

Grater Cake

The average child under 10 does not even know what a grater is, let alone knowing how to use it. Well to any bona fide Jamaican worth his or her salt, grater cake was a wonderful treat.

Anybody old enough to take on certain chores would grater (not grate) the coconut. And member mi tell yuh … plenty knuckles grater off in the process. Grater cake was often made on a Sunday in Jamaican households. Why? Because Sunday was the day you had rice and peas for dinner, rice and peas made with coconut milk. So after the coconut milk was extracted, the ‘trash’ was used to make the wonderful sweet treat, because that is how Jamaicans ‘tun dem han meck fashion’ … I think you might call that recycling. Plenty finger head burn and blister because the owners could not wait for the grater cake to cool. With modernization, some have resorted to making grater cake by shredding the coconut in the blender. But wi never say ‘blender cake’ … wi say grater cake and grater cake must ‘grater’. What Yuh Ago Need One dry coconut, (of course I have to specify dry coconut, lest yuh try to use a ‘jelly coconut’ or be modern and use a pack of store bought shredded coconut) 12 ounces of dark brown or granulated sugar A small piece of fresh ginger What Yuh A Go Do ‘Hucks’ the coconut, i.e. remove it from its shell, as the actual husk would have already been removed. Set about gratering off your finger head and your knuckles, oops … I mean the coconut. The shredded coconut full of milk is very delicious, but do, leave some for the grater cake. In a dutch pot, (or saucepan), put enough water to cover the coconut with about two inches of water on top. Add about half pound of dark or white sugar, and some pieces of ginger. Start off cooking on a high flame and then reduce the flame as the mixture thickens. When most of the water has dried out, and the mixture is so thick that it is difficult to continue mixing (ol time people call it ‘poon tan up’) remove the mixture from the fire. Spoon the hot coconut mixture unto grease paper and if you can resist the temptation, leave to harden. My granny generation use to put the grater cake mixture on banana leaves to cool, but in the absence of that, any flat plate or tray will do. NB : if you use granulated sugar, you can add red or pink food colouring to make it even more attractive.