

FOOD

KITCHEN CURIOUS

Get cooking with ancient African supergrain fonio

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“Today, our global diet consists largely of four crops: corn, wheat, soy and rice. Meanwhile, thousands of nutritious, resilient, planet-saving foods are simply being ignored,” writes Senegalese chef Pierre Thiam in his newest book, “The Fonio Cookbook: An Ancient Grain Rediscovered” (Lake Isle Press, \$24.95).

Fonio is a tiny grain about the size of quinoa with a nutty, earthy flavor. Although cultivated in Africa for more than 5,000 years, this drought-resistant cereal is now grown almost exclusively by small-holder farmers in West Africa and is relatively unknown

outside their communities, Thiam explains. (Fonio was unknown to me, but I managed to find these tan-colored grains in aisle 6 of the Buford Highway Farmers Market.)

In this 176-page, single-subject cookbook, Thiam not only makes the case for nutrient-rich fonio’s potential to help feed a rapidly growing world population, but also the culinary versatility of this easily digestible, gluten-free, low-glycemic grain.

Beyond traditional West African dishes, Thiam proposes fast-cooking fonio as a substitute for rice in dishes like Seafood & Okra Stew, as the grain that gifts heft to a pilaf bright with spring vegetables, as a filler in a frittata

and the star or supporting element in many other recipes that bring this ancient grain into the modern home kitchen.

Fonio is traditionally steamed, but it can be prepared easily and quickly on the stovetop. Once you’ve cooked the fonio, use it in place of rice to make jollof, a West African dish that combines the grains with tomato sauce.

If you want more of a flavor boost in your jollof fonio, add garlic and hot peppers when frying the onions, prior to adding the tomato paste.

Raw fonio can be stored for up to 2 years in a sealed container or resealable plastic bag at room temperature or in the refrigerator.

STOCK UP | COMPILED BY C. W. CAMERON

Enjoy 3 Southern sweets

Time to indulge your inner child with sweet treats from Southern bakeries.



Pecan shortbread from Lucille's Confections.
CONTRIBUTED BY RHONDA HUNT

Pecan shortbread from Lucille's Confections

Rhonda Hunt is an east Cobb technology professional with a passion for baking. Every Saturday morning, you can find her at Marietta Square Farmers Market, selling her handmade shortbread and chocolate chip toffee pecan bark. Hunt named her business Lucille's Confections, after

her maternal grandmother, Ruby Lucille Mitchell, whom she describes as a “phenomenal” cook. Hunt began by offering her original pecan shortbread, then branched out with pecan shortbread cookies with bits of toffee, lemon shortbread and chocolate chip toffee pecan bark. Now, there are vegan versions of her pecan and lemon shortbread available. She bills her cookies as “insanely

good,” and they are pretty addictive. They’re perfectly crisp, studded with lots of nuts, and have just a bit of salt to complement the sweetness. It’s hard to eat just one.

\$7.99 per 4-ounce bag for the cookies, \$6 per 4-ounce bag for the toffee bark. Available at Marietta Square Farmers Market, Lucy's Market and etsy.com/shop/lucillesconfections.

S'mores crispycake from the Crispery

The Crispery of Portsmouth, Virginia, sells handmade marshmallow rice treats they call “crispycakes” and ships these nostalgic treats to customers across the country. Would you believe they’ve created more than 50 flavors? Whatever your sweet indulgence, they’ve got a crispycake for you: pretzel surprise, rainbow sprinkles, cookies and cream, chocolate toffee crunch, red hots! We



S'mores crispycake from the Crispery. CONTRIBUTED BY THE CRISPERY

ran into the s'mores flavor during a recent shopping trip and couldn't resist

the 3½-inch square slice (2 inches deep!). Densely packed crispy rice and graham crackers were held together with marshmallow, then layered with dark chocolate, and the top was brûléed. We fell in love. One square definitely was enough for four to share.

\$6 per 6-ounce square. Available at Macy's; Lolli and Pops at Perimeter and Northlake malls; Target cafes; Scoops Ice Cream in Forsyth, McDonough and Monroe; and thecrispery.com.

Key lime cookies from Olde Colony Bakery

Olde Colony Bakery of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, has been offering handmade Southern cookie favorites since the 1940s. Their most famous cookie probably is the benne wafer, and, while we are fans of that flavor, we recently have been enjoying their Carolina key lime cookies. These bite-size cookies, dusted with powdered sugar, have just enough lime flavor to tantalize. We love their tiny size, and that we can see bits of lime zest in every cookie. There are plenty of other flavors to choose from: ginger, lemon, pecan, pecan and peach, raspberry and cocoa, along with a cheese version of their benne wafers. These are among the reasons the bakery's been pleasing customers for more than 70 years.

\$4.25 per 5-ounce bag, \$11.25 per 1-pound bag. Available at Everyday Market, the General Store at Serenbe, the Local Exchange and oldecolonybakery.com.



Key lime cookies from Olde Colony Bakery. CONTRIBUTED BY JONATHAN BONCEK

» Quick fish chowder recipe from F1

QUICK FISH CHOWDER

Quick Fish Chowder. CONTRIBUTED BY HENRI HOLLIS

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 small onion, chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
4 cups half-and-half
1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
1 pound cod or other firm white fish, pin bones removed
On the side: Oyster crackers
Optional: Fresh parsley, for serving

Melt the butter in a large pot over medium-high heat. When the butter is foamy, add the onion and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion begins to soften, about 3 minutes. Add the potatoes, and give them a stir,

then add the half-and-half, clam juice, and a generous pinch of both salt and pepper. Increase the heat to high and bring to a simmer.

Reduce the heat to medium to maintain a quick simmer and cook until the potatoes are tender, 8 to 10 minutes.

While the potatoes are simmering, cut the fish into bite-sized pieces. When the potatoes are tender, add the fish. Continue to simmer until the fish is just cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with the oyster crackers and parsley, if desired. Serves 4.

Per serving: 630 calories (percent of calories from fat, 49), 32 grams protein, 50 grams carbohydrates, 3 grams fiber, 35 grams fat (21 grams saturated), 154 milligrams cholesterol, 868 milligrams sodium.

BASIC FONIO — STOVETOP METHOD

Adding oil is optional but if you do, the grains will have a richer, fluffier texture and will keep separated. Cooked fonio can be kept refrigerated in a covered plastic or glass container for 2 or 3 days.

2 cups water**1 teaspoon salt**

1 cup raw fonio (available at the Buford Highway Farmers Market), rinsed and drained well

1 tablespoon peanut, vegetable or olive oil (optional)

Combine the water and salt in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the fonio and stir once. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cover tightly. Cook for about 5 minutes, until the water is absorbed.

Turn off the heat and keep the pot covered for another 2 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Mix in the oil (if using), and serve. Makes 3–4 cups.

Per cup, without oil, based on 4 cups total: 223 calories (percent of calories from fat, 2), 5 grams protein, 53 grams carbohydrates, 1 gram fiber, 1 gram fat (no saturated fat), no cholesterol, 536 milligrams sodium.

JOLLOF FONIO

Many West African nations, particularly Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal, have an ongoing fight over who makes the best jollof rice. If you make jollof with fonio instead, it is just as flavorful and even more nutritious.

2 tablespoons vegetable oil**2 tablespoons finely chopped onion****2 tablespoons tomato paste****1 cup vegetable broth****1 teaspoon salt, plus more if needed****½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

Jollof Fonio from “The Fonio Cookbook: An Ancient Grain Rediscovered” by Pierre Thiam. LIGAYA FIGUERAS / LFIGUERAS@AJC.COM

4 cups cooked fonio

Heat the oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and tomato paste and reduce the heat to low. Stir gently with a wooden spoon for about 5 minutes, until the paste is dark red but not burnt. If necessary, add a little water or some of the vegetable broth to avoid scorching.

Stir in the vegetable broth and season with the salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the oil rises to the surface, another 15 to 20 minutes.

Fold in the cooked fonio until well combined. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper and serve hot. Serves 4.

Per serving: 298 calories (percent of calories from fat, 22), 6 grams protein, 56 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams fiber, 8 grams fat (1 gram saturated), no cholesterol, 639 milligrams sodium.

— Recipes reprinted with permission from “The Fonio Cookbook” by Pierre Thiam, Lake Isle Press Inc.

Fire Maker opens in burgeoning brewery district



Bob Townsend
Beer Town

IF YOU GO**Fire Maker**

975 Chattahoochee Ave.
NW, Atlanta. 678-705-8777, firemakerbeer.com.

made for distribution.

“Our pilot system is how we’re going to fill those 30-plus tap handles,” he said. “Coming from the distribution side, I was with United when a lot of the Atlanta breweries were launched. And I really want to make what people really want to drink in the mass production market. I love a wide range of beers. But in production, we really want to brew what the market wants, and what the distributors want to sell.

“In-house in the taproom, we are going to do a lot of different things, from traditional styles to experimental beers, and, of course, we will have seltzers. I’m also getting our spirits license, and I hope we’ll have some spirits here towards the end of the year. And then ciders, as well. But we’re going to be pretty strict about what goes out the door. If something is not the quality we want, it’s not going out.”

Asked how Fire Maker intends to make its mark in Atlanta at a time when so many new breweries are opening, Hall took a minute to think about his answer.

“I think you need a good product, and good customer service,” he said. “You need good branding. You need good management. You need people who specifically know the industry they’re in. I’m very fortunate that the people I brought on so far are experienced in exactly what they do. And there’s enthusiasm, too. You’ve got to be out there pushing your product, and showing people that you live and breathe this.”

Atlanta’s Fire Maker Brewing has been operating in soft opening mode since March 6.

Located in a freestanding building on Chattahoochee Avenue, in what’s being called the “West-side Atlanta Brewery District,” the 9,000-square-foot space houses a 20-barrel Deutsche brewhouse, plus a 2.5-barrel pilot system, with a total production capacity of 3,500 barrels a year, and room for expansion.

The taproom features 34 tap handles behind the bar, with 10-15 beers currently on draft, including four core brands: Perfect Match IPA; Way Down Yonder Helles; Hazed and Blazed New England IPA; and Space Dragon Double IPA.

All four of those beers are currently in distribution with draft accounts, and the brewery’s Wild Goose canning line is slated to be up and running, with packaged products available in the market in May or June. The long-range plan is to offer many more beer styles, plus seltzers, ciders and eventually spirits. The Fire Maker team is helmed by owner and Georgia beer business veteran Elliott Hall, with a team that includes head brewer Tyler Cox, marketing manager Rachel Bramer and taproom manager Tracy Bardugon.

Recently, I caught up with Hall at Fire Maker, where he took me on a tour through the brewery, which features a covered patio and “beer walk,” private event areas, and a large mural by artist Jordan Atkinson with a version of the company’s dragon logo.

“I wanted the bar right up front-and-center, where it’s the first thing you see when you walk into our brewery,” Hall said. “Right out of college, I got a job with United Distributors, and I’ve been in the industry ever since, until last year when we started to build the brewery. My family is in construction, and we’re all sort of carpenters, so we did most of the work ourselves.

“The fire in Fire Maker is whatever somebody’s passion is. It’s that thing you can’t help but do. And if you’re pursuing it, you’re a Fire Maker, too. Now I’m fortunate to do what I love every day. With Fire Maker, the dragon just kept coming up. Throughout history and mythology, dragons have meant fortune and luck, but also dread and chaos. It’s a reminder that you can either embrace life or you can hide from it.”

Talking about production, Hall said there will always be a mix of small-batch taproom-only releases and core beers