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## Food : GHANA

In this three lesson Topic, focussing on food in the West African country of **Ghana**, children tell us about their favourite recipes, describe where they get the ingredients, and talk about how they and their families prepare the meals.

**Lesson 1 : Where does our food come from?**

**Lesson 2 : Food Producers**

**Lesson 3 : Favorite food**

### Ghana



#### Ghana Fact File

**President** John Atta Mills (elected 2008)

**Population:** 23.8 million (UN, 2009)

**Capital:** Accra

**Area:** 238,533 sq km (92,098 sq miles)

**Major languages:** English, African languages including Twi, Akan, Ewe

**Major religions:** Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Islam

**Life expectancy:** 56 years (men), 57 years (women) (UN)

**Monetary unit:** Cedi

**Main exports:** Gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminium.

## Food in Ghana

As we hear in Lesson 1 of this Topic, these days Ghanaians often get their food from a wide variety of sources. Children may visit local farms to get fruit and vegetables, or grow their own in the school garden (Lesson 1 Track 3). But many families will also buy much local and imported food - including a wide array of tinned and dried provisions - from shops ranging from small roadside kiosks, to large and often well-stocked supermarkets. And whilst meat is still considered something of a luxury and may be largely reserved for special occasions, in coastal areas fish is a rich and popular food source; Cecilia (Lesson 1 Track 4) describes how her fisher-folk family depend on the sea for their livelihood, and their diet.

In Lesson 2, children describe some of their favourite foods. Ghanaians traditionally consume three meals a day; each is usually only one course. The typical kitchen contains an open fire, a clay oven, a large pot for cooking large quantities of food such as stew, and a large iron griddle for frying. Breakfast is often quite substantial; one popular morning dish is *ampesi* which consists of a cassava, cocoyam, yam, and plantain mixture, boiled with onion and fish, and then pounded and boiled a second time. *Kenkey* – a starchy dish made of fermented ground cornmeal – is another common choice, as is *pumpuka*, a porridge made from ground millet.

Dishes served for lunch and dinner often consist of thick, well-seasoned stews, accompanied by staple starchy foods, such as *fufu* (Lesson 2 Track 1), made from plantains, yams, cassava (a tubular root vegetable) or rice; rice is also common. Other popular vegetables include spinach, okra, eggplant, onions, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, corn, and cocoyams.

Stews may be made from okra (Lesson 2 Track 2), fish, bean leaf (or other greens), forowe (a fishy tomato stew), plava sauce (spinach stew with either fish or chicken), and groundnut (peanut). Many spices are used to prepare stews, including cayenne, allspice, curry, ginger, garlic, onions, and chili peppers.

Children are normally given a substantial meal at school during the mid-morning break; fried bean cakes called *kose* (or *akara*), boiled plantains, and *koko*

(porridge made from corn or millet mixed with milk and sugar), are all popular school meals.

Many Ghanaians like sweet food - although surprisingly despite the fact that Ghana is one of the world's leading cocoa producers, they eat little chocolate. But *kelewele* is a popular dessert or snack, made of fried plantains seasoned with ginger and ground red pepper or fresh chili peppers. Another dish sometimes served for dessert is a pancake made of mashed plantains, deep-fried in palm oil.

Drinks native to Ghana include *Refresh*, a sweet soft drink made with fresh fruit juice which is extremely popular with children. For the adults, in the north of Ghana *pito*, a fermented beverage made from sorghum (a type of grain), is popular, while many people living in the south of the country prefer *palm wine*.

## **Palm Soup and Fufu (Lesson 2 Track 1)**

### **Palm Soup**

*500ml red palm oil (you can substitute 500ml groundnut oil + 2 tbsp paprika for colour but not flavour)*

*180g onions, chopped*

*1 hot chilli*

*350g tomatoes, chopped*

*300g okra, sliced*

*1 medium aubergine (eggplant) cut into chunks*

*450g fish (or crab meat or a mix)*

*1/2 tsp salt*

Add the palm oil to a large stewing pot, bring to a boil over high heat and cook for 10 minutes. Add the onions and the chilli and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Reduce the heat then add the remaining ingredients. Stir to combine then reduce to a low simmer, cover and cook gently for 2 hours, stirring occasionally.

### **Fufu**

In Ghana, the popular starchy fufu is made from cassava, or yam; these vegetables are not readily available in the UK, so this recipe has been adapted to use potato flakes instead.

*2 cups potato flakes*

*1 – 2 tablespoons margarine or butter*

*Salt and pepper*

*Cream of wheat (optional) one cupful Water (4 cups)*

Bring water to boil in a large saucepan. If you are using cream of wheat, add about 1 – 2 cups of the cream of wheat into the boiling water and stir. This leaves a thick pasty mixture. Add butter or margarine. Then add potato flakes and stir continuously. You can add hot water to the mix to

achieve your desired texture. Season with salt and pepper as desired, and then continue to stir until you get a smooth dough. The dough is rolled into balls and served with the stew.

### **Banku and Okra Stew (Lesson 2 Track 2)**

**Banku** is a starchy staple similar to **fufu**; unless you can get hold of yams or cassava, then use the **fufu** recipe as above to substitute.

#### **Okra Stew**

*1 tbsp olive oil*  
*½ red onion, finely sliced*  
*1 clove garlic, finely chopped*  
*½ tbsp chilli powder*  
*75g/2¾oz okra*  
*1 fresh plum tomato, chopped*  
*1 tbsp fresh chives, chopped*  
*1 tbsp fresh coriander, chopped*  
*300ml/10fl oz hot vegetable stock*  
*salt and freshly ground black pepper*  
*pinch chopped chives to garnish*

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the red onion and garlic and cook for two minutes to soften. Add the chilli powder, okra, tomato and herbs and cook for two more minutes. Add the stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for eight minutes. Season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper and pour into a warm bowl. Garnish with a pinch of chopped chives.

### **Jollof Rice (Lesson 2 Track 3)**

Tomato-flavored rice to which meat or fish is often added, may be served hot or at room temperature.

*1.5kg chicken, jointed and cut into serving-sized pieces*  
*800g tinned tomatoes (with juice)*  
*500ml water*  
*2 tsp salt*  
*¼ tsp black [pepper](#)*  
*250g rice*  
*125g cooked smoked ham, cubed*  
*¼ tsp ground cumin*  
*1 tsp red [chilli](#) paste*  
*600g coarsely-shredded cabbage*  
*250g green (French) beans, trimmed*  
*2 onions, cut into 1.5cm slices*  
*½ tsp salt*

Add the chicken, tomatoes, water, 2 tsp salt and pepper to a large metal casserole and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover and cook for 30 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside then add the rice, ham, cumin and chilli. Cook for 5 minutes then add the chicken, cabbage, green beans and onions. Season with the remaining salt, bring to a boil then reduce the heat, cover and allow to simmer until the chicken is completely cooked (about 30 minutes). When done the liquid should all have been absorbed.

### **Aprapransa (Lesson 2 Track 4)**

A dish made by combining maize flour with palm nut soup (recipe above). *Aprapransa* is an expression to describe the consistency in which the food comes. It literally means "get rid of it by rubbing your hands together". Because the maize is fried dry before being used to cook the food, it ends up a bit dry and one doesn't need to wash the hands after eating. Just rubbing them together cleans them.

*Palm nut soup (as above)*

*Roasted maize flour (available from Ghanaian / West African specialist food shops)*

*Salt*

Scoop a few tablespoons of the finished palm nut soup into a saucepan and bring to the boil (leaving the rest of the soup on the side hot and simmering - cold soup will spoil the dish). Gradually pour maize powder into the saucepan and blend to create a stodgy consistency. Eat hot or cold, sliced into wedges.

### **Yams (Lesson 2 Track 5)**

African yams taste slightly different than Western yams, but Western yams may be used, or sweet potato is a good substitute if you can't get yams.

*4 yams or sweet potatoes*

*Salt, pepper, and butter, to taste*

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Scrub yams. Wrap each in aluminum foil (or banana leaves, available at some specialty food stores), as you would wrap baking potatoes. Bake for 45 minutes, or until tender when pricked with a fork. Serve with salt, pepper, and butter.

### **Kelewele (Fried Plantains)**

*6 large ripe plantains*

*1 teaspoon powdered ginger*

*½ teaspoon salt*

*½ teaspoon ground red pepper*

*2 Tablespoons water*  
*Oil to deep fry*

Peel the plantain and cut crosswise into ½-inch slices, removing any woody parts from the center. Mix ginger, salt, and red pepper with water in a mixing bowl. Drop plantain slices into mixture and turn them to coat. Heat oil in a large saucepan and fry the mixture-coated slices until golden brown.

### **Groundnut Stew**

*3 Tablespoons vegetable oil*  
*2 medium onions, chopped*  
*2 carrots, chopped*  
*1 green pepper, chopped*  
*2 14 oz cans tomatoes*  
*1 14 oz can black beans*  
*1 teaspoon salt*  
*1–2 teaspoons red pepper (to taste)*  
*200 gram chunky peanut butter*

Measure oil into a large saucepan and heat over medium-high heat. Add onions and carrots and sauté, stirring with a wooden spoon, until vegetables are softened. Add green pepper and continue cooking a about 5 more minutes. Stir in canned tomatoes with liquid (do not drain them), canned black beans, salt, and red pepper. Lower heat, cover, and simmer about 15 minutes. Stir in peanut butter and continue simmering, covered for 10 more minutes. Serve hot. Serves 6.

With thanks and acknowledgement to [www.foodbycountry.com](http://www.foodbycountry.com)  
and <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/>

### **Read more :-**

Levy, Patricia. *Ghana: Cultures of the World* . Tarrytown, N.Y.: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1999.

Webster, Cassandra Hughes. *Mother Africa's Table: A Chronicle of Celebration through West African & African American Recipes and Cultural Traditions* . New York: Doubleday, 1998.

### **Photography illustrating audio**

*With thanks to [www.bigfoto.com](http://www.bigfoto.com)*