

***Cooking on the Songlines***  
**by Joanne Buerger**

Yeah, I thought I might sail down to Bridgetown  
Spend some time in the Barbados sun

*Presents To Send You*

This month's culinary journey takes us to Barbados, the easternmost of the Caribbean islands. Originally inhabited by the Amerindians, the island was first claimed by the British in 1627, and was densely covered in vegetation. The British immediately began clearing the forests and started planting crops, mainly spices, tobacco, cotton and sugar. It was not long before Barbados was one of the richest Caribbean islands. Most of the settlers were English, Dutch, and Portuguese, but there were also "criminals" sent to the island as punishment and "poor whites" – indentured servants from England, Ireland and Scotland. The capital, and only seaport was, and still is, Bridgetown.

We are going to focus on three of the main ingredients of Barbadian cuisine: chicken, grapefruit, and rum. Chicken is the most popular meat on the island, and Barbadians, or Bajans, have one of the highest per capita consumption rates of chicken in the world. The grapefruit originated in Barbados. It first appeared around 1750, and is a cross between a sweet orange and a shaddock (a native pear-shaped citrus fruit with a thick rind and white flesh). It wasn't until 1823 that the fruit was introduced to Florida, which is now the world's leading grapefruit producer. The first sugarcane was brought to Barbados from Brazil by Dutch settlers in 1637. The crops did well and in less than ten years, Barbados had flourishing sugar cane plantations. Slaves were brought to work the cane fields and, by 1684, black slaves outnumbered white settlers 3 to 1 (slavery was abolished on the island in 1834). As time went on, the sugar cane plantations started producing rum in addition to sugar and molasses. Mount Gay, the oldest rum distillery on the island, has been in constant operation since it was established in 1703. Focusing on those three ingredients, let's start cooking....

**RUM AND GRAPEFRUIT CHICKEN**

4 chicken breasts	2 T. rum
2 T. Flour	½ c. chicken stock
salt & pepper	4 T. sherry
½ c. butter	1 grapefruit

Coast the chicken in seasoned flour. Fry in the butter until golden, then reduce the heat, cover, and cook for about 20 minutes (until tender). When the chicken is cooked, drain off the fat. Pour over the rum, and ignite. When the flames subside, place the chicken on a serving dish, and keep hot. Add the stock and sherry to the pan, and season with salt and pepper. Halve the grapefruit and squeeze the juice from one half into the stock. Cook this sauce until it has reduced by half. Add the segments from the other half of the grapefruit, and pour over chicken. Serve.