

Frame Drum Chops with Spicy Rudimental Marinade
By
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With this recipe, you can create a sumptuous world percussion cuisine using many ingredients you may already have on hand, including good old fashioned rudiments applied to frame drums. The marinade takes time in order for all ingredients to properly marry, but the results are well worth the effort. An added bonus is that this dish actually *burns calories!*

Ingredients:

Any frame drum (*tar, riq, bendir, bodhran, etc.*)

***Arabic Tambourine* by Mary Ellen Donald (San Francisco: Mary Ellen Books, 1985) or any source of traditional Arabic rhythms for frame drums.**

26 Standard American Drum Rudiments (especially roll and drag patterns)

***Stick Control* by George Lawrence Stone (Randolph, MA: George B. Stone & Son, Inc., 1963)**

A few standard rudimental snare drum solos

Frame drum solos, ensembles, and improvisations

Serves:

Intermediate to advanced percussionists with a practical knowledge of traditional rudiments and an interest in applying them to developing frame drumming techniques

Among the first drums I encountered from the African continent were the frame drums from the desert areas of North Africa. The *tar*, *bendir*, *riq*, and ancestors of the Irish *bodhran* originate in the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt) and throughout the Middle East. In many of these instruments, I saw the ancestry of our western orchestral percussion instruments. The Moroccan *bendir*, with its single gut snare running along the underside of the head, is quite possibly an ancestral prototype of the snare drum, and the Egyptian *riq* is a predecessor of the tambourine. I was struck by the amazing variety of sounds that could be produced from a simple skin stretched across a cylindrical frame. Further, I saw a striking similarity between the vocalizations used to represent the various strokes in this drumming (“dum,” “tak,” “ka,” “cha”) and our own traditional snare drum rudiments (“flam,” “ruff,” “paradiddle,” “ratamacue”). Inspired by the eloquently virtuosic performances of Glen Velez, I obtained a few instruments and familiarized myself with some traditional Arabic rhythms through a wonderful book by Mary Ellen Donald titled

Arabic Tambourine: A Comprehensive Course in Techniques and Performance for the Tambourine, Tar, and Mazhar. I began collecting rhythms and grooves in a little notebook, and eventually incorporated some into solo compositions for my students. Many of these solos use a rhythmic language derived in part from my studies in rudimental drumming.

I usually begin working with students on frame drums once they have developed a strong technique on snare drum and have performed some substantial solo works for that instrument. After introducing the student to the basic frame drum strokes (“dum,” “tak,” and “slap”), we explore some practical applications of these sounds through a few traditional rhythms such as Malfuf (dum - - dum - - slap -), Saudi (dum - - slap - - slap -), Maqsum (dum slap – slap dum – slap -) and Masmudi (dum – dum – tak tak - tak dum – tak tak – tak tak -) among others. Once the student has grasped the basic techniques and can play some fundamental rhythms *with good sound quality* (vitally important!), we are ready to add embellishments such as drags and rolls. A solid background in rudimental drumming is especially helpful here, and I always find it appropriate to review the standard rudiments at this point.

No matter which frame drum a student chooses to play (*tar, riq, or bodhran*), the rolls are executed in the same manner; the ring and middle fingers of each hand act as the stroke and subsequent bounce of the snare drum stick. In my compositions for frame drums, this is usually notated with “43 43,” etc. beneath the roll notations to indicate the 4th and 3rd fingers respectively. I usually start with the 5-stroke roll using a L R L – R L R sticking (43 43 4 – 43 43 4 -) and progress through the 7 and 9 stroke rolls. The 6-stroke roll introduces consecutive (LR) 4th finger accents (43 43 4 4), as does the 10-stroke roll (43 43 43 4 4 – 4 -). The student continues in like manner through all roll rudiments. The drag rudiments (ruffs, drag taps, drag paradiddles, lesson 25, and ratamacues) are especially effective in developing a repertoire of techniques for embellishing improvisations and increasing dexterity.

Years ago, I developed a daily regimen for maintaining technical facility on snare drum using the first 13 pages of George Lawrence Stone’s *Stick Control*. I assigned a day of the week to each column so I completed the first 13 pages (effectively comprising the essential elements of the book) in one week. I highly recommend this practice regimen for any student or professional interested in building or rebuilding a solid drumming technique. It also happens to be highly effective in building frame drum facility, control, and endurance. Any pattern can be assigned various combinations of strokes (using “dum,” “tak,” “slap,” etc.) to create rhythmic “melodies.”

The exercises begin on page 5 with “Single Beat Combinations,” so label the two columns on that page “Monday” and “Tuesday.” Continue on to the four columns on pages 6 and 7 with “Wednesday” through “Saturday,” and take a day off on Sunday. On page 8 and 9 (“Triplets”), label the columns “Monday,” “Tuesday,” and “Wednesday,” then on pages 10 through 12 (“Short Roll Combinations”), again label the columns “Monday” through “Saturday.” Page 13 (“Review of Short Roll Combinations”) is marked “Daily,” and should conclude each daily practice session. So, a typical Monday

session should include the first column on page 5, 8, and 10, and all of page 13; a Thursday session would include the second column on page 6 and 11 and all of page 13, and so forth. This is a great way to build technique, especially during the summer months or extended holidays when there is extra “time off.” It is especially helpful in building and maintaining your frame drumming chops. This is the all-important marinade. Your chops (and your audience) will thank you later!

Once a player’s technique has been established, an abbreviated regimen can be applied using only the exercises that work both sides of the body. Please resist the temptation to go directly to these shortcuts! These are to be used only as maintenance exercises once a fairly complete technique has been attained. Simply circle the following selections in *Stick Control*:

Page 5: ex. 5-8, 13, 16-18, 23-24

Page 6: ex. 25-27, 32, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48

Page 7: ex. 53-54, 60-62, 69

Pages 8, 10, 11, 12: ex. 5-7, 12, 17-19, 24

Page 9: ex. 5-7

Standard rudimental snare drum solos such as “The General,” “Hell on the Wabash,” “Downfall of Paris,” and “Connecticut Halftime,” as well as selections from *N.A.R.D. Drum Solos* (Chicago: Ludwig Music Publishing, 1962) provide excellent material for developing frame drum technique and endurance. My students know their chops are beginning to cook when they can play “Three Camps” with all repeats on a frame drum. See how this recipe enhances your playing of the available solo material or traditional Arabic rhythms and improvisations. *Bon appétit!*

Dr. B. Michael Williams teaches percussion at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. He is an Associate Editor for *Percussive Notes* and composer of several works for hand drums, including *Four Solos for Frame Drums*, *Bodhran Dance*, *Another New Riq*, *Tiriba Kan*, and *Recital Suite for Djembe*.