

Cuban cuisine



[Ropa vieja](#) (shredded flank steak in a tomato sauce base), [black beans](#), yellow rice, [plantains](#) and fried [yuca](#) with [beer](#).

Cuban cuisine is a fusion of [Spanish](#), [African](#) and [Caribbean cuisines](#). Cuban recipes share spices and techniques with Spanish and African cooking, with some [Caribbean](#) influence in spice and flavor. This results in a unique, interesting and flavorful blend of the several different cultural influences. A small, but noteworthy, Chinese influence can also be accounted for, mainly in the Havana area. During colonial times, Cuba was an important port for trade and many Spaniards who lived there brought their culinary traditions along with them ^[1].

As a result of the [colonization](#) of [Cuba](#) by [Spain](#), one of the main influences on the cuisine is from Spain. Along with Spain, other culinary influences include Africa, from the Africans that were brought to Cuba as [slaves](#), and dutch, from the French colonists that came to Cuba from [Haiti](#)^[1]. Another important factor is that Cuba itself is an island, making seafood something that greatly influences Cuban cuisine. Another contributing factor to Cuban cuisine is the fact that Cuba is in a [tropical climate](#). The tropical climate produces fruits and root vegetables that are used in Cuban dishes and meals^[2].

A typical meal would consist of rice and beans, cooked together or apart. When cooked together the recipe is called either, "Arroz conгри", "Congri", or "Arroz moro" if cooked separately it is called "Arroz con/y Frijoles"--Rice with/and Beans"^{[3][4]}. A main course (mainly pork or beef), some sort of *vianda* (not to be confused with the [French viande](#) which stands for "meat", this term encompasses several types of [tubers](#), such as [yuca](#), [malanga](#), and [potato](#), as well as [plantains](#), unripe [bananas](#) and even [corn](#)), a salad (usually simply composed of [tomato](#), [lettuce](#) and [avocado](#), though [cucumber](#), [carrots](#), [cabbage](#) and [radish](#) are not uncommon). Curiously, typical *criollo* meals largely ignore [fruit](#), except ripe plantains, which are usually consumed together with the rice and beans. Tropical

fruit could be served, however, depending on each family's preferences. Usually, all dishes are brought together to the table at once, except maybe for desserts.

Rice and beans are a culinary element found throughout Cuba, although it varies by region. In the eastern part of the island, "arroz congri oriental" is the predominant rice and bean dish. White rice and red kidney beans are cooked together with a [sofrito](#) and then baked in the oven. The same procedure is used for the above mentioned [Congri](#), [Arroz Moro](#). The term Moros y Cristianos, literally "Moors and Christians" which uses black beans, it is not used in Cuba but in other parts of Latin America.^{[[citation needed](#)]} Although the process of preparing the black bean soup contains basics (onion, garlic, bay leaf, salt) each region has their tradition of preparing it.

Meat, when available on [ration book](#) is usually served in light sauces. The most popular sauce, used to accompany not only roasted pork, but also the *viandas*, is [Mojo](#) or *Mojito* (not to be confused with the [Mojito](#) cocktail), made with oil, garlic, onion, spices such as [oregano](#) and [bitter orange](#) or [lime](#) juice. The origin of Cuban mojo comes from the mojo sauces of the Canary Islands. Cuban mojo is made with different ingredients, but the same idea and technique is used from the Canary Islands. Of course with so many Canary Islander immigrants in Cuba, the Canary Islander influence was strong. [Ropa vieja](#) is shredded beef dish (usually shank) simmered in tomato-based *criollo* sauce until it falls apart. *ropa vieja* is the Spanish name meaning "old clothes", in which the dish gets its name from the shredded meat resembling "old clothes". *Ropa vieja* is also from the Canary Islands, as is many of the origins of Cuban food. [Boliche](#) is a beef roast, stuffed with [chorizo](#) sausage and hard boiled eggs.

Equally popular are [tamales](#), although not exactly similar to its [Mexican](#) counterpart. Made with corn [flour](#), [shortening](#) and pieces of pork meat, tamales are wrapped in corn leaves and tied, boiled in salted water and served in a number of different ways. *Tamales en cazuela* is almost the same recipe, although it does not require the lengthy process of packing the tamales in the corn leaves before cooking, but rather is directly cooked in the pot. Tamales as well as Black Bean soup, are among the few indigenous foods that have remained part of the modern Cuban cuisine.

Stews and soups are common. These are usually consumed along with white rice or *gofio* (a type of corn flour, also from the Canary Islands), or eaten alone. Corn stew, corn soup (*guiso*), *caldosa* (a soup made with a variety of tubers and meats), are popular dishes as well. Also common when available are the popular white bean Spanish stews, such as [Caldo Gallego](#) (Galician Stew), [Fabada Asturiana](#) (Asturian Stew) and [Cocido de Garbanzos](#) (Chickpea Stew).

Although Western Cuba's cooking is technically *criollo* as well (as this term signifies the existence of Spanish roots), its style can be separated from mainstream *criollo*, particularly in Havana. This city, for a number of reasons, was more continental and closer to the European cuisine^{[[citation needed](#)]}. There's also a notable Chinese influence, in dishes such as *sopa china* (an egg and onion soup) and *arroz salteado* (sauteed rice), among others. Rice is usually consumed separately from beans, and [flour](#) is much more

commonly used (it is almost completely ignored in mainstream criollo cooking). Some Havana dishes make frequent use of *alcaparrado*, a mix of olives, raisins and caper which provide the [sweet-and-sour](#)-inspired flavor that is typical of this cuisine. Alcaparrado is used as an ingredient in several recipes, usually as part of sauces to accompany meats. It is also cooked together with ground beef to provide the meat stuffing for a variety of Cuban pastries, or [finger food](#), very popular with Cubans.

Other common finger foods and dishes of Havana are [Cuban pastries](#) ([puff pastry](#) filled with fruit pulps (especially [guava](#)) or ground beef), [croquetas](#) (small cylinders of paste, made with a heavy bechamel sauce and ground beef, ham, chicken, fish, or cheese, covered with breadcrumbs and deep fried), papas rellenas (fried potato balls filled with ground beef), picadillo à la Habanera (ground beef with *alcaparrado*, served with white rice, black beans and fried plantains) and *niños envueltos* (beef filled with alcaparrado and served in pepper sauce).

Western cuisine also makes wider use of eggs, particularly omelettes (such as *tortilla de papa*) and fried eggs (*huevos à la habanera*, fried eggs served over white rice and fried plantains). Fish dishes are also common, especially in coastal areas, and although Cuba has a well-developed lobster fishing industry, it is used very sparsely. Aside from Cuba's present economic condition, which makes lobster an unreachable food for most families, Cuban cuisine was always of inland origin, therefore fish and sea products are as commonly used as in coastal areas, where [crab](#) is another common food staple. Popular fish recipes are enchilado (shrimp, fish, crab or lobster in a sauce that, despite its name, contains no chili), and *à la vizcaína*, a tomato-based sauce of Basque origin used to cook *bacalao* (salted cod).

Other Spanish dishes can be found in Cuba, such as the [paella](#), arroz con pollo (chicken cooked with yellow rice much like a paella), and the empanada gallega (which is similar to an English meat pie). Due to heavy [Galician](#) and [Asturian](#) migration during the early 20th century, many northern Spanish dishes made their way to Cuba and influenced the cooking of many families, like the *pulpo à la gallega*.

Eastern Cuba cuisine

While western Cuba is heavily influenced by its European roots, eastern Cuba (the old [Oriente](#) province) is influenced by African and Caribbean cuisines. Perhaps the biggest contribution is the [Congrí oriental](#), which is cooked red beans and rice. This is due to the close proximity to the other Spanish-speaking islands, where red beans are more prevalent than black beans. Many foods from the [Dominican Republic](#) and [Puerto Rico](#) can be found in eastern Cuba with their own twists. One example would be the [mofongo](#) (called fufú de plátano in Cuba), which is mashed plantains stuffed with pork, chicken, or seafood. The name "[fufu](#)" comes from Western Africa.

Sandwiches

The majority of sandwiches in Cuba make use of traditional [Cuban bread](#), a long loaf made with lard, instead of oil, and extra moisture, which give it its distinct flavor.

A [Cuban sandwich](#) is a popular item that grew out of the once-open flow of cigar workers between Cuba and [Key West, Florida](#) in the 1870s.^[5] It is a simple pressed sandwich traditionally made with sliced roast pork (cold), thinly sliced [serrano ham](#) (cold), thinly sliced [swiss cheese](#), dill pickles, and yellow mustard on buttered Cuban bread. In Tampa, [Genoa salami](#) is also added. Once assembled, the sandwich is simultaneously compressed and heated in a panini-type grill called "*la plancha*", and cut in half diagonally. Some add tomatoes and lettuce, but this is considered by some as an unacceptable Americanization of the sandwich. It is sometimes referred to as a "*sandwich mixto*" - "mixed sandwich".^[6]

A [medianoche](#) sandwich is made exactly like the traditional Cuban sandwich, though the Cuban bread is replaced by an egg loaf and ham is sometimes excluded. It received its name (*medianoche* means "midnight") from its popularity as a midnight snack in the nightclubs of Havana.

Pan con lechón is a traditional pressed sandwich created simply with Cuban bread, roasted pork, onions, and *mojito*. *Pan con bistec* is made in the same fashion, but the pork is replaced with a thin flank steak.

Another sandwich of Cuba is the "Elena Ruz". Elena Ruz was a young society debutante in 1930's who would stop at El Carmelo, a popular restaurant and confectionary shop in Havana after an evening at the opera or a social function, and would ask the waiter if he would fix her a sandwich to her orders. It is prepared on white or Cuban bread, with a layer of cream cheese on one slice, a layer of strawberry jam or preserves on the other, and thin slices of turkey breast in between.^[7]

Other traditional sandwiches include *pan con timba* (bread with guayaba paste and cream cheese), *pan con chorizo* (Cuban bread with thin cut Spanish chorizo sausage), and the *frita*.

The *frita* became popular in Cuba in the 1930s. It is a Cuban version of the American hamburger, although with significant changes. It is prepared with ground beef spiced with paprika and onion. The patties are made small and fried on a griddle. The fried patty is served in a small Cuban bread hamburger bun, topped with *mojo* sauce and with freshly prepared shoestring french fries.

List of Cuban dishes



- [Aji relleno](#)
- [Ajiaco](#)
- [Arroz a la chorrera](#)
- [Arroz amarillo](#)
- [Arroz con leche](#)
- [Arroz con maiz](#)
- [Arroz con pollo](#)
- [Arroz con congri](#)
- [Batidos](#)
- [Bocaditos](#)
- [Bistec de Puerco](#)
- [Bistec Empanizado](#)
- [Bistec o Encebollado](#)
- [Boliche](#)
- [Boñato Frito](#)
- [Buñuelos](#)
- [Butifarras](#)
- [Caldosa](#)
- [Camarones](#)
- [Camarones al ajillo](#)
- [Carne azada en cazuela](#)
- [Carne con papas](#)
- [Chiviricos](#)
- [Croquetas](#)
- [Dulce de coco con queso](#)
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- [Empanadas](#)
- [Enchilado de cangrejo](#)
- [Enchalada de caso](#)
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- [Ensalada de frijoles](#)
- [Ensalada de frutas tropicales](#)
- [Ensalada mixta](#)
- [Filete de pescado grillé](#)
- [Flan de calabaza](#)
- [Flan de coco](#)
- [Flan de guayaba](#)
- [Flan de huevos](#)
- [Fricasé de pollo](#)
- [Frita \(Cuban hamburger\)](#)
- [Fufu de Plátano](#)
- [Guayaba](#)
- [Harina de maiz seco](#)
- [Harina de maiz tierno](#)
- [Malanga frita](#)
- [Mariquitas](#)
- [Mazarreal](#)
- [Mermelada](#)
- [Morcillas](#)
- [Natillas](#)
- [Panetela borracha](#)
- [Pan con bistec](#)
- [Pan con lechon](#)
- [Papa Rellena](#)
- [Papitas fritas](#)
- [Pastelitos](#)
- [Picadillo](#)
- [Platano maduro frito](#)
- [Platillo](#)
- [Moros y Cristianos](#)
- [Pollo frito con mojo](#)
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- [Pudín de pan](#)
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