Main dishes / Nigeria

Akara (Black-Eyed Pea Fritters)

Black-eyed peas ground into a light, aerated batter — their skins removed so the paste is pure white and clean-tasting — then dropped by spoonfuls into hot oil where they puff, turn golden, and develop a crust that crackles while hiding a steaming, pillowy interior flecked with onion and chili.

Time 60 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 10 parts Dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight and skins removed
- ☐ 2 parts White onion, roughly chopped
- ☐ 0.5 parts Fresh scotch bonnet or habanero pepper, chopped
- ☐ 0.5 parts Salt
- ☐ 1 parts Water (for blending batter to correct consistency)
- ☐ 8 parts Vegetable or groundnut oil (for deep-frying)

Let's make it.

01 Soak the dried black-eyed peas in cold water for at least 6 hours or overnight. Drain, then rub the beans vigorously between your palms in a bowl of fresh water — the skins will loosen and float to the top. Skim off the skins and drain, repeating 3–4 times until most skins are removed. Clean, skin-free beans produce a white, fluffy akara batter; beans with skins still on make the fritters dense and grey-tinged. Even a 20-minute soak and aggressive rubbing will remove most skins.

02 Combine the peeled beans, onion, scotch bonnet, salt, and just enough water to help the blender run — start with 2 tablespoons and add more sparingly. Blend until very smooth, about 2–3 minutes. The goal is a thick, smooth, fluffy paste, not a thin pourable liquid. Transfer to a bowl and beat the batter vigorously with a wooden spoon or hand mixer for 3–5 minutes — this incorporates air and gives akara its characteristic lightness. The batter should double slightly in volume and turn paler as air is worked in.

03 Heat enough oil in a medium saucepan to give a depth of at least 5 cm. Heat to 175 °C (a small drop of batter should sizzle and rise immediately). Using two spoons or a small ice cream scoop, drop spoonfuls of batter gently into the oil — do not crowd the pot, 4–5 at a time. Fry for 3–4 minutes total, turning gently halfway, until deep golden-brown on all sides. The fritters will puff and become round as they fry. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

04 Remove akara with a slotted spoon and drain on a paper towel-lined plate. Serve immediately — hot akara at peak crisp is the entire point of the dish. In Lagos, akara is sold from street stalls in the early morning alongside ogi (fermented corn porridge). Serve with a dipping sauce of tomato, onion, and pepper if desired. Akara made to order, eaten in the street, still crackling from the oil, is one of the great breakfast experiences of West Africa.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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