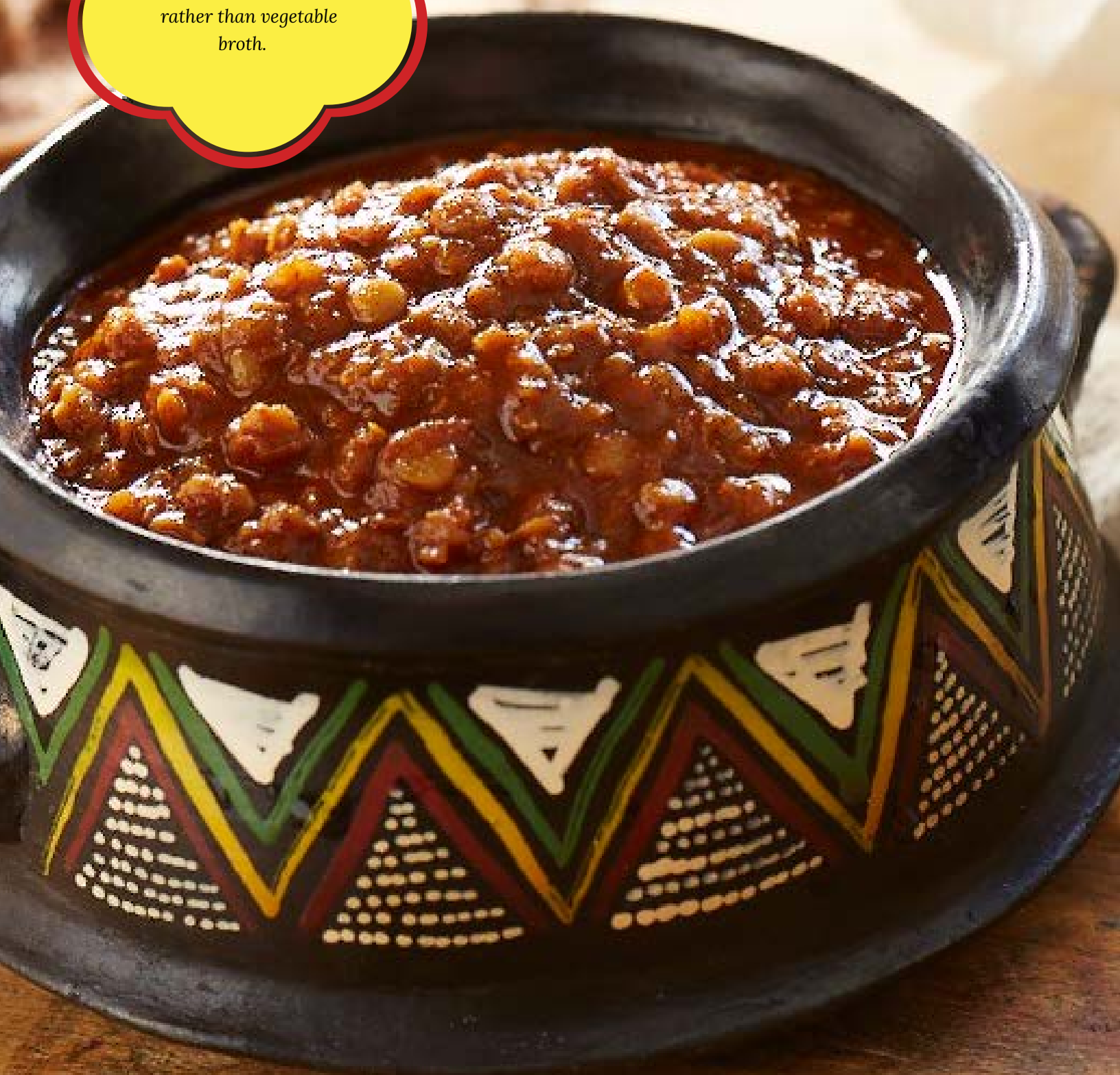
1. In a saucepan, sauté shallots with 2 teaspoons of oil. Add tomato and let it cook down.
2. Add shiro, korerima and the rest of the oil. Mix well, and slowly add hot water while consistently stirring.
3. You want the consistency of slightly thick gravy
4. Add salt, and let it simmer on low heat for at least 45 minutes. It will thicken over the cooking time.
5. The longer it simmers, the better it tastes. You know it is done when the oil starts to float above.
6. Enjoy with *injera* or a choice bread, rice or quinoa if you cannot find *injera*.

Chef Gueli Tip


There are multiple ways to make shiro wot. It is traditionally vegan, but it is not uncommon for it to be prepared with Ethiopian spiced clarified butter (which used to be my favorite way to eat shiro) or cubed beef, in which case it is referred to as "bozena shiro." So as not to lose the flavor of Ethiopian butter without the actual butter, I now make it with the same herbs and spices traditionally used to prepare Ethiopian clarified butter. I am able to keep it vegan and no flavor is lost!

GUELI TIP

If you want to keep it traditional, use hot water rather than vegetable broth.



Misir Wot

 ± 45 min

Lentil Stew

Misir wot is made with split red lentils. I have found that the flavor comes to life when you use vegetable broth rather than water. Here is my non-traditional version of *misir wot*.

Tip: Traditionally, misir wot is prepared with water. Use vegetable broth instead to bring the flavor to life.

Ingredients.

3 large red onions, finely chopped
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon berbere seasoning (you may add or decrease the amount based on your preferred level of spiciness)
1-2 roma tomatoes, finely chopped
1/3 cup of organic red split lentils
3-4 cups of warm water/veggie broth
Salt to taste

Preparations.

1. In a saucepan, sauté oil, onions, tomatoes and berbere.
2. Slowly add a little bit of warm water or veggie broth and reduce heat to medium/low.
3. Let it simmer for a minimum of 30 minutes while eyeing it closely, stirring occasionally and adding water/broth as necessary (to avoid the onions from sticking to the bottom of the pot).
4. Add the lentils, salt and the rest of the warm water/veggie broth and let it simmer for 15-20 minutes, or until lentils are cooked.
5. Serve over rice, bread or *injera*.

Chef Gueli Tip

Essentially every Ethiopian dish calls for onions. Minced, sauteed onions are the essential base, the heart, of the classic Ethiopian “wot” (stew). However, you probably wouldn’t know it unless someone told you. To achieve the characteristically “Ethiopian” flavor and consistency to your wot, be patient with the onions, taking care to mince them super finely and cook them down very well.

see recipe videos at: www.veganchefgully.com



Keye Sir

Beets

I have always loved beets. Beets are very popular in Ethiopia, but not so much here. I have met many people that either don't like them, or have never eaten them! I grew up not only eating but also playing with beets – I loved their bright red and pink color.

Ingredients.

1 sweet onion, finely chopped
1-2 large beets
1 tablespoon olive oil

Sea salt or pink Himalayan salt to taste
A dash of finely ground black cumin seeds

Directions.

1. Boil the beets until tender enough to easily poke a fork through them. Strain and sit aside to cool
2. Meanwhile, sauté onion with oil and let it caramelize.
3. Peel the beets and use a food processor to chop the beets into small pieces.
4. Add to onions and sauté until the beets are well cooked.
5. Season with salt and ground black cumin.


Chef Gueli Tip

Most beet recipes call for relatively large chunks or cubes of chopped beets. When I prepare my beet dishes, I prefer to use a food processor to get them into much smaller and finely-chopped pieces. This is a good tip for those who don't necessarily like beets – chopping them finely not only allows for better sautéing, cooking and flavor-infusion, but beets (pun intended) having to eat them in large chunks or bites.



Fossolia

Green Beans and Carrots

 ± 45 min

Traditionally, fossolia is served as a side dish to a spicy stew or shiro. It is generally pan fried with onions and carrots. Here is my version; enjoy!

Ingredients.

2 cups green beans, washed and cut in 1-2 inch sized pieces
2 carrots, peeled and chopped into 1 inch pieces
1 sweet onion, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons of olive oil
Sea salt or pink Himalayan salt to taste

Preparations.

1. In an oven safe pan, layer the green beans at the bottom, carrots in the middle and sweet onions on top.
2. Drizzle oil and salt. Bake at 365 degrees Fahrenheit for 30-40 minutes, or until the onions have caramelized and the green beans and carrots have cooked (browned).
3. If you want to make it the traditional way, you may pan fry the onions and green beans together, and add carrots towards the end – as they tend to cook faster.

see recipe videos at: www.veganchefgully.com



Alicha ena Dinich

Ethiopian-Style Curried Lentils and Potatoes

This is my version of alicha wot (curried stew). I combined two of my favorite dishes into one – potato stew with lentils. Alicha refers to a non-spicy Ethiopian curry stew, a contrast to the stews made with spicy berbere. Kids usually love alicha for this reason.

Ingredients.

2 tablespoon grapeseed or olive oil	1 teaspoon pure turmeric
1 sweet onion, finely chopped	1 tablespoon tomato paste
½ cup diced zucchini	2/3 cups of hot water
½ cup diced squash	1/3 cup of soaked split yellow lentils
1 cup yellow cubed potatoes (approximately 3-4 potatoes)	Sea salt or pink Himalayan salt to taste
Your choice to peel or not to peel the skin.	

Directions.

1. In a medium saucepan, sauté onions, zucchini, and yellow squash with oil.
2. Add potatoes, tomato paste and a little bit of hot water and sauté until the potatoes are tender.
3. Add the turmeric and lentils along with the rest of the water.
4. Cover and let it cook on medium-low heat until the potatoes and lentils are cooked all the way through
5. Add salt to taste.

Chef Gueli Tip


You may add the turmeric earlier, in the beginning of the cooking process, along with the onions. Doing so can cause the dish to burn, so be sure to keep a closer eye on it.

GUELI TIP

Spiced tea mixtures can be found at your local Ethiopian markets as well. It is made with cardamom, cinnamon sticks and cloves boiled in a kettle.



Ethiopian Chechebsa

 ± 45 min

Pancakes

Another absolute favorite “pancake” of mine is an Ethiopian dish called chechebsa. Chechebsa for me is the Ethiopian version of pancakes, except that it’s savory and spicy and typically served already cut into pieces. I love pairing it with Ethiopian spiced tea in the mornings for breakfast. And although totally nontraditional, my husband loves pouring pure maple syrup on it!

Traditionally, chechebsa is not a vegan meal because it is smothered in Ethiopian clarified butter. But of course, I have “veganized” it! You can also make this dish 100% gluten free by substituting the rye flour with teff flour. Teff is the grain that is used to make the *injera* bread that is eaten with almost every Ethiopian meal. Here is my vegan version of chechebsa!

Ingredients

2 cups of rye flour (Substitute with 2 cups of teff flour to make it 100% gluten free. You can also mix the 2 flours together)

1 teaspoon aluminum free baking powder

1 tablespoon berbere (can be found at your local Ethiopian market or online. If purchasing online, be sure to verify its authenticity)

A pinch of sea salt and black pepper

2 cups spring water (might need more as you go)

1/3 cup olive oil or melted coconut oil

1 teaspoon finely ground korerima (also known as Ethiopian cardamom or “false cardamom.” Can be found at your local Ethiopian market or online)

Preparations.

1. To make the batter, add flour, baking powder, 1/2 tablespoon of berbere, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Mix well to be sure there are no lumps.
2. Add small amounts of water to batter while mixing with hand (this is the traditional way. Feel free to use your mixing gadget).
3. Add water sparingly; you don’t want the batter to be runny.
4. You want the consistency to be somewhere between pizza dough and pancake batter. Grease your pan with a little oil if needed.
5. Spread the batter on your griddle or pan. Cook both sides until golden brown and put it to the side.
6. In a small pot, add olive oil or coconut oil, korerima, salt and 1/2 tablespoon berbere (you may use more or less to achieve your desired level of spiciness).
7. Mix the ingredients on low heat on top of your stove. In a serving bowl, tear apart the “pancakes” with your hands. Add the oil and korerima mixture and mix well; making sure every piece is well coated.
8. Use your hands to mix. Serve while it’s still hot with a side of Ethiopian Spiced Tea. Spiced tea mixtures, which contain cardamom, cinnamon sticks and cloves, can be found at your local Ethiopian market.



Awaze Tibs

Tibs traditionally refers to sautéed cubed beef or lamb. Here is my version using portobello mushrooms.

Ingredients.

5 large Portobello mushrooms, de-stemmed and diced in small cubes

1 large sliced red onion

½ teaspoon korerima (Ethiopian seasoning)

2 diced roma tomatoes

1 tablespoon olive or grape-seed oil

Sea salt to taste

To make the Awaze (Ethiopian “hot sauce”) mix the following ingredients:

1 tablespoon of berbere

1 teaspoon olive oil

2-3 tablespoons of vegan red wine

1 teaspoon of yellow or ground stone mustard

Directions.

1. De-stem and clean your mushrooms. In a large pan, marinate the mushrooms with the awaze for 1-2 hours.
2. In a cast iron skillet, sauté the onions with oil for a few minutes, just until they start to brown.
3. Add mushrooms and sauté until they are fully cooked (15-20 minutes) on medium-high heat.
4. Add tomatoes and let them cook for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Season with salt and serve with *injera* and a dollop of extra awaze for dipping if you like it extra spicy! (if you like extra spicy food!)


Chef Gueli Tip

Sauté the onions with the awaze sauce, and then further with the mushrooms. This will highlight the spice and the favor of the awaze, which is truly what “awaze tibs” means. If you’re not fond of spicy food, consider serving a dollop of awaze on the side.



Gomen

Greens

 ± 45 min

The secret to making tender and flavorful greens, is having patience.

Ingredients

2-3 large bunches of collards, washed, destemmed and finely chopped

Stems from the collards, finely chopped

2 tablespoons of olive or grapeseed oil

1 finely chopped onion of your choice (I prefer sweet vidalia onions, but red onions are traditionally used for this dish)

Sea salt & black pepper (or ground black cumin) to taste

Preparations.

1. In a large saucepan, sauté onions and oil for 5 minutes on medium-high heat, just until they start to brown
2. Add stems and cook them down for another 5 minutes.
3. Add the collards and stir until all of the collards are coated with the oil.
4. Turn the heat down to low.
5. Add salt and pepper (or black cumin seeds) and cover the pot.
6. Allow them to cook down for at least 30 minutes or until they are tender.
7. Greens always cook down to at least half of the original amount you started with.
8. Add a small amount of water if the greens are sticking to the bottom of the pot.
9. Be sure to stir and check on them regularly!

see recipe videos at: www.veganchefgully.com



Tikil Gomen

Curried Cabbage & Potatoes

Ingredients.

1 large cabbage, washed and chopped

1 cup of finely chopped sweet onion (about 1 large onion)

3 large potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1" cubes


2 tablespoons of olive or grapeseed oil

2 teaspoons of turmeric powder

Sea salt and ground black cumin seed to taste
1 sliced jalapeno pepper (optional)

Directions.

1. In a large saucepan, sauté oil and onions for 5 minutes on medium-high heat.
2. Add cabbage and turmeric. Be sure to stir consistently so that it cooks evenly.
3. After about 10 minutes, add potatoes and carrots and turn heat down to medium-low.
4. Add salt, pepper/black cumin, and sliced jalapeno pepper (optional).
5. Cover and let it cook until the potatoes and carrots are tender.



“ This aroma is
worth all the
trouble!

Buna

Ethiopian Coffee

 ± 45 min

Coffee originated in Ethiopia! Long ago, an Ethiopian shepherd observed his goats eat coffee beans and become excited and full of energy. Out of curiosity, he tasted and experimented with it, discovering its stimulant effects. Now, coffee is grown and cultivated in many countries, and coffee is arguably the most popular drink in the world.

Coffee is not only important to Ethiopia's economy but is also deeply imbedded in its culture. Ethiopians take their coffee seriously. In fact, there is a cultural ceremony specifically for the preparation and serving of coffee. Whether you dine at a traditional Ethiopian restaurant, or visit an Ethiopian friend's family home, you will most likely witness and become part of this beautiful, traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

During the ceremony, coffee is prepared from scratch. The coffee beans are roasted, ground and then brewed in a clay pot called jebena. This process takes a long time and is a reminder to slow down and enjoy the process while enjoying a nice cup of coffee and socializing with others.

Ingredients.

1 ounce of raw coffee beans (they are green in color)

2-3 cups of water

What You Will Need:

Jebena (Ethiopian coffee clay pot)

Coffee grinder

Pan for roasting coffee (I suggest you buy one from your local Ethiopian market to avoid staining your regular pans)

Preparations.

1. Roast coffee in the designated pan, constantly moving the beans around on the pot or pan so they can roast evenly.
2. The indication that the beans are done roasting is when the pan starts to smoke and the beans turn dark-chocolate brown.
3. This aroma is worth all the trouble!
4. If you don't feel like going through this process every single time, consider pre-roasted Ethiopian coffee beans found at your local Ethiopian markets.
5. Once the beans cool off, grind them and put them in the jebena using a small spoon
6. Add water and let it boil. When the coffee boils over, that's how you know it is ready.
7. Be sure to constantly watch and listen to your jebena.

Chef Gueli Tips

Let the jebena sit for 30 seconds so the coffee grind settles at the bottom. Once it is settled, slowly pour into your cup and enjoy!

“ I will gladly challenge anyone who says that vegan food is bland.



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CHEF_GUELI



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