

Best Hors D'oeuvre 2023

Unlocking flavours: a *Key to Wat*
a culinary experience is made of



Key Wat

Berbere Braised Beef,
House-made Ayib Fresh Cheese,
Crispy Injera Taco, Cilantro
(GF/NF)



Concept

We are fortunate to live in one of the most multicultural cities in the world, as such, an ongoing goal of our organization is to develop menus that are a direct reflection of our city's cultural tapestry. The most recent addition to our menu that expands our culturally diverse offerings is our Key Wat hors d'oeuvre.

From conception through to development and event execution, this hors d'oeuvre illustrates our company's vision to celebrate the culture and diversity within our team; and is a prime example of authentic cultural expression.

Originality

Our leadership team prides themselves on exploring the culinary diversity that our city has to offer, and after a visit to an Ethiopian restaurant, a staff member came to work buzzing about the incredible flavors. As our company is just as multicultural as the community in which we live, we have several staff who hail from East Africa, including one chef, who was more than happy to prepare a sampling of her native cuisine and share her culture with our entire staff for staff lunch.

For lunch that day, we were fortunate enough to enjoy three different stews, fresh injera, and freshly made ayib cheese to accompany it all, while she taught us about her traditional cooking methods and spice roast blends. At this point, the entire company was abuzz with glowing feedback on the taste profiles, depth of flavor and a newfound appreciation for our colleague's culture and cuisine. Immediately after the meal, our team set to work, brainstorming how to transform this incredible meal into an hors d'oeuvre, so we could bring East African cuisine to our clientele.





Challenges/Obstacles

One of the first challenges we faced with this hors d'oeuvre was structure. As the injera is soft and the key wat is a saucy stew, we needed to find a way to make this finger friendly. The team tried multiple iterations to overcome this challenge by focusing on the injera itself. We found that toasting the injera in small rounds and shaping them to resemble taco shells was the best solution. The next challenge we faced was balancing the spice level of the dish to ensure it would appeal to the widest possible audience; this led us straight to the housemade ayib cheese. A sprinkle of the cheese on top of this hors d'oeuvre balanced the spices out perfectly.

The final obstacle was getting our clients to select this hors d'oeuvre to be featured on their respective menus. In our experience, we have found that clients generally play it safe when selecting menus, however, one place that they tend to be more adventurous in their choices is with hors d'oeuvres. The variety of hors d'oeuvre on a menu gives guests an opportunity to sample something they might otherwise not have chosen. We also found that by sharing the story behind the development of the hors d'oeuvre and our chef's story and culture with our sales team, further helped this hors d'oeuvre be featured quite prominently on many of our menus in 2023.

Production at the Event

The Key Wat is fairly straightforward to assemble onsite. The three components – the beef stew, injera shell and ayib – are sent to events separately. The beef stew is heated onsite, then spooned into the injera shell and topped with ayib cheese. The beef stew holds well in the freezer, so we are able to make large batches ahead of time and use as needed. Once it has been toasted into the appropriate form, the injera holds its shape, which gives us the opportunity to prepare these before service. The last element, the ayib, is a fresh cheese that can be produced quickly in house, further helping with the scaling of production.

When all three elements are assembled onsite, the final product is an approachable, balanced and warm item that gives our guests the opportunity to enjoy the incredible flavors of East African cuisine.



Recipe

Key Wat

Ingredients

Beef, onion, tomato, garlic, butter, salt, ginger, olive oil, water, berbere spice, injera, buttermilk, white vinegar, cilantro sprout

Key Wat Beef

Total Yield: 180 g

Components

Beef tips ½ inch dice 100 g
Onion, yellow diced 20 g
Tomato, washed diced 20 g
Butter 10 g
Garlic, minced 5/8 tsp
Salt 1/4 tsp
Ginger, minced 1/4 tsp
Olive oil 1/4 tsp
Water, hot 20 g
Berbere Spice 20 g

Instructions

1. Put 2 tbsp of oil in pot over medium heat, sauté onions, add tomatoes.
2. Add diced meat to the pot and cook until browned on all sides.
3. Add Berbere spice to the pot and mix well.
4. Add hot water to the pot.
5. Simmer for at least 30 minutes or until meat is tender. Add small amounts of water throughout this process if the meat gets dry.

Crispy Injera Taco

Components

Injera (store bought)

Instructions

1. Cut out circles approximately 2 inch in diameter.
2. Place cutouts in taco mold and bake at 250F for 5 minutes.

Ayib- Fresh Ethiopian Cheese

Components

Buttermilk 4 cups
White vinegar 1/3 cup

Instructions

1. Bring the milk to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and pour in the white vinegar.
2. Reduce heat to low and cook – stirring constantly; until curds begin to form. Remove from heat.
3. Spoon the curdled milk into a sieve or colander and rinse with cold water. Discard the liquid.

Assembly

1. Heat meat.
2. Spoon meat into injera taco.
3. Top with ayib and a cilantro sprout.