

*BLENDED SCOTCH AND JERK RIBEYE STEAK WITH
APPLE AIOLI, PINEAPPLE SLAW, AND PLANTAINS*



This is a country island dish that found itself hanging out in a North Georgia spring when a buddy of mine and I were trying to figure out what to eat after a day outside. We are taking a traditional Caribbean jerk seasoning and making it our own by adding Scotch and using it on a classic ribeye steak, rather than chicken, goat, or fish. The Scotch brightens the flavors by reducing the impact of the heat of the peppers in the jerk seasoning, and gives the meat and aroma that smells the way it feels to be out on the links in early spring. Why do I suggest a jerked meat instead of blackened? Because it's time to get away from burnt flavors, it's time to taste the world in all its greatest aspirations. Jerk gives you all the best of blackening without the burning. You may even call it bronzing, as that is the color of the finished dish.

Alongside this great cut of meat we will have an apple aioli, pineapple slaw, and fried plantains. It is a late afternoon dinner perfect for a cool spring day. It can be prepared before the day of golf or outdoor fun, and the only two things you have to cook are the steak and the plantains, everything else is done ahead of time. Just remember that you are in Georgia, and it is March. The weather is great for being outdoors when all the great greenery of the state is coming alive: it's not too hot, not too cold, and just a little windy. Perfect. A perfect season in a beautiful place.

The apple aioli reaches into the very heart of the history of aioli and mayonnaise without turning into a mayonnaise, as it is eggless. We use the sugars and starches in the apple to emulsify (thicken) the garlic and olive oil. Don't think it too strange an accompaniment for the beef, as its texture and flavor are a perfect foil for the fiery jerk beef by smoothing out the heat and allowing the combination of spices to come together rather than dominate.



The pineapple slaw is classic crunchy with just enough of the pineapple to give you a sense of the tropical. Plantains are the starch of the world around the equator, and once you are opened to their versatility you will wonder why this is often ignored in the produce section. They sit there right next to its look-alike cousin, the banana. Plantains are a staple of Cuban cuisine, and are found in recipes all around the world. Don't think them the same, for plantains need to be cooked, like a potato needs cooking, in order for it to properly express its purpose as a starch, and sometimes a dessert. Buy the plantains that are starting to turn from yellow to orange.

Jerk seasoning serves many purposes besides just being sweet and hot. It preserves the meat. The peppers make you sweat so you cool off. I like jerk spices better than the cayenne and paprika blackening because the jerk seasonings bring out more of the combination of tastes, rather than a dominant thrust of char and heat that is the blackened signature. Blackened is a great method, and many dishes invite the process. It's just that I like the flavor of brown sugar, scallions, onions, nutmeg, cinnamon, thyme, allspice, and bird chilli peppers (Scotch bonnet pepper is the island way). If you don't want to make the jerk seasoning, commercial blends are available, but always avoid the ones with salt as the first or second ingredient. It's best to avoid the ones with salt altogether. Why is jerk seasoning particular to the islands? Because those are the spices that grew there when island cuisine was being formed a couple of hundred years ago. Also, the world of food before refrigeration was preoccupied with preserving food, while still giving ample amounts of indigenous spice to boost the flavors. Now enough of that, onto the food itself!

You will need two 10 ounce ribeye steaks. Remember that ribeyes are a fatty cut of meat, which makes them both tender and full-flavored.

Award-Winning chef, and culinary poet, Lamar Thomas, has contributed this month's recipe, which can be found in his soon to be published book, *Ginger, Lily, and Sweet Fire: A Romance with Food*. To experience Thomas' world class cuisine visit him at the East West Bistro in Downtown Athens.

A Beautiful Day

Everything is poetry
 In the swing of new wood,
 From the grip to the bowed shaft
 In its strike against the ball,
 Like there is nothing before
 And there is nothing after
 Except the titleist rocket
 Arcing over the fairway.
 Walking across the dry March
 Morning grass, with the wind
 Behind me and a five iron
 In my hand, I see the first
 Trap just lying there
 All smooth and untarnished,
 Waiting, Taunting,
 Betting its last grain of dull white sand
 That I'll never pass, I'll not get by.
 I do, and the day shouts "Hey, Hello",
 With welcome and a challenge to do even better.
 The putt has the feel of the prose
 In The Great Gatsby where
 The forbidden green flag stands
 For all that I desire.
 And the ball meets its mark
 The way that Arnold Palmer planned it.
 A perfect hole on a perfect course,
 And it all begins the way a great day should.
 I wonder if I can make it past the 7th hole lake,
 And I wonder if the second 9
 Will be this fine.
 And as I approach each new
 Turn in the course
 It feels more and more
 Like I'm walking on a river
 Of soft green heaven.
 And it feels better each time
 I tee off and hit the sweet spot.
 It feels better every time.
 Yeah, even when I pull back,
 Slice and rummage in the rough,
 Cause it's a beautiful day
 That begins with golf
 And ends in the afternoon with talk and drink,
 With a spicy steak dinner. Yeah, a day
 With all the things that makes
 This life a better place to be.

-L. Thomas



JERK SEASONING

2 Tbsp	light brown sugar, sifted
¼ tsp	nutmeg
1/3 tsp	allspice
¼ tsp	cinnamon
1 tsp	dried thyme leave
1 tsp	crushed chilli peppers
1 tsp	kosher salt
¼ tsp	coriander
¼ tsp	cardamom
1/3 tsp	ginger
4 oz	blended Scotch whisky

Mix the spices together with a mortar and pestle, or in a food processor. A good old marble mortar and pestle is your best tool here, as it gives you the ability to control how much you want to press the spices together, and how much of the spices natural oils that you want to release.

After you have mixed the spices, pour in three ounces of Scotch. Save the other ounce for when you cook the steaks. Place the steaks into a glass dish. Rub the scotch jerk into the steaks and let them stand for one hour. Then add:

½	diced yellow onion
1 cup	blend oil
3	large limes (squeeze the juice into the marinade)

Let stand overnight, or for 6 hours in the refrigerator.

PINEAPPLE-CUCUMBER COLE SLAW

1	seedless cucumber, peeled, cut in half and sliced thin
¼ head	green cabbage, cored and sliced thin
½ cup	pineapple, diced... come on, use fresh.
¼	red onion, diced
2 stalks	scallion, diced
1 tsp	sesame seeds
1 tsp	kosher salt
½ tsp	ground black pepper
1 tsp	crushed and chopped fresh garlic
2 Tbsp	corn oil
1 Tbsp	apple cider vinegar

Mix all together in plastic bowl and refrigerate overnight, or at a minimum of six hours. Pour off the liquid that gathers at the bottom

of the bowl before serving. This is the bitter runoff of the cabbage, and if you leave it in it will give the slaw more of a bite than you may want.

APPLE AIOLI

1	Pippin or Granny Smith apple, peeled, chopped
3	crushed garlic cloves
¼ tsp	cardamom
1 Tbsp	salt and pepper mix (1 part kosher salt to ¼ part cracked black pepper)
1 cup	extra virgin olive oil
1	juice of one lemon

In food processor, puree apple with garlic, cardamom, salt and pepper. Slowly, in a thin stream, pour in olive oil. When it is thick add the lemon juice. Chill.

OK! Time to cook.

PLANTAINS

2	ripe, yellow plantains, peeled, sliced thin
1 cup	corn oil

Heat oil to 335 in high-sided pan or wok. Gently submerge the chips one by one into the oil. This keeps the temperature from dropping too fast to fry. Fry until they are crisp, 3 minutes. Stir as they fry. Drain on paper towel. You can sprinkle them with any of the following: salt and pepper, jerk seasoning, sugar, cayenne and sugar, or just eat them plain. Set aside and keep warm while you cook the steaks.

Heat a large iron skillet on medium high. Remove the steaks from the marinade and shake them over the marinade to let the oil drain off of them. Place the steaks in the skillet one at a time. It will smoke and sizzle, just make sure you have the fan turned on. Turn heat down to medium. Cook to your desired temperature. Rare will take about five minutes. Medium Rare about eight minutes, cooking them four minutes on each side on medium heat. For the last minute, remove from heat and pour in the remaining ounce of Scotch. Be careful to keep it away from the heat as it may flame up. If it does, don't worry, the alcohol will quickly burn off. Just keep the exhaust fan running.

Remove the steaks from the skillet and paint each one with one tablespoon of the apple aioli. Set on large plate with slaw and plantains. If you want to jazz it up a little then sprinkle the plantains with blue cheese, or blue cheese dressing. That's it.