

ARTICLES HEALTHY LIVING

9 Astounding Somali Dishes You Would Instantly Fall In Love With

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Somalia is the easternmost country on the continent of Africa. Sitting on the horn of Africa, Somalia is the link between Africa and the Arab world but still manages to be unique in its own way. In this article, we'll be focusing on astounding Somali dishes you most likely would obsess over once you taste them.

A past of grim and violent history has virtually destroyed Somalia's economy and made Somalis refugees on all parts of the planet but notwithstanding it's still a land teeming with people's colorful, culture and delicious foods.

The food and culture of Somalis are a result of the amalgamation of traditions developed independently and through interactions between neighboring and faraway civilizations including but not limited to aspects of North Eastern African Culture, Arabian Culture,

Indian and South-Eastern Asian Cultures.

Rice, garlic, coriander, chili, cumin, cloves, and many more spices were introduced by Arab and Persian traders who created the ancient coastal towns of Mogadishu, Barawa, Marca, and Kismayo. Paratha (sabaayad in Somali) and samosa, spicy triangular-shaped pastries stuffed with meat or vegetables, were brought by Indian traders.

Pasta, the popular English pudding, and delectable croissants and exquisite pastries available in Djiboutian patisseries were all added by British, French, and Italian colonialists, who impacted Somali cuisine.

Their nomadic lifestyle also aided in the transmission of new cuisines as well. Some of their relatives emigrated from Somalia to Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Others traveled to Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and even the United Kingdom and Italy, among other Arab countries, wherever they found themselves, they managed to incorporate elements of the local people's cuisine in their traditional Somali dishes.

For centuries livestock has formed the backbone of the Somalian economy, Camels are especially highly valued by Somalian herdsman and loved more than any other animal pertaining to the fact that Camel is a source of Milk, Meat, Transportation, etc.

Apart from camel, most other Somalian staple food comes from their livestock, however, the Somalian cuisine varies from region to region and consists of diverse culinary influences.

The cuisine in the interiors is mostly native, with Ethiopian grains and vegetables, whereas the cuisine on the coast is a product of Somalia's long history of trade and commerce.

Despite the differences in their cuisine compositions, there is one thing that all Somali cuisines have in common: all food is served halal.

Halal means it's served in accordance with Muslim rules and regulations, therefore there are no pork dishes, no alcohol, nothing that died on its own, etc.

Meat dominates Somali cuisine, which is almost always prepared by women. goat, beef, lamb, and occasionally chicken fried in ghee or grilled or broiled. It's made with turmeric, coriander, cumin, and curry and served with basmati rice for lunch, dinner, or brunch. Over pasta, ground pork cooked in tomato sauce is served.

Vegetables tend to be mostly used as a side dish, and are frequently included in a meat dish, such as producing a stew with potatoes, carrots, and peas. Green peppers, spinach, and garlic were also mentioned as the most popular vegetables.

Breakfast (Quraac) is a very important meal to Somalians, it usually consists of Tea (Shahi), Coffee (Quxan), the main dish which is a pancake styled bread (canjeroo). This bread can also be eaten with stew at dinner or with soup at lunch.

Lunch is often elaborate, varieties of rice, the most popular being basmati are usually served as the main dish alongside goat, lamb, fish. Spices like cumin, cloves, cinnamon, and garden sage are used to aromatize these rice delicacies.

Dinner is often served late and usually consists of (casho) is often boiled with red beans (anbuulo) served with sesame oil or ghee and sugar.

There is also cornbread (Mufo) in many different variants, depending on the region, served with sesame oil and honey, sliced meat, or scrambled eggs with onion.

The most popular sweet is halwa. A firm jelly of sugar, spices like saffron and cardamom, and ghee, which is a popular confection eaten during festive occasions such as Eid celebrations or wedding receptions.

After meals, homes are traditionally perfumed using frankincense and incense.

Owing to the fact that the majority of Somalians are nomads, they often eat ‘okta’ while on their numerous sojourns.

Okta is dried camel meat that’s been deep-fried in butter and spices, Its preparation allows the meat to be preserved for a long time, making it ideal to be taken on long trips and nomadic expeditions.

Now let’s get to your favorite Somali dishes and how to make them!

9 Somali Dishes You Would Instantly Fall In Love With

Samosa, or Sambusa Somali dish

Image from cookpad

First, the world-renowned Samosa, or Sambusa Somali dish as it's originally known as, is much-loved snack food, they are deep-fried and usually reserved for special occasions such as the evening meals that end the daily fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

The pastry for this Somali dish is usually a thin filo-like pastry, and since they are a celebratory food, they are normally filled with minced (ground) beef, which like other meats tends to be kept back for special occasions.

Ingredients;

- 1 (14 ounces) package spring roll wrappers
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 leek, chopped
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground cardamom
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon water, or as needed
- 1 quart oil for frying

Directions;

- Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions, leek, and garlic, and cook, stirring until the onions are transparent. Add ground beef, and cook until about halfway done. Season with cumin, cardamom, salt, and pepper. Mix well, and continue cooking until beef has browned.
- In a small dish or cup, mix together the flour and water to make a thin paste. Using one wrapper at a time, fold into the shape of a cone. Fill the cone with the meat mixture, close the top, and seal with the paste. Repeat until wraps or filling are used up.
- Heat the oil to 365 degrees F (170 degrees C) in a deep-fryer or deep heavy pot. There should be enough oil to submerge the wraps. Fry the Sambusa a few at a time until golden brown. Remove carefully to drain on paper towels.

Your lovely Sambusa is now ready to be enjoyed as a meal or as a snack.

Have fun!

Next is Baasto

Baasto Somali Dish

Image from GratisfyCooking

This Somali dish, Baasto literally translates from the Somali as ‘pasta’, and entered Somali cuisine during the Italian colonization of southern Somalia, which lasted from the 1880s until independence in 1960.

Baasto doesn’t simply refer to the pasta itself, It translates to a popular dish made from it that’s served as lunch.

The pasta for this Somali dish, normally spaghetti, is flavored with a rich array of spices, including cloves, cardamom, and cumin.

It is topped with a thick meaty stewing sauce which bears a resemblance to Bolognese sauce.

Despite its similarity to spaghetti Bolognese, it is often served alongside grilled or barbecued chicken.

Ingredients;

- ½ kg pasta (spaghetti)
- ½ kg minced beef
- 1 onion, diced finely
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 5 ripe tomatoes, diced
- 3 tablespoons tomato puree
- A small bunch of coriander leaves, chopped
- Salt to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Directions;

- Making the bolognese sauce
- Fry the onion until it becomes translucent.
- Add the minced meat and brown the meat.
- Add the garlic and cook for about 1 minute.
- Add the diced tomatoes and tomato puree and stir continuously until thoroughly absorbed. This should take about 5 minutes.
- Reduce to low heat and simmer for about 10 minutes to allow the sauce to thicken.
- Add salt and coriander leaves. Stir and remove from the pot.
- Making the pasta
- Boil a large saucepan of salted water.
- Add the pasta, stir occasionally to ensure the pasta doesn't stick to the pan
- Cook the pasta until it's cooked, but firm to the teeth when you bite it.
- Drain the pasta, but don't rinse as this will wash away the starch which helps absorb the sauce.

You can now serve this delicious Somalian dish. Fill a plate with pasta and add your sauce on top and that's it!

Cambuulo iyo Maraq

Image from AshleyParamore

Cambuulo iyo Maraq (Rice with Adzuki Beans in a Spicy Tomato Sauce).

Cambuulo (ambulo) is a famous Somalian dish usually served with sesame oil and a drizzle of sugar. It can be a mix of rice and adzuki beans or any kind of beans or lentils, corn, and beans, or sometimes just adzuki beans. Cambuulo is usually eaten for dinner.

Ingredients;

- 1 cup long-grain Basmati rice
- 1 cup cooked adzuki beans or any
- kind of lentil (soak overnight and boil for about 20 minutes if using dried beans)
- 400g can of diced tomatoes or 6 fresh tomatoes, diced (keep aside a handful for garnish or use toasted nuts and fresh coriander)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground chili powder or chili flakes. You can two green chilies (diced) as a substitute.
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced finely
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- Juice of one lemon
- Salt to taste
- 1 cup water

Directions;

- Cover the rice with one and a half cups of water and a pinch of salt. Cover the pan and boil over low heat until the rice is done. This should take about 15 minutes.
Mix in the cooked adzuki beans and keep them aside.
- Making the tomato sauce
- Saute the onions in the sesame oil until translucent.
- Add in the garlic and cook for about a minute.
- Add in the diced tomato, tomato paste, cumin, coriander, and chili and cook for about five minutes.
- Add water to ensure the sauce doesn't dry out. You want a thick, soupy consistency.
- Add the white vinegar and lemon juice. Simmer over low heat for about five minutes.

To serve;

Serve the cambuulo mixture in a bowl.

Generously spoon the tomato sauce over the cambuulo

Garnish with diced tomato. Sometimes we use fried onions as a garnish.

Surbiyaan Somali Dish

This Somali dish is a form of rice dish that has its roots in Indian dishes of Biryani and Pilau due to all having the same appearance.

Surbiyaan is thought to have reached Somalia across the narrow stretch of water from Yemen, where it is also common.

It's made from Basmati Rice, soaked and half cooked, left to simmer in Chicken Sauce until it is soft and fluffy.

Ingredients;

- 6 pieces chicken (Thighs & Legs)
- 3 cups basmati rice
- 5 cardamom pods, crushed
- 2 black cardamom
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 5 peppercorn
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves
- 2 teaspoons cumin, powder
- 1 teaspoon ginger, powder
- 2 teaspoons coriander powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika/red pepper
- 2 teaspoon cilantro, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1/2 lemon
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped

Directions;

- Wash and soak the rice with water and let it rest for 30 minutes.
- Fry the chicken with the oil until brown, add cardamom, black cardamom, cinnamon sticks, cloves, peppercorn.
- Add onions saute until brown then add garlic add tomatoes.
- Add the yogurt when tomatoes are tender.
- Then add the juice of a lemon, cumin, ginger, coriander, paprika, and cilantro.
- Let it simmer while covered on medium heat until boil and then lower the heat for 10-15 minutes.
- In another saucepan add the rice in boiling water cook until the rice is half done.
- Drain and add the rice to the chicken sauce and cook until the rice is tender on a medium heat covered, add the garnish.

For the garnish;

- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon food coloring
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 onion, sliced

Heat the oil over medium heat, add the onion and fry until nice and brown. Add the raisins and cook until they puff up.

Add this mixture over rice, add the food coloring on the side.

Your hot spicy Surbiyaan Somalian dish is ready for consumption.

Canjeero;

Image from [Pinterest](#)

This delicious Somali dish, Canjeero (also called lahoh) is known as the large flat fluffy and slightly sour pancake injera.

The Somali version is different, in that it is smaller, thinner, and also sweeter than its Ethiopian counterpart. It is often consumed for breakfast, which many in the country consider being the main meal of the day.

For breakfast, canjeero can be eaten alongside stews. Alternatively, this Somali dish can be broken up and cooked in ghee (clarified butter) and sugar, or enjoyed plain dipped into milky tea.

Ingredients;

- 1 cup white cornflour
- ½ cup sorghum flour (optional)
- 4 cups self-raising flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4- 4½ cups lukewarm water (you will need to reduce the water a little bit if you aren't using the sorghum flour)

Directions;

- Mix all the ingredients together, slowly add water to it making sure that you get a smooth batter.
- Pour the batter into a bowl, cover, and let it rest for two days in a warm place. This will allow the batter to ferment nicely.
- Heat a non-stick frying pan on medium heat.
- Once the pan is hot, pour a ladleful of the fermented batter and spread from the center in a circular motion. You should aim for a circle that is about the size of a dinner plate.
- Cover the pan and cook until the surface is holey and the bottom a light golden brown. Remove from the pan and place on a plate.
- Keep cooking until you have enough canjeero.
Keep any remaining batter in the fridge to cook the next day.

Halwa

Image from Halward

Halwa or xalwo is a festive sweet treat reserved for special occasions and is quotidian wedding treat. With the main ingredients including sugar, butter, and oil, this may be a treat you would only want to indulge in once in a while.

Ingredients;

- 4 cups of water
- 2 cups/1 lb granulated sugar
- 2 cups/1 lb light brown sugar
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 1 cup ghee/oil
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 teaspoon of ground cardamom
- Pinch saffron powder

Directions;

- Bring the sugar and the water to boil.
- Mix cornstarch, saffron, and half of cup water, allow it to dissolve.
- Add the cornstarch to the mixture.
- Cook the mixture over medium heat while stirring.
- As the mixture turns thick, start adding oil. This might take about 30 minutes.
- Continue adding oil when it sticks to the bottom of the pan.
- Keep stirring until the mixture gets separated.
- When it starts to leave the sides of the pan add cardamom and cloves.
- Put the halwa on a baking sheet.
- Let it cool, Cut, and serve.

Maraq Digaag (Chicken Stew)

Image from Minahalal

Though maraq digaag is typically referred to as a soup, this Somalian dish is more common to think to it as a stew, with the digaag referring to the chicken that is included in the dish.

The broth, which forms the liquid element of the meal, is flavored with coriander and ginger and has a primarily European or Middle Eastern flavor profile.

Moreover, these aren't the only elements that contribute to the overall flavor of the dish. Maraq digaag includes potatoes, carrots, and tomatoes in addition to chopped or shredded chicken. Serve with flatbread.

Ingredients;

- 4 chicken legs-tights
- 1 tomato, cut in half
- 3 carrots
- 3 peeled potatoes
- 1/2 head of cabbage, sliced
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 3 black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 5 cardamom pods, crushed
- 1 teaspoon coriander
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1-2 tablespoons coriander/cilantro leaves
- salt.

Directions;

- Wash chicken thoroughly with salt and water, place in a pan.
- Fill the pan with water and boil for 15 minutes, let it simmer for a while.
- Add tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, garlic, and the spices continue to cook for 30-40 minutes or until the chicken is tender almost falling off from the bone.
- Garnish with more cilantro/coriander leaves. Serve with bread.

Kaluun iyo Bariis: Spicy Fish Sauce with Rice

This delicious fish sauce makes a great dinner when served with basmati rice, the combination of this fish sauce and the rice gives out an aromatic fragrance that dances on the nose and makes you want a plate.

Ingredients;

- 1 whole fish red snapper/kingfish, cleaned and cut
- 3 potatoes 1 chili pepper
- 2 carrots ¼ cup cilantro
- 2 cloves of garlic
salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 teaspoon tamarind paste
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 eggplant, chopped

Directions;

- Fry the fish on both sides with a little oil, and set aside in a warm place.
- Sauté the onions in the same pan. until golden.
- Add the garlic and stir for a few minutes.
- Add the potato and the carrots cover and cook for 5 minutes.
- Add seasonings and tomatoes, tomato paste, tamarind eggplant, and cilantro.
- Cook until tomatoes are tender. Put the fish back in the sauce and cook on a medium heat add a little water as needed.
- Continue to cook until the vegetables are tender. Serve with rice.

Muqmad (Preserved Meat)

Muqmad or Odkac is a Somalian dish made with preserved meat, usually camel but sometimes beef.

It's a dish for Somali nomadic communities who had to find a way to preserve food for their long migrations through the sweltering deserts. It is their contingency food in times of drought because the chewy, salty nuggets of meat can last for more than a year! That's wonderful!

Ingredients;

- 2 kg of lean beef or camel if you can get it (diced into muqmad or odkac style or dice it finely yourself into ½ cm cubes)
- 500g ghee
- 1 cup of sultanas (optional, but it adds a sweetness that enhances the meat's flavor)
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 teaspoon cardamom powder
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup of vegetable oil for frying
- Salt to taste

Directions;

- Over medium heat, heat one cup of oil and cook the beef until the natural juices have drained. It should take roughly 30 minutes to complete this task. The flesh will resemble dried sultanas or raisins.
- Drain the oil and set aside the meat to cool in a large mixing dish.
- Add the sultanas. Keep the oil in a container and use it to cook other meals.
- Fry the onion, garlic, and cardamom powder in the 500g of ghee over medium heat until the onion is nicely browned.
- Sieve the fragrant and spiced ghee over the muqmad, which is now ready to be stored in an airtight container.

There you have a round-up of Somalian dishes you should try. Hope you loved this article.

Here is a Somalian recipe on the [African Food Network](#) you'll love; [Somali Doughnuts \(Kac Kac\)](#)