

Jamaica and Peru: what we share

Ingredients, history and customs of two countries that are more alike than you think.



Before you start

Kool Tingz was born between Jamaica and Peru. This guide brings together what they have in common: plants, dishes, history and people.

In this guide

In the kitchen — Jamaica × Peru: same plant · Ingredient by ingredient · What is different? · From Peru to Jamaica · False friends · Flagship dishes · Wok and soy sauce · Sugar: Jamaica and Peru

Shared history — Africa in Peru and in Jamaica · Afro-Peruvians today · The Afro-Peruvian table · The Chinese Jamaicans · Chifa has cousins · Callao and Port Royal

Today — Peru and Jamaica in numbers · Lima and Kingston · Dates we share · Two carnivals · Higglers and caseras



Jamaica × Peru: same plant

Four are the same plant. Two are relatives.

JAMAICA

Sorrel

=

PERU

Flor de jamaica

Hibiscus sabdariffa

In Jamaica it is drunk at Christmas, with ginger and spices.

JAMAICA

Ginger

=

PERU

Kion (ginger)

Zingiber officinale

"Kion" is the Chinese name for ginger. It reached Peru with Chinese immigration in the 19th century.

JAMAICA

Pimento

=

PERU

Pimienta de Jamaica

Pimenta dioica

In Jamaica it is called pimento. It is key to jerk.

JAMAICA

Soursop

=

PERU

Guanábana

Annona muricata

In Jamaica it is drunk as a juice with milk and nutmeg.

JAMAICA

Scotch bonnet

=

PERU

Ají limo

Capsicum chinense (both)



Same chilli species. Scotch bonnet is fruitier; both are very hot.

JAMAICA

Callaloo

=

PERU

Kiwicha (amaranth)

Amaranthus — relatives, not twins

Same genus. In Jamaica people eat the leaves; in Peru, the grain.

Ingredient by ingredient

Each pantry has its equivalent in the other.

JAMAICA

Scotch bonnet

&

PERU

Ají amarillo

The house chilli

In Jamaica, scotch bonnet usually goes into the pot whole or chopped. In Peru, ají amarillo is ground into a paste.

JAMAICA

Pimento

&

PERU

Comino (cumin)

The background spice

Pimento (allspice) scents jerk and Jamaican stews. Cumin scents the Peruvian aderezo.

JAMAICA

Escallion

&

PERU

Cebolla roja

The base onion

Jamaican cooking starts with spring onion. Peruvian cooking, with red onion.

JAMAICA

Thyme

&

PERU

Culantro



The herb

Thyme is in almost every Jamaican stew. Coriander is in seco and in many Peruvian dishes.

JAMAICA

Coconut milk

&

PERU

Leche evaporada

What makes it creamy

Rice and peas is cooked with coconut milk. Ají de gallina is finished with evaporated milk.

JAMAICA

Yam

&

PERU

Papa (potato)

The tuber

In Jamaica, yam rules, alongside cassava and breadfruit. In Peru, the potato in all its varieties.

What is different?

Five things that change between Jamaican and Peruvian food.

More fire.

In Peru, ají is a base: in the aderezo, in creamy sauces, in salsas.

In Jamaica, scotch bonnet is hotter and used with more care: sometimes whole, to add aroma without bursting.

Vinegar, not lime.

In Peruvian cooking, lime rules: think of ceviche.

In Jamaica, the acid usually comes from vinegar, as in escovitch.

Smoke and pot.

Jamaica cooks with wood smoke (jerk) and slow stews such as curry or brown stew.



Lima has the charcoal grill, the chifa wok and sudados.

Pimento, curry, nutmeg.

Jamaica uses pimento (allspice), curry, thyme and nutmeg.

Peru uses cumin, ají panca, coriander and huacatay.

Rice and peas, not white rice.

In Jamaica, the sides are rice and peas, dumplings, yam or green plantain.

In Peru, white rice, potato, sweet potato or corn on the cob.

From Peru to Jamaica

What Jamaican food owes to the Andes and South America.

JAMAICA

Irish potato

=

PERU

Papa (potato)

Solanum tuberosum

Domesticated in the Andes. It reached Jamaica around 1600, perhaps via Cartagena.

JAMAICA

Sweet potato

=

PERU

Camote

Ipomoea batatas

It originated between Mexico, Ecuador and Peru. Before 1520 there were already eight varieties in Jamaica.

JAMAICA

Cherimoya

=

PERU

Chirimoya

Annona cherimola

In Jamaica it only grows well between 1,000 and 2,000 metres: a reminder of its Andean origin.



JAMAICA

Lima bean

=

PERU

Pallar (lima bean)

Phaseolus lunatus

In English it carries the name of Lima. The RAE defines it as "judía del Perú" (Peruvian bean).

Llamas in Jamaica.

In the 1770s, the historian Edward Long proposed taking llamas, the "Peruvian sheep", to Jamaica.

According to Higman, "nothing came of this dream".

Cassava and pineapple.

Cassava and pineapple arrived with the Taíno, who came from South America, around the year 700.

Long before the Spanish.

False friends

Words from Jamaican cooking that confuse a Peruvian.

Not what you think

Food	Tubers and plantain
Pear	Avocado
Salad	Tomato
Irish	Potato
Coco	A tuber

Chocho is not tarwi.

In Jamaica, chocho is chayote.

In Peru, chocho is tarwi, the Andean lupin seed.



Not your caimito.

The Jamaican star apple and the caimito sold in Peru are from the same family. But they are different species.

It depends on the island.

In the eastern Caribbean, “ackee” is the name of another fruit: the one Jamaicans call guinep.

Jamaican ackee is the one in ackee and saltfish.

Peas are not arvejas.

In rice and peas, the “peas” are red kidney beans or gungo peas.

If you ask for “peas” in Jamaica, do not expect green peas.

Flagship dishes

Ceviche has a resolution, its own day and UNESCO recognition. Ackee and saltfish has custom.

JAMAICA

Ackee & saltfish

&

PERU

Ceviche

National dish

Ceviche in dates

26 Mar 2004	Cultural Heritage of the Nation.
2008	National Ceviche Day is created.
28 June	One day before Fishermen's Day.
Dec. 2023	UNESCO adds it to its list.

The first from the kitchen.

UNESCO inscribed the “practices and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche”.

It is the first element of Peruvian cooking on its list of intangible heritage.



The sources disagree.

One version, reported by Andina, says it was born more than 2,000 years ago in the Tallán culture, in Piura, and that the name comes from Arabic.

These are hypotheses: the origin of the dish and of the word is still debated.

National by custom.

For the Jamaican government, ackee is the national fruit. Ackee and saltfish is “widely considered” the national dish.

We found no law that declares it: the title was given by the table.

JAMAICA

Saltfish

&

PERU

Pescado crudo

The fish in the dish

Saltfish reached Jamaica as a cheap, long-lasting protein. Ceviche is made with raw fish marinated in lime.

Wok and soy sauce

What Chinese cooking changed in the pots of Peru and Jamaica.

From fried to stir-fried.

Chinese immigrants brought the wok and high-heat stir-frying, as well as ginger and soy sauce.

With that technique and Peruvian ingredients came lomo saltado, one of our flagship dishes.

Soy sauce in almost everything.

According to the Gleaner, the great Chinese gift to Jamaican cooking is soy sauce: hardly any meat is cooked without it.

The wok, stir-frying, oyster sauce, hoisin and sesame oil also arrived.



JAMAICA

Pak choi

=

PERU

Pakchoy

The same Chinese cabbage

Almost the same name, in the markets of Kingston and Lima. Both arrived with Chinese immigration.

Chifa and chaufa.

"Chifa" comes from the Cantonese "chi fan", to eat rice. "Chaufa", from "chau fan", fried rice.

The cook Gloria Hinostrroza says that around 1921 Chinese eateries began to be called chifas.

Tamarind for plum.

With the wars, products from China ran short, and Chinese-Jamaican cooks improvised with what the island had.

In the 1940s, Jamaican tamarind replaced Chinese sour plum in a duck dish.

Jamaican-style chop suey.

Noodles, fried rice, chop suey and Cantonese roast pork are part of the Jamaican table, with their own seasoning.

Just like chaufa, which became Peruvian.

Sugar: Jamaica and Peru

Two cane coasts, two histories of forced labour.

JAMAICA

Sugar estates

=

PERU

Haciendas

Large cane estates

Jamaica had its sugar estates. Peru's north coast had its haciendas: Casa Grande, Cartavio, Pomalca, Tumán.



Peru's haciendas.

In La Libertad were Casa Grande (owned by the Gildemeisters) and Cartavio (owned by Grace). In Lambayeque, Pomalca, Tuman and Cayalti.

Between 1900 and 1910, the Larcos and the Gildemeisters bought more than 14 haciendas in the Chicama valley.

Africa, India and China.

Later Jamaica brought workers from India; Peru, from 1850, Chinese workers in conditions close to slavery.

400 Chinese per hacienda.

In 1877, the Martinet census counted 240 cane haciendas on the Peruvian coast.

It calculated that a 500-hectare hacienda needed 400 to 500 Chinese workers.

The sugar estates change hands.

On 24 June 1969 the agrarian reform began. That day, soldiers entered the sugar estates of the north coast.

The haciendas became cooperatives owned by their workers.



Africa in Peru and in Jamaica

The African heritage that links Peru and Jamaica.

Since the conquest.

The first Africans reached Peru with Pizarro's voyages, around 1527 or 1528; the sources disagree on the exact date.

In total, some 95,000 enslaved Africans were brought to Peru.

More than the Spanish.

The 1614 census of Lima counted 10,386 enslaved Black people and 9,630 Spaniards.

They worked in houses, shipyards and on sugar, cotton and vineyard haciendas.

JAMAICA

1 Aug 1838

&

PERU

Dec 1854

End of slavery

In Jamaica, some 311,000 people were freed. In Peru, Ramón Castilla signed the abolition in Huancayo.

A historic apology.

On 7 December 2009, the Peruvian State made a historic apology to the Afro-Peruvian people.

In Jamaica, 1 August is Emancipation Day, a public holiday restored in 1997.

Afro-Peruvians today

How many there are and where they live, according to the censuses.



828,894 people.

In the 2017 census, 3.6% of Peruvians aged 12 and over identified as Afro-Peruvian.

Tumbes, Piura, Lambayeque and La Libertad had the highest proportions.

Almost two million.

According to 2025 census results presented by INEI in July 2026, 1,976,396 people identify as part of the Afro-Peruvian people.

The question changed between censuses, so the figures cannot be compared directly.

Communities

Yapatera	Morropón, Piura.
Zaña	Lambayeque.
El Carmen	Chincha, Ica.
San Luis	Cañete, Lima.
Lima	Barrios Altos, La Victoria, Malambo.

JAMAICA

9 out of 10

&

PERU

3.6%

African ancestry

Jamaica: 2011 census (92% Black, 6% mixed). Peru: Afro-Peruvian self-identification, 2017 census.

The Afro-Peruvian table

Dishes that Peru attributes to its African heritage.

Dishes

Anticuchos	Grilled beef heart.
Tacu tacu	Beans with rice.



Carapulcra	Stewed dried potato.
Sangrecita	And choncholí, chanfainita.

Desserts

Frejol colado	Chincha and Cañete, at Easter.
Turrón de Doña Pepa	The October sweet.
Chapana	From Chincha.
Ranfañote	A Creole sweet.

Disputed origins.

The origin of anticucho and tacu tacu is debated: some see it as African, others as Andean.

What is certain is that Afro-Peruvian cooking made them its own.

Flagship dish.

Since 2022, carapulcra with sopa seca, the “manchapecho”, has been the flagship dish of Ica.

In Jamaica, the national dish also has African roots: ackee arrived on a ship from Africa.

The Chinese Jamaicans

A story Peru understands better than anyone.

JAMAICA

1854

&

PERU

15 Oct 1849

The first Chinese arrive

75 workers reached Callao on the ship Frederick Wilhem. Two ships reached Jamaica in 1854: one direct from China and another from Panama.



Mostly Hakka.

Most of their ancestors were Hakka, from the Dongguan, Huiyang and Bao'an area.

In the 2011 census, 50,228 Jamaicans identified as Chinese.

The Chinese shop.

By 1963, Chinese-Jamaican families ran the great majority of the island's grocery shops and supermarkets.

As in Peru, the Chinese corner shop was part of daily life.

Hard dough bread and soy sauce.

The Chinese contribution is credited with hard dough bread, the Jamaican sandwich loaf, and the use of soy sauce and ginger.

In Peru, Chinese immigration also brought soy sauce and ginger into the kitchen, and gave rise to chifa.

Behind reggae

Tom Wong	Tom the Great Sebastian, the first successful sound system.
Leslie Kong	Produced Bob Marley's first single (1962) and "Israelites".
Vincent and Patricia Chin	Founded VP Records, today the world's largest reggae label.

Since 1891.

The Chinese Benevolent Association was founded in 1891: school, sanatorium, cemetery and newspaper.

Today its headquarters houses the Chinese-Jamaican Historical Museum.

Chifa has cousins

Peru and Jamaica received immigrants from Asia at almost the same time.



JAMAICA

1854

&

PERU

1849

The first Chinese immigrants arrive

They reached Callao in 1849. The first ships reached Jamaica in 1854.

Chifa was born.

Chinese cooks with Peruvian ingredients.

Today chaufa is eaten all over the country.

“The Chinese shop” was born.

By 1963, Chinese-Jamaican families ran the great majority of the island’s grocery shops and supermarkets.

The Chinese shop was part of the Jamaican neighbourhood.

Curry goat and roti.

From 1845, more than 36,000 workers from India came to Jamaica.

They brought curry. Today curry goat is part of the national cuisine.

Two stories of mixing.

In Peru, the Japanese arrived in 1899 and Nikkei cooking was born.

In Jamaica, India left curry. Two countries, the same story of mixing.

Callao and Port Royal

Two ports destroyed by land and sea, and still there.

JAMAICA

7 Jun 1692

&

PERU

28 Oct 1746

The earthquake

Port Royal partly sank into the sea. Callao was flattened by the tsunami that followed the great Lima earthquake.



Two-thirds under water.

Some 13 hectares, two-thirds of the town, sank into the sea after the quake, according to estimates.

Thousands of people died; the figures vary by source.

A port wiped out.

For the Geophysical Institute of Peru, the 1746 earthquake was the strongest in our history. A great tsunami followed.

Very little of Callao was left. The death toll and the height of the waves vary by source.

JAMAICA

Fort Charles

&

PERU

Real Felipe

The fortress

Fort Charles (around 1655) survived the 1692 quake, damaged. Work on the Real Felipe began in 1747, after the tsunami.

A pentagon by the sea.

Viceroy Manso de Velasco ordered it built from 1747: an irregular pentagon plan, five bastions and a moat.

Since 2023 it has been on UNESCO's World Heritage tentative list.

Two cities moved.

After 1692, most of Port Royal's trade moved to Kingston.

After 1746, Callao's civilian population was moved away from the shore, and the Real Felipe remained as a fortress.



Peru and Jamaica in numbers

Two very different countries, face to face.

Peru

Population	34,157,732 (2025 census)
Area	1,285,216 km ²
Highest peak	Huascarán, 6,768 m
Currency	Sol
Languages	Spanish, Quechua, Aymara and more

Jamaica

Population	2,774,538 (2022 census)
Area	10,991 km ²
Highest peak	Blue Mountain Peak, 2,256 m
Currency	Jamaican dollar
Languages	English and patois

Lima: three and a half Jamaicas.

Metropolitan Lima has 10,129,708 inhabitants according to the 2025 census.

That is more than three and a half times the population of all of Jamaica.

Since 1970.

Peru and Jamaica have had diplomatic relations since 1970.

In August 2025, Peru announced the reopening of its embassy in Kingston.

Lima and Kingston

One on the Pacific, the other on the Caribbean. Face to face.



JAMAICA

1692

&

PERU

1535

Year founded

Kingston was born after the earthquake that destroyed Port Royal. Lima was founded on 18 January as the City of Kings.

JAMAICA

672 904

&

PERU

10,129,708

Inhabitants

Kingston and St Andrew, 2022 census. Metropolitan Lima, 2025 census: about fifteen times more people.

Bay and port.

Kingston has a large natural harbour, protected by the Palisadoes peninsula.

Lima has Callao, one of the main fishing and trading ports in South America.

Heat versus garúa.

Kingston averages highs of about 32 °C and lows of about 25 °C.

In Lima it hardly rains: between 10 and 60 mm a year, and from June to September the garúa (coastal drizzle) rules.

One place in each

Lima

Historic centre: World Heritage since 1988.

Lima

Convent of San Francisco.

Kingston

Hope Gardens, a large botanical garden.

Kingston

Bob Marley Museum, at 56 Hope Road.



Dates we share

JAMAICA

2nd Sun. May

=

PERU

2nd Sun. May

Mother's Day

The same Sunday in both countries. In 2026 it fell on 10 May.

JAMAICA

3rd Sun. June

=

PERU

3rd Sun. June

Father's Day

This one also matches. In 2026 it fell on 21 June in Peru and in Jamaica.

JAMAICA

23 May

&

PERU

1 May

Labour Day

Peru celebrates it on 1 May. Jamaica, on 23 May; in 2026, as it fell on a Saturday, the holiday moved to Monday the 25th.

Different holidays.

In Peru, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are public holidays.

In Jamaica, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Month of heroes.

Jamaica celebrates National Heroes Day on the third Monday of October: in 2026, the 19th.

In Peru, 8 October is a holiday for the Battle of Angamos.

Christmas and one more day.

In both countries, 25 December is a public holiday.

Jamaica adds the 26th, Boxing Day. Peru, earlier, the 8th (Immaculate Conception) and the 9th (Battle of Ayacucho).



Two carnivals

In Peru, before Lent. In Jamaica, after Holy Week.

JAMAICA

After Easter

&

PERU

Before Ash Wed.

When is carnival?

In Peru it ends on Ash Wednesday. In Kingston, the big 2026 parade was on Sunday 12 April.

A burial to close.

In several regions, carnival ends on Ash Wednesday: the will of Ño Carnavalón is read and then he is buried or burned.

In Cajamarca he is paraded in a coffin, and the farewell is at Baños del Inca.

Verses with heritage status.

The copla and contrapunto of the Cajamarca carnival have been Cultural Heritage of the Nation since 2017.

Around 250 troupes paraded in the 2025 corso, according to El Peruano.

Byron Lee takes to the streets.

Carnival began at the University of the West Indies in the 1950s, with students from the eastern Caribbean.

Byron Lee turned it into a major event: the first parade was on 22 April 1990, in Kingston.

JAMAICA

Soca and dancehall

&

PERU

Copla

Carnival music

Jamaica mixes soca, dancehall and reggae. In Cajamarca, the copla is sung in contrapunto (call and answer).



Carnivals with heritage status.

Andina counted 24 Peruvian carnivals declared Cultural Heritage of the Nation, from the Ayacucho carnival (2003) to the one in Patambuco, Puno.

Jamaica has one big carnival, in Kingston, and smaller festivals in Ocho Rios and St Thomas.

Higglers and caseras

The people who sell in the street and at the market, in Lima and in Jamaica.

JAMAICA

Higgler

&

PERU

Casera

Your regular seller

From “higgle”, to haggle.

“Higgle” is an English verb meaning to haggle. It is recorded from the 17th century, probably as a variant of “haggle”.

In Jamaica, the higglers’ trade is called “higglering”.

Sunday markets.

During slavery, what was grown on provision grounds was sold at Sunday markets: a tradition from West Africa, where women traded.

After 1838, the trade stayed in women’s hands.

The women who travel to buy.

“Informal commercial importers” bring goods from Panama, Haiti, Curaçao or the US to sell in Kingston.

Many were higglers or are daughters of higglers.

The emoliente seller, a micro-business.

Law 30198, from 2014, recognises the street sale of medicinal plant drinks, such as emoliente, as micro-businesses.



In March 2026, Congress approved changes so they can also sell, for example, sandwiches.

Coronation Market.

In downtown Kingston is Coronation Market, known as "Curry". The Gleaner called it the most popular market in Jamaica.

In 2015, the JCDC took its higglers to a producers' fair on Hope Road.



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