

Rabbit Sauce Piquant, Tuna Ceviche Tostadas, Bourbon Bread Pudding, and 26 other recipes to make this fall

The **SAVEUR** 100

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Make It





The Soul of Guadeloupe in a Sandwich

Pointe-à-Pitre chef David Drumeaux shares how he prepares the archipelago's signature bokit, from bread to fillings to relish.

By Jessica B. Harris

VIRTUALLY EVERY PLACE HAS AN iconic street food—that inexpensive, highly portable bite capable of telegraphing its geographical culinary identity to the rest of the world. The United States is known for hot dogs; Vietnam, *banh mi*. In Guadeloupe, the bokit (pronounced “BO-keet,” not “bo-KIT”) sandwich speaks volumes about the French-Caribbean archipelago’s complicated history with slavery and colonialism.

To call this wonder a sandwich would be to seriously undersell its bread. Yes, there are fillings: typically cod and conch,

ABOVE Chef David Drumeaux outside his Pointe-à-Pitre restaurant, Bokit Delux.

OPPOSITE The slow-cooked pork bokit is the most popular item on his menu.

but also chicken and pork. Toppings too, including lettuce, tomato, and hot-pepper sauce. The main attraction, however, remains that perfectly crisp, pillowy envelope, reminiscent of the American South’s yeast roll, had said roll’s dough been deep-fried instead of baked.

Versions of this bread—some yeasted, some incorporating cornmeal—are prevalent throughout the Caribbean, called *djoncakes* in Dominica, *yaniqueques* in the Dominican Republic, and dumplings in Jamaica. Their predecessor, the *danquite*, was a simple mix of flour and water fried in fat. Scholars believe it arrived on the islands of Guadeloupe by way of the Caribbean’s English-speaking colonies as early as the 17th century—right around the time the French

enslaved West Africans and brought them to the West Indies to work sugar and coffee plantations.

Slavery was abolished in Guadeloupe for good in 1848, and the *danquite*, made from few ingredients and easy to prepare, became the sustenance of the recently emancipated. Eventually stuffed with salt cod and later filled like a sandwich, this fried dough evolved into today’s bokit.

“Bokit was poor folks’ food, made from cheap ingredients,” says David Drumeaux, the charismatic chef-owner of Bokit Delux. The casual spot, established in 2018, sits near the old section of Pointe-à-Pitre, across the street from Drumeaux’s music club, 1973 Food & Sound. The two restaurants—and their shared outdoor pavilion, sandwiched between building exteriors painted with giant murals of Guadeloupean men and women—have turned the block into a vibrant pocket amid an often-dusty historical city.

Why open a second restaurant while still plenty busy with the first? Drumeaux, who studied at Alain Ducasse’s École Ducasse in France, puts it thusly: “Our McDonald’s started selling a version of the traditional Guadeloupean burger, the *agoulou*. They called it the *McGoulou*. I did not want to see that happen to bokit.”

Drumeaux fills his version the traditional way, with salt cod, though his salt cod is more like a bright fish salad with fresh herbs, crunchy sweet peppers, onion, and a squeeze of lime juice. The most popular option on the menu, however, is pork that’s been stewed in a mixture of soy sauce, mustard, and lime juice for several hours before meeting up with a slaw of julienned cabbage, carrots, and winter squash, slices of zucchini, and a drizzle of the local cane syrup, *sirop de batterie*. When paired with *that* bread, the rich, shredded meat and toppings are nothing short of transcendent.

Once a month, area chefs are invited to craft their own take on the sandwich at Bokit Delux. Chef Arthur Karioua of Pointe-à-Pitre’s La Porte des Indes, or the Indian Door, recently contributed a bokit stuffed with potatoes, peas, beans, and cabbage, flavored with garam masala and turmeric, and topped with a mint sauce.

“Bokit is the Proustian madeleine of Guadeloupe,” Drumeaux reflects. “It is the food of grandmothers and aunts, and everyone here has a memory of it. This staple of our culture deserves to be celebrated.”

Jessica B. Harris is the author, editor, or translator of 18 books documenting the foodways of the African Diaspora. This past March, she received a James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award.

A Step-By-Step Guide to Making Bokit

The pillowy, deep-fried bread that is the base for Guadeloupe's bokit puffs up as it fries, creating a hollow pocket. (Be careful not to squeeze the steam out as you remove the bread from the hot oil.) This recipe makes five 6-inch rolls and takes about three hours (including rise time). Fill the bread while it's still warm.



1 In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons tepid water, 1¼ teaspoons sugar, and ¼ teaspoon dry instant yeast, stirring until sugar and yeast are dissolved. Fit the mixer with a dough hook, then add 3¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, 2½ teaspoons baking powder, and 1½ teaspoons kosher salt.



2 Mix on low speed until a cohesive (but still shaggy) dough forms, 3-4 minutes. Add 1½ teaspoons softened, unsalted butter, and continue mixing on low speed until dough is smooth and elastic, 8-10 minutes more. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, and set aside to rest at room temperature until dough is relaxed and slightly puffed, about 1 hour.



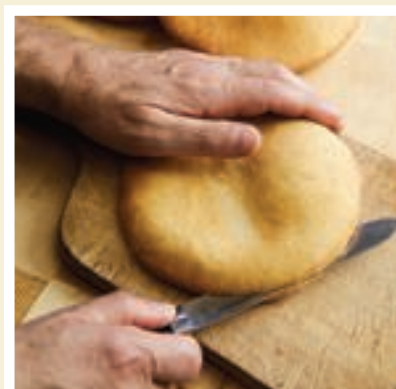
3 Lightly flour a clean work surface and turn the dough out onto it. Divide the dough into 5 pieces (about 1¼ ounces each) and roll into balls. Cover with plastic wrap, and set aside to rest for 1 hour more.



4 About 15 minutes before frying the dough, fit a deep-fry thermometer on a heavy-bottomed pot and add canola oil to a depth of 2 inches. Place over medium-high heat and cook until the oil reaches 355°F. Meanwhile, use a rolling pin to flatten each ball of dough into a 6-inch disc.



5 Fry the discs one at a time, turning once as they cook, until evenly golden, 3-3½ minutes total. With a pair of tongs, carefully transfer the bread to a paper-towel-lined baking sheet to drain while you continue frying the remaining discs.



6 With a serrated knife, split the bread on one side to make a pita-like pocket. To assemble the bokit, spread about ½ cup slow-cooked pork (opposite left) or marinated salt cod (opposite right) inside, then top with ¼ cup fresh pikliz (below).



Pikliz

MAKES: 2 CUPS

Total Time: 10 min.

Drumeaux's undressed version of the Haitian coleslaw, pikliz ("pick-lees") adds freshness and crunch to every sandwich at Bokit Delux. Giromon is a type of winter squash popular in the Caribbean. Look for it in West

Indian markets, or substitute another dense, sweet squash such as butternut or kabocha.

In a large bowl, mix together 1½ cups thinly sliced white cabbage, ½ cup peeled, shredded carrots, and ½ cup peeled, shredded giromon. Season lightly with kosher salt, if desired, and use immediately to garnish the bokit. Refrigerate in airtight container up to 2 days.



Porc Confit (Slow-Cooked Pork)

MAKES: 2½ CUPS (ENOUGH FOR 5 BOKITS)
Total Time: 4 hr. 20 min.

Drumeaux uses a cut of pork called rouelle—a thick round slice with a bone in the center, taken from the pig's hind leg—that is not likely to be sitting in your grocery store's meat case. Special-order it from a butcher, or substitute a 2-inch-thick, bone-in pork-shoulder steak.

- 2 lb. bone-in pork rouelle
- + Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- ¾ cup dark soy sauce
- ¾ cup sweet soy sauce
- + juice from 2 medium limes (about ¼ cup)
- 3 chive stems
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 2 mini sweet peppers, halved, stemmed, and seeded (or half a green bell pepper, stemmed and seeded)
- ¾ cup sirop de batterie*

1 Season the pork generously with salt and black pepper. Sprinkle with cayenne, then spread the mustard over the meat and set aside.

2 In a large pot, combine the dark and sweet soy sauces, lime juice, chives, thyme, and peppers. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then add the reserved pork. Reduce the heat to simmer, then cover and cook until the meat is very tender when poked with a fork, about 3 hours. Remove from heat, and set aside to cool to room temperature for about 1 hour, leaving the pork in the cooking liquid.

3 Use tongs to transfer the pork to a medium bowl, reserving the liquid. Remove and discard the fat and bone, then use two forks to shred the meat. Pour the sirop de batterie over the pork and set aside. Return the liquid to the stove and reheat to a simmer; stir ¾ cup of it into the pork mixture. (Use any leftover broth as a base for soup: Dilute it with water or stock, then add noodles, vegetables, etc.) Season to taste with additional salt and black pepper.

*While this dark sugar-cane-based sweetener is available at some Caribbean markets, you can also substitute ¼ cup molasses mixed with ½ cup cane syrup (we prefer Steen's).



Chiquetaille de Morue (Marinated Salt Cod)

MAKES: 2½ CUPS (ENOUGH FOR 5 BOKITS)
Total Time: 13 hr. 45 min.

Drumeaux adds West Indian *piments végétarien* (small sweet peppers) to this salad. They can be hard to find outside the Caribbean, so use mini bell peppers as a substitute.

- 8 oz. salt cod, rinsed and cut into 4-in. pieces
- 1 small onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 4 mini bell peppers, seeded and finely chopped (about ¼ cup)
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped Italian parsley
- 2 tsp. finely chopped chives
- 1 tsp. finely chopped thyme
- ¾ cup olive oil
- + juice from 1 medium lime (about 2 Tbsp.)
- + Kosher salt (optional)
- + Freshly ground black pepper

1 Place the salt cod in a large bowl, and add enough cold water to cover by several inches. Set aside to soak in the fridge for 12 hours, changing the water every 3 or 4 hours.

2 Drain and rinse the cod. Transfer it to a medium pot, cover with cold water, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook until the fish flakes when poked with a fork, 15-20 minutes. Using a fine mesh sieve, drain, then rinse the cod under cold running water, squeezing it to remove excess moisture. Finely crumble the fish into a large bowl, and add the onion, peppers, parsley, chives, and thyme; toss to combine. Stir in the olive oil and lime juice, then season to taste with salt, if desired, and black pepper. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to 48 hours, before serving.