

GUAM SAVORY GREEN COOKING BANANAS SIMMERED IN COCONUT MILK

Gollai åppan chotda, or unripe, green-skinned bananas simmered in coconut milk, is a delectable dish to enjoy with a barbecue plate, or estufao, or even just kelaguen. Hard, unripe bananas do take longer to soften compared to ripe cooking bananas thus you'll need to add more coconut milk as the water evaporates while cooking. This dish freezes and thaws quite well, but the plantains discolor some upon thawing.

FYI, for the sweet version, check-out my gollai åppan aga' recipe using sweet, ripe cooking bananas or plantains. When making åppan chotda versus åppan aga', the chotda is more savory-starchy like a taro compared to aga' which is more sweet-dessertish like a sweet potato.

There are several varieties of bananas that grow on Guam, and many varieties growing around the world. In theory, you can use any green, unripe banana for this recipe. In days gone by on the island, the popular cooking bananas called chotdan long were favored. These days, other varieties have been grown and are being used for gollai åppan chotda. It takes stateside plantains about 2 hours to cook through when simmered in coconut milk.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

½ cup bacon or fatty pork pieces, or 2 tablespoons of lard

3 to 4 green, unripe cooking bananas, quartered and peeled

3 to 4 - 13.5-ounce cans thick coconut milk

1 teaspoon salt

Tools: medium pot with cover, rubber spatula, colander

DIRECTIONS

In a medium pot, sautee bacon on medium heat till it releases its fat or melt the lard. Once ready, add a half-inch layer of coconut milk then 1 teaspoon of salt. Stir to dissolve the salt.

Add one layer of plantains then enough coconut milk to cover. Continue layering plantains and coconut milk until all plantains are in the pot, and the coconut milk completely covers the unripe bananas. Gently move the plantains around in the pot to prevent sticking.

Cover the pot and bring to a simmer or gentle boil. Cook for 15 minutes then gently move the plantains around. Cover but leave it cracked open and simmer for 30 minutes. Move the plantains around and continue cooking and checking till the plantains are soft and cooked through. As the water evaporates from the coconut milk, add another can of coconut milk to the pot and continue cooking.

Once the plantains are softened, taste and adjust salt as needed.

Recipe courtesy Paula Quinene of Paulaq.com.