



Classical

When ACF Chef **Blessing Chichah**, a recent graduate of Bishop State Community College in Mobile, Alabama, emigrated to the United States from Nigeria in 2015, she missed the **egusi soup** enjoyed frequently in her birth country. Egusi is a West African name for the dried and ground, protein-rich seeds of squash, melon and other cucurbitaceous plants. For the classic version, Chef Chichah makes a paste with the egusi and some water, cooking the paste with crushed tomatoes, sweet peppers, onions and a touch of hot chili peppers for spice. She brings the mixture to a simmer with stock from cooking goat meat, along with beef bouillon, salt and ground dawadawa (African locust bean) for earthiness. Leafy greens and the reserved goat meat are added just at the end.



Modern

For the modern version, Chef Chichah presents a deconstructed, seafood-forward take of **egusi soup**. She starts off making the soup in the classic way but adds ground crawfish to the simmer. Traditionally, egusi soup is eaten with your hands by tearing off a piece of fufu, a semi-thick starch patty or soft dough made with pounded yam flour and hot water. In this case, the cooked elements of the soup are removed from the broth and served alongside the fufu. Blackened shrimp and shaved blanched carrots round out the dish.

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