Cooking up the 'Calaloo' Nation: Gender, Race and National Cuisine in the Imagining of Trinidad and Tobago

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1993
B.Ed., The University of Toronto, 1995

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming To the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 1998

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the formation of a national cuisine in post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago. Tracing national identity through cultural and political manipulations of food by elites and ordinary citizens, I have attempted to build a context for understanding the nature of nation-building, as well as the specific impact of race relations on conceptions of 'nation'. I conclude that the 'nation' is imagined by elites in accordance with international standards of nationhood, while its everyday construction is derived from a less formal pattern. In fact, the average citizen's idea about nationhood is produced out of a sense of community and divisions between communities set in the colonial period. While the government, major industries, and commercial interests attempt to refashion the previously colonized space of the twin islands into a productive and internationally acceptable terrain, local interest groups defend practices that have grown up in indigenous historical contexts. The 'Black Power' movement clearly articulates this entrenchment of the 'local' culture and economy in its critique of the 'progress' driven elite. Furthermore, women and the Indian minority population resist official representations of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, denying the validity of the 'calaloo' nation. Not wishing to be a part of a mixed stew that in effect negated their historical struggles, both women and Indians erect boundaries and demarcate the limits of the nation. The Indian woman sits uncomfortably on the threshold of nationhood, acting as a border marker for both her community and for the outer limits of the nation. As an antiquated figure, the Indian woman is cherished by both Black and Indian men as a remnant of the colonial past. Once 'creolized' or assimilated into the mainstream culture, the Indian woman poses a threat to the purity of the Indian community, as well as the black or creole community. The enforced purity of the Indian woman's cuisine opposes the 'calaloo' nation cooked up by the elite of Trinidad and Tobago, and surfaces 'race' and 'gender' tensions that stir within the 'calaloo' pot.
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To my parents, Priyadarshini and Vasudeva,

my sister, Vinotha,

and my grandmother, 'Amma,'
whose insights on cooking inspired me to investigate further.
Acknowledgments

Throughout my childhood, my father exposed me to the world of culture, politics and literature in the contexts of India, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago. He instilled in me an interest in the imaginative spaces of the Indian and African diasporas. This thesis reflects an extension of my father’s probing analysis of race relations in the post-colonial world he experienced.

My primary research was conducted with the assistance of the accommodating and proficient reference staff at the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine) West Indian Division and the Heritage Library in Port of Spain. I would also like to thank the reference librarians at Koerner Library at UBC for their initial facilitation of my research endeavors. I am extremely grateful for the direction I received from Dr. Brinsley Samaroo at the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine) during the process of shaping and researching my thesis. Dr. Samaroo made accessible a wealth of information and opportunities, and made my research trip a thoroughly worthwhile experience. My deepest gratitude extends to the Chaboo family for their hospitality and support beyond the call of duty during my stay in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am indebted to Dr. W. French whose guidance, support, and insightful commentary enabled the production of this thesis. I wish to thank Dr. French for challenging me to think critically and develop my own voice over the years I have spent as his student. I am constantly inspired by Dr. French’s outstanding abilities both as a teacher and as an intellectual. I have appreciated the on-going backing I have received from the History Department at the University of British Columbia, and would particularly like to acknowledge Gloria Lees for her attentive and caring support of graduate students. I would further like to acknowledge the useful and informed critique of my second reader, Dr. Sahadeo Basdeo of the Okanagan University-College. I sincerely appreciated his participation in this thesis project.

I thank Tamiko Nicholson for her helpful critique of an early draft of this thesis, and for supplying me with ‘food for thought’ over the course of our friendship. My final thanks go to my family for feeding my mind, body, and soul and, for their unwavering love.
Introduction: Building the ‘Calaloo’ Nation

We Trinidadian and Tobagonian want we own nash-nal costume. But in Trinidad we have all kine a people, an dat is where de trouble start. Leh me tell yuh den. We have Chinee, Injun, Neegrow, Syreeum, ‘Merican, English, French, Spanish, Dutch, all kine a races. Now I say dat any nashnal costume must have a little bit of each race else it eh trooly nashnal.... I suggest a head dress with a little piece of African toga, a bit of Injun turban, part of a French beret, part of English bowler and so on. But doh ask me how to make it because ah eh no tailor or hatterer. We gotta leff dat to de X-perts.

The building of a national identity was a monumental task for ‘de X-perts’ of Trinidad and Tobago, a newly independent state in 1962. Led by a political expert, Oxford University trained Dr. E. Williams, a black-dominated government held national power from 1962 to 1986. It inherited from colonial governors a cultural mosaic that reflected the migratory patterns of the imperial age. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the governing party, the People’s National Movement or PNM, would attempt to construct a nation out of this repository of imperialism’s immigrants. The nation was fragmented along ‘race’ or ‘ethno-cultural’ lines, and cleaved by gender and class difference. Colonial economics had brought together disparate groups and placed them in a geographic ‘stew pot’. Limited resources throughout the colonial period served to increase competition between segregated ‘race’ groups, and aggravated gender and class conflict within and between communities. Over time, social groups had both mixed and entrenched their separateness. Like a stew commonly cooked in Trinidad and Tobago – the ‘calaloo’ – the nation was a blend of unlikely ingredients.

Each item of the ‘calaloo’ had been thrown into the cooking pot via a mechanism of imperialism. Neegrow had come to Trinidad and Tobago via the Spanish, French, English, and Dutch imperial slave trades, while Chinee and Injun had arrived in the ‘calaloo’ via indentured

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1 Orlawee Iswon, “We Nash-nal Costume” CALALLOO 6:3 (Mar. 1968): 4. All citings of CALALLOO consulted at the West Indian Division at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago (hereafter WID).

2 Please note the many spellings of ‘calaloo’ = callaloo, calalloo, calalu etc. All forms are acceptable and interchangeable. The Trinidadian recipe consisted of “a thick soup made of crab or pigtail, okra, dasheen leaves, and seasoning all mixed into coconut milk.” Donald R. Hill, Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad (Florida, 1993), xiv. For more ‘calaloo’ recipes please see Appendix I.
servitude once emancipation had depleted a cheap and reliable labour supply. Syreeum merchants had emigrated to Trinidad and Tobago through imperial routings, and the 'Merican brought to the colony to serve at the American naval base in World War II was now there to usher in an informal cultural and economic imperialism.

'Calaloo' provided 'de X-perts' with a likely metaphor for the emerging nation with its many different ethnic groups and their special histories. Despite their distinctions, the diverse communities in Trinidad and Tobago shared a common experience, though to varying degrees, of colonialism. Poised to take its place among nations of the world, Trinidad and Tobago contended with the 'colonial mentality' of apathy and deferral to the colonial power brokers. As the opening quotation suggests, the local population distanced itself from the official nation-building assignment – retreating into familiar and defiant colonial speak - and delegated it to X-perts in government and industry who deemed themselves qualified to transform the space of the colony into a nation. As X-perts conceptualized nationhood around a self-sufficient economy, they called upon the local populace to play their part in imagining the nation as a disciplined, productive and tolerant space, and asked for an investment in the 'local'. X-perts found themselves in a dilemma in which they had to market their notion of nationhood to foreign investors and consumers, as well as to the Trinidadian people they represented. X-perts manipulated a conception of the 'calaloo' nation in order to conjure up an image that both foreign and local factions would ingest.

Alongside its definition as a uniquely blended soup, 'calaloo' also could designate a "'confusion,' a 'fix' or a 'stew' of the sort in which a person may become entangled," and ironically both definitions applied to the nation-building endeavor. Extricating itself from the

3 Ibid.

4 The sarcastic use of creole dialect in the introductory quotation (1) symbolizes the author's voice as a product of colonialism (pigeon English developed in the slave days) and her insistence upon retaining her colonial diction to resist the X-perts vocabulary of progress and 'westernization'.
‘calaloo’ it found itself in, the post-colonial governing forces scripted the nation as a harmonious and delicious dish, one that compelled consumption. The government grasped onto a ready analogy for the nation in its attempt to define and contain it, and ultimately sell its goods and services to an international clientele. Well aware that its disparate social groups sustained memories of their original homelands, the new government wished to solidify the space of the nation, or at least harden its borders so as to hold the liquidity of the ‘calaloo’ stew. Their larger agenda, however, was to translate the jumbled population of the new nation to an outside audience. ‘Calaloo’ framed the nation as appetizing, exotic, tolerant, and cosmopolitan.

Elites who held the power to shape the post-colonial future scripted and institutionalized change. The slogan ‘Discipline, production, and tolerance’ constituted a recipe for nation-building. If an imperial history had carelessly concocted a ‘calaloo’, the post-colonial ruling class with its eye on progress would extricate itself from the ‘calaloo’ it was in and fashion a national identity out of the assemblage of ethnic groups or ‘unlikely ingredients’ it had inherited. Convinced that independence ensured freedom and power, the elite body of Trinidadian society embarked on an ambitious project of expunging the memory of colonialism and replacing it with a narrative of progress and development.

By the second decade of independence, the progress agenda came into criticism by various sectors of the nation. Independence seemingly failed to unhinge the foreign strangle hold on the local economy, and industry workers, X-pert nation-builders, intellectuals and laborers

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5 Ibid.

6 Brian Meeks describes the elite of Trinidad as “a broad alliance of merchants, landed and foreign interests and in the political sphere, state bureaucrats and the governing People’s National Movement (PNM).” For the purposes of this thesis, I incorporate this definition and specifically refer to the founders of the ‘Culinary Arts Society’ in collusion with the food and tourism industry leaders, as well as government ministers in my discussion of national cuisine. I use the term ‘X-perts’ to refer to an educated sector of the society who studied a discipline and served the nation with knowledge and ‘western’ solutions to economic development issues. Brian Meeks Radical Caribbean (Barbados, 1996), 9.

7 “[T]he nation’s watchwords DISCIPLINE, PRODUCTION, TOLERANCE.” “Diss We Country” CALALLOO 5:2 (Feb. 1967), 1. Consulted at WID.
questioned government policy and liberal economic ideology. Further resistance to the ‘calaloo’ nation came from the substantial Indian minority community in Trinidad and Tobago. Concerned about the maintenance of their culture, Indians preserved ‘tradition’ in as many ways as possible. Indian men guarded Indian female reproduction as well as cultural production in order to ensure a ‘pure race’ and ‘pure’ cultural forms. While the food of the ‘calaloo’ nation would hybridize as it was sold on the global market, Indian food remained a distinct cuisine, included in the scope of the national cuisine, but considered intact in terms of its cultural ‘authenticity.’ The ‘calaloo’ nation, then, was not necessarily an image espoused by the local population of Trinidad and Tobago, but was a construct erected by elite nation-builders to bolster the nation’s economic and political status on the international front. The elite presented Trinidad and Tobago as one among many nations, unique yet instantly recognizable according to internationally accepted standards of what constituted a nation.

Section I: The Culinary Arts: Culling the Nation

The Culinary Arts Society of Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indies, a newly formed organisation, not yet a year old, is certainly wasting no time in forging ahead. It was formed in July of last year. ... the Association is already affiliated to the American Culinary Federation, one of the largest international bodies of its kind in the world. 8

With ‘nation’ status on its side, the ruling elite of Trinidad and Tobago coveted a spot on the international scene. Not merely caught up in prestige and self-aggrandizement, the post-colonial leaders recognized their continuing dependence on the world economy. Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams mediated his knowledge of foreign domination with the immediate necessities of an overburdened post-colonial economy. The colonial legacy of neglect and inefficiency placed the new state in an economic predicament, as it faced the dilemma of political independence. The economics of decolonization tended to shift the burden of responsibility for

8 “Prestige Sought For WI Dishes” Trinidad Guardian 6 April 1962, 5. Consulted at the Heritage Library, Port of
colonial insolvency to the post-colonial rulers. In order to cope with the backlog of debt and lack of productivity, the political and economic elite of Trinidad and Tobago left aside a ‘politics of resistance’ and embraced foreign trade connections and monetary aid. Though re-entering into an unequal economic relationship with stronger ‘western’ economies, the twin island nation endeavored to compete on the international front and eventually rectify the financial and commercial global inequities that ensnared the local economy.\(^9\)

The local elite perceived the cosmopolitan character of their nation, and anticipated that foreigner consumers would identify with this worldly image. This perhaps was their primary concern in propagating a national identity. Local concurrence with the elite version of the nation was a by-product of inventing an image for foreign consumption. Local workers and X-perts had to be brought in on this project as they would act as manufacturers of the image – they would project it as they served tourists visiting the nation, and they would infuse it into the nation’s goods exported on international markets. Elites targeted cuisine as just the sort of medium to represent the ‘calaloo’ nation to the world. Capable of melding local idiosyncrasies with European discernment, a cuisine reflecting Trinidad and Tobago could elevate the status of the nation, and in a sense ‘license’ it as a nation. Endorsing the formation of a ‘Culinary Arts Society,’ nation-builders expected that the Society would provide a crucial link to international markets and provide the type of exposure the new nation needed.

The post-colonial government sought to diversify the slave and indenture based economy of sugar and oil. Local foodstuffs suggested a marketable commodity. But these commodities needed disciplining, as in packaging and marketing. The Culinary Arts Society stated its

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ambition to "...pursue research in the preparation of the West Indian dishes from local products" in order to advertise West Indian dishes.\(^\text{10}\) "I think that we should now embark on a large-scale, well-organized system of collecting, marketing and selling our own local foods" with "new and better methods of preparing and presenting them..." states one writer in the catering school paper. She goes on to remark:

I noted during the recent festival culinary display that the Hotel and Catering School had produced a large number of local foods prepared and packaged attractively. I saw pickled vegetables, chives, sweets, sauces, wines made from guavas, pineapples, cashew, beets, rice etc., etc., I saw locally-produced ham and bacon well-cured, smoked and packaged. Now it is time to market all these fine foods properly. They should be available in all local shops and supermarkets. Hotels and restaurants should be serving these local products on their menus daily. Special efforts should be made to encourage tourists and visitors to try them and to take away samples from our local shops when they return home.\(^\text{11}\)

If foreigners entering the nation's borders bought the concept of local foods, they would transport it abroad to the markets upon which the Trinidadian economy greatly relied. Members of the Culinary Arts and tourist industries enthused:

We in Trinidad & Tobago can do much more towards producing the best local dishes to tourists or visitors that come on vacation or business. The best way of popularising our local dishes is by introducing more local food in hotels and restaurants by cultivating more lands and producing more food, some of which will be canned for export to different parts of the world.\(^\text{12}\)

Each item of packaged food replicated the nation for its purchaser. The imperative of the Culinary Arts Society and the catering school was to multiply the locations of the nation through the widespread exposure of its goods and services to maximize the chance of economic return. The tourism industry provided sites (restaurants, hotels) for the sale of national products. Tourist industry workers were to take advantage of the opportunity to sell these 'modern' products abroad, or to tourists coming to Trinidad. In so doing, standards had to be put in place, foreign palates assuaged to accommodate the rarity of Trinidadian culinary traditions. X-pert nation-builders in industry and the appropriate national ministries required that local food producers,

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\(^{10}\) Vernon Khelawan "Culinary Society Aims at Boosting WI Menus" Trinidad Guardian 27Aug 1961. Consulted at HL.

\(^{11}\) Ann Marie Marchan "Marketing and Selling Local Foods" CALALLOO 4&5 (Apr/May 1968), 4.
sellers, and servers conceptualize the nation as extending beyond its parochial borders in the sense that its definition was relevant to non-Trinidadians as much as to Trinidadians. Though a national identity could act as a unifying device for the disparate Trinidadian population, its perhaps more immediate utility in the early independence era was as a translation of the ‘essence’ of Trinidad and Tobago for outside investors and consumers.

The Culinary Arts assumed foreigners and foreign markets were innocent yet apprehensive receptacles for representations of the Trinidadian nation, and furthermore incapable of conceiving the nation without aid. Accommodating the supposed passivity of the foreigner, it became imperative that locals excite the tourist impulse to consume local culture, and that local goods provoke a response in foreign markets. Eric Roach, a local cookbook author, illustrates this task for his people as he discusses a popular and simple Caribbean dish, ‘cook-up rice’:

> Anyone can do it, but the rest of the world never heard of it. Tourists have come here time after time and never heard of it either. ...This kind of experience can and should be enjoyed by every visitor to the islands. Many tourists go to a Caribbean restaurant and are afraid to eat the native dishes: they are afraid to order this or that because it sounds strange. Why so much fear? One should discover the main dishes of a country and get turned on by them, because through appreciation of the food you will learn a great deal more about the people.  

It was up to the Trinidadian server to lure the timid tourist into tasting the local cuisine. Though this may expand the tourist’s knowledge of the local, the more compelling concern was that he or she consume the goods being produced by the nation. The aim ultimately was to present a sanitized version of history for consumption. A food created out of slavery and indenture was to be marketed as exotic and novel, after passing through stringent (foreign-produced) standards. The culinary arts were meant to accomplish this modernizing of food, this readying for world consumption of local culture.

Of course, the local population constituted a readily available market as well, and X-perts did not ignore this as they courted international opportunities. Combining its efforts with those of the Culinary Arts Society, the government encouraged the nation to ‘buy local’ in an extensive

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campaign to bolster the local economy.\textsuperscript{14} "We have during our Buy Local campaign and in our Agriculture Year programme tried to emphasize to our people the importance of consuming local goods in preference to foreign." Trinidadians' insatiable appetite for foreign products induced the X-perts to persuade it to buy local goods in much the same way as the foreign consumer. They claimed to be concerned beyond increasing the wealth of the nation, however. "We have emphasized the need on economic as well as health grounds, for modifying many of our dietary habits, which were developed in conditions different from those prevailing today."\textsuperscript{15} Alluding to the colonial diet, the twin force of state and Culinary Arts once again undertook a refashioning of the colonial in post-colonial betterment. The health of the nation could be generated from "information on the nutritional qualities of locally-produced foodstuff, and on the variety of ways in which these can be prepared to be attractive, as well as appetizing," and the populace would thus submit "more readily to the appeal to go local."\textsuperscript{16} On the local front, then, the X-perts were interested in reforming the nation's consumption patterns so as to produce a local 'modern' customer of goods and services.

The X-perts were called in to lead the local population toward an appreciation of their national identity as consumers as well as citizens. 'Eat local' subtly intended to make 'new citizens,' modern consumer-citizens, of the formerly colonized. "'Eat local' drive is on; Contest for Cooks" read the headlines. The editorial postulates: "Why are Trinidadians still eating so much foreign foods? Is it because they do not know how to prepare local dishes properly?" In

\textsuperscript{13}Eric Roach "Cooking for fun with Geoffrey" Trinidad Guardian 6 Jul. 1973, 6. Consulted at HL.

\textsuperscript{14}"My Ministry is fully aware of the special role which the National Culinary Arts Society is equipped to play, and we have not omitted to enlist its collaboration whenever we felt it was in a position to help. The Society has assisted in setting up the Nutrition booths at the recent County Agricultural Exhibitions and has been almost solely responsible for organizing the recipe contest conducted to obtain formulations, involving the use of local ingredients, which may be suitable for export." L. M. Robinson, Min. of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries "Our own food in our own way" Your Chef Quarterly Magazine of Trinidad and Tobago Carifta Country (May 1970), 2. Consulted at HL.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
order to combat this lack of identification with the local or national cuisine, the Culinary Arts
Association conducted a ‘Stop the Use of Imported Food’ campaign and an island wide Local
Dishes contest in which the local population could be exposed to the instruction of the chefs. The
contest’s intent was to “encourage variety in the preparation of local foods.” Another X-pert,
cookbook author Jean De Boissiere explains the apathy and disinterest in national identity
formation similarly, and makes a comparable allowance for the pollination of local and foreign.
As a way of persuading both locals and tourists to make use of local foods, the ‘calaloo’ pot is
resurrected one more time and incited for its nationalizing of the cosmopolitan:

To understand Trinidad it is essential you know her foods and live by them. Many miss the
fascinating experience of eating Creole because they insist on clinging to foods that are not
indigenous and have to be imported at considerable expense from countries thousands of miles
away. You can eat creole and taste the northern influences still: but they have been transformed. ... [A]s Creole cooking is international all national prejudices must be dropped and our food
approached with an open palate.”

Food and food production, infused by the processes of colonialism and imperialism,
continued to be targeted for regeneration throughout the post-colonial era. Soldered to the power
matrix of colonialism, the mundane and ordinary practice of cooking had become a matter of
national interest and now the state and its proponents in the Culinary Arts turned toward the
disorderly farms, markets, and kitchens – national spaces in need of regulation. Ethnic
minorities, petty vendors, and women were emblematic and reminiscent of the colonial past in
which haphazard mechanisms governed the growth, sale, and consumption of food. In enforcing
national boundaries, these peripheral entities became central to the cause of reforming the nation.

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16 Ibid.

17 “WHY TRINIS EAT FOREIGN FOODS” Express 28 Apr. 1964. Consulted at HL.

The process of nation-building was deeply gendered, meaning it reenacted the power struggle in which 'female' and 'male' form a binary opposition on which to pattern social interactions. At the cusp of nationhood, the conceptual space of the colony bore resemblance to a woman dominated, while the invented 'nation' would find its feet in masculinist discourses of 'progress', scientific development, and foreign market conquest and exploitation. The virile nation exuded independence and liberty offsetting the effeminate colony marked by struggle and prostration. Reproducing the opposition of 'female' and 'male' throughout the economic and cultural structures of the new nation, nation-builders not only naturalized gender differences but further polarized 'colony' and 'nation'. Nation-builders superimposed their blueprint of the 'nation' on the space of the colony in an attempt to delete the past and begin with a clean template. Ignoring the seepage of colonial history into the modern state, they indulged their potent fantasies of nationhood (man- hood).

The feminine body of the colony cross-dressed as 'nation(man)-hood' entered into the reconstituted 'neo-colonial' global economy, while the slippage between the dominated form (colony) and the dominating figure (nation) inspired public debate in which the dubious interstice between 'colony' and 'nation', 'woman' and 'man' was scrutinized. Dissatisfied with the concretizing of a female identity around disempowerment, women interrogated the cogency of the masculinizing force behind nationhood. The country's men with 'language' and 'science' as their swords combated the irrationality of the colonial space, as they contested the terrain of primarily female control: the kitchen. The Culinary Arts Society submitted the kitchen to a 'technology of power' in which food preparation became a discipline to be mastered. Associating cooking with knowledge as opposed to experience the Culinary Arts converted an everyday 'female' practice into a learned 'male' domain. After so long being 'dominated' by the genius
(read erratic) of the West Indian woman in her kitchen magically turning pig’s feet into a masterful meal, the Culinary Arts rationalized cooking in order to ensure its productivity and marketability in the standardized global marketplace.

No one ever taught them. They learnt from watching their mothers and grandmothers. They attained their expertise through aptitude and trial and error. That’s part of the West Indian tradition too.\(^{19}\)

Their forms of constructing and disseminating knowledge relegated to the ‘traditional’ past, women became the objects of ‘development’ as much as goods and services under reform in the local economy. In his rapturous harmonizing of ‘tradition’ with a colonial ‘female’ knowledge Roach captures the post-colonial problematic:

> I began to think historically about West Indian food, I began to wonder what sort of “war-rap” the slave cooks churned out for their fellows on the slave plantations and how European and African cooking came to be married in their collision in the great houses of the period. That clash in the dark ages, that marriage and spawning of creolism is part of the story of cooking in the Caribbean.\(^{20}\)

‘Tradition’ bound the colony and seemingly cemented its domination by outside forces. Women were inextricably linked to the coercive strategies of colonialism as symbols of oppression. The food women produced was laden with a history of colonization and ‘making-do’; the very structure of the food and the items cooked, the parts of the pig the master wouldn’t touch, expressed and spoke of a history that was not commensurate with the forming national identity.

The culinary arts, then, were a conscious re-fashioning of an effeminate colonial past. The powerful community-building task of cooking that women performed in the colonial period was deliberately re-shaped into the domain of the male chef cooking up a distinctly ‘national’ and masculine identity. The tool for change was linguistic – the practice of encoding the legacy of the nation was a reproductive act in which the nation could be presented and represented to both the local populace and the world. “The present, popular trend in catering is to revive some

\(^{19}\) Eric Roach, 6.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
of the favorite recipes of our grandmothers, and in so doing, improve on them.”

Revival in effect meant re-writing, that is, literally writing over the stigmatized (‘feminine’) past of colonialism. The masculinist discourse of recording (in written form) recipes and knowledge on food symbolically negated the intuitive and orally-transmitted female knowledge of cooking and food. Experience-based food preparation defied standardization, the guiding principle of the international economy. In order for the Trinidadian nation to be present in the global marketplace, it had to part ways with the female/colonial unscientific transference of knowledge:

There is no distinct trend in Caribbean cooking, indeed, quantities of ingredients of most dishes have never been written down, but have been handed down verbally from generation to generation. ... Many experienced and successful cooks are guided only by the reaction of their senses, and to the correct ingredients necessary for a specific recipe. This often baffles anyone studying cooking in our Caribbean territories.

West Indian cooking, as such, was inaccessible to the foreigner who required a systematized and ‘knowable’ methodology for food preparation. Experience was not quantifiable and therefore rebutted the inquisitive non-native who was the ultimate consumer of West Indian cuisine and cookbooks. Powerless to live the history that informed West Indian cuisine and cooking methods, the foreign cook desired cuisine that was exotic yet codified in a legible form. Trinidadian cuisine required translation before it would or could be consumed by outsiders.

Juxtaposing the ‘female’ intuitive cooking style was the literary and legitimimized male order: “The written record is the obvious answer” comments the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, L. M. Robinson, referring to the publication of a National Culinary Arts Society quarterly magazine. In the past, he claims, useful information about food has been lost because there has not been a systematic way to record and transmit ideas. He ignores the patterned oral transmission of knowledge from grandmother to mother to daughter that had persisted from the

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21 WEST INDIAN COOKERY (source unknown). Consulted at WID.

22 Ibid.

23 L. M. Robinson, 2.
pre-colonial to the post-colonial age. In his support for the Culinary Arts magazine, the Minister denounced the ignorance and inefficiency of colonialism, and adopted the written measure as the solution. His assumption that the ‘visible’ corresponded to the ‘known’, that a recipe made tangible by writing was fathomable, was underwritten by ‘western’ science’s materialism. The ‘progress myth’ was textured by a sense that the material world could be mastered if ‘seen’ or ‘observed’. ‘Female’ constructions of knowledge eluded masculinist nation-builders and trained X-perts, their foundations imperceptible to scientific reasoning. The national identity was a formula that could be transliterated for international recognition and consumption.

Women were initiated into the national identity through the reformation of their kitchens. In order to contain the disruptive past they cooked, X-perts instructed them in ‘modern’ methods of food preparation, and informed them that they would be aiding in the modernization of the nation by appropriating this knowledge. It took men, chefs, to build the ‘national’ cuisine, to propel it out of the local and onto the international front, where it took on value as a commodity. Women, housewives in particular, would maintain the home front, building the health of their household members as a contribution to the nation. Cookbooks written by X-perts were the training manuals for the nation’s ‘guardian angels’. Inculcating ideals in women, cookbooks encouraged women to reach their potential as in-home nation-builders. Inaugurated with this ambivalent role of creator/server, the homemaker would cultivate the ability to create meals that were both aesthetically pleasing and healthy for her family.

Every well-prepared meal has a designer. Not a cook merely, but a designer – an artist, dietitian, nutritionist, and economist all combined in one. Such a homemaker will find this volume of recipes a stimulating aid in measuring up to her own high ideals in meal planning and preparation. It will perform a service far greater than that merely of a ‘cookbook’ – a service of building better people and thus better communities through the faithful ministry of homemakers.24

Trained on the impoverished techniques of colonial cookery, women needed to be taught how to cook nutritionally and efficiently. They needed cookbooks that showed them how to

measure and sanitize their cooking processes. Ordinary housewives were celebrated in culinary magazines for internalizing these important values. "Spotlessly-clean, bright and shining" kitchens and the prevalence of measuring devices, scales etc. aid the housewife's 'professionalism'.

Nazi Ramrattan, a local housewife who as a creator/server "cooks for pleasure and to give pleasure" and who, upon marriage, couldn't cook, "...gradually learnt by asking friends for their recipes and through trial and error. The latter is a method that she recommends for every young cook." Despite her arcane cuisinary training Nazi was commended for her kitchen as "...one of the most organised ... its efficiency allows her to concentrate on the preparation of her dishes rather than wasting time looking for utensils." The industrialization of the kitchen was a clear mark of modernity, and a symbol of 'development' for the new nation.

Exceptional women bridged the private space of kitchen and the public space of professional cuisine. One article tells the story of a housewife turned culinary expert: "Mrs. Sheila Rocke [is] one of the few women who successfully combine the duties of wife and mother with a career." As a professional caterer and a housewife she ratified the efforts of the Culinary Arts Society. In her interview, she emphasized the necessity of 'contraptions' to standardise measurements, even for experts: "We no longer rely on 'a piece of butter the size of an egg.'" Says the interviewer: "As a matter of fact, I gathered that cookery has advanced, like everything else, to such a standard of perfected precision..." Embedded in her cooking advice are the intertwining narratives of gender, 'progress' and nationhood. Through the discourse of professionalism, male 'X-perts' advertised and properly displayed for consumption the commodity of food. Chefs, as professionals, represented an overcoming of the haphazard and

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25 Jean Minshall "Culinary expert who always liked the kitchen" 22 April 1964 paper? Consulted at HL.

26 "CURRY! Mm! Roti, pilori balls, curried channa and chicken" You Magazine, 2:9. Consulted at HL.

27 Minshall.
malnourished past, and were envisioned as leading the way to a healthy nation. Housewives who associated themselves with this advancement of the nation potentially ‘cross-dressed’ as X-perts. This was exceptional (read *unnatural*), however, and as the article reflects, Mrs. Rocke was an anomaly rather than an exemplar for Trinidadian women.

In the main, the professionalization of cooking was reserved for men: “The art of cookery embraces skilled and trained personnel, for behind every appetising dish there is a Chef. *His* artistry builds up a food industry.” Women, though they had been providing meals for families and masters for so many generations, were not to be credited in this process, but rather converted to its tenets. Women were archaic in their techniques until they embraced the ‘improved’ methods imported into the new nation through the international culinary arts scene. Women were no longer the generators of knowledge on food, but the needy recipients of advice from culinary artists. Furthermore while chefs were creating an image for the nation, women remained relegated to the kitchen with the less imaginative task of balancing nutrients and budgets.

**Section III: The ‘Calaloo’ Nation under Critique**

This trend did not go unnoticed or undisputed, even in the culinary magazines themselves. The droll argument that developed in an editorial section of the culinary magazine ignites this particular issue. A letter from a man states a case for the superiority of men as cooks. Spinning his chauvinistic history of cooking, Quash concludes that men needed to learn to cook for themselves, “[s]o man settles down to make himself a real master of the art. What is the result? Man become the better cook.” In a cheeky rebuttal, Jean Filip responds with the following diatribe:

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28 (my italics) Alfred Phillip “Bringing Professionalism to Caribbean Cooking” *Your Chef Quarterly Magazine of Trinidad and Tobago Carifta Country* (May 1970), 5.

Ah have to use de rael 'creole' language to deal wid Ken Quash...Who teach man how to cook? Woman oui: When man say “Woman jess light de wood and put de bease to roas” What she do? Ah go tell yuh. She say "Wah - appen wid yuh; man put herbs and salt and leh do ting have tase nuh. Dem men does dekrate food pretty. But yuh cyah eat dektration. All dem food display and food show dey havin. Is a lot of fancee stuff - Ony show - People want food wid tase. So way dey goin? In de WOMAN kitchen. Woman food sweeter dan man food any time.30

Filip cleverly perceives and makes use of the alliance between a language and a food created out of colonialism as she contests Quash in creole dialect. Here, the use of creole dialect suggests a ‘politics of resistance’ to the disciplining (masculinizing) dictates of the state and its X-perts, and it also reflects the oppositional structures of oral and written language. Filip consciously rebuts in creole dialect so as to underline the structural alliance between orally-transmitted knowledge (women passing down cooking instruction generation to generation) and the oral dialect of English invented by her enslaved forebearers. Just as the slave had resisted the master’s tongue and refashioned it to articulate his/her own voice, Filip now resisted the modernizing language of the developing nation and responds to Quash’s heady machismo with a cutting reminder of the nation’s origins in slavery and colonialism. Her retort in creole dialect opposes the written culture of the Culinary Arts, enunciating a gendered dichotomy between oral (female) and written (male) legacies. This dichotomy is deepened by her claim that female cookery, grounded in the local, is more edible than the male chef’s internationalized concoctions (pretty food). Creole dialect, a distinctly Trinidadian linguistic tradition underscores the localness of female cookery, in opposition to the modernizing culinary arts project articulated in the Standard English of the international culinary scene.

She shows she understands the problematic of national cuisine – the redesigning of colonial food as national food in her manipulation of space and time. Though Quash had fictionally placed his contested terrain in a sort of prehistoric time, Filip explicitly relocates the battleground in the colonial period through the use of the ‘slave tongue’. She throws

professionalism and 'western' standards in the face of her nemesis in order to underscore her point: women taught men to cook, and it was women's ingenuity in the kitchen (in extreme deprivation under slavery) that nourished and sustained the community that now paraded as a nation. She boldly denied the ability of the culinary arts to entice local palates (and perhaps by extension foreign ones too) because the food sanitized and appropriately packaged, marketed and shown off (pretty food), ultimately lacked 'spice,' that is, the sensual input of the West Indian women.

The sensual pleasure of taste could not be quantified, packaged, or standardized and Filip plays on this supposition in reclaiming for women the space of the kitchen from the blanching march of nationalization. Moreover, Filip alludes to the erotic undertones of cooking when she states that women's food is 'sweeter' ('sweet' in dialect can signify a sexual nuance). Geoffrey Holder, culinary X-pert, lays wide a prevalent fantasy that is thick with the deep-play of spice and female sexuality. He euphorically details: “Just imagine stuffing and cooking roast pork. There is so much sensuality in that. To watch a West Indian woman stuff pork is obscene.” For Holder, as with Filip, the carnal cookery of the West Indian woman overpowers the sterile 'national cuisine'. Its rusticity directly contradicted the rationalizing processes of nation formation, yet both authors confirm their preference of female cooking. We will return later to this correlation of cooking with female sexuality in my discussion of Indian female sexuality and her production of 'exotic' food.

As Filip noted, local palates did not accommodate the 'calaloo' nation and its hybrid forms, at least initially. Seen by local consumers as a falsification of a 'true' local cuisine, rooted in a history of colonial subjugation and dietary restriction, the national cuisine gained little support and needed constant advertisement by the X-perts in the Culinary Arts and tourist industry. The national identity of 'calaloo', synonymous with the national cuisine, also stood to
be rejected for its lack of 'local content'. Inevitably, the local population began to question the use of a national identity that was strictly a device to allure foreign attention. The tactics of these X-perts seemed to deviate from the goal of independence – the economic freedom for Trinidad and Tobago, and rehabilitation of the local economy for the benefit of local people. As the post-colonial government and industry sponsors courted their international customers, and drove the local population to assume roles as courtiers, integrity of their policies on the development of the local economy came under attack.

Section IV: 'Local’ Food Campaign under Critique

There is a case to be made that the nation-builders’ faith in the ‘discourse of progress’ blind-sided their attempts at promoting the ‘local’. Neither the government nor the Culinary Arts Society was interested in the promotion of local knowledge on food, for instance. Because food ‘X-perts’ considered local knowledge on food production impoverished, the Culinary Arts provided ‘educative’ strategies for the preparation of improved versions of local recipes. One commentator, Eric Roach, writes in a local chef’s magazine that people in ‘underdeveloped’ country know little about nutrition. “To most of us a meal means just anything that fills the stomach.” He goes on to propose: “If we knew more about food, we could demand greater efforts both from the Government and the farmers.”

Another critic states the quandary with seeking the aid of technology to “catch up with years of neglect.” He cites an example in which X-perts pass off indigenous pigeon peas as (northern-grown) green peas. His case illustrates the point that ahistorical and culturally insensitive development initiatives not only waste development dollars, but also miss the opportunity to engage indigenous knowledge in promoting local agriculture and food production.

He isolates as the problem: "In a majority of cases, technology is totally transplanted without consideration of climatic conditions, material differences and availability and differences in cultural practices and personal attitudes." In the process of nationalizing industrial production, the governing forces of Trinidad and Tobago and their industry decision-makers opted for 'western' knowledge over local insights that perhaps were not scientific in their basis, but were venerable in their understanding of the local landscape and its yields.

X-perts' adherence to 'western' standards extended to preparation of food as well as its production. Using the trilogy of discipline, production, tolerance, food was to be produced efficiently ('western' technology), made tolerable to the palate of the foreign - and the local with his/her foreign tastes - consumer (culinary arts and catering), then disciplined into a marketable form (packaging). In furnishing a product under foreign dictates, localized food forms were abandoned in exchange for a national cuisine with a hybrid, internationally acceptable appearance. The raw material of the local cross-dressed for the pleasure of the foreign client, while local knowledge was marginalized and discounted. The X-pert culinary artists concerned themselves with the normative knowledge structures of the international culinary stage so as to assure Trinidad and Tobago its place within the panoply of nations. The 'national cuisine' they cooked had little basis in the locale, but instead represented a variant or translation of the local cuisine that would be evaluated in accordance with international conventions.

Section V: National Cuisine versus Local Cuisine

The Headline Reads...
"Chef of the Year; The top chefs in Trinidad and Tobago; Minister calls for national cuisine"  
The strengthening of a national identity around food took hold around an invented

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32 Eric Roach Your Chef Quarterly Magazine of Trinidad and Tobago Carifta Country (May 1970), 8.

33 Your Chef Quarterly Magazine of Trinidad and Tobago Carifta Country (May 1970), 8.
‘national cuisine’. In 1970, a Minister made a call for the creation and promotion of a national cuisine. His comment was made at the Chef of the Year awards, a ceremony that had been in place since the inception of the nation. An established body of professionals, these acclaimed chefs became partners of the state and assumed the role of ‘X-perts’ in the invention of a cuisine to represent the essence of Trinidad and Tobago to the world. For almost a decade, the Culinary Arts had developed and improved so that these men could play such a defining role for the nation. Not only were they to depict the nation to itself, but far more importantly, to the international community. “Tastes vary from country to country, nation to nation, and though it is conceded that West Indian dishes are among the best in the world, the names and quality of these dishes are not sufficiently well known.”

‘National cuisine’ appears in the public record as synonymous with ‘local cuisine’, yet it acted in radical opposition to the history of that ‘local cuisine’. As a tool of the state and industry in their promotion of local foodstuffs, national cuisine was generated from the localized space of the ‘nation’ and remained closely associated with local food growth, sale, and consumption. Nonetheless, it did not exclusively replicate local recipes. While the Culinary Arts supported the use of local products, it did not necessarily require chefs to produce ‘indigenous’ recipes. Article headlines recited: “The Winning Recipe; Hospital cook leads the way” with “Seafood and Poultry Loaf Surprise, Saffron Rice, Mixed Vegetables Gardinia, and Angostura Barbadino” or “An old campaigner with the master touch” wins with ‘West Indian Chicken with Russian Vegetable salad’”. The unlikely matching of local with international is stark. In the first recipe, the only identifiably local food product in the recipe is the Angostura bitters. While local

34 Trinidad Guardian 14 July 1970. Consulted at HL.
36 “An old campaigner with the master touch” wins with ‘West Indian Chicken with Russian Vegetable salad’ (paper?) 29 Dec. 1965; Trinidad Guardian 14 Jul. 1970 p?. Consulted at HL.
poultry, seafood, rice and vegetables may indeed have been proffered, it is clear that the recipe did not adhere to a 'local cuisine'. In other words, the raw materials could be extracted from the 'locale' but the art of preparing it remained a foreign concept.

Chefs earned acclaim via their artistry and the refinement of their recipes. In an attempt to represent the nation but fulfill the requirements of their profession, chefs masqueraded local food in an internationally ordained respectability.\(^{37}\) The chef contests prioritized 'creativity':

"The Prime Minister’s challenge trophy for the most creative dish and the Angostura Bitters Trophy for the best chef from Tobago, are the two most sought after trophies."\(^{38}\) The prestige attached to producing a hybrid food form was commensurate with the local government’s policy to liberalize trade, and to mediate a 'calaloo' society that accepted its foreign elements as part of the whole. The food being produced in local chef contests - even those explicitly aimed at engaging local foods - were hybrid forms that attempted to meet world-wide culinary standards at the same time as appeasing the need to support 'buy local'. In keeping with the ruling group’s desire to design a new template for the Trinidadian society, 'national cuisine' erased traces of its historical – colonial – past, and instead presented as a benign and apolitical version of the nation’s dishes to the outside world.

Though locals were incited to imagine the nation and engage in its representation and sale, their roles as nation-builders remained ambiguous. X-perts – those appointed by the Culinary Arts Society – figured as creators of national identity, while those involved in industry manufactured the national image in their goods and services. Yet the process of fabricating the nation in various contexts was not transparent. X-perts and workers alike catered to the demands of the international consumer and market. Their role thus figured was as servers rather than creators. Independence, in the form of control over the local economy, would remain elusive to

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these actors as they remained enslaved by foreign domination. Caught in this ambivalence, these oscillating roles, the people of the nation proverbially sat back, laughed and largely left the messy task of sorting out a national identity to ‘de X-perts.’

Section VI: The Intervening ‘Black Power’ Counterdiscourse

In 1970, culinary X-pert, Mr. Ronald Narine, was awarded the title of Chef of the Year. In 1972, apparently understanding the power of this seemingly apolitical title, Narine engaged the politics of the era and brought forth the following complaint. If the local government and the Culinary Arts movement were so concerned about promoting the local economy, why did the media continue to promote a foreign cooking program on TV? Where were the groomed nation-building chefs of Trinidad and Tobago to go with their homegrown talents? The TMA conceded that indeed the “Galloping Gourmet” programme did not meet local needs.\(^9\) Narine’s complaint smacked of the ‘Black Power’ vocabulary that rose to social consciousness in Trinidad and Tobago in 1970 with a series of ‘revolutionary’ events.\(^0\)

‘Black Power’, the international counterdiscourse sprung from an earlier ‘Pan-Africanism’, offered a strong critique of a perceived pattern of ‘neo-colonialism’ emblematic of post-colonial regimes struggling to construct nations upon decolonization. ‘Black Power’ intellectuals manipulated a Marxist ideological framework to re-focus the post-colonial initiative on ‘the people’ – the common worker who ought to have experienced economic and social amelioration after the metropole divested its colonies. The ‘Black Power’ intelligentsia, then, regarded itself to be in the midst of a pitched battle with the ‘neo-colonial’ establishment state

\(^{9}\) “TMA Agrees with 1970 Chef Champ; Plans own TV Programme” Express 20 Oct. 1972, 23. Consulted at HL.

\(^{0}\) See Radical Caribbean “Chapter Two: The 1970 Revolution: Chronology and Documentation” (9-36) for an overview of these events. In the main, the revolution consisted of: demonstrations surrounding an incident of alleged discrimination (The Sir George Williams incident); the formation of NJAC (National Joint Action Committee) and the consolidation of union support – especially the OWTU (Oilfield Workers’ Trade Union); the March to Caroni to seek Indian workers’ support; and finally, a State of Emergency and an attempted coup by radical ‘Black Power’ rebels.
and its attendant bourgeoisie. Though international in scope, the articulations of the ‘Black Power’ ideology necessarily varied depending on localized contexts.

‘Black Power’ intellectuals in Trinidad and Tobago dismissed the notion of the ‘calaloo’ society and forced a scrutiny of race relations in terms of ‘white imperialist’ oppression of black people. The ‘Black Power’ critique in Trinidad and Tobago was fashioned around an accusation that the local black government and black middle class Trinidadians alike had no ideological convictions, and therefore colluded with the ‘white imperialists’. “Are they capitalists...do they believe in capitalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, anything? Nobody knows. They keep as far as they can from committing themselves to anything.” 41 Furthermore, the noted lack of resolution harked of the ambivalence of nation-formation itself. As the roles of everyday nation-builders oscillated between creator and server, ‘Black Power’ intellectuals questioned the viability of building a nation on international foundations. They longed for an internal stability that would benefit the local, and their stance insisted upon a disassociation with the foreign.

The ‘Black Power’ vocabulary opposed a ‘national cuisine’ that discounted or minimized local contributions. They critiqued the elite’s manipulation of the ‘local’ for international consumption. They would have concurred with critics within the tourist industry who questioned the sincerity of the post-colonial government’s commitment to a ‘local foods campaign’.

‘Buy Local’ is our government slogan. How many local ‘Maitres d’hotel’ have we at the Hilton? Why does the average Trinididian trying to make a career in the industry attain the post of Head-waiter and go no further? ... If tourism is to give this country a boost, government must spend the money allocated to this industry much more wisely and in the right direction.42

Though politicians championed ‘buy local’ or ‘local foods’ campaigns that encouraged the local population to consume goods produced within national borders, their allegiance to international standards and conventions was clear. Despite the development of local X-perts by local training facilities and organizations such as the Culinary Arts Society, the administrative and executive

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levels of industry remained unattainable for local workers. The new X-perts found themselves in vacuous and impotent roles as servers, their creative powers inert. Initially resurrected as nation-builders, the X-perts created of modernity began to experience the ambivalence of their role and saw in the ‘Black Power’ counterdiscourse a pronunciation of their frustration.

Section VII: ‘Black Power’ Ideology and ‘Race’

The engagement of a ‘black and white’ politics pointed to the ‘Black Power’ adherence to fixed racial and class identities. The ‘Black Power’ movement urged a purging of the anxieties sustained within the national identity through a recovery of pre-colonial racial identities. Laying bare the legacy of domination and power struggle embedded in the histories of colonialism and imperialism, ‘Black Power’ constituents attempted to return diasporic identities to the homeland through a ‘roots-revival’ and restored pride in an originary ‘culture’.

‘Culture’ for ‘Black Power’ intellectuals was far less nebulous than in the hybridized and ‘progress-ive’ ‘calaloo’ propagated by the nation’s elite. Incorporating a return to ‘tradition’ into their philosophy, the ‘Black Power’ intellectuals upheld something closer to ‘unity in diversity’. They recognized distinct cultural forms and identities, but saw separate ethno-cultural sub-groups building solidarity, especially in terms of workers’ rights. Their intentions of solidarity did permeate the ‘cultural,’ nonetheless. An advertisement for a ‘Black Power’ dance sanctioned ‘culture swapping,’ and presumably cross-cultural awareness and tolerance; yet the categories of ‘African’ and ‘Indian’ were discursively normalized and typed:

... To symbolise the Hope of our People for Afro-Asian Unity, Africans if they so wish are encouraged to wear Indian outfits and Indians, African outfits. In addition this exchange of cultural wear between Africans and Indians would enhance the beauty of both ethnic groups in a way that the European dress normally worn by both can never do!43

42 CALALLOO, 2.
Naturalizing ‘African’ and ‘Indian’ beauty in the blatantly culturally constructed form of clothing was an equivocation risked in order to make the point that European dress was offensively foreign on the African or Indian body. Literally \textit{re-dressing} the mimicry sprung from a colonial psychology of submission and acculturation, the dance brought into question the privileging of European garb. Their subsequent subversion ‘turned the world upside down’ but paradoxically made use of the racial typing so fastidiously a part of the colonial endeavor. Essentialized ethnicities gained further immutability as ‘Black Power’ dogma distilled ‘culture’ into the knowable and defined it in relation to the well-identified originary spaces of Africa or India. ‘Culture’ became entrenched in forms - food, clothes - thought to be ‘indigenous.’ The ‘Black Power’ movement empowered the ex-slave and ex-indentured peoples of Trinidad and Tobago to publicly announce their fantasies of ‘home.’

While it was permissible for Blacks and Indians to \textit{cross-dress} and temporarily exchange identities within the contrived boundaries of the dance, the transgression for Black Power ideologues took place when isolated racial identities assimilated or commingled to the point of dilution or distortion. Instead of allowing ‘races’ to conmingle in the haphazard manner of the ‘calaloo’, ‘Black Power’s’ racial identities were clearly demarcated. Collapsing the categories of ‘race’ and ‘culture’ into one meaning, the ‘Black Power’ movement produced and solidified pre-colonial cultural identities for both Blacks and Indians living in a diasporic state. Diasporic peoples traversed imagined time and space to rediscover their ‘true’ selves. The restorative project was founded on a rejection of the foreign, and thus a denial of the intervening presence of colonialism and indeed the very neo-colonialism to which the movement was adverse.

The dance’s advertisement addressed the restitution of discrete ‘heritages’ and claimed the vindicating power of history. Optimistically dismissing the pervasive and disturbingly deep traces of colonialism, the ‘Black Power’ dance recalled the pre-colonial world (the motherlands) as if these spaces had not been tampered with by the history of colonialism and imperialism.
At a time when Trinagonians of African and Indian descent are rediscovering their own cultural and historical heritage the President General, always attuned to the dynamics of popular, genuine change -- in short true revolutionary awakening, sees the need to encourage and enrich the reclamation of our African and Asian Identities. And what better way to do this than by embracing the cultural and social expressions of our true historical heritage!  

A self-proclaimed class-based revolution, the 'Black Power' movement also perceived itself to be revolutionary in its conception of 'race' and 'culture' and in its recognition of 'true' identities. Yet the movement's inability to affirm the intermingled identity of the diasporic person – the post-colonial confused 'calaloo' – resulted in a reification of the category of 'race' and a nostalgic racial and cultural determinism. Paradoxically, the ideology that claimed to restore history rendered the history of colonialism illegible. 'Black Power' seemed vulnerable to the same ahistoricity of which it had criticized the post-colonial state.

Despite calling for unity, 'Black Power' ideology maintained separate 'race/culture' and class identities denying a transcendence into oneness. Its evasion or all-too-easy evaporation of the context of chronic racial tension between blacks and Indians did little to resolve these differences. In fact, despite its overtures to the Indian community to unite against the 'white imperialists,' the 'Black Power' movement gained only minor support from Indians.  

In the main, Indians inhabited the extremities of the national space, reflecting the combined effects of the Indians' rejection of the 'calaloo' nation, and the blacks' discomfort with the nationalizing of Indian culture.

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44 Ibid.

Since neither the ‘calaloo’ nation nor the ‘Black Power’ counterdiscourse broke the surface skin of race relations in Trinidad and Tobago, tensions simmered on in the supposed ‘calaloo’ pot after decolonization. The definition of communal identities continued to monopolize local interest even as the nation required formation. Integral in upholding the boundary between black and Indian identities was the Indian woman. As a bearer of ‘tradition’, she represented the immaculateness of the Indian community, at the same time as she marked its status as ‘outsider’ to the ‘calaloo’ nation. The Indian male-dominated community achieved distinction from the black-run nation by maintaining the Indian woman’s cultural and sexual virtue. In the age of black/creole nationalism and ‘progress’, the Indians’ stance appeared recalcitrant and backward. Expressions of creole nationalism employed sexualized discourses to further isolate the Indian community, and again the Indian woman was the object of manipulation. Despite animosities, however, Indian, and to an extent black men, resented the creolization of Indian women when it happened, and reacted conservatively as Indian women inducted themselves into the national ‘calaloo’ in a gesture of liberation.

The attitudes of black and Indian men toward the Indian woman cannot be understood outside of the historical context of colonialism. ‘Race politics’ is deeply engrained in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and stems from the original point of Black and Indian contact in the colony. After emancipation many ex-slaves urbanized and eventually would form a distinct ‘middle-class’; others made up the base of the ‘working class’ that was associated with major industries, especially oil. European-descended planters pressured the British colonial power to subsidize their labor supply, thus the advent of the indenture system in Trinidad. When Chinese labor pools proved impermanent – many Chinese laborers abandoned indentureship as soon as they could – the British exploited the colonized labor markets of India and exported Indians to its
Caribbean colonies. Though Indian indentured laborer worked primarily on the sugar cane plantations ex-slaves in Trinidad perceived the Indian indentured laborer to be a substitute labor force and economic threat. By the time decolonization occurred, Blacks and Indians had established an attitude of distrust and rivalry. Rosanne Kanhai observes: “...after national independence, competition for food, housing, school places, etc., in societies with little infrastructure and resources for decent living led to the party politics which formalized race divisions at a national level.”

In its social and political commentary, calypso – the popular and ‘national’ musical form of Trinidad and Tobago – has documented and perhaps even exaggerated the agitation produced from the multi-racial colony and ‘calaloo’ state. Up until the 1980s, African male artists dominated calypso and disclosed their political and social allegiances in their lyrics. “Calypso singing is a predominantly working-class, male, Afrocentered activity...” Calypsonians sang their support for black (creole) nationalism as the nation emerged:

Well the way how things shaping up  
All this nigger business go stop  
I tell you soon in the West Indies  
It’s please, Mister Nigger, please.

Calypsonian also endorsed the post-colonial government’s adoption of ‘development’ ideology. Calypsonian Nap Hepburn sang the national motto “Discipline, Tolerance, Production” in the year of independence, and jubilantly encouraged forgiveness of race and class differences.

46 See Bridget Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962 (Port of Spain, 1981) for background on history of race relations.


48 Bridget Brereton, 225.

49 Rosanne Kanhai, 14.

50 Ibid.

51 Zeno Obi Constance Tassa, Chutney and Soca; the East Indian Contribution to the Calypso, 1991, 30.
Invoking a sense of the ‘calaloo’ pot happily mixing its races, the nation was to celebrate and erase the colonial past and its by-product of racial polarization. This message is articulated in Sparrow’s “Model Nation” as well.

The whole population of our little Nation
Is not a lot
But oh what a mixture of Races and culture…
Still no major indifference
Of Race colour religion or finance
It’s amazing to I’m sure
That we didn’t get Independence before.

Disavowing animosity between ‘race’ groups, Sparrow’s lyrics reveal the desire of nation-builders to present an image of the nation as racially tolerant, despite its colonial experiences. He also associates this national tolerance with the bid for independence and the process of ‘earning’ independence from Britain rather than fighting for it. The colony had to prove it was worthy of nationhood by reflecting its stability. Violent race conflict could have postponed independence.

Sparrow, aware of foreign eyes observing and judging his nation, flippantly remarks:

You people who are foreign
I’ve got a message to give you when you’re going
Spread the word anywhere you pass
Tell the world there’s a model Nation at last.53

Despite these particular verbal gestures of tolerance and nationhood, calypsonians often isolated the Indian community in their lyrics, ridiculing Indian communalism and cultural protectionism.

‘[Q]uant’ customs of a group...exists on the margins of the calypsonian’s consciousness. Since the calypsonian generally perceives himself as an insider...groups seen to be on the margins are rarely presented as sanely ordered within themselves, but as eccentric, unsophisticated, weird and comical.54

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52 Meanwhile, The Statesman, the political organ of the DLP, ran editorials undermining the sincerity of the PNM government’s slogan. Bitterly charging ‘ad hoc authorities’ of discriminating against a Statesman news vendor, the paper printed: “No slogan about Tolerance, Discipline and Production will mean anything unless these little Eric Williamses are put in their place by Dr. Williams himself.” The Statesman 6 Jul. 1962, 2. Microform. Consulted at WID.

53 Mighty Sparrow: One Hundred & Twenty Calypsoes to Remember (Port of Spain, 1963), 40. Consulted at WID.

54 Rohlehr, Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad & Tobago, 493-4.
The Indian man was typed as comical and insecure, and Indian woman was represented as inaccessible (sexually, romantically, socially). The marriage between a black man and Indian woman was portrayed in calypso as a quip, the humor derived from the implausibility of such an arrangement. The calypsonian, Killer, sang in “Grinding Massala”:

Ah decide this year to marry a Hindu...
They bring a set of dhal bhaat for me to eat
Lahd! Is pepper like fire
Ah cyan stan de bunnin I bawling fuh waataa
So big belly Ramlal
Come wid a coolie drum an’ a dhalant...

Portraying the Indian man as ignorant -- note Ramlal’s inability to comprehend that the calypsonian needed water bringing musical instruments instead – the calypsonian derives a sense of his own superiority in the scenerio. Simultaneously he phrases the difficulties of marrying a Hindu or Indian woman, for swallowing her food – and culture – would burn away his own identity. Spice, and the ability to digest it, clearly marks a boundary between the black and Indian cultures for Killer.

Calypsonians also remark on the rivalry between black and Indian men over the control of the Indian female body and especially reproductive capacities. Rosanne Kanhai articulates this conflict in the following way:

[T]he trend of black cultural hegemony ... seemed to accompany black national politics in some Caribbean territories. Indians in Trinidad, forced into a reactionary mode over the years because of their minority/marginalized status in the politics of the region, saw the need to protect and affirm their ethnic identity....

Indian men manned the borders of the community through the guarding of Indian female sexuality. Threatened by the sexual aggression of the Black man, the Indian man protected his woman ferociously. Under threat was the Indian man’s masculinity as well as the purity of his ‘race’. Afraid that Indian women would be seduced by the taunting black man (exemplified in

55 Ibid, 493.

56 Rosanne Kanhai, 10-11.
the calypsonian), Indian men restricted the mobility of Indian women, and bemoaned their women's inevitable border-crossings.

Black men make no bones about the fact that they consider the Indian man to be an impotent weakling. ... And Indian men have internalized this, as evidenced by the perennial [sic] rum-shop talk about how Indian women cannot resist outsized black phalluses.57

Indian women maintained the borders of the community in perpetuating its purity. Sexual relationships that could produce mixed children had to be prohibited to meet this goal. Morality and purity colluded and became one – racial purity relied upon sexual virtue.

An Indian woman's transgression could lead to the birth of a 'dougla' child in the Indian community. 'Dougla,' a Hindi term meaning 'bastard,' in Trinidad and Tobago refers to a person of mixed black and Indian heritage.59 Racial hybrids became ingredient in the national 'calaloo,' but posed a threat to the purity of the Indian 'race'. Many douglas assumed the identity of one or the other race and sidestepped the ambiguity of their merged backgrounds. Calypso artist 'Dougla' sang "Split me in Two," describing with humor the dilemma of the mixed race person in Trinidad and Tobago.

Suppose they pass a law
They don't want people living here anymore
Everybody got to find they country
According to your race originally
What a confusion I would cause...
Because they sending Indians to India
And the Negroes back to Africa...
Where they sending poor me
I am neither one nor the other...
If they serious about sending people back for true


58 Rosanne Kanhai, 9-10.

They got to split me in two.\textsuperscript{60}

The presence the ‘douglia’ or other mixed-race peoples, however, did not necessarily weaken the boundaries between ‘races’, and possibly even strengthened them as hybrids posed a threat to ‘race’ purity. ‘Race’ divisions persisting from the colonial period undermined any genuine sense of a ‘calaloo’ society as the national culture went under construction.

Indian food and its preparation further implicated the genuineness of the ‘calaloo’ nation, and served to distinguish its borders. In seeking cultural self-definition, the Indian minority separated itself out from the ‘calaloo’ in a conscious marking of communal territory. Sham Mohammed gave an impromptu speech on Indian culture and defined it as “[c]urry in its various forms: Roti-Sadha, Dhalpurri, Paratha, Channa, Bara, Catchowri....”\textsuperscript{61} In his speech, however, Mohammed acknowledges the Indian community’s desire to be considered a part of the nation, but perhaps not a part of the ‘calaloo’ (with its cultural heritage intact – not creolized). He declares all Trinidadian culture as foreign in original as he justifies the promotion of an exclusive Indian culture – its music and dance – within Trinidad and Tobago:

> So don’t come and tell me that the song, music and dance are foreign, and the roti, what? Foreign, but you accept it? Well, even if it is foreign and you accept it, you must accept the song, music and dance in the same way. Because the same Carnival which is foreign in origin, is now accepted as the National Festival of Trinidad and Tobago.\textsuperscript{62}

Mohammed’s remark is referenced by the widespread acceptance of ‘roti’ as a street food by all members of the nation, but general discomfort with the ascendancy of other forms of an Indian cultural heritage.

Even though, ‘roti’ had become an informal part of the national cuisine, Indian food still remained a marker of difference between black and Indian. Indian women as the producers of ‘exotic’ food, embodied her community’s status of outsider in the nation. Her employment of

\textsuperscript{60} Constance, 31.
\textsuperscript{61} Sham Mohammed, “Indian Culture in Trinidad and Tobago?” Speech delivered at Astor Cinema, Port of Spain, 16 Sep. 1979, 10. His definition goes on to list the various garb, languages, spiritual and musical practices of the Indo-Trinidadian community.
‘traditional’ methods of food preparation combined with her enforced sexual purity in making her a vehement symbol of resistance to the process of creolization. Calypsonians did not fail to pick up on this either. As Rohlehr notes, Indian women were accompanied by their food, sexuality, and ethnicity in the calypsonian’s lyrics. “Calypsonians singing about Indians inevitably mention their food - dhal, roti, curry, talkarie - which is ... a marker of difference...” The calypsonian was often enraptured with the unattainable ‘traditional’ Indian woman, as he fantasized about the borderland she inhabited.

This use of food to metaphorize the sexuality of the Indian woman is significant given the context I have built around national cuisine. Spice defined the outside fringe of national cuisine, the magical contribution of the Indian minority to creole cooking. Yet spice was as mundane in Indian cooking as the task of making massala itself; grinding massala was an ingratiatingly laborious process, and ironically so, given the exotification of this process in calypso. As border markers, Indian women inhabited the spicy fringe of the melting pot experience. They were that magical effect that captured the African male imagination (or at least these certain calypsonians) and drove him wild with anticipation. “Every time ah passin gal grinin’ massala” Killer moaned. As the Indian woman teases him, the calypsonian torments the Indian male in hungering after his property. Indian and black men fought each other for the control of the ‘traditional’ Indian woman. One calypsonian equated the national symbol of ‘calaloo’ with virility, both his own and the that of the nation.

63 Gordon Rohlehr, 494. “Among the issues which certain calypsonians sing about when addressing the Indian woman are food, copulation, the ethnic barriers which impact on their access to food, copulation and acceptance by the Indian community. This tells us about the in-group nature of the ethnic communities and further, that the Indian woman is a prize that is zealously guarded by her men folk but she remains a prize worthy of capture.” Kampta Karran Trinidad an dTobago’s Parang Calypso and Chutney (Georgetown, Guyana, 1996), 13.

64 Sylvia Windle Humphrey “THIS IS SOUP WITH CURRY... BUT IT’S COOL, MAN, COOL” 26 Aug. 1961 (page, paper unknown). Consulted at HL.

65 Rohlehr, 493.
I notice ah get as hard as a police bootoo... Calaloo is the greatest tonic for me... 

His association of his sexual prowess with his food intake, specifically creole/national in form, implicitly disassociates the Indian man, who eats the marginalized food of his Indian woman, from sexual adequacy and national status. The creolization of Indians was not necessarily on the creole nationalist agenda, however, and was even resented:

What's wrong with these Indian people?
As though their intention is for trouble...
Long ago you'd meet an Indian by the road
With his capra waiting to take people load
But I notice there is no Indian again
Since the women and them taking Creole name...

Since the calypsonian had painted himself as an 'insider' based on his description of the Indian as the 'outsider', the dissolution of the 'other' also dissipated his own identity. "In the light of this logic of 'us' and 'them,' it is not surprising that many conservative Africans see the assimilation of Indians into the cultural mainstream as threatening, and resist the official liberal ideology of Trinidad as a callaloo." For all the jibing at Indian parochial ways, the calypsonian was bound to his definition of the Indian community as segregated and static in its cultural representations. He, like the 'traditional' elements of the Indian community, especially the Indian man, could not abide the 'nationalizing' of the Indian woman, and attempted to hold her back from the forces of liberalization and 'progress' that otherwise pervaded the national space.

Paradoxically, as nation-builders called for the modernizing of the Trinidadian woman, both black and Indian men maintained their desire for a 'traditional' Indian woman, and longed for the return of the creolized Indian woman to her wondrous masala stone.

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66 Mighty Terror – 50 Years of Pure Calypso (Port of Spain, 1997), 40. Consulted at WID.
67 Rohlehr, 498.
68 Puri, 8.
69 "Indeed, the figure of the traditional Bhowjee [sister-in-law], humming at the masala stone, is familiar to the Indo-Caribbean landscape. It is a signifier of both her oppression and her creativity... Trained since childhood to assume her place as Bhowjee at the masala stone, she hardly questions her fate to marry and join her husband's family as..."
Conclusion: Ruptures in the ‘Calaloo’ Nation and Everyday Nation Formation

The imagining of Trinidad and Tobago as a nation in the early independence era was a process complicated by gender, ‘race’, class, and sexuality. The Trinidadian elite cooked up a version of the nation that appealed to international norms and tantalized foreign palates. The ‘calaloo’ nation, however, did not capture the imaginations of the local populace wholesale. The ‘national cuisine’ concocted by X-pert nation-building chefs did not absorb the issue of racial tension as Indians continued to be identified (and self-identified) by their ‘indigenous’ food forms and culinary preparations. The ‘calaloo’ further disintegrated under pro-local critiques. The everyday and banal chore of cooking was saturated by the political, economic, and cultural context the nation had inherited from its colonial predecessors, and became a central device in describing its future. As appetizing as the notion of the ‘calaloo’ nation was to its creators, to many Trinidadians, it lacked the soaked-in flavor of the ‘local’.

The debate over ‘national cuisine’ represents just one often-overlooked aspect of the nation-building process, but it was a significant gesture on the part of the X-perts who propelled its history. Food and the form it took were ultimately a concern for every member of Trinidad and Tobago; the selling of a national cuisine, locally and abroad, very much relied upon local workers and consumers’ acceptance of its ideological contents. Not able to sign up to the agenda of a national cuisine that was unrecognizable to native Trinidadians, these vital everyday nation builders largely rejected the early portrayals of the nation’s cuisine.

If we were to continue the story of national cuisine into the present day, we would see its changed face – the reflection of the constant shifts and mutations that are a part of the maintenance of a national identity. The nation, as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, has been bearer and minder of children. A hardworking woman is likely to be docile and virtuous, and Bhowjee’s skill in grinding masala is proof of her chastity and morality; she symbolizes all that is wholesome and proper in the Indo-Caribbean community.” Kanhai, 2.
replaced by fresh imaginings, but these representations too are dependent on the political, economic, and cultural trends that govern the nation’s interaction in the world system. In attending the minute details that we assume are natural and ordinary aspects of our lives, we assume responsibility for processes that otherwise seem out of reach. By critiquing the ‘calaloo’ nation and its subtext of ‘progress’, the Trinidadian people opened up the possibility of defining their own nationhood on their own terms. This remains an on-going process and one that takes place in often modest and uncounted ways.
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Appendix:  
Selected Cookbook Recipes

The ABC of Creative Caribbean Cooking

Trinidad and Tobago

"Southernmost of the islands in the Caribbean chain, the two islands which constitute the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago lie only 7 miles from the South American mainland. Unlike the other Caribbean islands they are not the product of ancient volcanoes but a gradual breech between South America and a small mountainous region on her North-east coast. Trinidad is a ‘paradise of interracial harmony’, containing probably the most heterogeneous people on Earth. Indians and Africans make up about 80 per cent of the population. Immigrants from the Far and Middle East arrived as traders. The European element comes mainly from the Spanish, French and British – all at one time rulers of the island. Because of the rich variety of cultures, Trinidadians may one day eat a hot Indian curry, the next day, a Creole pelau, the next, French black pudding, saltfish buljol, Chinese char-sue pork and Spanish pastelles. The most popular ‘fast-food’ is roti."

"In vivid contrast, Tobago has unspoilt beaches – deserted save for fishermen or groups of local children, bumpy roads and tiny hamlets where tourists are an interesting anomaly rather than an oppressive necessity! Culinary notables are curried crab and dumplings, fish broth, cassava bread and some excellent homemade wines – pineapple, breadfruit, mango, cashew and banana."  

Callaloo

*A light green, bushy vegetable with thin-veined leaves which is very similar in appearance to spinach or kale. It may also be known as bhaji. It is the main ingredient in a hearty soup that bears its name and imparts a lovely peppery flavour. Callaloo soup from the Eastern Caribbean is made with dasheen (elephant ear) leaves.*

CALLALOO SOUP

To serve 6:

2 lb fresh spinach or kale, washed and roughly chopped
1 lb back bacon, cut into thin strips
1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Hot sauce to taste
Juice of 2 limes
½ tablespoon dried parsley
2 pints chicken stock

Place the bacon in a heavy pan and sauté until the fat has been rendered, approximately 10 minutes. Drain off the fat, except for one tablespoon. Add the onions and sauté until transparent. Add half the spinach or kale, salt and pepper, hot sauce, lime juice, herbs and stock. When the first batch of spinach has wilted add the remainder. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Place in a blender and liquidise until smooth. Return to a clean pan, reheat and serve. This soup is one that benefits from a day in the fridge and is even better the next day.


71 Ibid, 20.
Island Cooking – Recipes from the Caribbean

“The recipes in this collection are national dishes – everyday fare and tasty bits and pieces found in Caribbean cooking. Most show the influences of the British, Dutch, French, Spanish, East Indian, West African, Portuguese, and Chinese. Because of this grand mingling of traditions, Caribbean dishes are uniquely seasoned with a little bit of this and a little bit of that. I like to describe Caribbean foods as a kind of calypso/salsa culinary medley – full of subtleties, yet pulsating.”

“Many of the dishes in this volume have different names on different islands. To add to the confusion, ingredients in recipes from some countries are the names of recipes in others. For example, in Jamaica, callaloo is a green vegetable of the Chinese spinach family, while in Trinidad it is a dish with crab meat, pork, and callaloo leaves (dasheen or kale). It is also a soup called Pepperpot in this book.”

“Some of the recipes here have been borrowed from skilled chefs, and I thank them for their artistry. Others have been handed down from generation to generation and have withstood the passing of time.”

Cooking Caribe

“African slaves brought beans and callaloo, the leaves of the dasheen and malanga roots.”

“[T]he Hindu influence (in Trinidad) … introduction of colombo (or curry powder).”

Callaloo & Crab

“This unusual winner is one of the Caribbean’s many gastronomic treats. Spinach, Swiss chard or kale come close to the original flavor of callaloo and substitute nicely for it.”

3 pounds fresh callaloo, or spinach, Swiss chard or kale, stems removed; or 2 pounds swiss chard mixed with 1 pound spinach
8 ounces fresh okra, stems removed, cut into ¼-inch rounds
About 6 cups fresh or canned chicken stock
½ cup vegetable oil
4 ounces salt pork, cut into ¼-inch dice; or 1 smoked pig’s tail, diced
1 medium onion, chopped
6 scallions (including some of the green), chopped
1 Scotch bonnet or other fresh hot chili pepper, seeded and finely chopped
1 pound fresh lump crabmeat, picked clean
juice of 1 lime
1 cup fresh Coconut Milk (page 139) or canned unsweetened
2 thyme sprigs
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Rinse the callaloo (or substitute) and okra thoroughly in cold water and drain. In a large nonreactive soup kettle, add the callaloo and okra and enough stock to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat. Drain, reserving the greens, okra and cooking liquid.

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Heat the oil in a large nonreactive saucepan. Add the salt pork or pig's tail and sauté until golden. Removed from the pan and drain on paper towels. Add the onion and garlic, and sauté until lightly browned. Stir in the scallions and chili pepper, and sauté for another 2 minutes. Stir in the crabmeat and lime juice, and blend well. Set aside.

Puree the greens and okra in a food processor, adding a little of the reserved cooking liquid to keep the mixture lightly soupy. Pour the puree into a clean non-reactive saucepan and set over medium heat. Add the pork and crabmeat mixture. Stir in the coconut milk and thyme sprigs. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

Add 2 cups of the reserved cooking liquid, or enough of the liquid to keep the mixture thick and soupy. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

Serve immediately in heated bowls with boiled white rice and Banane Pésé (page 129).

Serves 6-8.74

Roti

“Omnipresent street food, these floppy, flaky golden breads are folded like envelopes and filled thick with meat, fish or vegetable curries.”

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into bits
About 2/3 cup ice water
Vegetable oil, for frying

In the bowl of an electric mixer, sift together the flour, salt and baking powder. Add the butter and beat the mixture until it is the consistency of cornmeal. Gradually add the ice water until the dough forms a stiff, but not sticky, ball. Cover the dough with a clean kitchen towel and set aside for 45 minutes.

On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough for 5 minutes. Divide the dough into 12 equal balls. Place on a lightly oiled pan or dish and cover; let rest for 30 minutes.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out each ball as thin as possible without tearing, 10 to 12 inches in diameter.

Heat a cast-iron skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. Lightly brush some of the oil over 1 side of the roti, place the roti in the pan and cook for 1 minute. Brush the top side of the roti with oil, turn and cook for 1 minute on the second side.

Keep the cooked rotis warm in a clean kitchen towel while you continue to cook the remaining rotis.

Serve warm, with curried dishes or filled with curry or Dhal (page 113) and eaten like a sandwich.

Makes about 12 rotis.75

Cooking Creole: Suggestions on Making Creole Food

“Trinidad and Tobago, it has been remarked, reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the new world in the make-up of its population. The first in the chain of islands that link the northern and southern hemispheres of the American continent, Trinidad and Tobago is a microcosm of the world...”76

74 Ibid, 54.
75 Ibid, 117.
“Today, Creole cooking or West Indian cooking is a grand amalgam of our historical experience. It is where the various tastes of our people meet, where it is shared and most enjoyed: the home of hospitality itself.”

Menus Creole

“As it is very important to know what to serve with what, we begin by suggesting some of the typical and traditional meals as they are served in Creole homes that pride themselves on their food.”

SUNDAYS
LUNCH
Callaloo Crab
Banane Pilee
Taza Court-Boullion
Rice
Roasted Beef
Baked Macaroni
Yam
Boiled Ripe Plantain
Fruit Salad

Callaloo
This is best done in an earthenware canaree. Put everything in at one time. Use a small piece salt beef, a small piece salt pork cut up finely, one small melongene cut up, nine ochroes, cut up in two or three pieces each, three bundles dasheen leaves with strings removed, two crabs cleaned and with the members broken off and cracked, a green whole pepper, chives, thyme, garlic and onions. Pour over this enough water to fill the canaree or pot about three quarters full. Do not stir; only occasionally shake the pot. When half the water has boiled away remove green whole pepper and swizzle vigorously with a lala stick, serve with banane pilee, (pounded plantain).

Trade Winds: Caribbean Cooking

Calaloo (callilu or calaloo)

“I am fascinated with the workings and equipment of the slave kitchens. By all the accounts I’ve read they were simple affairs, as you would expect, yet essentially they are the same now as they were then, still producing the traditional cooking that I know and love. There were very few cooking utensils and they consisted of two or three iron pots and a strong wooden pestle and mortar which was used for beating down boiled plantain to a mash, which they called Tum Tum. They would, no doubt, have regularly cooked and eaten calaloo probably out of a calabash – the hollowed out shell of a gourd. Mrs. Carmichael in 1833 seemed to think that her husband ‘enjoyed his calaloo soup as much out of a calabash as the noble man does his turtle soup in the finest chaste silver’. To this day calaloo remains one of the cornerstones of Caribbean cooking and is remembered nostalgically by all who have eaten it. Mrs. Carmichael wrote in some detail and with affection about this great dish:

There is a well known root in Trinidad, common all over the West Indies I believe, known by the name of eddoe. It abounds upon every estate. The roots are not unlike a rough irregular potatoe: -- the leves make

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77 Ibid, 3.
78 Ibid, 5.
79 Ibid, 10.
excellent wholesome greens; and the negro, with the addition of a bit of salt fish, or salt pork – sometimes indeed has an excellent pot of soup. He may add pigeon peas during the months they are in season; and as for the capsicums – his seasoning for all dishes – they are never wanting. This soup is excellent, wholesome and palatable to all – creoles, whites, free coloured or slave; and indeed is one of the great blessings of the West Indies.

Made in a strictly traditional way or blended to a purée with good cream and parsley, this makes a delicious and unusual dish. … this recipe… has evolved over the centuries as it travelled from one island to another.”

Serves 6

4-5 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 onions, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 pinch dried thyme
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
10 okras, very finely chopped, with the course tops removed
1 lb (450g) calaloo or spinach leaves, thoroughly washed, drained and chopped to ¼” (0.5cm) shreds
1 pint (570ml) coconut milk (page 23)
1 medium size cooked crab
6 spring onions, (scallions), finely chopped
¼ oz (5g) salt fish, soaked overnight, skinned and shredded
3-4 dashes Tabasco sauce

For the puréed version:

¾ pint (150ml) good double cream (Marks and Spencer)
2 tablespoons well chopped parsley

Heat the oil in large saucepan and fry the chopped onions and garlic in the vegetable oil until soft and golden. Add the thyme and the black pepper and cook for a few more minutes. Now add the okras and the calaloo or spinach, roughly stirring to coat all the vegetables in oil. Cook in a covered saucepan for 5 minutes. Pour in the coconut milk and stir in the contents of the crab back with its juices and the crab legs. Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer, well covered, for half an hour. It will all break down into a very good rough soup. Check the seasoning.

For the sophisticated version, remove the crab legs and pick out the meat and stir it in with half the parsley. Blend in a processor or liquidiser until absolutely smooth. Return the soup to the stove and stir in the cream. Serve garnished with the rest of the parsley. Superb! On a hot summer’s night why not chill it before serving. 80

Caribbean Cooking

MASSALA – Trinidad
Ground Spice Mixture

“This mixture of ground spices and hot pepper was brought to Trinidad by migrant Hindu workers. When ground dry it is curry powder. When wet, because of the addition of fresh hot peppers or a liquid, it is curry paste. Commercial curry powder may be used, but since massala is easy to make, and all

the ingredients readily available, it is worth the extra effort. Massala may be used in any island recipe calling for curry powder.”

WET MASSALA

1 teaspoon saffron threads, or ground turmeric
4 tablespoons coriander seeds
2 teaspoons anise seeds
2 teaspoons whole cloves
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
2 teaspoons fenugreek seeds
3 teaspoons black peppercorns
2 teaspoons mustard seeds
1 large onion, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped
Fresh hot red peppers to taste

Soak the saffron threads in a little water and, using a mortar and pestle, grind into a paste. Grind all the remaining ingredients using a mortar and pestle, or combine in an electric blender, a little at a time, to make a heavy paste. Remove the seeds from the hot peppers unless a very hot curry paste is wanted. Use as directed in recipes, or to taste. Keep refrigerated in jars, but use within a day or so. Makes about 2 cups. Also see curry powder I and II.

DRY MASSALA

Grind the saffron threads dry, or use turmeric. Omit the onion and garlic, and substitute dried red peppers for the fresh ones. Store in airtight glass jars at room temperature. Dry massala will keep for 6 months. Makes about 1 cup. 81

Trinidad Hilton menus

Pool Terrace – 1974

From the Soup Kettle
Crab and Callaloo

For Waist Watchers
The Carnival Fruit Platter
The Calypso – A Country Style Special Bun Generously filled with Ham-Cheese-Tomato and Lettuce

La Boucan 1978

Soups and Callaloo
Crab and Callaloo Greens

Old Port-of-Spain Cookery
East Indian Lamb Curry “Rajah” – An authentic spicy Trinadian Curry served with Rice and a wide selection of Condiments

La Boucan 1996

Seafood
Jumbo Shrimp, "creole" style
Baked Snapper Fillet, topped with a coconut and crab crust and set on a caribbean rum sauce

Meat
West Indian Lamb Curry, with traditional accompaniments

Appetizers
Classic Callaloo (a local favourite)