

Food

Spare ribs on the rocks



Susan Sampson

Trv This At Home

THE ITEM: *Cooking with Booze* by Ryan Jennings and David Steele.

THE INFO: Life is one big cocktail party for these Canadian boys. They are fans of the basics: eating and drinking. No wonder they say: "Think of your liquor cabinet as an extension of your spice rack."

It all comes together in this collaborative cookbook. The approach is fun but serious, with booze being the prime seasoning in 100 recipes. You'll encounter standards such as beer can chicken, fondue, meatballs, soup, Irish stew and granita (a drink made with crushed ice) in their boozy incarnations. But the boys go beyond the call of duty, too. Luckily, we like to be surprised.

All three of the recipes we tested were inspirational and very fine in flavour. Dining on giant seared scallops with tomatoey-coconutty "Swahili sauce" was a joyful new adventure.

Red snapper in crème de banana curry featured bright, almost candied banana accents; some eaters found its intensity too scary. Cuba Libra ribs took a standard to new (and strange) places.

Tasty tidbits of information, delicious photos and, naturally, cocktail suggestions for each recipe round out the cookbook. Bad news: the dishes tend to be not only boozy but creamy — and often too saucy. So be prepared to make adjustments.

Jennings was born in Hamilton and grew up in Caledonia, Ont. He is a hybrid journalism/

chef school grad. Steele was transplanted from Scotland to Stratford, Ont. He is an events producer.

Cooking with Booze is a soft cover published this year by Whitecap. Price: \$29.95.

THE RECIPE: Cuba Libra is the fancy name for rum and cola with a splash of lime. Its flavours have been translated into a rib dish to remember.

Cuba Libra Ribs With Caribbean Barbecue Sauce

✓ Star Tested

Adapted from *Cooking With Booze*. I made the sauce more tropical by substituting coconut rum for dark rum and limejuice for cider vinegar. Buy racks of ribs that have the flaps of meat at the ends and any membranes and fatty chunks trimmed off. For the cola, I used Coke.

RIBS:

2 trimmed racks pork back ribs (about 2-1/4 lb/1 kg total)

Salt + freshly ground pepper to taste

1 onion, quartered

6 cloves garlic, crushed

2-litre bottle cola

SAUCE:

1 tsp vegetable oil

1 onion, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp each: ground cumin, chili con carne powder

3/4 cup ketchup

1/3 cup coconut rum

1/4 cup packed brown sugar

1/4 cup lime juice

1 tbsp each: Dijon mustard, Worcestershire sauce

Dash hot pepper sauce

PREPARATION: Season both sides of ribs liberally with salt and pepper. Place meat side down in 11-by-15-inch baking dish. Scatter onion and garlic evenly around ribs. Pour in cola. (It should cover ribs.) Cover dish with foil. Bake in preheated 200F oven 3 to 4 hours, until just tender. Remove from oven. Allow ribs to come to room tem-

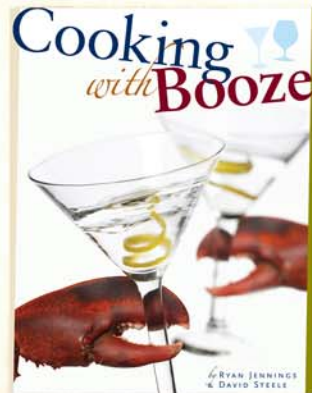


Cooking with Booze gives new meaning to being drunk with flavour, like these ribs marinated in rum and cola with a splash of lime.

perature in cooking liquid, about 1-1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, for sauce, heat oil in medium pan on medium heat. Add onion, garlic, cumin and chili powder. Cook, stirring frequently, 3 to 5 minutes, until softened. Stir in ketchup, rum, brown sugar, lime juice, mustard, Worcestershire and hot pepper sauce. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 30 minutes, until thickened. Remove from heat. (Makes about 1-1/2 cups.)

Preheat barbecue to medium. Place ribs meat side down and turn heat to low. Cover and grill until browned, tender and pulling away from bones, 30 to 45 minutes. Check and turn frequently to prevent charring. With 10 minutes remaining,



brush ribs with some of the sauce.

Cut each rack in half. Serve with remaining sauce alongside. Makes 4 servings.

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