A Taste of Guam

The 3 ‘R’s to good eating – Restaurants, Reviews & Recipes

4-page pullout
W hite sands and swimsuits may replace snow and fur coats during the holiday season on Guam, but holiday foods are no less festive here than anywhere else. Home to a unique blend of culinary cultures, Guamanians ring in Christmas and New Year’s with feasts ranging from seafood barbecues to high-end hotel restaurant banquets. But like all great feasts on island, it all starts at home: “Guam’s holiday food is special because it brings family together,” says Geoffrey Perez, executive chef at the popular Chamorro eatery, PROA Restaurant. “The heart of the house here on the island is the kitchen. There will always be someone in this area of the home. Families come together during each holiday or celebration and create the food and drink that they love.”

During the holidays, freshly caught fish may be seasoned with different aromatic herbs and spices to infuse them with flavor: They’ll be accompanied by salads with local vegetables such as bitter melon, sweet potato leaves, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes or beans - all harvested fresh that very morning by uncle’s island-wide, Perez says.

Recipes to ring in Guam’s holiday

R uben Olivas, a barbecue and fishing fanatic who authors the blogs BBQGuam, Guam FirehouseCook and FishingGuam, shared these traditional holiday recipes with Stripes Guam. To get that authentic taste of Chamorro tradition, he asked his sister-in-law and others for family recipes handed down over the generations.

“The food (back in the 1950s) was just as great then as it is now, if not better,” Olivas said. “And what holiday season would be complete without those traditional sweets?”

“Bunuelos dagu is a special treat during the holiday season,” says Josh Tyquinggu, a Guam Visitors Bureau spokesman. “The yams used to make these fried donuts are usually harvested during the Christmas season.”

Just like on the Continental U.S., he adds, expect to see anything pumpkin related featured in eateries ranging from coffee shops to hotels restaurants during the holidays. This includes pumpkin shakes, pumpkin-spice coffee drinks and plenty of pumpkin pie varieties to choose from.

To be sure, there will be a lot of festive sweets adorning holiday tables. But first and foremost, according to barbecuing and fishing aficionado Ruben Olivas, are the meat dishes.

“The standard on all tables is white rice, red rice and homemade flour tortillas made with coconut milk,” says Olivas, author of the BBQGuam blog. “Assorted barbecue meats such as chicken, beef and pork as well as fish are always served, along with the island delicacies like ‘kadon fahii’ (fruit bat soup) and turtle soup.”

Nothing says special holiday feast on Guam, however, like the “lechon,” or whole roast pig, which when prepared is the centerpiece of the holiday fiesta table. Once roasted over an open fire on a handmade spit with select

K adon Mannok (chicken soup)

K adon Mannok was a traditional table fare back in the day. Most homes have chickens running around in their yards so chicken was often on the table in one form or another.

- 1 whole chicken cut into small pieces
- ½ large white or yellow onion, diced
- 4-6 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp of freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp of oil (in the old days coconut oil
- 12 cups of water or just enough to cover chicken by 2 inches
- 2 lbs of fresh white taro cut, peeled and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 1 lb of pumpkin tips
- 1 lb of green beans
- 2-3 cups of freshly grated coconut milk or two 15 oz cans

1. In a soup pot saute the yellow onion, garlic and black pepper over medium heat.
2. Once the onions are translucent, add in the chicken.
3. Sauté the chicken until slightly brown but no longer than about 5 minutes.
4. Add the water, change heat to high and bring to a boil.
5. Once the boiling has commenced, return heat to medium, add the taro and green beans and cook for about 20-30 minutes, covered, until the taro is cooked. Test with fork (doneness similar to potatoes though taro is denser)
6. Add the pumpkin tips and coconut milk, stir and cook covered for another 2 minutes and turn heat off.

“Lechon,” or roast pig, is a traditional holiday feast dish on Guam.

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Bohœlços Dago aka (yam donuts)

B ohœlços Dago is a holiday staple. Everyone loves to eat these donuts. The most popular type of dago (yam) used for bohœlços red dago. These donuts were usually dipped in syrup, made by melting sugar, and made for an almost unstoppable bite size treat.

- 8 cups of grated local yam
- ½-1 cup of sugar
- 1 ½ cups of flour
- 2-3 tbsp of baking powder
- Oil, enough to deep fry the donuts. It depends on the pan you use for frying. Any of these amounts can be adjusted to the personal taste of the preparer.

1. Grate the dago very fine. It will turn into a goey and slightly sticky type of paste.
2. Mix in the flour until you get the consistency you like. If you have never made advice from one who has just used the 2 cups of flour.
3. Mix in the baking powder and sugar.
4. Heat your oil to about 350 F. Let it get to that temperature.
5. Wet your hand with water (helps the dough slip off the hand easier), take a bit of dough and squeeze a few donuts into the oil.
6. Fry until golden brown, let cool and taste. If they are too gooey inside, you may need to add more flour. If they are not you add more sugar. But remember you may be dipping them into syrup may be adequate. It’s all up to the individual’s taste. Once you are satisfied with the taste of the donuts, fry the rest.
7. Allow to cool.
8. You can enjoy these with syrup or without.

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Local woods, this time-honored tradition can still be seen – and tasted – thanks to more modern methods. “Back in the 1950s, the roast pig was pretty straightforward for the most part on Guam,” says Olivas. “Nowadays, they are roasted in large ovens and stainless steel outdoor spits turned by electric motors. Some roasting is also still done in the traditional way on occasion.”

Guam being the tropical paradise that it is, every day is a good day to barbecue. But when it comes to holiday season feasts, it is indispensable. “‘Let’s barbeque!’ is a phrase heard on Guam that is just as popular as ‘Hata Adai!’” says Joe Okada, pit master and owner of TUNU barbecue takeaway shop. “Each individual group or barbeque specialists and families pride themselves on their secret marinade and their ability to create the best-tasting or champion barbecue. The menu items found at barbeques around the island can be just as exotic as our locale.”

Like TUNU (the Chamorro word for barbecue), many of the island’s hotels and restaurants will also be offering barbecue takeaway packages for family holiday feasts.

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**Chicken Koleguen**

- **Koleguen and Titiyas** – both staples on a Chamorro fiesta table. But you don’t have to be invited to a fiesta in order to enjoy these tasty dishes – they are so easy to make that you can have it anytime you get the craving!

  My two daughters (ages 11 and 15) prepared the dishes pictured in the photos below; if THEY can do it, so can you! Give my super easy recipes a try. I think you’ll like them! :)  

1. Debone the chicken; shred or cut into small pieces (I used a food processor to roughly chop the chicken).
2. Thinly slice the green onions then add it to the chicken.
3. Add the lemon powder, water, salt and pepper to the bowl of chicken; mix to combine. Taste; adjust seasoning if required.
4. Stir in the grated coconut (optional).
5. Serve with my super easy sweet flour titiyas and enjoy!

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**Red Brown Rice**

My family is making a concerted effort to develop healthier eating habits. We’re making small changes in the foods we eat as well as how we prepare them. One change we definitely like is that we’ve made the switch from white to brown rice. I admit, it took some getting used to, but we actually like it. Of course, I have to season the brown rice whenever I cook it.

I wanted to see if the classic Chamorro Red Rice would taste good using brown rice instead of the usual white medium or long grain rice we know and love. The result? Delicious! Granted, you can definitely tell you’re eating brown rice (it’s firmer and a bit nuttier than white), but delicious nonetheless.

Give my recipe a try. I think you’ll like it. :)  

1. **3 cups brown rice (use your rice cooker cup)**
2. **6 1/3 cups water (use your rice cooker cup)** (*See note below*)
3. **1 packet achote powder** (*See note below*)
4. **1 tablespoon olive oil**
5. **1 bunch green onions, sliced**
6. **1 tablespoon Dashida seasoning (or salt, to taste)**

You can use achote water made with achote seeds instead of achote powder. Scrub the seeds in the water; strain out the seeds before using.

1. Rinse the rice then place into your rice cooker pot.
2. Add the water.
3. Add the achote powder.
4. Add the olive oil.
5. Add the green onions.
6. Add the Dashida seasoning.
7. Cover the pot then turn it on or place it on “cook” After about 5 minutes, open up the lid and stir the rice, ensuring the achote powder and Dashida seasoning is dissolved and evenly distributed. Place the cover back on the pot and let it finish cooking. After your rice cooker turns from “cook” to “warm” (or the equivalent for your rice cooker model), be sure to keep the lid closed, letting the rice continue steaming for 10-15 minutes before serving.
8. We love red rice with fried chicken and cucumber salad. Serve with your favorite main dish(es) and enjoy!
OH KFC, OH KFC
original and criiiispy!

Happy Holidays, folks! Colonel Sanders here! KFC is here to help feed your holiday hunger with our six- OR twelve-piece family meals! Enjoy your favorite juicy fried chicken with friends and family this season paired with your choice of KFC’s zesty coleslaw, savory mashed potatoes, other delicious sides, and famous buttery biscuits. And, don’t forget, a commemorative glass food container as a special holiday gift straight from the Colonel. KFC Guam is here to help you with your holiday meals and we hope you have a safe, happy and tasty holiday season! It’s Finger Lick’n Good!

A Taste of Guam

Cheese Crust Pizza, the Official Pie of the Holidays

Ladies and gentlemen, Sbarro presents the Official Pie of the Holidays! This season, enjoy your favorite toppings and classic sauce loaded on a cheesy crust made with Sbarro’s traditional New York Style Pizza dough. The Cheese Crust Pizza comes generously sprinkled with 100 percent real mozzarella cheese and after just one bite, you’ll be glad you chose this delicious pizza. Jingle all the way over to your nearest Sbarro Pizzeria and get yourself the Official Pie of the Holidays.

Sbarro Official Pie of the Holidays is available at Micronesia Mall and GPO food courts or with Good to Go, GrabNGrub and UnoGo.