



Ginger Root

It's time to tackle the rhizome

INTRO BY STEPHANIE BURT | RECIPES BY CHEF JEREMY ASHBY

YOU SURELY have seen it, you may have even used it, but for many of us, fresh ginger can still be a little intimidating. It's knobby and woody and rather unwieldy to chop. But here's the thing: it's worth the effort. Scrape off the skin to reveal an aromatic and unmistakable spiciness that will enliven your senses and elevate your cooking. The fresh product is worlds away from the powdered business on your shelf, as Chef Jeremy Ashby, a Kentucky native, can attest. He remembers only dried or candied ginger from desserts of his childhood. However, all that changed when he started working in a Miami kitchen. "Fresh ginger is all through Caribbean cuisine, and I started learning how to incorporate it." And these days, as executive chef of Brasabana Cuban Cuisine and AZUR in Lexington, Kentucky, he's getting creative with ginger, combining it with traditional Southern staples such as sorghum (and, of course, Kentucky bourbon) to create distinct dishes that are light years away from that dusty dried ginger currently being ignored on your space rack. ➔

PHOTO BY SARAH JANE SANDERS

BOURBON-CANDIED GINGER AND ONION DIP

(PICTURED OPPOSITE PAGE)

For Bourbon-Candied Ginger

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup bourbon
- 2 cups sugar, plus ¼ cup for dusting
- 1½ cups fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced

1. In a saucepan over high heat, add water, bourbon, and 2 cups sugar, then bring to a boil.
2. Add ginger and reduce heat to medium and simmer for 25 minutes.
3. With a slotted spoon, transfer ginger to a drying rack.
4. Let dry for 1 hour and then add remaining ¼ cup sugar. Store in an airtight container.

For Dip

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 Vidalia onions, julienned
- 4 shallots, julienned
- 4 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 cup Duke's mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 recipe bourbon-candied ginger
- Salt and pepper to taste
- High-quality sweet potato chips for serving

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium.
2. Add onion, shallot, scallion, and garlic and cook until caramelized, about 20 minutes, stirring frequently.
3. Add sugar and butter and cook an additional 5 minutes.
4. Transfer mixture to food processor and purée for 10 seconds, or until smooth. Add remaining ingredients and pulse until fully incorporated, then season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Chill overnight. Serve with high-quality sweet potato chips, seasonal vegetables, or both.

Yield: 3 cups



CARAMEL-GINGER CHEESECAKE

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1½ cups fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- ½ teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. In a 9-inch cake pan, add sugar and shake to coat evenly. Place pan in oven to melt sugar into a rich brown caramel, about 10–15 minutes.
3. In a small saucepan on medium-high heat, add water and ginger. Simmer to infuse ginger flavor, about 25 minutes, then strain and cool.
4. In a mixing bowl, mix together cream cheese, milk, eggs, vanilla, and salt. Add ginger-infused water.
5. Pour mixture into cake pan (on top of caramelized sugar) and bake in a water bath for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Chill overnight to set.

Yield: 8 servings

GINGER-SORGHUM MARINADE

- 1½ cups Kentucky sorghum
- ½ cup Spanish sherry vinegar
- ¾ cup stone-ground mustard
- ¾ cup ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 cup canned unseasoned tomato sauce
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 chipotle in adobo, minced
- 1 orange, zest and juice
- 1 lemon, zest and juice
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped

1. In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients.
2. Marinate meat for a minimum of 6 hours, preferably overnight, reserving a small amount of marinade before adding meat in order to baste meat at end of cooking process.

Editor's Note: Pictured above, the chef serves this marinade on roasted duck leg and thigh quarters, cooked at 300 degrees for 2½ hours or until fork tender, then served with a squash and apple purée.

Yield: Marinade for 12 meat servings

