

CACCABSAA

THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS



As it is rather simple to make, Caccabsaa is the go-to breakfast meal for most households in the Oromia region and has been for quite some time.



A freshly baked Qita (unleavened bread) for Caccabsaa

Abenezer Yonas

dough can be as runny or as solid as desired. The bread should be baked until it is crunchy but not completely dry; the goal is to arrive at a crispy and chewy texture. The bread is then broken up into small pieces and placed in a colorful, traditional food container called a Qorii, which is carved from wood and strengthened with leather. At this point, a spiced clarified butter is poured over the bread and worked gently into it. The butter is clarified using a variety of spices; traditionally it was done with kase, but recent years have seen ginger, garlic, and korarima added to the mix as well. After all of this, it is common to also add a generous amount of berbere, which is an Ethiopian hot spice blend. Then, either yogurt, a cottage cheese known as baadu, honey, or all three, are poured over or served on the side of the Caccabsaa. Of all these options, the most traditional and popular method is to pour the honey on the Caccabsaa and serve it with a tall glass of yogurt to drink on the side. All of this combines to make Caccabsaa one of the most well-rounded breakfast meals and the number one choice for many.

Freshly made Caccabsaa served in a traditional clay bowl called Xaabaa

Abenezer Yonas

Oromia, a region renowned for its high production of cereal crops, boasts a broad array of cereal-based delicacies. However, there is one cereal dish that has emerged as the undisputed champion of breakfast meals, and that dish is Caccabsaa. When you break it down it really is no surprise that this traditional dish has earned the right to hold a title of such high acclaim.

As it is rather simple to make, Caccabsaa has for a long time been the go-to breakfast meal for most households in the Oromia region. But recent years have seen Caccabsaa expand far beyond the borders of its birthplace. It is a meal that has swept across cities and taken the breakfast culture by storm. Having become the breakfast choice for many, it is now ordered and served in practically all cafes and restaurants in the country. What has made it so popular? You might wonder. What is it that distinguishes Caccabsaa as more remarkable than other cereal-based dishes? Let's see if we can discover its secret in the ingredients.

The appropriately named Caccabsaa, which literally means "broken up", is prepared by... you guessed it... breaking up thinly baked bread, mixing it with butter and spices, and kneading it gently together. The aim is to ensure that the spices permeate the bread while still allowing the bread to maintain its texture. While the subtle arts involved in making Caccabsaa differ with every household and establishment, its broader aspects are very much the same. The first step is baking a thin bread from unleavened barley, wheat, or teff flour. Based on preference, the

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While its ingredients make it sweet and spicy, crunchy and chewy, and one incredibly tasty breakfast, its deliciousness is not the only reason Caccabsaa is hailed as “the breakfast meal” for ordinary households and large establishments alike. One reason is that Caccabsaa, unlike other traditional meals, can be prepared in very little time. The bread is baked as soon as the flour is mixed with water; there is no need to wait until the dough rises, and the butter and berbere are typically found ready-made in most places. So, all that really needs to be done to make Caccabsaa is to bake the bread, break it up, and then add in whichever spices and side servings you have available. All of which can be done in less time than most other dishes.



The fact that many ingredients are optional in the preparation of Caccabsaa is the second factor that contributes to its popularity, especially in the typical Oromo household. Caccabsaa provides the average family with an option for a rich and balanced breakfast that fits within their budget, and as the preparation of Caccabsaa is littered with a host of choices, it can be tailored towards individual or household needs. Let us begin to break down the incredible adaptability of this meal. First a choice is made as to which cereal to use. When

making this choice, there are two important questions to consider. One, which cereal is preferred, taste-wise? And second, which cereal is more affordable or easily accessible to the household? Based on the answer to these questions either oat, barley, wheat or teff (usually red-teff) will be selected. After that you must choose which spices you wish to add. While it is very common to add berbere and the like, it is not a necessity. And lastly if you happen to be a vegan or if you are fasting, you can even choose to opt out of using butter and use oil instead, although considering the Oromo love for dairy, this is not a choice one traditionally makes. From start to finish, you can pick and choose what ingredients to include in your Caccabsaa, and regardless of the variations, it is sure to taste absolutely delectable.

Finally, no discussion about Caccabsaa can be complete without making mention of its special connection to Oromo cultural festivities. Caccabsaa, being a favorite of many of the attendees, is a must for any and every Oromo feast.

From Gadaa power transfer ceremonies to the great Irreechaa celebration, Caccabsaa is always present. Irreechaa, a thanksgiving holiday marking the end of the rainy season (ganna) and the arrival of spring (birraa), is celebrated in the mornings to commemorate the dawning of the spring sun. After this morning of spiritual celebration, the Oromo traditional banquet is served, and one meal that must never be excluded from this banquet is Caccabsaa. After a season of arduous rain, the serving of Caccabsaa, along with other traditional meals such as Marqaa and Cukkoo, is just what's needed to welcome and solidify the arrival of spring. After all, no dish is more appropriate to usher in the new season of sunshine and bountiful harvest than sweet, crispy, honey-soaked Caccabsaa.



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The bread is broken up into small pieces to make Caccabsaa by a chef from Hot Coffee and Food



The broken up pieces of bread are coated with butter



The butter is gently kneaded into the bread



Caccabsaa is popularly had with yoghurt



Variations on the Caccabsaa include this “special” version with yoghurt and eggs