EAT MORE PLANTS
A selection of Zimbabwe's popular traditional vegetables
The Zimbabwe Traditional and Organic Food Forum
Acknowledgements

This edition of the Zimbabwe Traditional and Organic Food Forum’s annual publication features traditional vegetables and mushrooms. Its production was made possible through contributions of various stakeholders. We would like to thank all the people who shared stories and recipes with us, in particular Thamsanqa Khanye and Hepson Muregwi of CTDO and Tendekai Mudimu of Sustainable Agriculture Technology (SAT) for organising field visits and submitting farmers’ stories, Tafadzwa Chidoori (FAO) for the photographs taken in Matabeleland South province, and Kerry and Farai Wallace for selecting and cooking (most of) the recipes.

The booklet was produced with support from the Seed and Knowledge Initiative, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Trocaire, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO/UN), and the European Union.

Written by: Anna Brazier and Caroline Jacquet
Edited by: Patience Hoto
Photography: David Brazier, Farai Wallace and Jessie Sargeant
Layout and Design: Farai Wallace
Printer: Future Communications

Printed in 2022
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES MATTER MORE

GOT TO HAVE THESE VEGGIES

Leafy greens

Okras

Wild mushrooms

Pumpkins, melons, cucumbers and squashes

POWERED BY VEGETABLES

Marvellous’ mushrooming enterprise

Taking indigenous vegetables upmarket

Saving seeds and species

Green and leafy generates money

Indigenous is precious

RECIPES

Home-made usavi powder mix

Amaranth leaves and biltong with peanut butter

Blackjack leaf patties

Spiced okra matchstick fries

Okra with tomato, garlic and lemon

Pumpkin and mapudzi curry

Wild mushrooms on toast

Pumpkin and honey muffins

Prickly cucumber infused water

Prickly cucumber and vanilla ice cream

INSIDE COVER

2

3

4

4

5

6

7

8

10

10

11

12

13

14

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

BACK COVER
**FOREWORD**

This is the seventh booklet developed by the Zimbabwe Traditional and Organic Food Forum. The aim of the Food Forum is to encourage healthy eating by introducing consumers to a wide range of Zimbabwean foods and at the same time link farmers, collectors, processors, and chefs to a wider market. Each year the Food Forum organises the Good Food Festival where people come together to enjoy traditional foods, buy seeds, meet producers and processors, and have a fantastic time.

This year we have chosen to focus on traditional vegetables and mushrooms as the theme for our booklet. Zimbabwe has a wide range of traditional vegetables and mushrooms which are enjoyed fresh when in season and dry.
Vegetables are a very important part of the diet in Zimbabwe, forming the main component of relish or sauce which is eaten with the staple food, sadza. Wild mushrooms are also popular and often used to make a flavourful, thick textured relish. In the past, more than fifty different wild vegetables were harvested and consumed from across Zimbabwe, with various parts of the plants being eaten including tubers, stems, leaves, green pods, and fruits.

These days, most Zimbabweans opt for cultivated, introduced, vegetables such as rape, kales, or cabbage, mixed with tomatoes and onions. Button and oyster mushrooms can be bought in most supermarkets. In rural areas, a much wider range of vegetables and mushrooms is consumed. Some are indigenous and some were introduced during colonial times but have become integrated into the traditional diet. Unlike in other parts of Africa, few indigenous vegetables are cultivated in Zimbabwe. Wild vegetables are normally harvested from forests, riverbanks, and mountains or as weeds from crop fields.

Indigenous vegetables tend to be more tolerant of drought, pest and disease problems and poor soils. Therefore, they provide an important alternative to exotic vegetables which with climate change have become increasingly difficult to grow. As climate change and natural resource degradation intensify in Zimbabwe, many of the habitats of wild plants and mushrooms are being destroyed. This makes cultivation increasingly important for food security and preservation of biodiversity.

Most traditional vegetables are seasonal and not readily available throughout the year. Drying of vegetables and mushrooms is an important food preservation method in Zimbabwe, helping families to have nutritious foods throughout the long dry season. Dried vegetables can be even more nutritious than fresh ones because the nutrients are concentrated as water is removed. Dried vegetables and mushrooms have a good market value and thus help families to get extra income at times of the year when there is little agricultural produce to sell.

This booklet describes some of the common and less well known popular traditional vegetables and mushrooms that are collected, cultivated, processed, and consumed in Zimbabwe.
**Leafy greens**

Leafy vegetables are a critical component of the Zimbabwean diet providing a base for the relish that is eaten with sadza. Leafy green vegetables are often cooked alone, with onions and tomatoes to add flavour, or a favourite method is to add peanut butter during cooking.

Many of the traditional leafy greens are considered agricultural weeds which come up on their own in crop fields during the rainy season. The young leaves of amaranth, spider plant and blackjack for example, are often harvested from such volunteer plants.

The leaves of some cultivated crops such as pumpkin and cowpea are particularly popular. The leaves of many others including cocoyams *(madhumbe)*, sweet potatoes and cassava are also edible, although not widely eaten in Zimbabwe.

Dried cowpea leaves are much sought-after and preferred to fresh leaves. These dried leaves *(mufushwa)* fetch a higher price in markets. Cowpea pods are sometimes harvested green and boiled like string beans.

When compared to popular cultivated vegetables, indigenous leaf vegetables fare better in terms of most (micro)nutrients. For example, amaranth contains more protein, calcium, magnesium, and iron than cabbage, kale, or spinach. Pumpkin leaves contain more than double the amount of protein, nine time more calcium and ten times more Vitamin A than cabbage. Spider plant leaves are particularly rich in magnesium and iron.
Unusual vegetables

Across Zimbabwe there are wild vegetables that are specific to certain parts of the country. For example, in Mashonaland East and Central, collectors relish tsongora (Coccinia sessilifolia) a type of wild cucumber. In Mudzi and Rushinga people eat the leaves, flowers, cucumber-like fruits, and the large tuber of this plant. The dried leaves are sold locally and even sometimes taken to Mbare market in Harare.

Tips for conserving nutrients in (leaf) vegetables:

- Wash vegetables before preparing them.
- Cut vegetables in medium sized pieces.
- Never add baking soda during cooking.
- Boil or steam vegetables at medium to high heat. Avoid overcooking - most soft vegetable greens can be consumed after 8-10 min of cooking.
- When drying, clean the leaves and blanch them by dipping into boiling water for about 1 min. Remove from the water and dry in a well-ventilated, shady place, protected from wind. Drying using a solar drier is ideal.
Okras
Lady finger okra, 
*Abelmoschus esculentus*,
Derere (S), Idelele (N)

Cultivated okra is a perennial plant that originated in West Africa or Asia but is widely cultivated throughout Africa today. The plant is related to cotton and hibiscus and enjoys hot conditions, sandy soils and with plenty of water can reach 2m in height. It produces large fruit containing many seeds.

For cooking the fruit is harvested green. It is mucilaginous or slimy when cooked, giving dishes containing okra a glossy texture. To avoid the slime, the fruit can be roasted, grilled or fried. The fruit can also be dried and turned into a powder which can be added to thicken and flavour soups, stews, and relish. The young leaves may be cooked as a green vegetable and the mature seeds can be roasted and brewed as a coffee-substitute. Okra is a good source of dietary fibre, Vitamin C and Vitamin K.

Wild okras
Derere renyaguru - *Sesamum calycinum*

Derere renyenje - *Corchorus tridens*, *Corchorus trilocularis*, *Corchorus aspelnifolius*

Several wild plants in Zimbabwe are called *derere* (Shona) or *delele* (Ndebele) or okra. The leaves of these plants are mucilaginous and produce a pleasant, glossy sauce which is favoured in traditional cooking.

The leaves of most of these species can be dried and stored for future use. They are also sold and can be found in the traditional food sections in major supermarkets.
Wild Mushrooms

Field mushroom, *Agaricus campestris*, chikungowo (S), cbudzunge (N)
Cep, *Boletus edulis*, Dindindi (S)
Apricot fungus, *Cantharellus logisporus*, Vashaveshave (S)
Chantarelle, *Cantharellus miniatescens*, Tsvuke, Firifi (S)
Termite fungi, *Termitomyces spp*, Nhedzi (S), Makhowa (N)

Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of fungi which are not actually plants. They feed off dead and decaying organic matter. There are several thousand species of fungi but only about a third of these produce edible mushrooms.

Fresh wild mushrooms can often be bought from roadside sellers and sometimes in markets although dried mushrooms are more commonly sold there. The mushrooms are dried after being cleaned and then boiled in salted water. Mushrooms are a good source of B Vitamins, Vitamin D, and selenium.

Many fungi can only live in association with certain plants. For example, cep is only found in pine forests in the Eastern Highlands and was probably introduced to the country when pine trees were introduced. These mushrooms have a large cap and stout stem and are highly priced for their flavour and versatility. Currently in Zimbabwe it is hard to find these mushrooms as they are usually harvested as soon as they appear after the first rains and exported to Europe.

Chanterelles are more widespread in Zimbabwe but are still often associated with specific tree species. There are creamy brown and scarlet varieties, both of which faintly taste of apricots. They need to be carefully cleaned and soaked before cooking as they often contain grit from the sandy soils in which they prefer to grow.

As their name suggests, termite mushrooms grow on termite mounds and are farmed by the termites in underground gardens in the termite nests. There are several termite mushroom species but not all are edible. Some produce very large caps over 20cm in diameter. The flesh has a strong meaty texture and a pleasant flavour.

**WARNING**

Fatalities occur every year in Zimbabwe from people consuming poisonous mushrooms. For this reason, it is extremely important to only eat mushrooms that you are sure are edible. Always gather mushrooms with a mushroom expert and only buy wild mushrooms from well-known, reputable sources.
Several members of the gourd (Cucurbitaceae) family including pumpkins, gourds, melons, and cucumbers are cultivated in Zimbabwe, grow spontaneously in fields and gardens or are harvested from the wild. All these plants are quite drought-resistant although they will flourish if given extra water and fertile soil.

The wild melon is the ancestor of the watermelon. The fruit of the wild melon is savoury, not sweet, and produces flesh of a variety of colours ranging from pale yellow to bright orange. Bottle gourds or calabash squashes are thought to be one of the most ancient crop plants. There are many different varieties, varying in size and shape.

Prickly cucumbers are usually collected fresh and eaten raw as a refreshing snack. Pumpkins, wild melons and gourds (picked green) can be boiled or roasted and are usually eaten on their own with tea rather than as an ingredient or accompaniment. Pumpkin or wild melon fruit also form the foundation of the popular dish, nhopi – a mash of boiled pumpkin/ melon flesh, thickened with a little maize flour and mixed with peanut butter.

One major advantage of pumpkins and melons is that, due to their hard shell, they can be stored for many months after harvest and thus eaten throughout the year. Pumpkin flesh can also be dried and reconstituted later for cooking or ground into powder and added to relish and stews. Some people allow the gourds to mature. The flesh is then removed from the hard outer skin to make a cup, ladle or food or drink container, depending on the shape of the gourd.
The seeds of pumpkins and wild melons are eaten roasted as a snack or used for oil extraction. Roasted pumpkin seeds can also be used to make *mabumbe*—pounded, cooked with maize or millet flour, and rolled into small balls. The leaves of pumpkins are most Zimbabweans' favourite leaf vegetable. Gourd leaves are also edible.

Pumpkins, cucumbers, melons, and gourds are an excellent source of dietary fibre. Pumpkins contain high levels of Vitamin A while cucumbers are a good source of vitamin C. Gourds are good sources of potassium, magnesium, and phosphorus. The seeds of pumpkins and melons are a good source of phosphorus, magnesium, iron, potassium, and zinc.
Elegant young city dweller Marvellous Maninji grew up with her grandma in a village in Buhera. It is there that she was introduced to indigenous mushrooms. “With my Granny, we used to gather mushrooms from mountains or beneath msasa trees. Others we got on anthills. I loved the huve and the red chanterelles (tsvuke or firi firi). We would dry them and then cook them with peanut butter or tomatoes and onions,” Marvellous explained at her stall at Maasdorp Market. Taking this traditional knowledge, Marvellous has developed a lucrative business, Earth-Best Enterprises, supplying shops and restaurants in Harare with a delicious range of wild mushrooms.

“We decided to do indigenous mushrooms because they’ve got more flavour and are one hundred percent organic,” says Marvellous. “We source from intact natural areas.” The people Marvellous contracts to pick mushrooms are elderly community members. “I prefer to work with older people because they are the real experts on what can be eaten and what can’t.” Marvellous pays them a minimum of 50USD per day during the mushroom season. “They really appreciate the income; it helps them with school fees for the children they support”. Valuing the income also encourages sustainable harvesting. “They always leave enough mushrooms to reproduce because they want them to grow back next year. They’re very careful to do that.”

Unfortunately, wild mushrooms are very dependent on the weather as they need plenty of rain to stimulate fruiting. This year (2021–’22) there wasn’t much rain, so yields were low. To ensure income year-round, the team also grow oyster and button mushrooms. “My uncle taught me how to grow mushrooms and we train other people how to do it.”

Marvellous’ story illustrates the importance of older people passing on vital knowledge to the younger generations who use their creativity and marketing skills to put indigenous products on shelves and plates.
When it comes to traditional foods, Utsanzi is a household name, with an increasing range of products on supermarket shelves, and an exclusive, upmarket shop. Utsanzi promotes good nutrition, good health and traditional culture to consumers who seek high-quality products. In doing so the company benefits producers, processors, and consumers.

CEO Austin Munyavhi started his company 20 years ago. But it wasn’t until Austin started having health problems that he became really excited about traditional plants. After failing to find relief from conventional treatments, he visited a traditional medical practitioner and was prescribed a herbal medicine. After the first dose he felt a significant difference. Austin ended up joining the Zimbabwe Association of Traditional Medical Practitioners, eventually heading the school of Herbal Medicine.

He began stocking herbal preparations, to be consumed mixed with finger millet. To improve quality, Austin began buying grain directly from farmers. “We have farmers in many parts of the country, but mostly in Masvingo because there people still have a strong tradition of growing and eating traditional foods.” This was a turning point for the company. “Small grains’ sales were skyrocketing! We realised we needed to expand the product range.”

Marketing indigenous vegetables has been tricky. Getting fresh vegetables on supermarket shelves is very challenging. The problem is the shelf-life is very short. For now, Utsanzi is focussing on dried vegetables which are processed at their plant in Chitungwiza. Apart from the usual ones such as nyevhe, tsine and nyemba, they also sell mubvunzandadya (Chenopodium album) which is similar in texture to pumpkin leaves and comes from farmers in Buhera.

The next step will be the development of an online catalogue which will have at least 500 different products including cereals, dried herbs, oils, dried fruit, and vegetables.
SAVING SEEDS AND SPECIES

The Zimbabwean diet has become very monotonous, as people have turned their back on traditional foods. This has had a very negative impact, especially on women and young children, many of whom are just not eating the full range of foods necessary for good health. But Thamsanqa Khanye, a nutritionist at Community Technology Development Organisation (CTDO), is on a crusade to change that, by practising what she preaches. “When it comes to food, I sample almost everything. If someone says it is edible, I go and try it!,” she laughs.

CTDO has been promoting wild harvesting, cultivation, processing, and consumption of indigenous vegetables since its establishment in the early 1990s. Indigenous vegetables are nutrient-dense and drought tolerant. “These vegetables are part of our identity so they must be preserved and promoted,” Thamie notes. “Many people feel they are not appetising. This often relates to the ways they are processed. If they are left to dry exposed to sun and wind, they end up losing their colour and may contain grit. Also, when cooking, people just boil vegetables for a very long time without adding anything to flavour them. There are better ways of doing things,” says Thamie. A big part of her job is demonstrating these better ways through recipe sharing, cooking competitions and food and seed fairs. CTDO also teaches farmers how to make solar driers which greatly improves preservation.

Recently CTDO have begun promoting domestication of wild vegetables by teaching farmers how to identify healthy, productive plants and collect the seeds from them. CTDO are encouraging cultivation of spider plant, blackjack and amaranth, and different types of wild leaf okra such as nyamatepe and nyenje. “Farmers are encouraged to exchange seed, carry out germination experiments, and record what works,” Thamie explains.

CTDO also try to link farmers to commercial buyers. “In terms of marketing, we can do more. We need to penetrate the formal markets. Farmers need decent prices so that can sell their surplus.”
Green and leafy generates money

Matabeleland South province is a part of Zimbabwe where it is hard to grow crops due to very high temperatures, lack of irrigation water and plant pest and disease attacks. However, the province shares borders with South Africa and Botswana, giving it a potential market advantage for agricultural products. Through the FAO and UNICEF funded Enhanced Resilience for Vulnerable Households in Zimbabwe project, Sustainable Agriculture Technology (SAT) is working with farmers in several districts in Matabeleland South. One of the aims of the project is to encourage the practice of agroecology, and promote diversification of crops, particularly indigenous varieties, for improved nutrition.

Vinathi Nkomo of Siyephi village in Bulilima district is one of the farmers who has started commercialising production of indigenous vegetables using these sustainable cultivation methods. Mrs Nkomo collects cowpea and spider plant leaves from her fields during the rainy season. She cleans the leaves to remove soil particles, boils them with a little salt and leaves them to dry. Once dry, she sells the leaves to traders who come from Bulawayo and South Africa where the demand for traditional vegetables is high due to their flavour. In a good season, Mrs Nkomo can produce 200kg of dried spider plant leaves for sale. The best time for sales is in August and September when those who didn’t preserve their own vegetables have run out.

In Insiza, Mrs Ngonidzashe Moyo of Sizalobuhle village also collects a range of traditional vegetables including spider plant, wild okra, pumpkin and cowpea leaves. She finds cowpeas to be a particularly useful crop because they are drought-resistant and tolerate sandy soils, low in organic matter. They not only produce nutritious pulses, but the leaves are also delicious and taste even better when they are dried. Mrs Moyo saves a bucket of each type of vegetable for household consumption and alternates between cooking them with cooking oil, cream, or peanut butter.
Indigenous is precious

Mudzi district lies in a hot, dry part of northern Zimbabwe, which experiences increasingly frequent droughts. Many crops struggle to survive in these harsh conditions and communities have begun growing drought-tolerant local varieties and harvesting wild plants for sustenance. In Mafuta village, members of Kurarama Farmer Field School (supported by CTDO) started to intensify growing, processing, preparation, and utilisation of indigenous plants in 2019.

Gorgina Kwerengwe (51) is particularly enthusiastic about a plant known locally as muevelina. Muevelina, guar or cluster bean (*Cyamopsis tetragonolaba*), is assumed to have developed from the African, wild, species *Cyamopsis senegalensis* and has been widely cultivated for centuries. After learning how nutritious this plant is, locals started to produce and consume it. The plant is fiercely protected by the community, with members avoiding overharvesting while collecting germplasm to preserve it. Measures to protect all natural resources in Mafuta village have been put in place with enforcement from local leaders, to ensure conservation of the precious local food plant.

Gorgina and fellow farmers get significant yields even during the dry season. They use solar drying to hygienically preserve the leaves, minimise nutrient loss and ensure year-round access to this delicious relish, while selling surplus for income. “As a group, we tried different recipes and cooking methods and I can testify that muevelina is one of the most delicious plants. And the thought of generating income from an indigenous plant that many consider to be useless brings much joy in my heart,” smiles Gorgina. She sells the dried vegetable to local communities and uses the earning to feed her family and for general upkeep.

Another passionate indigenous vegetable promoter from Kurarama is Betty Nyakare, who collects and grows a wide range of indigenous vegetables including blackjack, amaranth, muevelina, cowpea and
muferere [melon] leaves. Since childhood Betty has been collecting and sun-drying traditional vegetables but after receiving seed from CTDO, she began scaling up production. Betty has been helping her neighbours to get into the indigenous vegetable business and this has made her very popular in her community. She also sells dried vegetables at Mbare market in Harare. Betty says, “Now there is harmony in my household as a result of an end to our monotonous diet and increased income.”

In Murehwa also, farmers produce traditional vegetable seed. Mrs Jeke of Chadenga village is an energetic grandmother who is regularly visited by her children and grandchildren, thanks to the delicious food that she dishes up. “My traditional mouth-watering cuisine keeps my family returning home,” she smiles. But she admits that when she was younger, she thought traditional food was inferior. Thanks to the training and support from CTDO she found out that traditional vegetables are extremely nutritious and an excellent income-earner. In the past, she used to weed out those that grew in her fields. But now she selects the best plants between January and April and harvests and multiplies the seed. “Traditional vegetable seed is easy to produce as it is not labour intensive, and no fertiliser is needed.” She has become a celebrated local vegetable seed producer giving seed to her neighbours as well as supplying NGOs and university students conducting research. Mrs Jeke plans to expand her seed production business and diversify into selling dried, packaged vegetables.
**Recipes**

**Home-made usavi powder mix**

Instead of buying gravy mixes, soup powders or stock cubes, which probably contain all kinds of unhealthy additives, you can easily make your own.

Most vegetables (including okra, pumpkin, gourds and melons) can be dried by cutting them into small, thin pieces and placing them in a shady, well-ventilated place (such as raised up on a frame, on a piece of shade cloth covered by a net). It is important to make the cut pieces the same size and thickness. The pieces should be turned frequently to expose all sides to the air. Any pieces that seem to have gone mouldy should be discarded.

Once they have been dried, the vegetables can be ground into powder and mixed, with salt and pepper, herbs and spices, to make your own gravy or soup mix. To make these powders even more flavourful and nutritious you can add beans (cooked, pounded and dried, and lightly roasted), powdered dried mushrooms, dried fish, dried insects (such as madora/amaximbi) or dried meat. Store the usavi powder in a clean, dry jar until you need to use it.

To use the usavi (soup) powder, add one heaped Tbsp of the powder to half a cup of cold water and mix well. Add to relish or stews and simmer for 5 min.
Amaranth Leaves & Biltong with Peanut Butter

INGREDIENTS:

For the meat:
- 500g dried meat
- 1 big tomato, grated
- A clove of garlic, cut into tiny pieces
- 1 small onion, grated
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 100g peanut butter

For the vegetable:
- 500g fresh/dried amaranth leaves
- 1 big ripe tomato, grated
- 1 small onion, chopped finely
- Pinch of salt
- 100g peanut butter

DIRECTIONS:

1. Boil the dried meat and tomato until the meat is tender.
2. Add garlic, onion, salt, and pepper.
3. Then add the peanut butter.
4. Simmer for a few min.
5. For the amaranth leaves, bring 2 cups of water to the boil, add a pinch of salt.
6. Add amaranth leaves, grated tomato and chopped onions. Boil until tender.
7. Add the peanut butter.
8. Simmer for a few min.

Serve with sadza.
BLACKJACK LEAF PATTIES

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup of leafy greens, chopped, boiled and drained (amaranth, spider leaf, blackjack)
- ½ cup wholemeal flour
- ½ cup oats
- ½ cup water
- 2 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ginger, grated
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped

DIRECTIONS:

1. Wash and boil your chosen leaves until cooked and squeeze off all the excess water then chop up.
3. Stir in flour and oats.
4. Spoon into hot oil and fry until golden.

Recipe from Marjorie Wallace
Spiced okra matchstick fries

INGREDIENTS:
• ¼ cup chutney
• ¼ cup sour cream
• 500g fresh okra pods, trimmed
• 4 cups canola oil
• ½ cup cornflour
• 2 tsp curry powder
• 1 ½ tsp salt

DIRECTIONS:
1. Stir together chutney and sour cream in a small bowl; set aside.
2. Cut each okra pod in half lengthwise. Place halves, cut side down, on cutting board and cut each half lengthwise into 3 or 4 thin strips.
3. Heat oil in a large pot over high heat. Combine cornflour, curry powder and salt in a large plastic bag. Add okra strips, close and shake well to coat. Remove okra from bag, shaking off as much excess cornflour as possible. Fry okra in 4 batches in hot oil until browned and crisp, about 4 min per batch. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with additional salt, if desired. Serve with sauce.
Okra with tomato, garlic and lemon

INGREDIENTS:
• 300g baby or very small okra
• 2Tbsp olive oil, more if needed
• 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
• 20g preserved lemon peel, cut into 1cm wedges
• 3 small tomatoes (200g total), cut into 8 wedges each, or halved cherry tomatoes
• 1 ½ tsp chopped flatleaf parsley
• 1 ½ tsp chopped coriander
• 1 Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
• Salt and freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS:
1. Using a small, sharp knife, trim the okra pods, removing the stem just above the pod so as not to expose the seeds.
2. Place a large, heavy-bottomed frying pan over high heat and leave for a few min. When almost red hot, throw in the okra in 2 batches and dry-cook, shaking the pan occasionally, for 4 min per batch. The okra pods should have the occasional dark blister.
3. Return all the charred okra to the pan and add the olive oil, garlic and preserved lemon. Stir-fry for 2 min, shaking the pan.
4. Reduce the heat to medium and add the tomatoes, 2 Tbsp water, the chopped herbs, lemon juice and ½ tsp salt and some black pepper. Stir everything together gently, so that the tomatoes do not break up, and continue to cook for 2-3 min, until the tomatoes are warmed through.
5. Transfer to a serving dish, drizzle with more olive oil, add a sprinkle of salt, and serve.

Adapted from Yotam Ottolenghi, Jerusalem: A Cookbook
**Pumpkin and Mapudzi Curry** Serves 4

**Ingredients:**
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 large onions, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp cumin
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- 1 kg pumpkin and/or mapudzi, before trimming and peeling, cut into 2cm chunks
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 red chillies, finely chopped
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- 3cm piece of ginger, grated and squeezed, and the resulting liquid reserved
- 1 Tbsp soft brown sugar
- 90g creamed coconut
- 3-4 tomatoes, quartered
- 3 Tbsp finely chopped fresh coriander
- 1 Tbsp sesame or olive oil
- 3 Tbsp desiccated coconut

**Directions:**

1. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan. Add the onions and garlic and fry until translucent.
2. Add the ground coriander, cumin and turmeric and cook, adding a couple of Tbsp of water to loosen. Then add the pumpkin and *mapudzi*, a little salt and pepper and sauté for about 10 min, until the cubes start to brown slightly and soften.
3. Add the red and green chillies, reserving a little for garnish. Then add the ginger juice, the sugar and the creamed coconut and stir constantly over a medium heat until the coconut is completely melted.
4. When the pumpkin and *mapudzi* are tender but still holding their shape, add the quartered tomatoes and the coriander, stirring gently until the tomatoes are no longer raw.
5. Finally, stir in the sesame or olive oil and 1 Tbsp of the desiccated coconut. Transfer to a warmed serving dish and garnish with the remaining coconut and chilli. Serve with rice or naan bread.
Wild mushrooms on toast

INGREDIENTS:
- Chanterelles
- Garlic
- Thyme
- Olive oil
- Butter

DIRECTIONS:
1. Soak mushrooms in cold water for 30 min to dislodge any dirt. Then boil them for 30 min. Drain and dry on kitchen towel.
2. Put a drizzle of olive oil in a hot pan. Add the mushrooms, salt and pepper, and fry for about 10 min. Then add a dollop of butter, the chopped garlic and fresh thyme. Cook until garlic is golden.
PUMPKIN AND HONEY MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ cups pumpkin, chopped into cubes
- Olive oil for roasting
- 1 ½ cups cake flour
- ½ cup nuts (marula, hacha and/or mongongo), chopped
- ½ cup oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup honey
- 1/3 cup coconut oil
- 1/3 cup amasi (or buttermilk, cottage cheese or plain yoghurt)
- 1 tsp vanilla essence

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 170°C.
2. Roast pumpkin with a little olive oil, salt and a pinch of cinnamon for around 40 min until crispy on outside and soft in middle.
3. When cooled, toss into a blender, pulse until smooth and set aside.
4. Mix together flour, nuts, oats, baking powder, salt and spices.
5. In a separate bowl, combine blended pumpkin, egg, honey, coconut oil, amasi and vanilla.
6. Add dry ingredients to wet and stir, but be sure not to over mix.
7. Pour mixture into muffin tins and bake for 20-25 min.
8. Cool and serve with extra honey.

Adapted from Sarah Lilford,
Dusty Road Township Tastes
Prickly cucumber infused water

Infusing water with fruits and herbs is a delicious way to make sure we drink plenty of water.

INGREDIENTS:
- 2 limes, thinly sliced
- 10 mint leaves
- 2 prickly cucumbers
- 2 cups of ice
- Water

DIRECTIONS:
1. Take one cucumber, cut in half, and squeeze the pulp into a large jug. Take the second cucumber, cut into slices and add to the jug with the thinly sliced limes. Over the jug squeeze and slightly twist the mint (do not tear apart, you only want to gently release the oils). Drop the mint leaves into the pitcher. Top with ice and water.
2. Let the jug sit in the fridge for 1 hour before serving.
3. When the water is down to 1/4 full, refill and place back in the fridge. You can do this several times. Store this in the fridge for up to 24 hours.
Prickly cucumber and vanilla ice cream

This very simple dessert promises to impress your guests.

**INGREDIENTS:**
- Ripe prickly cucumber
- Vanilla ice cream

**DIRECTIONS:**
Put a few scoops of vanilla ice cream in a bowl or margarita glass and then scoop a few spoons of ripe prickly cucumber pulp over the ice cream and serve.