

**A TASTE**  
*of*  
**SAGE**



*a novel*

**YAFFA S. SANTOS**

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

A TASTE OF SAGE. Copyright © 2020 by Yaffa S. Seraph. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address HarperCollins Publishers, 195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

HarperCollins books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. For information, please email the Special Markets Department at [SPsales@harpercollins.com](mailto:SPsales@harpercollins.com).

FIRST EDITION

*Designed by Jen Overstreet*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-06-297484-6 (pbk.)

20 21 22 23 24 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



## LUMI'S SIMPLE SANCOCHO

Serves 8

1 tablespoon vegetable oil (not olive)  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
6 cloves garlic  
1 tbsp. black pepper  
1 large red onion  
1 pound beef cubes or oxtail  
1 pound goat  
10 cups water  
1 cup auyama (West Indies squash), diced  
3 carrots, peeled and diced  
2 ears of corn, shucked and cut into 1-inch rounds  
2 cups yuca, peeled and diced  
1 cup yautia, peeled and diced  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup cilantro, chopped  
juice of 1 bitter orange  
salt, to taste  
cooked white rice, to serve

Mash garlic in a mortar and pestle. Dice onion. Season the meats with the salt, pepper, cilantro, onion, and juice of the bitter orange. Heat the oil on medium high in a large Dutch oven or "caldero" and add the sugar. When the sugar is bubbling, add the meats and brown them on all sides. When they are thoroughly browned, add the water and the vegetables. Bring to

a boil and then simmer until all the ingredients are cooked through, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Serve with white rice.

*Note: Chicken and pork are also commonly used instead of or in addition to beef and goat. Plátano is also a traditional addition that was left out here due to flavor preference.*



## AVOCADO SALAD

Serves 4

4 ripe avocados (not overripe)

$\frac{1}{2}$  red onion

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil

juice of 1 lime

Split each avocado, remove the pit, scoop out the flesh, and dice into bite-sized chunks. Dice the onion, setting aside some for garnish. Combine the avocado, onion, olive oil, and lime juice and toss. Sprinkle diced onions on top to serve.



## LUMI'S FAMOUS FISH BALLS

Serves 2 (makes about 8 fish balls)

1 pound ground white fish  
½ cup bread crumbs  
¼ cup parsley, finely chopped  
½ teaspoon ground cilantro  
¼ teaspoon ground ginger  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 egg white, lightly beaten  
kosher salt, to taste  
freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
frying oil of choice (canola and avocado  
are two of many options)

Stir together the fish, bread crumbs, parsley, cilantro, ginger, garlic, egg white, and salt and pepper in a bowl. Form into quarter-sized balls and chill.

Heat the oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the fish balls and brown on all sides. Lower the heat and cook for 3-4 minutes on each side. Let cool and serve.



## DAX RATATOUILLE

Makes 4 servings

2 onions  
4 tomatoes  
1 eggplant  
2 zucchini  
1 yellow squash  
1 red bell pepper  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cups tomato puree  
salt, to taste  
freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Slice all the vegetables into thin rounds and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Drizzle the olive oil into the bottom of a 13"x9" baking dish. Pour in the tomato puree, and lay the vegetable slices overlapping one another to fill the dish. Bake for 45 minutes.

For Lumi's version, add 1 green apple, sliced identical to the vegetables.



## **LUMI'S COCONUT FISH (PESCADO CON COCO)**

**Serves 2**

- 1 small onion, diced**
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1/2 cup cilantro, diced**
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste**
- 1 whole red snapper**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 12-ounce can coconut milk**
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste**

Combine the onion, garlic, cilantro, and salt. Make vertical cuts in the skin of the fish and stuff them with the onion mixture. Let marinate for 20-30 minutes.

Heat the oil in a pan on medium high. Cook the fish on each side for 2 minutes. Flip again and lower the heat to medium. Cook for 6-7 minutes on each side. Try to keep the fish from breaking into pieces. When both sides are fully cooked, add the coconut milk and tomato paste, and simmer until the sauce thickens, about 4 minutes.



## MAJARETE

Serves 4

- 4 cobs husked sweet corn
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar, plus more to taste
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon cinnamon powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 3 cups whole milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

Shuck the corn. Using a sharp knife, cut the kernels from the cob. Blend the corn kernels with the sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon powder, salt, milk, and water. Pass the mixture through a strainer (discard the solid parts). Pour the liquid into a 3-quart pot. Add the cinnamon sticks. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly to avoid sticking. When the mixture thickens to the consistency of drinkable yogurt (approximately 15 minutes), remove from the heat. Stir in sugar to taste, if necessary.

Cool the pudding by placing the pot into another pot containing cold water, stirring to prevent a crust from forming.

To serve, pour into small bowls or ice cream glasses. Sprinkle with a small amount of nutmeg, if desired. If you prefer, chill before serving.





## **BOUILLABAISSE WITH ROUILLE**

### **FOR THE BOUILLABAISSE:**

1 pound ripe tomatoes  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large chopped onion  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
4 cups cold water  
1 tablespoon anise-flavored liqueur  
8 sprigs parsley  
2 bay leaves  
2 sprigs thyme  
1 sprig fennel  
1/4 teaspoon saffron threads  
4 pounds fish heads and bones  
1 lobster  
4 potatoes, peeled and diced  
3 pounds mixed fish steaks cut into large  
chunks

### **FOR THE ROUILLE:**

3 baguette slices with the crusts removed,  
plus 12 more slices to serve  
1 red pepper  
3 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 small red chili pepper, seeded and  
chopped  
1 tablespoon fresh basil  
1/3 cup olive oil

Cut an X in the bottom of each tomato and boil them for 10 seconds. Remove from the boiling water, and use the X to peel off the skin. Chop the tomatoes.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, add the onion, and cook for 5 minutes without browning. Add the tomato, garlic, and tomato paste. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the 4 cups of water, then add the parsley, bay leaves, thyme, fennel, saffron, fish heads and bones, and lobster. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Strain into a large saucepan, pressing the juices out of the ingredients.

Reserve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup stock. Add the anise-flavored liqueur to the saucepan and stir in extra tomato paste if needed to thicken the sauce. Bring to a boil and add the potato. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the firmer-fleshed fish steak chunks and cook for 2-3 minutes, then add the thinner pieces of fish and cook for 5 minutes.

For the rouille, remove the crust from the bread and soak in cold water for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, grill the red pepper until the skin starts to blacken. Let it cool, and then peel off the skin. Squeeze the water out of the bread and place it in a food processor or blender with the peeled red pepper, chili, garlic, and basil. Blend, gradually adding the olive oil, until the mixture forms a smooth paste. Thin as necessary with the reserved stock. Serve with toasted bread.

*Recipe adapted from The Essential Mediterranean Cookbook (Bay Books, 2001).*



## LUMI'S TOMATO SORBET

Makes 1 pint sorbet

10 large tomatoes

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar

Juice of 1 lemon, seeded

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons ginger root, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground clove

Peel and chop the tomatoes. Combine all the ingredients in a large saucepan over medium heat for 30 minutes. Cool the mixture, then blend in a blender until smooth. Let it cool completely, then freeze in an ice cream maker. Remove the sorbet and place in a container (preferably one with a lid) and freeze for 2-4 hours before serving.



## MUSHROOM AND GRUYÈRE SOUFFLÉS

Serves 3 (2 soufflés per person)

- 2 1/2 tablespoons butter
- 2/3 cup mushrooms, sliced
- 2/3 cup whole milk
- 2 eggs, separated
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup gruyère, grated
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease 2 ramekins with a dab of butter. Heat 2 tablespoons of the butter in a saucepan and sauté the mushrooms for about 2 minutes. In a small bowl, whisk together the milk and egg yolks, and add the salt and black pepper. Add the flour and the remaining tablespoon of butter and whisk continuously. Pour the mixture into the pan with the mushrooms and continue to whisk. Add the gruyère and stir until it melts. Fold the egg whites into the mixture, pour the batter into the ramekins, and bake until risen and lightly browned, between 15 and 20 minutes.



## **LUMI'S MIDNIGHT ESPRESSO**

**Serves 2**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup water**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup ground coffee (NOT instant)**

**Fill the bottom of an old-fashioned espresso maker with the water. Drop the metal filter in place and add the coffee grounds. Screw on the lid and place on the stove on high heat. When the coffee is heard bubbling up, remove from the flame immediately and serve in demitasse cups.**

**For best results, wait until after dark.**

## **MINI GUAVA CHEESECAKES**

Makes 18 mini-cheesecakes

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup butter  
2 cups graham cracker crumbs  
24 ounces cream cheese  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  pound ricotta  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
juice of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lime  
1 pound guava paste

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Melt the butter and mix with the graham cracker crumbs in a small bowl. Press the graham cracker mixture into the bottoms of lined muffin tins to form the cheesecake shells. Bake the shells for 5-7 minutes or until lightly browned.

In a large bowl, mix the cream cheese, ricotta, sugar, eggs, vanilla, and lime juice. Spoon the batter into the cheesecake shells and bake for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, dice the guava paste and melt on the stovetop on low-medium heat. Pour over the cheesecakes. Let cool for 10-15 minutes at room temperature and then refrigerate until chilled.

Best served without bad juju.



## **LUMI'S RICE CHEX SMOOTHIE**

**1 cup Rice Chex cereal**

**$\frac{2}{3}$  cup powdered milk**

**1 cup water**

**Preparation instructions: Don't.**



## **JULIEN'S PINEAPPLE PESTO**

**Makes 1 cup of pesto**

**2 cups fresh basil**

**2 cloves garlic**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil**

**2 tablespoons pine nuts**

**2 tablespoons parmesan cheese**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup crushed pineapple**

**Blend all the ingredients in a blender until smooth.**

## LUMI'S COQ AU VIN IN MAMAJUANA

Serves 4

4 whole chicken legs  
juice of 1 lime  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup mamajuana (Dominican liquor made  
of red wine, rum, herbs, roots, and honey)  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon black pepper  
salt, to taste  
oregano, to taste  
sage, to taste  
2 tablespoons cooking oil  
1 red onion  
6 cloves garlic  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cilantro, diced  
1 green pepper, diced  
3 stalks celery, diced  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup carrots, diced  
 $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups red wine  
2 tablespoons butter  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
1 tablespoon tomato paste

Separate the chicken thighs from the drumsticks and skin if desired. "Wash" the chicken with the lime juice and drain. Marinate the chicken for at least 2 hours in the salt, seasonings (which include the garlic, onion, cilantro, pepper, celery, carrots), and mamajuana. Remove the chicken from the marinade, reserving the liquid. Heat the butter on medium-high in an iron Dutch



oven. Sprinkle the sugar into the butter and allow to brown. When the sugar is bubbling, add the chicken and brown on each side for 2 minutes. Add the reserved marinade and cook on low heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally so the chicken does not stick to the bottom of the pot. After about 50 minutes, add the tomato paste and stir until dissolved.



## **MANGO-CILANTRO SALAD**

**Serves 8**

4 ripe mangoes  
1 medium red onion  
olive oil, to taste  
red wine vinegar, to taste  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cilantro, diced

Chop the mangoes into chunks and dice the onion as small as possible. Toss in the olive oil and red wine vinegar. The mango should be moistened by the oil and vinegar but not swimming in it. Garnish with the cilantro.



## **LUMI'S APPLE "RATATOUILLE"**

**Serves 12**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup butter, plus more for the baking dish**

**3 red apples, mixed varieties**

**3 green apples, mixed varieties**

**3 tablespoons cinnamon**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup lemon juice**

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease the bottom of a 9-inch baking dish with a dab of butter. Slice the apples into  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch slices and layer over one another in the dish. Melt the butter on low heat in a small saucepan. Add the cinnamon and sugar and stir into a viscous mixture. When these elements are well combined, remove from the heat and pour over the apples. Sprinkle with the lemon juice and bake for 30 minutes or until golden.