These recipes are all from *Spice & Kosher: Exotic Cuisine of the Cochin Jews* by Essie Sassoon, Bala Menon and Kenny Salem. *Spice & Kosher* is not a mere cookbook. It tells the story of the Jews of Cochin, walks through their history and captures their unique culture through their food.

“It is often said that our foods link our present lives with that of our ancestors, and it is not easy to explain why the smells of childhood last a lifetime…”
Polappam & Chikkiyathu

The polappam is a type of crepe made with black gram and semolina and is a breakfast dish unique to the Jews of Cochin.

Makes 20 polappams.

For Polappam:
- 3 green chillies chopped fine
- 1 small sprig curry leaves
- 2 1/2” piece of ginger, chopped
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 4 tbsp coconut oil
- Salt to taste

For Chikkiyathu:
- 1 cup black gram, soaked for about 8 hours and then processed in a blender
- 3 cups of semolina
- Two cups of pumpkin, skin removed and cut into cubes
- 2 large onions
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 1 tsp mustard seeds

Steam the semolina and process in blender along with the black gram, with water to get a batter-like consistency. Add salt and keep covered overnight.

Heat 2 tbsp oil in a skillet and fry the onions until they are translucent and begin to brown. Add the chillies, ginger and turmeric. Mix well. Add the pumpkin pieces with 1/4 cup water; cover and cook for 10 to 15 minutes. Add the grated coconut.

In another pan, heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard seeds. Add curry leaves and sizzle for 2 minutes. Pour over the pumpkin. Stir.

In an iron griddle, use the batter to make crepes similar to the dosa.

Serve polappam with the chikkiyathu.

Optional: Hard, dried tuna (known as Massa in Cochin and available in plenty) can be grated and fried in coconut oil. This can be added to the cooked pumpkin, before taking pan off the stove. It adds an additional layer of flavor.
Chukund

In Kerala, these tiny baked/fried rice balls were a popular treat for children during the festival of Shavout.

Makes 80-100 balls.

- 2 cups grated coconut
- 1 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups rice
- Coconut oil for frying (optional)

Soak rice in cold water for about an hour. Drain. Grind the rice to a coarse flour. Dry roast the flour in a deep saucepan. Transfer to bowl. Stir-fry the grated coconut. In another pan, on low heat, melt the sugar with a little water. (Don’t let it caramelize). Let cool. Add coconut and rice flour to the syrup and mix well. Roll tiny pellet-size balls from the mixture. Fry the pellets in coconut oil in a wok or steam them in a suitable pot.
Chicken Pastel

The pastel is an ancient Cochin Jewish dish, mentioned in Dutch documents from Kerala in the 17th century. In modern Israel, a similar dish is called bureka, but made with cheese filling.

Makes 40 servings.

- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 10 oz cabbage, chopped
- 5 whole mushrooms, chopped
- 1 potato, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp ground turmeric
- 2 tsp soup mix
- 2 oz cashew nuts, chopped
- 1 boiled egg, chopped
- 1 raw egg
- 1 package egg roll wraps
- Cooking oil
- Dough: 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 tbsp margarine, melted
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- Salt to taste

Whisk 2 cups flour and the salt together in a bowl. In a separate bowl, combine margarine, oil, egg and 3/4 cup water. Slowly pour the egg and oil mixture into the bowl with the flour, stirring to prevent clumping. Add flour as needed until it forms a soft dough.

Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the chicken and cook over medium heat until the pink disappears. Add onions, carrot, potato, peppers and spices. Cook for about 30 minutes. Stir in vinegar and chopped coriander in the last few minutes of cooking. Let cool completely.

Divide the dough into thirds. Roll it out thinly one at a time. Cut out circles, each the size of a coffee mug. Place a heaped teaspoon of filling on half of each circle, fold, to make half-moons, and crimp to seal. Heat the oil. Deep-fry the pastels until light brown, flipping once. Drain on paper towels.

These recipes were taken, with permission, from Spice & Kosher - Exotic Cuisine of the Cochin Jews, Essie Sassoon, Bala Menon and Kenny Salem, Tamarind Tree Books Inc. (June 14, 2013), 222 pages. Spice & Kosher is readily available online, including on Amazon.