

GUAM CHAMORU DINANCHE HOT PEPPER PASTE

My favorite dinanche was a jar we brought back from Guam in 2017. It was made by DFRNT GU – spicy but not so much you couldn't enjoy the flavor, and smoky. I'm finally getting around to making this as I am unable to mail-order that deliciousness! I don't know what was put into it, but this type of dinanche paste uses the same general ingredients across most recipes – eggplant, green beans, onions, hot pepper, lemon, and coconut milk.

My dad likes to add crab paste to his – so feel free to do so after you make this dinanche. Also, I happened to have calamansi juice my dad squeezed on Guam so I used that instead of lemon juice. Lemon juice will work fine but start with half the amount of calamansi juice in this recipe – calamansi is not as tart as lemon juice.

Barbecuing or smoking most of the veggies makes this dinanche – the Guam bomb of Guam bombs, in a good way. I've roasted the veggies in the oven too and it's better than not doing anything to them – but bbq and smoking take it to a whole other level.

Dinanche makes so many foods delicious – especially seafood and coconut-milk based dishes.

Makes about 9 cups.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

1 ½ pounds of eggplant, destemmed

½ a pound of ready-to-eat string or green beans, get a ¼ pound more if you need to trim the ends

1 medium green bell pepper, core removed

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and left whole

Set 2

1 whole, medium bulb of garlic

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Set 3

6 tablespoons of vegetable or coconut oil, to be added incrementally

5 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon of table salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

Set 4

2-13.5 ounce cans of coconut milk

Set 5

3 tablespoons lemon or calamansi juice

Hot pepper

Tools: roasting pan with lid, heavy-duty foil, immersion blender, whisk, rubber spatula, large pot, medium bowl, glass containers with lids for storing dinanche

DIRECTIONS

Take one-third of each of the vegetables – don't cut the veggies smaller – just cut off one-third. Cut one-third of the eggplant off, of the onion, and of the bell pepper. Take one-third of the green beans. Set all this aside.

With the remaining two-thirds, brush the eggplant and bell pepper all over with vegetable oil. Set aside in the half-sheet roasting pan.

Make a small tray out of heavy-duty foil for the two-thirds of the beans. Brush the foil with a generous amount of oil. Chop the beans into about 2 inches long, place on foil and toss to coat with oil.

Make and oil a small tray of foil for the two-thirds of the onion. Separate the onion layers, place in the tray, and toss to coat with oil.

Get a small sheet of foil to wrap the bulb of garlic. Cut the top of the garlic bulb off to expose most of the cloves of garlic. Pour 1 tablespoon of oil over exposed cloves then loosely wrap the entire bulb in foil.

Place the eggplant and bell pepper directly on the grill – cook till tender. Place the foil trays of onions, beans, and wrapped garlic bulb on the grill too. As the veggies cook, place them aside in the half-sheet roasting pan – the eggplant and bell pepper will cook before the onion and beans. The bulb of garlic will be done when soft and browned.

If you are unable to bbq or smoke, at least roast the two-thirds of vegetables in the oven – it softens them, adds color, and enhances the flavor. The only different thing to do is to cut the eggplant and bell peppers into chunks and be sure to oil the chunks liberally. Roast veggies in the oven at 435 degrees for about 30 to 45 minutes, or until they are soft and have some caramelization/charred edges.

While the barbecue is going, finely chop the remaining one-third of green beans, onions, and bell peppers. Chop the remaining one-third of eggplant into small square pieces, about the size of frozen carrots. Mince the five cloves of garlic. Keep these chopped veggies in separate piles. Set aside till barbecued veggies are done.

Once the large pieces of veggies are barbecued, start cooking the diced veggies. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large pot at just under medium heat. Add the diced green beans first. Sauté for five minutes. Stir to keep from burning. They should take on some color/caramelization, but not be burned.

Add the onions and sauté for 5 minutes. Stir often. Again, veggies should take on some color.

While the onions and pepper soften in the pot, pour the thick coconut milk into a medium bowl. Whisk if it has separated into water and coconut cream. Use your hands to tear apart the eggplant and bell pepper then add them to the coconut milk. Add the other grilled veggies. Combine this entire mixture with an immersion blender, ensuring the green beans have been broken up. You may leave this a bit chunky if you'd like. It should not be completely pulverized. Set the bowl aside.

To the pot of sautéed veggies, add 2 more tablespoons of oil then add the bell pepper. Sauté for 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for two minutes.

Add the final 2 tablespoons of oil then add the diced eggplants. Sauté for 5 minutes.

Transfer the pureed barbecued vegetables into the pot and stir to combine well. Add salt, black pepper, and calamansi juice. If using lemon juice, remember to start with half the amount first. Taste the mixture and adjust to your liking. When you taste the mixture, you should think it might be just a little too salty and a little too tangy – that's fine! It will be perfect the next day.

Add a little bit of hot pepper. Stir, or if you want this to be less chunky, use the immersion blender. Scoop some out for those that don't want it too spicy.

Add more pepper to the remaining and adjust to taste.

Store in glass jars. This mixture will thicken to a nice paste after it is refrigerated.

Recipe courtesy Paula Quinene of Paulaq.com.