

the RANCHO GORDO BEAN CLUB

1ST QUARTER 2016

NEWSLETTER

NAPA, CALIFORNIA

Welcome back from the holidays. Isn't it nice to get another package, this one 100% dedicated to you? And this one is a doozy!

The most exciting bean we have is the Marcella. We tried it a few years ago and the yield was pretty dreadful. We had just enough for seed to try again and a little extra, which we shared with the Bean Club members. Now, we're enjoying a real harvest and I'm tickled to be sharing it with the Bean Club again. Marcella Hazan's husband, Victor, gave us the green light to call the bean Marcella and for me it will always be a tribute to one of my culinary heroes.

If you don't have her book, *Classic Italian Cooking*, you should treat yourself today.

We also are re-introducing Sangre de Toro, an incredible red bean from Mexico that we've been out of for most of the last year. Red beans and rice are in your future!

We love hearing about your successes in the kitchen so don't be shy! I want to thank you again for your support and I hope 2016 is our most delicious year yet.

-Steve

MEET THE BEANS SCARLET RUNNER

Scarlet Runners are one of the oldest cultivated foods of the New World! From the heart of Oaxaca, these big fat beans are less starchy than Limas but more substantial than other Runner beans.

If you're vegetarian and looking to cook something that will please your omnivore friends, or if you're just trying to eat less meat, this is a great "gateway" bean. Vegans and Meat Eaters alike will all meet happily at the table for a serving of Scarlet Runners.

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus coccineus*

LARGE WHITE LIMA

Lima beans have a creamy texture and savory flavor and they taste more like fresh vegetables than other beans. Good, new crop Limas (like ours!) are worthy of your attention, especially if you grew up eating those nasty frozen beans, under pressure from your dear old mom. Chances are she overcooked them. Be prepared to be astounded by how big they are when cooked. Fully cooked, they can be a little starchy but you can also

keep cooking until they reach the creamy point.

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus lunatus*

SANGRE DE TORO

Here is a classic red bean from the heart of Mexico. Whether it's New Orleans red beans and rice, chili or just a bowl of beans, we think Sangre de Toro (or "Bull's Blood") is a tremendous bean.

We expected them to be popular but we had no idea we'd have so much trouble keeping them in stock. The bean broth is really good and is almost like a sauce, coating each grain of rice when you make a classic New Orleans red beans and rice. We don't even think the traditional Andouille sausage is the star of this dish when you use a superior bean like Sangre de Toro.

Dense and meaty, Sangre de Toro has a good pot liquor and can be used whenever red beans are called for. You can use them in Southern dishes as well as in Caribbean and Central American meals.

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus vulgaris*

MIDNIGHT

Midnight is a true black turtle bean with a rich, traditional black bean flavor and texture. Midnight beans have a light, thin skin that allows its flavors to mix with your aromatics and create a delicious bean broth. The beans and their broth are great with simple rice. The liquid coats each kernel of rice, adding flavor, protein and pizzazz. But don't forget to strain them for a salad with your favorite greens and use any leftover broth as a base for soup or even poaching eggs.

These are incredibly fresh so little, if any, soaking is required. You can retain the black color better by not soaking. If you must soak, try using the soaking water while cooking.

Cooking suggestions: Use them in any recipe calling for black or turtle beans or just enjoy on their own. Perfect for chilis, pot beans, salads, stews, and Brazilian feijoida.

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus vulgaris*

CRANBERRY

Cranberry is an odd name for a lovely, versatile bean. Thought to be originally from Colombia and then bred in Italy, Cranberry beans are soft and dense with a velvety, rich texture. The thin skins help produce a rich bean broth, making it the natural friend of pasta e fagioli (pasta fazool) as the liquid coats each noodle

with its luxurious sauce.

Cranberry beans are ideal for soups, stews and even re-fried beans. A favorite staff meal here at Rancho Gordo is a bowl of cranberry beans with poached chicken pieces, drizzled with our best fruity olive oil. Simple and sublime!

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus vulgaris*

MARCELLA

Marcella beans are grown in California from Italian Sorana seedstock. Sorana is a cannellini bean with incredibly thin skin and when cooked properly, an indulgent creamy texture. You can use them in your kitchen as you would any small white, European-style bean, but with an ingredient like this, simple is often better. Good crusty bread with some Marcella beans smashed on top, drizzled with your very best extra virgin olive oil and maybe a dusting of freshly cracked pepper is the new standard for "fast food."

Even though these beans are small, you should take your time and gently allow them to fully cook. They are edible quite soon after you start but the real creaminess comes with time and low, slow and gentle heat. The skins are almost not there, which means you can love them too much by constantly stirring them, and they will start to fall apart. This may sound a little snobby, but they're not for everyone. They require a little more care but the payoff is a cannellini like no other.

LATIN NAME: *Phaseolus vulgaris*

STONEGROUND CHOCOLATE

In the beautiful state of Guerrero in Mexico, a cooperative of women grow and harvest their own cacao, toast it on clay comales (pans) and then stone grind it with piloncillo (an unrefined sugar) and canela, the famous soft cinnamon preferred in Mexico.

Unlike other commercial brands, our tablets are 70% chocolate and the only other ingredients are the piloncillo and canela. Nothing else is added, or needed!

You can make traditional Mexican hot chocolate with milk or water but this chocolate can also be used in pork rubs, as a seasoning in a pot of beans and of course a batch of Mole Poblano or Mole Negro. Sadly, the staff has discovered you can also just eat it like candy with very little trouble and most of us are addicted to the rustic, almost smoky flavor. It's hard to stop once you start.

Recipe: Potaje de Frijol

Adapted from *The Cuban Table* by Ana Sofia Pelaez and Ellen Silverman (St Martin's Press 2014)

Serves 6 to 8

For the Beans

- 1 pound Rancho Gordo Midnight black beans, rinsed well
- 1 large green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and diced
- ½ large white onion, diced
- 4 large garlic cloves, peeled and lightly crushed with the back of a knife
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 dried bay leaf

For the Sofrito

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large green bell pepper, stemmed, diced, seeded, and diced
- ½ large white onion, diced
- 3 large garlic cloves, peeled and finely minced
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup green olives stuffed with pimientos, thinly sliced
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 to 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar (optional)

Inspect the beans for pebbles and dirt and rinse well and place them in a 6-quart heavy pot with 10 cups of water. Add the next five ingredients to the beans and bring to a boil using the same soaking water. Lower the heat to medium and simmer the beans until just tender, checking regularly and skimming the foam that forms on the top, 45 to 60 minutes.

In the meantime, prepare the sofrito. Warm the olive oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the green pepper, onion, and garlic and sauté until the onion is soft and translucent, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the salt, black pepper, oregano, and cumin, and cook an additional 2 minutes.

Add the sofrito to the pot with the beans. Stir in the wine, olives, and bay leaf. Bring the beans to a fast simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, covered, for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Stir frequently, until the broth has thickened and the beans are completely cooked through. Add the vinegar, salt, and black pepper to taste. Remove the beans from the heat and add the sugar if using.

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