

## TAKE THE WORLD ~ RECIPE

Prepared by: Angélique Kidjo BENIN

### YASSA CHICKEN WITH LEMON & SAFFRON JASMINE RICE

Serves 4-6

Yassa chicken is a classic dish from West Africa and is very popular with guests who discover African food for the first time. My Mum used to make it on special occasions. The way I personalize it is with my special Beninese marinade.

#### Beninese Marinade (makes 1½ cups\*) ~ Ingredients

- 1 x 2.2 ounce bottle whole black peppercorns
- ½ cup peeled whole garlic cloves
- ½ cup peeled and coarsely chopped fresh ginger
- ¾ cup and 1 teaspoon water, divided
- 2 large white or yellow onions, halved, then cut into 1/4-inch slices
- Juice of 10–12 lemons (about 2 cups).

#### Chicken ~ Ingredients

- 2 pounds skinless boneless chicken breast, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons instant chicken bouillon powder
- 2 cups water
- 2 teaspoons coarse salt
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 x whole green Scotch bonnet pepper or other chili pepper (optional)

#### Saffron Jasmine Rice ~ Ingredients

- 3 cups low-sodium chicken stock or water
- Pinch saffron threads
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- 2 cups jasmine rice

#### Beninese Marinade ~ Method

In a medium bowl, cover the peppercorns with cold water. Allow to soak overnight. Change water and then soak for 1 more night.

Drain the peppercorns, put them in a blender with garlic, ginger, and 1 teaspoon water and puree until smooth. Add ¼ cup water and blend to form a smooth, moist paste. Add the remaining ¼ cup water and continue to puree until the paste is very smooth and the peppercorns are barely visible.

\*Reserve a heaping tablespoon of the marinade for this recipe and refrigerate the rest in an airtight container for future use. It will keep for up to 6 months.

#### Marinate Onions ~ Method

In a medium non-reactive bowl, combine onions and lemon juice, and cover. Make enough to able to be able to cover the chicken, so add more juice if necessary. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 1 hour.

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### **Marinate Chicken ~ Method**

In a large bowl, combine the chicken with a heaped tablespoon of the marinade paste, chicken bouillon powder, 2 cups of water and the salt. Stir well to coat the chicken. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight.

### **Prepare Chicken ~ Method**

In a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, heat olive oil until it is hot, but not smoking. Working in batches, place the chicken in the oil and brown it on all sides. Reduce heat to medium and return all the chicken to the pot. Add the onion-lemon juice mixture and chicken stock, and stir well to combine. Return the heat to high, and bring to a boil, then reduce it to medium, cover, and cook the chicken for 30 minutes.

Taste for seasoning and add the Scotch bonnet pepper if using. Reduce heat to low and continue cooking uncovered for 10 more minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Remove the pepper before serving.

While the chicken is cooking, prepare the saffron jasmine rice. In a large saucepan with a lid, bring the chicken stock or water to a boil over high heat. Add saffron, salt, and rice and stir well. Return to the boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover and cook 12–15 minutes or until liquid has been absorbed by the rice. Remove the pot from the heat and set aside, covered, for 5–10 minutes, to finish steaming the rice.

Fluff the rice with a fork and serve with the chicken.