

Heirloom

Ethiopian



Recipes with love from

The Robot Book Club

Heirloom Ethiopian

*Authentic Ethiopian Home Cooking and Time-Honored
Recipes*

The Robot Book Club

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Published by The Robot Book Club

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Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Ethiopian Home Cooking.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

Prologue

There's a particular aroma to Ethiopian home cooking, a deep, layered symphony of spices and slow-cooked onions that speaks of patience, ritual, and generations. It's the scent of a grandmother's kitchen, an insistent whisper across continents and decades. But for many Ethiopian-Americans, raised with the memory of those flavors yet caught between the relentless demands of a modern schedule and the fierce yearning for authentic tastes, that whisper often feels distant, its complex execution daunting. How do you honor centuries of tradition when Tuesday night calls for something *now*?

This book isn't a pristine, museum-piece rendering of tradition, nor is it some watered-down approximation. It's a love letter to adaptation, a practical guide for those who demand the true, uncompromising taste of home without sacrificing their weeknights to hours of arduous prep. It's about smart translation, respecting the culinary architecture by taking those time-honored grandmotherly secrets and making them work with a food processor, an Instant Pot, and ingredients readily found at your local specialty market. No apologies. Just good, honest food.

Here, the laborious foundational *Kulet* and aromatic *Niter Kibbeh* become weekend batch-prep triumphs, transforming dishes that once took half a day into 30-minute weeknight realities. We embrace the ancient wisdom of *Ye'Tsom* fasting traditions, finding quick, plant-

based meals that are both inherently authentic and perfectly aligned with modern healthy eating. And we don't shy away from the beautiful, blended reality of the diaspora kitchen: where a savvy sourdough hack might replace a multi-day *injera* fermentation, or where the fiery embrace of *Doro Wat* shares a celebratory Thanksgiving table with macaroni and cheese, because that's just how it's done.

This isn't about culinary purism. It's about connection. It's about the robust, unforgettable flavors that tie us to our past, allowing them to thrive—vibrant and uncompromising—in our present. These are the recipes that actually get cooked, shared, and savored by families navigating two worlds. It's about keeping that vital, delicious link alive, ensuring the next generation knows exactly what "home" tastes like. Turn the page. The aroma of a shared heritage awaits.



The Grandmother's Fridge: Batch-Cooked Foundations

*The weekend prep secrets to cooking complex, authentic Ethiopian stews on
a modern weeknight schedule.*

The truth about the complex, soul-stirring stews the matriarchs conjured on a Tuesday night is that they had a system. To cook like them in the modern American world—between the commute, the grind, and the sheer chaos of the week—requires a tactical retreat to

Sunday afternoon. The deep, unapologetic punch of an everyday Ethiopian dinner doesn't come from a magic trick. It comes from the fridge.

Here is where the real work lives: a stockpile of spiced, clarified niter kibbeh and thick, slow-cooked mother sauces blitzed down to their glorious, concentrated essence in a standard food processor. Put in the time on the weekend, and eat like royalty the rest of the week. These are the foundations. Build them well.





Misir Wot (Spicy Red Lentil Stew)

mee-seer wot

THE WESTERNIZED VERSION OF MISIR WOT IS A WATERY LIE, cooked fast and seasoned like an afterthought. The real taste of an Ethiopian grandmother's kitchen comes down to two unglamorous secrets: the patience to dry-sweat a mountain of onions into a dark, caramelized paste, and the discipline to save the sweetest aromatic spices for the very end. By making this thick, fiery kulet base on a Sunday, you honor the slow tradition of the homeland while outsmarting your Wednesday night schedule.

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp	whole black peppercorns	1/2 cup	berbere spice blend
1 tsp	cumin seeds	3 tbsp	fresh garlic <i>minced into a paste</i>
1/2 tsp	whole cloves	2 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>finely grated</i>
1 small	cinnamon stick <i>crushed</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
10 small	green cardamom pods <i>seeds removed and reserved, husks discarded</i>	1 cup	red split lentils <i>rinsed thoroughly until water runs completely clear</i>
1/2 tsp	fresh nutmeg <i>grated</i>	3 cup	hot water
4 large	red onions <i>pulsed in a food processor to a fine mince</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 cup	neutral vegetable oil	1 tbsp	niter kibbeh <i>optional</i>

PREPARATION

- **Build the mekelesha finishing spice.**

Toast the peppercorns, cumin, cloves, crushed cinnamon, and cardamom seeds in a dry skillet over medium-low heat until highly fragrant. Let them cool, grind to a fine powder, and stir in the grated nutmeg. Store in an airtight jar.

- **Dry-sweat the onions to break down their cellular structure.**

Place the minced red onions in a dry, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat. Stir constantly as they release their water, collapsing into a soft, brown paste over 20 to 30 minutes. Splash in a little water if they threaten to burn, but do not add oil yet.

- **Emulsify with fat and bloom the berbere.**

Pour the vegetable oil into the onion paste and fry for 5 to 10 minutes until caramelized. Stir in the garlic and ginger for 2 minutes, followed by the tomato paste and berbere. Fry this mixture for another 10 minutes, adding splashes of hot water so the spices don't scorch, until it forms a thick, dark mahogany base known as kulet. Let it cool and store in the fridge.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Wash the red lentils aggressively.

Place the lentils in a fine-mesh sieve and run them under cold water, agitating them with your hands until the water runs completely clear. This strips away surface starches so the stew doesn't turn into gummy glue.

2 Simmer the lentils with your prepared kulet.

In a saucepan, combine the washed lentils, 1 cup of your batch-cooked kulet, and 2 1/2 cups of the hot water. Bring to a gentle boil, then immediately drop the heat to low and partially cover.

3 Cook until the lentils melt into a thick, velvety porridge.

Simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally so the bottom doesn't catch. If the stew gets too thick before the lentils are perfectly tender, stir in the remaining half cup of hot water.

1

Kill the heat and add the grandmother's signature.

Once the lentils are tender, turn off the stove. Stir in the kosher salt, a half teaspoon of your homemade mekelesha blend, and the niter kibbeh if using. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes—the residual heat will wake up those volatile spice oils without boiling them away, locking in the true taste of home.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The necessity of the dry-sweat.**

Do not fry raw onions in oil. Oil coats the cell walls and stops them from breaking down, leaving you with crunchy onion bits in what should be a perfectly smooth, homogenous stew.

- **Sourcing real berbere.**

Don't bother with generic grocery store blends, which are mostly paprika and salt. Find a local East African grocer or a reputable online spice merchant to get the complex, fiery heat this dish requires.



Silken Chickpea Flour Puree

shi-ro wot

THE SMELL OF TOASTED CHICKPEAS, GARLIC, AND BLOOMING berbere bubbling on the stove means absolute comfort is exactly twenty minutes away. Shiro Wot is the ultimate Ethiopian weeknight savior, leaning entirely on a pre-spiced chickpea flour blend called Miten Shiro and the non-negotiable magic of the dry-pan onion sweat. Do not reach for the oil bottle first. Let the onions steam out their moisture in a dry pan to concentrate their savory depth, creating a thick, bubbling puree that demands to be scooped up with torn pieces of fresh injera.

INGREDIENTS

1 med	red onion <i>peeled and quartered</i>	1 tbsp	berbere spice blend
1 med	Roma tomato <i>quartered</i>	1/2 cup	Miten Shiro powder
4 large cloves	garlic <i>smashed</i>	2 1/2 cup	hot water
1 tsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and roughly chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1/3 cup	neutral oil or niter kibbeh	1/4 tsp	garlic powder
		1 small	jalapeño pepper <i>halved lengthwise and seeded</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Puree the aromatics to drastically cut down prep time.**

Pulse the red onion in a food processor until completely pureed and watery, then transfer to a small bowl. Rinse the bowl, add the tomato, garlic, and ginger, pulse until smooth, and set aside in a separate bowl.
- 2 Sweat the pureed onions in a completely dry pan.**

Place a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat with absolutely no oil. Pour the pureed onions directly into the dry pan and stir frequently for five to seven minutes until the water evaporates and the harsh slurry transforms into a dry, concentrated paste.
- 3 Introduce the fat and bloom the spices.**

Once the onions are dry and threatening to stick to the bottom, pour in the oil or kibbeh and fry for two minutes. Stir in the berbere spice and cook for sixty seconds, letting the hot fat wake up the aromatics and turn the oil a brilliant, deep red.

1 Build the foundational jam.

Pour in the pureed tomato, garlic, and ginger mixture. Cook for three to four minutes, stirring continuously, until the raw tomato smell burns off and the base darkens into a thick, savory paste.

2 Whisk in the chickpea flour and water.

Turn the heat down to low. Gradually rain the Miten Shiro powder into the pot with one hand while whisking vigorously with the other to prevent clumps from forming. Slowly pour in two cups of the hot water and the garlic powder, whisking continuously until the mixture is completely smooth.

3 Simmer to a bubbling, silken perfection.

Drop in the jalapeño halves, cover with a cracked lid, and simmer gently for fifteen to twenty minutes, stirring and scraping the bottom often so the flour doesn't burn. The stew is ready when the raw chickpea taste is gone, the texture resembles thick hummus, and little pools of red-tinted oil separate to the edges.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Sourcing the Shiro.**

Miten Shiro is a heavily spiced, pre-roasted chickpea flour blend that takes days to make traditionally. Buy a high-quality import at your local Ethiopian market or online to keep in the fridge as your ultimate weeknight secret weapon.

- **The dry-pan rule.**

American red onions hold significantly more water than Ethiopian varieties. Pureeing them and cooking them in a dry pan is mandatory to achieve the correct caramelization without boiling the onions in their own juices.



Qurs: The Slow Saturday Morning

Robust, savory Ethiopian breakfasts meant to be shared with the family on a lazy weekend morning.

Monday through Friday, breakfast is just a frantic pit stop. You grab a piece of toast, slam a coffee, and get to the grind. But Saturday morning is a reclamation of time. It's when the kitchen wakes up slowly, filling the house with the unmistakable scent of clarified butter, toasted spices, and the quiet rhythm of something older.

This isn't the kind of brunch that comes with bottomless mimosas. This is qurs—the robust, communal anchor of an Ethiopian weekend. Whether it's the volcanic warmth of spiced fava beans, a proper genfo with its golden well of niter kibbeh, or torn flatbread soaking up the defiant heat of berbere, these are the dishes that demand you sit down, share the plate, and remember exactly who you are.





Chechebsa (Spiced Torn Flatbread)

che-cheb-sa / kee-tah fir-fir

THE SECRET TO THE BEST CHECHEBSA ISN'T IN SOME HIGHLY engineered dough—it's in your hands. You must resist the sterile urge to use a knife. Tearing the warm, freshly cooked flatbread creates jagged, uneven edges that act like microscopic sponges, aggressively drinking up the melted, berbere-laced butter. This isn't just bread sitting in oil; it's a unified, melt-in-your-mouth morning ritual. It is the undisputed heavyweight champion of the slow weekend breakfast, bridging the gap between Addis Ababa and suburban America without dropping a single ounce of its soul.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/4 cup	unbleached all-purpose flour	4 tbsp	niter kibbeh
1/2 tsp	fine sea salt	2 tbsp	berbere spice blend
1 cup	warm water	1/2 cup	plain whole-milk yogurt
1 tbsp	neutral oil	2 tbsp	honey

PREPARATION

- **Shortcut the Niter Kibbeh if you must.**

If you don't have a batch of authentic homemade niter kibbeh sitting around, melt 4 tablespoons of high-quality store-bought ghee with a pinch of garlic powder, ground ginger, and a dash of turmeric for a highly functional weeknight approximation.

INSTRUCTIONS

1

- **Whisk the batter and let it hydrate.**

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, salt, and warm water until you hit the consistency of a slightly thick pancake batter, adding another tablespoon of water if it seems too thick. Let it rest for 10 minutes so the flour fully hydrates.

2

- **Cook the flatbread until leopard-spotted.**

Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat and wipe the surface evenly with the neutral oil. Pour the batter into the center, swirl it outward into a thin circle with the back of a ladle, and cook undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes until the top dries and the bottom develops golden-brown spots. Flip and cook for 2 more minutes, then remove to a cutting board.

1 Tear the bread by hand.

Let the flatbread cool just enough so you don't burn your fingers. Working quickly, use your hands to tear the bread into jagged, bite-sized, one-inch pieces.

2 Bloom the berbere in the butter.

Wipe your skillet clean and lower the heat to medium-low. Add the niter kibbeh, wait for it to melt and gently bubble, then stir in the berbere to release its essential oils for about 30 seconds, watching closely so the bright red spices do not burn.

3 Toss and saturate the bread.

Immediately dump the torn bread into the skillet and toss continuously with a wooden spoon. Force every jagged edge to drink up the spiced butter until the bread is heated through, fiery red, and softly yielding, about 2 minutes.

4 Serve immediately with yogurt and honey.

Transfer the warm Chechebsa to a communal plate and serve immediately with a generous dollop of plain yogurt and a drizzle of honey to cut the heat.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Incorporate teff for an earthy upgrade.**

While all-purpose flour provides the softest, spongiest canvas, swapping a quarter cup of it for brown teff flour brings back that unmistakable, earthy homeland aroma without ruining the texture.

- **Make it fasting-friendly.**

During Orthodox fasting days (Tsom), drop the butter entirely. Bloom the berbere in a high-quality light olive or vegetable oil for a sharper, cleaner, vegan version.



Shahan Ful (Spiced Fava Bean Mash with Feta and Jalapeños)

sha-han fool

IF INJERA IS THE KING OF THE ETHIOPIAN DINNER TABLE, Shahan Ful rules the slow Saturday morning. It is the immediate, visceral smell of home: deeply sweated onions, earthy cumin, and the brick-red heat of Berbere hitting hot oil. Back in the homeland, grandmothers soaked dried fava beans overnight, but the diaspora secret is the canned fava bean, which turns a twelve-hour labor of love into a twenty-minute triumph. The magic lies entirely in the contrast

—A HOT, AGGRESSIVELY SPICED, RUSTIC BEAN MASH PILED high with unapologetic mounds of cool feta, sharp raw jalapeños, and crisp red onions.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 tbsp	fresh lemon juice
4 med clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	1/2 cup	feta cheese <i>crumbled</i>
1 tbsp	Berbere spice blend	1 med	jalapeño pepper <i>finely diced</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	1/4 cup	red onion <i>finely minced</i>
2 med	tomatoes <i>finely diced</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>chopped</i>
30 oz	canned fava beans <i>undrained</i>	4 med	crusty rolls <i>warmed</i>
1/2 cup	water		

PREPARATION

- **Warm your crusty rolls in a low oven before starting the beans.** Shahan Ful comes together incredibly fast, so you want your bread warm and ready for immediate scooping the second the beans come off the stove.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Sauté the onions in the olive oil over medium heat until deeply softened and just turning golden.**

Do not rush this; the sweetness of the heavily cooked onions provides the necessary foundation to balance the aggressive heat of the spices.

- 2 Add the minced garlic, Berbere, and cumin to the oil and stir constantly for one minute.**

This is blooming—the essential technique that unlocks the fat-soluble flavor compounds and eliminates the dusty, raw taste of the spices.

- 3 Stir in most of the diced tomatoes and the salt, letting them cook down into a thick, jammy paste.**

Reserve a small handful of the raw diced tomatoes for the final garnish.

- 4 Pour in the undrained fava beans, bring to a gentle simmer, cover, and cook for ten minutes.**

- 5 Remove the lid and roughly mash the beans directly in the pot.**

Use a potato masher or the flat bottom of a mug. You want a coarse, rustic texture like chunky refried beans, not a smooth puree. Splash in a little water if the mixture looks too dry.

- 6 Remove from the heat, stir in the fresh lemon juice, and adjust the salt to taste.**

1 Divide the hot mash into wide bowls and crown heavily with the garnishes.

Top each bowl with distinct piles of crumbled feta, minced red onion, the reserved diced tomatoes, and jalapeños, finishing with a heavy drizzle of good olive oil. Serve immediately with warm crusty rolls for scooping.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Sourcing the Berbere is absolutely non-negotiable.**

Berberere is the soul of this dish. Avoid generic grocery store blends and source it from a local East African market or a reputable online vendor for the true, complex heat.

- **Crumbled feta is the universally accepted diaspora substitute for traditional Ayib cheese.**

It offers the perfect salty, lactic tang needed to cut the heat. To align with Orthodox vegan fasting days, simply omit it.



Ye'Tsom Weeknights: 30-Minute Vegan Dinners

Drawing on the Ethiopian Orthodox fasting tradition, these naturally plant-based recipes are the ultimate answer to the Tuesday night dinner dilemma.

The Ethiopian Orthodox calendar demands a staggering amount of sacrifice—over two hundred fasting days a year where meat and dairy are strictly banished from the table. But deprivation, in the hands of resourceful grandmothers, inevitably breeds culinary genius. This is Ye'Tsom, a tradition that transforms cheap pantry staples and

humble roots into deeply complex, soul-soothing meals. It isn't some trendy plant-based lifestyle pivot; it is an ancient rhythm of faith and survival, quietly solving the modern weeknight dinner crisis.

By leaning on the pre-made flavor bases sitting in the door of the fridge, these workhorse dishes—fiery red lentils, garlicky collards, and mellow, earthy split peas—come together in the time it takes to wait for a mediocre takeout pizza. It is food born of strict restriction, engineered for everyday comfort, and served up unapologetically in under half an hour.





Fosolia (Caramelized Green Beans and Carrots)

fa-so-lee-ya

FORGET EVERYTHING AMERICAN CULINARY TELEVISION taught you about crisp-tender vegetables. In an Ethiopian kitchen, a crisp green bean is an undercooked green bean. This is the ultimate comfort side dish, a weekday staple that transforms ordinary supermarket produce into something impossibly sweet, meltingly soft, and deeply savory. The secret isn't some rare, imported spice. It's the patience to dry-roast your onions before the oil ever hits the pan, and the wisdom to braise the beans until they look like a mistake to your American friends, but taste exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 med	yellow or red onion <i>halved and thinly sliced</i>	1 lb	fresh green beans <i>ends trimmed, snapped in half</i>
3 tbsp	neutral oil	2 med	carrots <i>peeled and cut into 2-inch matchsticks</i>
3 med	garlic cloves <i>finely minced or crushed into a paste</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	1/4 cup	water
1/2 tsp	ground turmeric	1 med	jalapeño pepper <i>seeded and sliced lengthwise into strips</i>
1 tsp	tomato paste		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Dry-sweat the sliced onions in a hot pan without any oil.**
Place a large, dry skillet over medium-high heat and add the onions directly to the pan. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring constantly as they release their moisture and soften; if they start to stick or scorch, add a tiny splash of water and scrape up the browned bits until the onions are collapsed and deeply golden.
- 2 Bloom the aromatics in the oil.**
Pour the neutral oil over the softened onions and reduce the heat to medium. Stir in the garlic, ginger, turmeric, and tomato paste, cooking for 1 to 2 minutes until the oil turns a rich yellow-orange and the raw bite of the garlic cooks out.
- 3 Toss the vegetables in the spiced oil and add the water.**
Add the green beans, carrots, and salt to the skillet, tossing vigorously to coat everything evenly in the savory onion base, then pour in the water.

1 Cover tightly and braise until meltingly soft.

Immediately cover the skillet with a tight-fitting lid and reduce the heat to medium-low. Let the vegetables steam in their own juices for 12 to 15 minutes, checking occasionally and adding another splash of water if the pan threatens to go bone-dry.

2 Glaze the vegetables and finish with the fresh jalapeño.

Remove the lid and increase the heat slightly to boil off any remaining water so the seasoned oil lightly coats the wrinkled, olive-green beans. Toss in the jalapeño strips for 1 to 2 final minutes of cooking, just enough to release their bright, fruity heat without making the dish aggressively spicy.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **The secret to authentic Ethiopian flavor is the dry-roast.**

Do not add oil to the pan initially. Letting the onions sweat in a dry skillet concentrates their natural sweetness and initiates the Maillard reaction without leaving the final dish heavy or greasy.

• **Unlearn the crisp-tender myth.**

Authentic Fosolia requires patience. Cook the green beans until they are completely yielding and wrinkled. They should lose their bright hue and turn a muted olive green to fully absorb the ginger and garlic.



Inguday Tibs (Spicy Sautéed Mushrooms in Awaze)

in-goo-die teeb

IF YOU ASK AN ETHIOPIAN GRANDMOTHER HOW TO MAKE tibs, she'll tell you it's all about the sear and the spice. Traditionally a celebratory meat dish, tibs transforms into a brilliant, earthy staple during the frequent fasting days of the Orthodox church. The secret here isn't just securing good berbere—it's the unforgiving heat required to dry-sweat the mushrooms so they caramelize instead of boiling in their own water. Tossed in a quick, punchy awaze paste

ADAPTED WITH DRY RED WINE AND A DROP OF HONEY TO mimic traditional tej, this is the unmistakable, fiercely savory taste of a real Ethiopian family kitchen, pulled off on a frantic Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp	authentic Ethiopian Berbere blend	1 med	red onion <i>julienned into thin strips</i>
3 tbsp	dry red wine	1 med	jalapeno pepper <i>sliced into thin strips</i>
1/2 tsp	honey	1 small	tomato <i>diced</i>
3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil <i>divided</i>	1 tsp	fresh rosemary leaves <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 large	clove garlic <i>finely minced</i>	1/4 tsp	ground Korarima
1 lb	Cremini mushrooms <i>cleaned and quartered</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>plus more to taste</i>

PREPARATION

- **Have your mise en place ready before the mushrooms hit the pan.**

Tibs is a fast, high-heat process, so ensure your onions are julienned, tomatoes diced, and awaze paste completely mixed before you turn on the stove.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Whisk together the awaze spice paste.**

In a small bowl, combine the berbere, wine, honey, 1 tablespoon of the oil, and the minced garlic until it forms a smooth, thick paste.

1 Dry-sweat the mushrooms in a hot skillet.

Place a large, wide skillet over medium-high heat with 1 tablespoon of oil. Add the quartered mushrooms and salt. They will initially soak up the oil and then release a massive amount of water; let them cook undisturbed until every drop of liquid evaporates and the mushrooms form a deep, fiercely sizzling brown crust.

2 Remove the mushrooms and build the aromatics.

Transfer the caramelized mushrooms to a plate, lower the heat to medium, and add the final 1 tablespoon of oil to the skillet along with the julienned red onions.

3 Soften the onions while maintaining their structure.

Cook the onions for 3 to 4 minutes until they are softened and just beginning to turn golden on the edges, taking care not to let them turn into mush.

4 Bloom the awaze and tomatoes.

Add the diced tomato, sliced jalapeño, and the prepared awaze paste to the onions, sautéing for 2 minutes until the alcohol cooks off and the tomatoes break down into a clinging sauce.

5 Bring the dish together.

Return the mushrooms and their resting juices to the skillet, fold in the fresh rosemary and korarima, and toss continuously for a minute or two until everything is coated, fragrant, and hot.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The mushroom sweat is non-negotiable.**

If you rush the cooking of the mushrooms or crowd the pan without letting the water fully evaporate, you'll end up with a watery soup instead of the chewy, deeply seared texture that defines true tibs.

- **Adjust the heat to your preference.**

Ethiopian food is deeply flavorful, not purely painful. Start with less berbere if you are sensitive to spice, adding a pinch of mild smoked paprika to maintain the necessary volume and color of the paste.



Ye'Fisik: Sunday Suppers and Sizzling Skillets

*Hearty, meat-based dishes that traditionally commanded respect and time,
adapted for the American weekend.*

There is a primal shift in the atmosphere when the fast breaks and the meat finally hits the heat. Ye'Fisik is the heavy artillery. Historically, these are the dishes that demanded the surrender of an entire afternoon, commanding respect over low, slow embers. But the diaspora doesn't live in the old country, and Sundays in America require a different kind of hustle.

Here, the ancestral slow-braise of a proper doro wat meets the high-pressure alchemy of the modern kitchen, and the blistering heat of a seasoned cast-iron skillet steps in to violently sear off the siga tibs. It's the same unapologetic, deeply spiced soul of an Ethiopian Sunday supper, engineered for the reality of the weekend. These are the centerpieces. The plates that stain the fingers and linger in the memory.





Doro Wat (The Centerpiece Chicken Stew)

dō-rō wät

DORO WAT IS THE UNDISPUTED KING OF THE ETHIOPIAN table—a deeply spiced, mahogany-dark chicken stew that smells exactly like home. Traditionally, a grandmother would spend a full day on precise butchery and hand-mincing a mountain of onions over a wood fire. We don't have all day, but we aren't cutting the corners that matter. By pulsing the alliums in a food processor, rigorously dry-

COOKING THE ONION BASE, AND FINISHING THE POT WITH A hit of volatile Mekelesha spices, you can conjure that exact, soul-warming aroma on a realistic weeknight schedule.

INGREDIENTS

3 lb	bone-in skinless chicken drumsticks and thighs	2 tbsp	neutral oil
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1/2 cup	berbere spice blend
1 med	lemon <i>juiced</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
3 large	red onions <i>peeled and roughly chopped</i>	1 cup	chicken stock
3 large	shallots <i>peeled and roughly chopped</i>	4 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and pierced with a fork</i>
1 tbsp	fresh garlic <i>minced</i>	1/4 tsp	ground cardamom
1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>minced</i>	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
1/2 cup	ghee or niter kibbeh <i>divided</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper
		1/8 tsp	ground nutmeg
		1/8 tsp	ground clove

PREPARATION

- **Pulse the roughly chopped red onions and shallots in a food processor.** Process until they form a chunky purée. This replaces twenty minutes of tear-inducing knife work while helping the alliums break down much faster in the pot.

- **Cleanse the chicken with a traditional citrus-salt wash.**

Place the chicken in a bowl, massage with the lemon juice and kosher salt, and cover with cold water. Let sit for 30 minutes, then rinse thoroughly until the water runs clear. Pat dry and score the meat with a knife to allow flavor penetration. Do not skip this; it tenderizes the meat and removes the gamey poultry smell.

- **Mix the mekelesha finishing spice.**

Whisk together the cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper, nutmeg, and clove in a small bowl and set aside until the very end of cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Place the puréed onions and shallots in a dry, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat.**

Cook, stirring frequently, until all the water evaporates and the onions reduce to a thick, dark paste, about 15 to 20 minutes. Do not add oil yet; this dry-cooking concentrates the natural sugars and is the ultimate secret to a proper wat.

- 2 Add the neutral oil and all but one tablespoon of the ghee, frying the onion paste until it deeply caramelizes.**

Stir in the minced garlic and ginger, cooking for another 2 minutes until incredibly fragrant.

- 3 Stir in the berbere and tomato paste, allowing the spices to toast in the fat for 5 minutes.**

The paste should turn a rich, dark mahogany. If it begins to catch or scorch, splash in a little chicken stock to cool the pan.

- 1 Pour in the remaining chicken stock, submerge the scored chicken pieces, and bring the stew to a simmer.**

Cover and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 45 to 50 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is fall-off-the-bone tender and the fat has separated to the surface.

- 2 Nestle the pierced hard-boiled eggs into the sauce during the final 10 minutes of cooking.**

- 3 Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the remaining tablespoon of ghee alongside your mekelesha spice blend.**

The volatile oils from the cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves will hit the hot liquid and instantly perfume the kitchen with that signature nostalgic aroma. Serve immediately with fresh injera or rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Source your berbere with care.**

Berberere is the fiery, earthy backbone of this stew. Seek out a high-quality blend from a local Ethiopian specialty market or a reputable online spice purveyor; generic grocery store versions often lean too heavily on simple cayenne and lack the necessary depth.



Awaze Siga Tibs (Sizzling Cast-Iron Beef Stir-Fry)

ah-wah-zay see-gah teebz

IF YOU GREW UP IN AN ETHIOPIAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD, you know the sound before the smell: the aggressive, popping sizzle of meat hitting a dangerously hot pan, followed seconds later by the sharp, intoxicating hit of toasted berbere and sweet red onions. For the diaspora cook navigating a Tuesday night, the secret to reproducing that grandmotherly magic isn't a long, arduous simmer or an imported clay brazier. It's a heavy, screaming-hot cast-iron skillet, a

DRY SEAR TO LOCK THE MEAT'S FIBERS, AND THE RAPID introduction of spiced butter and chili paste at the very end. Keep it fast, keep it simple, and have the injera ready before the pan even gets hot.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	berbere spice blend	1 med	red onion <i>sliced root-to-stem</i>
1 tbsp	olive oil	4 med	garlic <i>finely minced</i>
1 tbsp	dry red wine <i>or fresh lemon juice</i>	1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>finely minced</i>
3 tbsp	water	2 tbsp	Indian ghee
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1/8 tsp	ground cardamom
1 1/2 lb	ribeye or top sirloin <i>cut against the grain into thin 1-inch strips</i>	2 med	jalapeno peppers <i>sliced into thick coins</i>
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1 med	Roma tomato <i>cored, seeded, and chopped into chunks</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1 sprig	fresh rosemary
2 tbsp	neutral oil	1 tbsp	water

PREPARATION

- **Prepare all ingredients and place them within arm's reach of the stove.** Tibs cooks in under ten minutes and requires high heat; there is no time to chop onions or mix pastes once the meat hits the pan.
- **Whisk the berbere, olive oil, red wine, three tablespoons of water, and half teaspoon of salt in a small bowl to form the awaze paste.** Set this thick, dark paste aside. It will be the flavor engine for the dish.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Heat a large cast-iron skillet over high heat until wisps of smoke appear, then add the neutral oil and the salted beef in a single layer.**

Let the meat sit undisturbed for two minutes to develop a hard crust. Toss and cook for another three to five minutes until the juices released by the beef have completely evaporated from the pan. You want a dry, sizzling sear, not boiled meat.

- 2 Add the sliced red onion, garlic, and ginger directly to the browned beef.**

Sauté vigorously for two to three minutes until the onions soften and char slightly at the edges while retaining a bit of bite.

- 3 Lower the heat to medium and add the ghee and cardamom to coat the meat.**

This is a quick hack to mimic the complex, slow-simmered flavor of traditional niter kibbeh. Immediately scrape the reserved awaze paste into the skillet and toss everything continuously for one to two minutes so the paste cooks slightly and glazes the beef.

- 4 Toss in the chopped tomatoes, jalapeños, rosemary sprig, and a tablespoon of water to deglaze the skillet.**

Stir for exactly sixty seconds to warm the tomatoes through without letting them turn to mush, then remove from the heat.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Carry the smoking, sizzling skillet straight to the dining table and set it on a heat-proof trivet.**

Serve immediately with fresh injera to scoop up the meat and the rich, spicy butter left in the pan.



The Injera Reality: Bread Hacks and Fermentation

*An honest, highly functional guide to navigating notoriously difficult
Ethiopian flatbread in an American climate.*

Let's be honest about the injera situation. Back in Addis, the high-altitude air and native wild yeast do half the heavy lifting. But in a drafty Midwestern apartment or a bone-dry suburban kitchen, coaxing out those perfectly sour, spongy eyes from a batch of pure teff is a brutal battle against physics. It's a beautiful, maddening agony that every diaspora cook eventually confronts. The old guard might scoff at compromise, but survival has always meant adapting.

This isn't about chasing an impossible, grandmotherly perfection—it's about getting dinner on the table without losing your mind. Whether a cook is babysitting a three-day ferment, hacking the system with a Western sourdough mother, or simply tapping into the local Auntie Network for a fresh stack wrapped in plastic, there is no judgment here. Just the hard-earned, highly functional reality of keeping the lifeblood of the Ethiopian table flowing.





Yemeteshebo Injera (The Quick-Pour Club Soda Flatbread)

ye-met-be-sha in-je-ra

INJERA IS THE UNDISPUTED ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION OF the Ethiopian table—your plate, your fork, and your comfort. Traditionally, it demands a wild sourdough starter, three days of patient fermentation, and a massive specialized clay griddle. But when you're a first-generation kid craving the tastes of your parents' homeland on a random Tuesday night, you adapt. By trading the microbial marathon for the rapid chemistry of baking soda and highly

CARBONATED CLUB SODA, THIS SKILLET HACK FORCES thousands of tiny bubbles into the batter. It yields that perfect, spongy sourness to soak up every drop of stew, without making you wait until Friday to eat it.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	teff flour	1 tbsp	apple cider vinegar or fresh lemon juice
1 cup	all-purpose flour		
1/2 tsp	baking soda	2 1/2 cup	highly carbonated club soda <i>chilled</i>
1 tsp	fine sea salt	1 tbsp	neutral cooking oil or melted ghee

PREPARATION

- **Chill the club soda.**

Cold carbonated liquids hold their dissolved gases better than warm ones, meaning more bubbles make it into your pan.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Whisk the dry ingredients together in a large bowl.**
Combine the teff flour, all-purpose flour, baking soda, and salt, ensuring there are no hidden clumps of baking soda.
- 2 Activate the batter right before cooking.**
Add the vinegar or lemon juice to the dry mix, then immediately pour in the chilled club soda. Whisk gently but thoroughly; it will foam enthusiastically. Let it rest for exactly 5 to 10 minutes to hydrate the flours.

1 Heat and lightly oil a non-stick skillet.

Place a 10-inch or 12-inch non-stick skillet over medium-high heat until a drop of water sizzles instantly. Wipe the surface with a paper towel dampened with just a microscopic film of oil or ghee—too much fat fries the bread and ruins the bubbles.

2 Pour the batter in an outside-in spiral.

Fill a ladle with about 1/2 cup of batter. Starting at the outer perimeter of the hot skillet, pour in a continuous circle spiraling inward. Immediately tilt and swirl the pan to coat the bottom in a thin, even layer.

3 Watch for the eyes to form.

Return to the heat. Within 30 seconds, hundreds of tiny air bubbles should push through the surface and pop.

4 Cover to steam and set the top.

Once the surface is completely covered in popped bubbles and the edges just begin to pull away, place a tight-fitting lid on the skillet. Lower the heat to medium and steam for 45 to 60 seconds until the top is dry and slightly spongy. Never flip injera.

5 Cool in a single layer.

Slide the injera onto a clean kitchen towel. Let it cool before stacking so the breads don't stick together. Wipe the pan with your oiled paper towel and repeat.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Keep the club soda sealed until the very last second.**

You want maximum carbonation the moment the liquid hits the flour to force those essential bubbles into the flatbread.

- **Embrace the teff variety of your choosing.**

Ivory teff yields a milder flavor, while brown teff provides a deeper, earthier, and more nostalgic color. Use whichever you can source.



Kategna

kah-ten-yah

IN AN ETHIOPIAN HOUSEHOLD, THE INTOXICATING SCENT OF sour, fermented teff batter hitting a smoking-hot clay mitad signals the arrival of a baker's reward: kategna. Traditionally crafted from the final scrape of batter or used to revitalize day-old flatbread, it is a fiery, zero-waste masterpiece of spongy injera slathered in spiced clarified butter and berbere. For the diaspora cook chasing the exact, uncompromised taste of home on a Tuesday night, it requires no ancient clay griddle—just a dry skillet, authentic imported spices, and the patience to let the bottom shatter while the top weeps with rich, deeply fragrant fat.

INGREDIENTS

2 large	injera	1/4 tsp	ground korarima
4 tbsp	niter kibbeh or ghee	1 small	garlic clove <i>smashed (if using ghee hack)</i>
1 1/2 tbsp	berbere	1 small	fresh ginger <i>sliced (if using ghee hack)</i>
1/4 tsp	kosher salt	1 small	green cardamom pod <i>lightly crushed (if using ghee hack)</i>

PREPARATION

- **Infuse the ghee.**

If you lack a homemade batch of authentic niter kibbeh, do not use plain unsalted butter. Melt the high-quality Indian ghee over low heat with the smashed garlic, ginger, and crushed cardamom pod. Let it steep for five minutes, then discard the solids before moving on to the recipe.

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Melt the clarified butter.

Gently warm the niter kibbeh or infused ghee in a small saucepan over medium-low heat.

2

Bloom the spices off the heat.

The absolute second the butter turns liquid, pull the pan off the burner to prevent the milk solids from scorching and turning bitter. Whisk the berbere, salt, and ground korarima into the warm fat until it forms a vibrant, fragrant paste.

1 Heat a dry skillet.

Place a large cast-iron or non-stick pan over medium-low heat without a single drop of oil, mimicking the dry conduction heat of a traditional clay mitad.

2 Warm the injera.

Lay one round of injera flat into the dry pan with the porous, bubbly side facing up, letting it warm gently for about thirty seconds.

3 Paint the bread.

Using a spoon or pastry brush, generously drag half of the fiery butter paste across the entire bubbly surface, ensuring you saturate the bread all the way to the edges.

4 Achieve the crisp.

Let the bread toast undisturbed for two to three minutes. The heat melts the spiced fat deep into the soft top layer while the bottom dehydrates into a beautifully golden, shattered crunch.

5 Fold and serve.

Remove the injera from the pan, fold it in half, then into quarters, or roll it up tightly like a wrap. Slice into bite-sized wedges and serve immediately while the butter is still weeping.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Source real berbere.**

Generic supermarket Ethiopian spice blends often lack the correct chili varietal and lean far too heavily on cinnamon. Find a specialty grocer or a reputable online vendor for the authentic imported blend.

- **Seek out pure teff.**

While a wheat-cut injera works flawlessly, a pure teff base shatters more beautifully in the pan and keeps the dish entirely gluten-free.



The Blended Table: First- Generation Holidays

A celebration of the Ethiopian-American holiday table, where heritage flavors sit naturally alongside classic American festive dishes.

The immigrant experience isn't a museum exhibit; it's a living, breathing collision of worlds. Nowhere is that more obvious than the holiday table. You've got the sacred geometry of the American Thanksgiving—the turkey, the mac and cheese, the sweet potatoes—colliding head-on with the assertive, unapologetic heat of the homeland. It's a beautiful, necessary compromise.

Here, a berbere-rubbed bird sits next to a tray of macaroni engineered specifically to drag through the last pooling streaks of doro wat. These aren't fusion gimmicks concocted for a tasting menu. This is the authentic reality of the first-generation feast, where sweet potatoes get a heavy dose of alicha kulet, and heritage doesn't demand purity—it just demands a seat at the table.





Ye'Turk Siga Tibs

ye-turk see-gah tibs

IF YOU GREW UP THE CHILD OF ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS IN some Ohio suburb, Thanksgiving was a paradox. You wanted the giant American bird, but your palate craved the fiery, complex, buttery heat of the homeland. The grandmotherly hack? Ditch the three-hour oven marathon. Deconstruct that notoriously lean turkey breast into bite-sized cubes and hit it high and fast in a cast-iron pan, exactly like a traditional tibs. Bathed in spiced clarified butter and a rich berbere paste, it's juicy, blistering, and smells exactly like your mother's kitchen on a holiday—all on a random Tuesday in under thirty minutes.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	Berberé spice blend	3 tbsp	Niter Kibbeh
3 tbsp	water	1 large	red onion <i>thinly sliced</i>
1 tbsp	olive oil	4 cloves	garlic <i>minced</i>
1 tbsp	fresh lemon juice	1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and minced</i>
1/2 tsp	sea salt	1 med	Roma tomato <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless turkey breast <i>cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	2 med	fresh jalapeños <i>sliced into strips</i>
1 tsp	sea salt	2 sprigs	fresh rosemary
1 tbsp	neutral cooking oil		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Whisk the awaze paste.**
In a small bowl, mix the berbere, water, olive oil, lemon juice, and the half teaspoon of salt into a thick, brick-red paste to wake up the complex spices.
- 2 Sear the turkey hard and fast.**
Season the cubed turkey with the remaining teaspoon of salt. Get a large cast-iron skillet screaming hot over high heat, add the neutral oil, and drop the meat in a single layer. Leave it entirely alone for 2 minutes to build a crust, give it a quick toss for another minute, then pull the meat and its juices onto a plate.

1 Build the aromatic foundation.

Drop the heat to medium and add the Niter Kibbeh. Once the spiced butter foams, toss in the red onions and sauté for about 5 minutes until soft and golden, scraping up the browned turkey bits from the bottom.

2 Bloom the spices.

Stir in the garlic and ginger for 60 seconds until highly fragrant, then pour in your prepared awaze paste. Frying the paste in the spiced butter cooks out the raw, dusty edge of the chili and turns the sauce into a rich, mahogany glaze.

3 Enrobe and finish.

Return the seared turkey and its resting juices to the pan, tossing to coat the meat completely in the spicy butter. Simmer uncovered for 3 to 4 minutes until cooked through. In the final sixty seconds, throw in the tomato, jalapeños, and whole rosemary sprigs, then serve immediately directly from the hot skillet.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Sourcing the butter.**

Niter Kibbeh is non-negotiable for the true flavor, but if you don't have a homemade batch in the fridge, fake it on a weeknight by melting three tablespoons of high-quality ghee with a pinch of turmeric and ground cardamom.

• **Serving.**

Tear off pieces of sour, spongy injera to scoop up the meat and cut the richness of the butter. If you can't find injera locally, steamed basmati rice works fine.

- **The whole roast variation.**

If your family insists on a carving centerpiece for the holiday, deeply score a 3-pound whole turkey breast, massage the awaze and melted Niter Kibbeh into every crevice, and roast at 350°F for about 75 minutes.



Ye'Injera Mulmul (Savory Wild Mushroom & Injera Stuffing)

yeh-eeen-jeh-rah mool-mool

IN ETHIOPIA, A MULMUL IS A CELEBRATORY BREAD. IN THE American Midwest, it's the brilliant collision of two cultures on a holiday table. This diasporic genius takes the native mechanics of Enguday Firfir—a deeply savory mushroom stew soaked into torn teff injera—and bakes it into a crispy-topped stuffing that cuts right through a heavy spread. The grandmotherly secret here is dry-sweating your onions to a sweet jam before the fat ever hits the pan,

THEN FINISHING WITH THE AROMATIC MEKELESHA SPICE OFF the heat. It demands zero compromise on technique, yet asks only forty-five minutes of your time.

INGREDIENTS

2 med	red onions <i>finely minced</i>	1 1/2 lb	mixed mushrooms <i>roughly chopped into bite-sized pieces</i>
4 tbsp	Niter Kibbeh <i>divided</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 1/2 tbsp	Berberere	1/4 cup	dry white wine
4 med clove	garlic <i>minced to a paste</i>	1/2 cup	hot water
1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	1 lb	injera <i>torn into 1.5-inch pieces</i>
		1/2 tsp	Mekelesha Kimem
		1 small	jalapeño <i>seeds removed and cut into long thin slivers</i>

PREPARATION

- **Stale the injera.**

The most critical prep step is leaving your fresh injera out on the counter for at least two hours before cooking so it stales and holds its structure.

- **Preheat the oven.**

Set your oven to 375°F before you begin cooking the mushrooms.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Dry-sweat the onions to build the Kulet.

Place a wide sauté pan over medium-low heat with no oil, adding the onions and cooking until they collapse into a translucent, jammy purple-brown paste, about 10 minutes.

2 Bloom the spices in the fat.

Stir in 3 tablespoons of the Niter Kibbeh and the Berbere, cooking the spices in the fat for 2 to 3 minutes until dark and rich.

3 Fry the aromatics and earth.

Add the garlic and ginger for 60 seconds, then toss in the mushrooms and salt, turning the heat to medium and cooking until they release their liquid and brown deeply.

4 Deglaze the pan and build the gravy.

Pour in the white wine to scrape up any caramelized bits, let the alcohol cook off for 2 minutes, then stir in the hot water and simmer.

5 Fold the injera into the sauce.

Turn the heat to low and gently fold handfuls of the torn, slightly dried injera into the pan until the spongy bread drinks up the sauce but doesn't turn to mush.

6 Finish with Mekelesha off the heat.

Turn off the heat entirely, then gently fold in the Mekelesha spice and the final tablespoon of Niter Kibbeh to preserve their volatile, aromatic oils.

1 Bake the stuffing to a crisp.

Transfer the mixture to a lightly greased 8x8-inch baking dish, pressing it into an even layer, and bake at 375°F for 15 minutes until the top is deeply satisfying and crisp. Garnish with jalapeño slivers.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Source day-old injera from a local market.**

Fresh injera will disintegrate into a gummy paste when used as stuffing; buy it a day or two ahead, or leave it out on the counter to stale slightly.

- **Make the Kulet ahead of time for a faster weeknight.**

You can cook down the onions, garlic, ginger, and berbere over the weekend and keep it in the fridge, cutting your active cooking time down to 15 minutes.

- **Adjust the heat of your Berbere.**

Berberere blends vary wildly in spice level; smell and taste a pinch first, and if it's too fiery, start with 1 tablespoon and add a squirt of tomato paste to mellow it out.