



READING COMPREHENSION



Sofrito Sensation

1 Puerto Rico, a Caribbean island rich in history and remarkable
natural beauty, has a cuisine¹ all its own. Immigration to the island
has helped to shape its cuisine, with people from all over the world
5 making various contributions to it. However, before the arrival of
these immigrants, the island of Puerto Rico was already known as
Borikén and was inhabited by the Taíno people. Taíno cuisine
included such foods as rodents² with sweet chili peppers, fresh
shellfish, yams, and fish fried in corn oil.

10 Many aspects of Taíno cuisine continue today in Puerto Rican
cooking, but it has been heavily influenced by the Spanish, who
invaded Puerto Rico in 1508, and Africans, who were initially
brought to Puerto Rico to work as slaves.³ Taíno cooking styles were
mixed with ideas brought by the Spanish and Africans to create new
15 dishes. The Spanish extended food choices by bringing cattle, pigs,
goats, and sheep to the island. Africans also added to the island's
food culture by introducing powerful, contrasting tastes in dishes like
piñon—plantains layered in ground beef. In fact, much of the food
Puerto Rico is now famous for—plantains, coffee, sugarcane,
20 coconuts, and oranges—was actually imported by foreigners
to the island.

25 A common assumption many people make about Puerto Rican food
is that it is very spicy. It's true that chili peppers are popular; *ají*
caballero in particular is a very hot chili pepper that Puerto Ricans
enjoy. However, milder tastes are popular too, such as *sofrito*. The
base of many Puerto Rican dishes, *sofrito* is a sauce made from
chopped onions, garlic, green bell peppers, sweet chili peppers,
oregano, cilantro, and a handful of other spices. It is fried in oil
and then added to other dishes.

How to Make a Basic Sofrito

Ingredients

- 1 yellow onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 green bell pepper
- 3 to 4 sweet chili peppers
- 3 cilantro (coriander) leaves
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried whole oregano



Green pepper



Yellow onion



Cilantro



Chili peppers



Oregano



Garlic

Directions

Remove skins from onion and garlic. Clean and prepare green bell and sweet chili peppers. Wash in water. Then finely chop⁴ these ingredients, including the cilantro leaves. Place a heavy-bottomed pot over low heat; add oil and oregano. Add the chopped ingredients. Continue cooking for about three to four minutes, stirring⁵ occasionally.



¹ The **cuisine** of a place is its style of cooking.

² A **rodent** is a type of small animal such as a mouse or rat.

³ A **slave** is someone who is the property of another person and has to work for that person.

⁴ When you **chop** something, you cut it into small pieces.

⁵ When you **stir** something, you mix it.

▲ Sofrito is used as the base of many Puerto Rican rice, bean, and stewed dishes.



□ Reading Comprehension

A. Multiple Choice. Choose the correct answer for each question.

Sequence

1. Who lived in Puerto Rico first?
- the Taíno people
 - the Africans
 - the Spanish
 - the Americans

Main Idea

2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
- Taíno dishes are important in Puerto Rican cooking.
 - Puerto Rican cooking has had many influences.
 - Food that has been imported by foreigners isn't really Puerto Rican.
 - American foods have probably had the most influence.

Reference

3. In line 4, the word *it* refers to
- immigration
 - Puerto Rican cuisine
 - Caribbean history
 - the island's natural beauty

Detail

4. Which of the following is NOT true?
- Many people think Puerto Rican food is spicy.
 - Puerto Rican cuisine uses a lot of chili peppers.
 - Sofrito* is an extremely spicy type of food.
 - Ají caballero* is a type of chili pepper.

Detail

5. How is *sofrito* used?
- It is eaten before meals.
 - It is added to other dishes.
 - It is used when foods are too spicy.
 - It is eaten as a main dish.

Did You Know?

Recent DNA tests showed that more than 60 percent of Puerto Ricans alive today have a connection to the Taíno people.

B. True or False. Read the sentences below and circle **T** (true) or **F** (false).

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The old name for Puerto Rico was Borikén. | T | F |
| 2. Pigs were a common ingredient in traditional Taíno cooking. | T | F |
| 3. Plantains and sugarcane are native to Puerto Rico. | T | F |
| 4. <i>Sofrito</i> is traditionally cooked in an oven. | T | F |
| 5. Another name for cilantro is coriander. | T | F |
| 6. The first ingredients used in preparing <i>sofrito</i> are garlic and onions. | T | F |
| 7. <i>Sofrito</i> should be cooked for at least an hour. | T | F |