

## Miramar's Coconutz Fusion Café a Jamaican gem

For a taste of Jamaica served to a reggae soundtrack, head to Coconutz Fusion Café. The humble place serves oxtail stew with butter beans and jerk chicken plus a selection of Chinese dishes, pastas and vegetarian fare, some with the addition of tofu chunks or soy protein &ldquo;meat.&rdquo;

There's a counter to one side, with the kitchen behind, where cooks can be seen in a cloud of steam. Every dish is made to order and customers can request their desired amount of hot pepper.

Jamaican cuisine reflects a diverse cultural heritage and tells the story of its people. Owner Ralph Mason's surname is Irish yet his grandparents came from India and he grew up eating curry with roti in Ocho Rios. He started cooking at beach parties through a tourist board job and then worked for Royal Caribbean until he bought his own place 10 years ago in Miramar. It became a destination for musicians from the island who perform in South Florida; many locals come almost every day.

Start the day with stamina porridge made from bananas, carrots, pumpkin, cornmeal, oats and peanuts pureed with coconut milk and spiced with nutmeg and cinnamon. Ackee combos are made with the little brain-shaped fruit that taste like scrambled eggs sautéed with salt fish (bacalao), callaloo (thick spinach-like greens), cabbage, okra or chickpeas. Main dishes come with rice and peas or &ldquo;food,&rdquo; referring to &ldquo;ground provisions&rdquo; including chunks of steamed white yam, sweet potato, pumpkin, potato and green banana. Choose a preparation style from sweet and sour, Szechuan, steamed, fried, curried, barbecued, brown stewed (in dark soy sauce gravy) or garden style with lots of veggies.

Whole yellow tail is good escovitch style (fried and marinated in vinegar with allspice, onions and peppers). Rasta pasta brings linguine tossed with curry and coconut sauce. Fresh-made pineapple ginger juice and candy coconut drops conjure a tropical sunset over the Caribbean sea.

### Main Dish

#### Oxtail and Beans

Any bean can be used, but butter beans (large lima beans) are traditional. Serve with rice.

1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 pounds oxtails

2 medium tomatoes, chopped

2 medium yellow onions, chopped

3 large garlic cloves, minced

1 sprig thyme

Salt and freshly ground pepper

One 15.5-ounce can butter beans, drained and rinsed

Heat the oil in a large pot and brown the oxtails on each side. Add four cups of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer until the meat is tender, about 1 hour. Add the tomatoes, onions, garlic, thyme and salt and pepper to taste. Cook over medium heat for 10 minutes and add 1 cup of water and the beans. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until the liquid reduces to thick gravy, about 10 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

Source: Adapted from "The Food of Jamaica" by John DeMers (Periplus Editions, 1998)

Per serving: 347 calories (50 percent from fat), 21 g fat (4.2 g saturated, 6.5 g monounsaturated), 51 mg cholesterol, 21.5 g protein, 24.8 g carbohydrates, 6 g fiber, 542 mg sodium. If you go

What: Coconutz Fusion Café

Address: 2408 S. State Road 7, Miramar.

Contact: 954-961-3334

Hours: 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; till 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 8 p.m. Sunday