



RED BEANS AND RICE

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What is the relationship between food, jazz, and American history? In the late 19th and early 20th century, jazz spread into American life, blending many influences and finding distinct forms in each community it was played, from New Orleans to Kansas City to Harlem. Chef Rock Harper joined us to prepare a few dishes from America’s most historic jazz communities as we explored how each city produced unique culinary creations to feed both musicians and their audiences and discussed how the foods that fed jazz are as improvisational, innovative, and rooted in tradition as the music itself.

New Orleans is widely referred to as the birthplace of jazz—a city where music was a celebratory, public expression of the city’s blended African, French, Spanish, and American Indian roots. So too is the cuisine of New Orleans a portrait of the city’s vibrant cultural and culinary influences. Jazz legend Louis Armstrong was a native of New Orleans—born in the poverty-stricken but musically vibrant section of the city known as Storyville.

*Though his career as a world-class trumpeter and vocalist took him to all the great jazz cities of the world, he remained fiercely proud of his New Orleans roots, concluding much of his correspondence with the sign-off “**red beans and ricely-yours.**” Red beans and rice, a dish that Armstrong called his “birthmark,” is one of the most beloved dishes of New Orleans cuisine—often made on Monday nights, incorporating the leftover roast ham or pork of a Sunday supper. Chef Rock offered us his own interpretation featuring andouille sausage (an ingredient brought to Louisiana by French colonists), but we have Armstrong’s 1970 version for you to try as well.*

RED BEANS AND RICE (2017)

Courtesy of Chef Rock Harper

Serves 8

Ingredients

1 pound dry kidney beans
8 ounces andouille sausage, sliced
1/2 pound salt pork (slab bacon may be used instead)
1/2 cup tomato sauce or puree
2 small ham hocks
1 cup diced yellow onion
1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
1/2 cup diced celery
2 small dried peppers (like chile de arbol)
1 clove garlic, chopped
Salt to taste
Cooked white rice, for serving

Directions

1. Wash the beans thoroughly and place them in a two-quart pot with a lid. Cover the beans with cold water, then cover and let soak overnight.
2. To cook, pour the soaking water off the beans and add fresh water to cover. Add the salt pork, andouille, and the ham hocks and bring to a boil over full flame. Turn the heat down to slightly higher than low, cover the pot and let the beans cook for 1-1/2 hours. Add the diced onions, bell pepper, celery, garlic, dried peppers and salt. Cook for three hours. Add tomato sauce and cook for 1-1/2 hours

more, adding water whenever necessary, until tender. The beans and meat should always be just covered with water, never dry.

3. Remove the ham hock and dice the meat. Remove about a fourth of the beans and mash until a smooth paste. Add the diced ham hock and mashed beans back to the cooked beans and adjust seasonings. Serve over white rice.

CREOLE RED BEANS (1970)

Serves 6 or more persons

Courtesy of Louis and Lucille Armstrong, Louis Armstrong archives at Queens College, New York

Ingredients

1 pound kidney beans
1/2 pound salt pork (strip of lean, strip of fat; slab bacon may be used if preferred)
1 small can tomato sauce (if desired)
6 small ham hocks or one smoked pork butt
2 onions, diced
1/4 green bell pepper
5 tiny or 2 medium dried peppers
1 clove garlic, chopped
Salt to taste

Directions

1. Use a two-quart pot with cover. Wash beans thoroughly and soak overnight in cold water. Be sure to cover beans.
2. To cook, pour water off beans and add fresh water to cover. Add salt pork or bacon and bring to a boil over full flame in covered pot. Turn flame down to slightly higher than low and let cook for 1-1/2 hours. Add diced onions, bell pepper, garlic, dried peppers and salt. Cook for three hours. Add tomato sauce and cook for 1-1/2 hours more, adding water whenever necessary. Beans and meat should always be just covered with water (juice), never dry.
3. To prepare with ham hocks or pork butts: Wash meat, add water to cover and let come to a boil in covered pot over medium flame. Cook for 1-1/2 hours and then add beans (pour water off) and add rest of ingredients to meat. Cook for 4-1/2 hours. Add water when necessary.

Suggestions: For non-pork eaters, chicken fat may be used instead of salt pork. Corned beef or beef tongue may be used instead of ham hocks or butts.

RICE (1970)

Ingredients

2 cups white rice
2 cups water
1 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. Wash rice thoroughly. Have water and salt come to a boil and add rice to boiling water. Cook until rice swells and water is almost evaporated. Cover and turn flame down low. Cook until rice is grainy.

To serve: On dinner plate -- rice then beans, either over rice or beside rice, as preferred.



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