

## The Roof Party

Finally, thankfully, we had a major milestone to celebrate: the completion of the roof. The house was still a concrete shell, open everywhere to the outdoors, but the roof was on, and Jamaican tradition dictates a major party at this stage in the building of a new house.

I learned that when the foundation of a new house in Jamaica is dug, a goat is slaughtered and the blood sprinkled around the corners. The tradition grew from the belief that the sacrifice would keep the ghosts of the ancestors — called *duppies* in Jamaica — satisfied, and they wouldn't come after the blood of the house's occupants. The ritual is repeated after the roof is complete. A goat is slaughtered, its blood is sprinkled in the corners, and everyone feasts on the meat.

Mr. Salmon had picnic tables constructed out of scrap lumber to seat the guests, hired a cook well versed in roof party traditions, secured a band to play dinner music, and bought the goat. A temporary kitchen was set up in the garage.

I have to confess that for Canadians accustomed to buying their meat plastic-wrapped in the supermarket, watching “dinner” tied up to a tree at the top of the hill for several days, grazing on the bit of grass it could find, was somewhat unsettling. Megan's husband, Ian, caught up in the spirit of the festivity, managed to overcome any hesitation and dig in with gusto. Caitlin, my youngest, on the other



*The roof is finally going on — time to plan the party.*

## A Traditional Roof Party Feast

**S**laughter the goat and sprinkle its blood around the corners of the completed roof. Chop up the head, feet, and intestines, and put them in a pot along with water, onion, potatoes, cho-cho, and carrots. Boil. Provide each guest with a cup of the resulting “mannish water.”

Cook the meat separately as curried goat. Serve with white rice and a side of cabbage-and-carrot salad. The traditional beverage of choice is white rum, although beer is acceptable nowadays.

Don't forget to spill some rice and rum so the duppies get their share.

### CURRIED GOAT with Green Mango Chutney

*Curried goat, a common Jamaican dish, was introduced to Jamaica by East Indians who immigrated to Jamaica in large numbers starting in about 1830.*

2 lbs	goat	1 tsp	salt
1	scallion, chopped	2 tbsp	vegetable oil
2	cloves garlic, chopped	2 cups	water
1/2	scotch bonnet pepper	1 lb	potato, peeled and cubed
2 tbsp	curry powder		Green Mango Chutney (see below)

Season goat with scallion, garlic, pepper, curry powder, and salt. Marinate overnight.

Scrape seasoning from meat and set seasoning aside.

Put the oil in a frying pan, add the meat, and brown. Add about 2 cups water and simmer until meat is soft, adding more water as necessary.

Return seasoning to the pan and add potatoes. Simmer until cooked, about 2-3 hours. Remove hot pepper.

Serve hot with Green Mango Chutney and hot biscuits.

SERVES 4

### Green Mango Chutney

4	green mangoes	1	scotch bonnet pepper, seeded and chopped
2	garlic cloves, minced		
2 tsp	thyme leaves	1 tsp	sugar
1/2 cup	cilantro		salt to taste

Peel the mangoes and slice. Place in a blender with the rest of the ingredients and process until minced.

MAKES 1 CUP

hand, found it gruesome and couldn't be coaxed to eat anything but salad when the moment came and the goat was duly sacrificed and cooked. Megan, who eats poultry but not meat, had a ready-made excuse not to indulge in goat.

It was a grand event, nonetheless, enjoyed late into the evening by the growing Greatview community. All the workers and their families were there, along with neighbours, suppliers of building materials, and my extended family, over from Canada to celebrate the milestone. At the evening's end, the fire was left to go out on its own when the duppies had satisfied their appetites. Thankfully again, to date they seem to have been successfully appeased.



*The growing Greatview community enjoys the feast.*