



Many of the traditional foods of Puerto Rico at first glance seem beguilingly simple. What's so special about a chicken stew, for example? But dig a little deeper and you'll discover one of the many reasons I remain totally in love with the food of my homeland even as I travel around the world trying—and enjoying—new and ever more refined dishes. It has to do with the way the flavors that made their way here from Europe and Africa are layered to create a whole that's much more complex than the sum of its parts. This braised chicken dish with earthy vegetables is built on a base of classic Puerto Rican sofrito, aromatic dried oregano and bay leaves, and tart tomato sauce and wine, then brightened with a hit of tropical golden rum and briny olives.

FRICASE DE POLLO CON PAPAS Y ZANAHORIAS

Chicken Fricassee with Potatoes and Carrots

SERVES 4

- 1 (5-pound) chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more as needed
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 cup sofrito (page 40)
- ½ cup green olives, pitted or not
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1 cup tomato paste
- ½ cup golden rum
- 1 cup red or white wine
- 4 bay leaves
- 6 potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 carrots, peeled and diced
- Hot cooked white rice (page 132), for serving
- Tostones (page 166), for serving (optional)

Season the chicken with the salt, pepper, and oregano. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the sofrito, olives, and chicken. Cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato sauce, tomato paste, rum, wine, and 2 cups water. Add the bay leaves, potatoes, and carrots and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 30 to 45 minutes, until the chicken and vegetables are tender. Serve with rice and maybe some tostones.