

Cultural Daily

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What to Eat and Drink in the Dominican Republic

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The Dominican Republic might be well known to tourists for its beaches, mountains, rainforests, weather, or the indigenous people. But one aspect of this Caribbean country that often gets overlooked is its cuisine. Maybe because it is overshadowed by American foods, people hardly get a chance to indulge in authentic Dominican cuisine; unless they step outside their hotel dining hall.

What makes Dominican cuisine so unique from other foods is the awesome fusion of European (Spanish and French), Taino (Caribbean indigenous), and African meals; the resulting taste is like no other country. Besides, many Middle Eastern and island dishes have also found their way into Dominican food. This unique fusion was only made possible by the turbulent and long history of the Dominican Republic.

These cross-cultural influences created something more fascinating which manifests in Dominican cuisine- the *Comida Criolla*. If you are planning on visiting this Caribbean country anytime soon you must know about their culture and cuisine. And here's a little glimpse of Dominican food that will prompt you to get out of your hotel buffet to explore the authentic Dominican meals.

La Bandera

La Bandera is a complete meal with rice, beans (red beans, black beans, lentils, and small green beans), stewed meats, salad, and fried plantain. It is simple, cheap, and delicious. Besides, it also provides a balanced healthy meal that you can have any time of the day.

The literal meaning of la Bandera in Spanish is the flag, and true to its meaning it is a kind of national staple that you can find in any corner of the country. Try [Arroz con habichuelas](#), the most common variation of Dominican rice and beans, you won't be disappointed.

Casabe

Casabe is a Taino originated flatbread. It is made out of Yuca (Cassava plant root). It is regarded as a staple in many countries including the Dominican Republic, [Jamaica](#), and Nigeria. The nuttiness of the root gives a unique taste to an otherwise regular flatbread. You can try casaba for breakfast.

Mangu

Mangu is a combination of mashed plantain, eggs, salami, and fried cheese. Plantains are softened by boiling, and then mashed. Finely chopped red onions are the usual topping for the dish.

Mangu is usually served during breakfast. The fresh homegrown plantain adds to the favor of this African-influenced dish. However, if you are not a fan of plantain, you might have to steer clear of Mangu.

Seafood

Being surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, it is no surprise, Dominican cuisine has a great variety of seafood. Dominicans have several ways to prepare fish fillets and gravy- first is *al Criolla*, a spicy version of tomato sauce, *a la diabla* even spicier version of *Criolla*, *al horno* where the fillets are roasted with lemons, *al coco*, coconut sauce, *al ajillo*- garlic sauce, *al oregano* a heavy cream sauce mixed with oregano. The most common local seafood are *carite* (kingfish), *chillo* (red snapper), *pulpo* (octopus), *lambi* (conch), *langosta* (lobster), *camarones* (shrimp), *calamari* (squid), and many more.

Chivo (Goat Meat)

Goat meat is the most popular meat in the Dominican Republic. What makes the flavor of goat dishes here stand out from the others is, sometimes the goats feed on wild oregano. *Chivo guisado* or stewed goat is a common goat dish around the Dominican republic.

Along with the meat, this dish has a rich flavor of tomato, garlic onion, and oranges. There is another fancy way of serving goat dishes, and that is *pierna de chivo Asada con Ron y cilantro*. A whole goat leg is roasted with cilantro and rum.

Dessert

You might rather say Dominicans have a sweet tooth considering the extreme sweetness of their dessert items. However, don't let that scare you away from tasting some authentic Dominican cake *Bizcocho Dominicano* or some *dulces con coco*. If the added sweetness is not your thing you can taste the more natural sweets- [some fresh tropical fruits](#)– bananas, pineapple, papaya, *lomochillos*, or *chinolas*.

Drinks

Dominicans have both alcoholic and non-alcoholic authentic beverages. You can try out *Ron* (Dominican rum) or *ron ponche*, a rum-based drink fused with tropical fresh juice. For non-alcoholics there are Dominican coffee (a little bitter for some), *batidas*, a type of smoothie with crushed fresh fruits- (usually banana, pineapple, sapote), milk, and orange juice.

The Bottom Line

As you might have guessed Dominicans do love their starches, almost all major dishes contain carbohydrates, and often they are a mixture of two or more starches. For instance, while Dominicans love a large breakfast like the Americans, the resemblance ends here. They prefer a starchy breakfast with beans or plantains. So low-carb people might have to watch out for what they are eating in the Dominican republic. However, there is no harm in indulging if you are exploring a new culture and its cuisine. Happy eating!

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