

Pepper Pot Stew Recipe & Journal

Background Information: Pepper Pot Stew started as an African stew that combined meat with starches, greens, and hot peppers. However, the exact ingredients varied depending on what was available. This dish followed the Transatlantic Slave Trade from Africa to the West Indies and North America.

Main Ideas:

- At the time of Washington's death, 317 enslaved people lived across Washington's five farms.
- Recipes like Pepper Pot Stew, a common dish made by enslaved individuals, are some of the many ways African culture influenced American culture.

Questions to Consider:

1. Where do our recipes come from?
2. Where does our food come from?
3. How does location influence a person's diet today? What about in the eighteenth century?

Ingredients:

- 1 package of spinach/collard greens
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 4-6 small potatoes
- 3 quarts water or stock
- 1.5 pounds stew beef
- 1/2 of a medium sized yam/sweet potato
- 2 long red peppers
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- Optional: 1 cup of picked crab meat, garlic, onions, pickled peppers, carrots, salted port



Learn more
about Hercules
Posey



Learn about
Doll and the
recent cherry
bottle
discovery



Learn more
about the diet
of enslaved
individuals at
Mount Vernon

**To learn more
about slavery at
Mount Vernon,
click here.**

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S
MOUNT ★ VERNON

THE MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION

Pepper Pot Stew Recipe

Pepper Pot soup started as an African stew that combined meat with starches, greens, and hot peppers. However, the exact ingredients varied depending on what was available. This dish followed the Transatlantic Slave Trade from Africa to the West Indies and North America.

This is an early example of how enslaved individuals influenced the cuisine of Great Britain and her colonies. In fact, Pepper Pot soup became so popular among Europeans that by 1732, recipes for it appeared in British cookbooks. You can try your hand at making Pepper Pot Stew at home using the recipe below! Just be sure to get an adult's help.

Pepper Pot Stew

Ingredients:

1 package spinach or collard greens
1 tablespoon cooking oil
4-6 small potatoes
3 quarts water or stock
1½ pounds stew beef
½ of a medium sized yam/sweet potato
2 long red peppers
1 tablespoon black pepper

Optional: 1 cup of picked crab meat, garlic, onions, pickled peppers, carrots, salted pork/ham hock*



Pepper Pot Stew made onsite by Mount Vernon staff

Instructions:

*If using ham hock or salted pork - Start by adding the salted pork to a small pan filled with water and bring to a boil for 30 minutes, remove the pork and set it aside.

In your pot heat some oil and fry the beef. Once the beef is done remove it from the pot. If you have another person with you, have them chop the spinach/collards, potatoes, yam/sweet potato, and any other vegetables you plan on using. This can also be done at the start of the demo when you're waiting for the fire to produce enough coals.

Toss everything but the spinach/collards to your pot the beef was cooking it. Fry it for just a few minutes, you can add your spices at this point as well until it gets fragrant. Then add your water to the pot. Let this boil for about 1.5 - 2 hours.

If using crab, add it in during the last 30 minutes of cooking.

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Recipe Journal

Hercules Posey was an enslaved cook at Mount Vernon who gained public renown in Philadelphia when he cooked meals for President Washington and his guests. He would have learned to cook as an apprentice to Doll and Nathan, the enslaved cooks at Mount Vernon when he was brought to the plantation in the 1780s. Hercules self-emancipated in 1797, and spent the rest of his life in New York City, where he worked as a laborer and a cook.

Just like today, cooking in the eighteenth century was a way to bring people together and pass on tradition. For example, Pepper Pot Stew is still popular in the Caribbean and Jamaica today. In the space below, write down a recipe important to you and your family or write about a memory of eating a special dish.



*An artistic depiction
of Hercules Posey's
silhouette.*