

The **RANCHO GORDO**

THANKSGIVING *Guide*



If you stop to think about it, Thanksgiving is one of the nicest holidays we have. It's a day dedicated to good food, friends and family, being thankful for what we have and for a moment, acknowledging the indigenous cultures that were here before the waves of immigrants arrived.

In school we learned that the pilgrims and the Native Americans all had a wonderful feast and learned to become friends over turkey and cornbread. I suspect things weren't so easy but it's a great goal. Too often our Thanksgiving hosts are obsessed with recreating a meal "just like Mom's" and that's all well and good but it can be a little boring. We offer you some great recipes to make your Thanksgiving a little more American, a little less traditional, and we think, a lot more delicious.

We're hoping this little guide will help you with your holiday, whether you're a guest at a potluck or a host in charge of the whole show. You might pick up a trick or two or you might plan the entire meal around our suggestions. We just hope you have a great day and we'd be flattered if Rancho Gordo is a part of your celebration. — Steve Sando

APPETIZERS

BUCKEYE BEAN FRITTERS

Serves 10 to 12 as an appetizer (about 30 small fritters)

These bean fritters were created for us by Angela Tamura, formerly of Napa's Zuzu Restaurant. Let's be honest, from vegan to meateater, everybody likes a little something fried. We think this is a terrific way to kick off a memorable meal.

½ pound dried [Rancho Gordo Buckeye beans](#), sorted and rinsed
¼ white onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ cup whole milk
¼ of a small red onion
1 cup yellow cornmeal
⅓ cup all purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
½ cup buttermilk
1 medium egg, beaten
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
Zest of 1 lime
1½ teaspoons coarse salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
¾ to 1 cup vegetable oil for frying
Salsa and sour cream for serving

In a stockpot, saute the onion and garlic in the olive oil. When soft, add the beans. Cover beans with 2 inches of water. Bring the beans to a strong boil for 15 minutes and then lower to a gentle simmer. Cook the beans until tender, anywhere from 1 to 3 hours. If the water is running low, add warm water from a teakettle, as desired. Let the beans cool, then measure out 2 cups of cooked beans. Reserve the rest for another use.

In a food processor or blender, puree 1½ cups of the cooked beans, along with the milk and red onion, until you have a smooth paste.

In a large bowl, with a potato masher, smash the remaining ½ cup of beans until chunky-smooth. Add the cornmeal, flour, sugar, buttermilk, egg, cilantro, lime zest, and salt and pepper. Mix well with a rubber spatula. Stir in the bean puree. The texture should be like that of oatmeal. Increase the cornmeal or milk as needed.

Preheat the oven to 225°F. Line a baking sheet with paper towels.

Pour the oil into a 10-inch cast iron skillet until it comes about ⅓ of an inch up the sides of the skillet. Turn the heat to high and heat the oil until it is very hot and shimmering, but not smoking. Spoon a scant teaspoon of bean batter into the oil to test it. The batter should hold its shape and sizzle in a lively fashion, but not smoke.

When the oil is ready, drop the bean batter by scant tablespoons into the oil, being careful not to crowd them. Cook for about 1 minute until they are set and browned on the bottom and then carefully turn them with tongs or a metal spatula and cook the other side for 1 minute longer. The fritters should be set and become a dark, caramel brown. Cook in batches of about 6 fritters, removing cooked fritters to the paper-towel-lined baking sheet and placing them in the oven while you continue with the remaining batter. Adjust heat as needed and add more oil if it gets low. Be sure to give it time to come up to temperature before cooking more fritters.

Serve as hors d'oeuvres with sour cream and salsa or a plated first course over greens with the same garnish.

APPETIZERS

CRANBERRY SHRUB COCKTAIL (OR MOCKTAIL)

Makes about 2½ cups

A shrub is an old-fashioned concoction involving vinegar. The concept has gained popularity recently as the health benefits of vinegar become more widely discussed. Once you make the shrub base, you can use it as a mixer for unique and refreshing alcoholic or nonalcoholic drinks.

For the shrub:

2 cups cranberries (fresh or frozen)

1 stick canela

1 cup sugar

1 cup water

*1 cup Rancho Gordo [Pineapple Vinegar](#), [Stivalet Banana Vinegar](#),
or apple cider vinegar*

For the cocktail/mocktail:

Sparkling water

Bourbon or other alcohol (optional)

Fresh herbs, lime wedges, and/or cranberries for garnish

To make the shrub: In a saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the cranberries, canela, sugar, and water. Bring to a simmer, then lower the heat and cook, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved and the cranberries release their juices, about 10 minutes. Stir in the vinegar. Let cool. Strain the mixture into a jar or airtight container, pressing down on the cranberries to release all the liquid. Discard the cranberries and canela. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Serve the shrub over ice, mixed with sparkling water and alcohol (if desired). You can adjust the proportions according to taste. Garnish with a fresh herb sprig, lime wedges, and/or cranberries, if you like.

FRIED GARBANZO SNACK

Serves 4

To go with cocktail hour, or just for fun, we've adapted a classic Italian snack. I think this is a smart way to start a meal.

2 cups cooked [Rancho Gordo Garbanzos](#), drained and patted dry

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Oregano Indio](#) or [Mexican oregano](#)

1 teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Stardust Dipping Powder](#)

Salt and pepper to taste

2 tablespoons olive oil

In a small bowl, combine the garlic powder, oregano, Stardust, and salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garbanzos and spice mix and cook, shaking the pan occasionally, about 7 minutes. Keep cooking until most of the moisture is gone. They won't be crisp-fried, more like very small russet potatoes when cooked. Drain the chickpeas on a paper towel.

Taste and adjust the seasonings. Serve at room temperature.

APPETIZERS

MARINATED HEIRLOOM BEANS

Serves 4 to 6 as an appetizer

This recipe is very flexible, so feel free to adjust it based on your tastes and what's in your kitchen. Once you find your perfect bean marinade, you'll be set. These beans make an unexpected but welcome addition to an appetizer spread.

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 tablespoon mustard
1 shallot, minced
1 garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon minced preserved lemon peel or the zest of 1 lemon
A handful of chopped flat-leaf parsley
Red chile flakes (optional)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
3 to 4 cups cooked, drained Rancho Gordo [Ayocote Blanco](#), [Ayocote Morado](#), [Royal Corona](#), or other large heirloom beans
3 small rosemary sprigs

In a medium bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, vinegar, mustard, shallot, garlic, lemon peel or zest, parsley, and chile flakes, if using. Taste and season with salt and pepper. The marinade should be very flavorful.

Place beans and rosemary sprigs in a wide, shallow container with a lid, or quart-size glass jar. Add the marinade; the beans should be totally covered. If they aren't, add more olive oil and lemon juice in equal amounts. Cover tightly; shake gently to distribute ingredients evenly. Let sit for at least 1 hour and up to 1 day.

Serve in a bowl on a platter with your favorite small bites.

DEVILED EGGS WITH STARDUST

My family was invited to a party and with our bounty of eggs, thanks to our flock of chickens, it seemed like a natural to bring some deviled eggs. My son Nico was the egg master. Instead of dusting the eggs with paprika, as instructed in the recipe, Nico used our Stardust powder and it was perfect.

Fresh eggs, as many as you'd like
Mayonnaise
Yellow mustard
Salt and pepper
[Rancho Gordo Stardust Dipping Powder](#)

Place the eggs in a pot and add cold water to cover. Place the pot over medium heat and bring to a boil. Lower heat to a simmer, and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes (depending on how many eggs you have and how cold they were to start out). Transfer the eggs to a bowl of cold water and let sit until cool.

Peel the eggs, then cut them in half lengthwise. Carefully remove the yolks from each egg half, and transfer to a bowl. Crush the yolks gently with a fork or a masher, and then add enough mayonnaise just to moisten them. Season with mustard, salt, and pepper.

Arrange the egg whites on a platter. Using a small spoon or a pastry tube, place the filling back in the whites. Before serving, sprinkle the eggs lightly with Rancho Gordo Stardust powder.

APPETIZERS

BLACK BEAN, SQUASH & CHIPOTLE DIP

Serves 4 to 6 as an appetizer

Inspired by a recipe featured on Laura Wright's food blog [The First Mess](#), this vegan dip is loaded with ingredients that are indigenous to the Americas. If you're serving this to a crowd, we recommend adding some colorful garnishes to make it more visually appealing.

½ cup raw pumpkin seeds, plus more for garnish

1 small head of garlic

1 small butternut or other winter squash, halved lengthwise, seeds removed

½ cup olive oil, divided use

Salt and ground black pepper, to taste

1½ cups cooked, drained [Rancho Gordo Midnight Black beans](#)

(or other dark heirloom beans)

1 or 2 chipotles in adobo, depending on taste, plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce

1 teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Castillo Spanish Pimentón](#)

2 teaspoons [Rancho Gordo Pineapple Vinegar](#) or red wine vinegar

Minced red onion for garnish

Minced fresh herbs, like cilantro, for garnish

Chips or fresh vegetables for serving

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Spread the ½ cup pumpkin seeds out on a baking sheet and roast until golden and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

Cut the top ¼ inch off of the head of garlic. Set the halved squash, cut sides facing up, on a baking sheet. Add the garlic. Drizzle the cut squash and the exposed top of the garlic bulb with 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Wrap the garlic bulb in aluminum foil, and flip the squash over so that the cut sides are facing down. Transfer to the oven and roast until the garlic and squash are tender, about 25 minutes for the garlic, and about 40 minutes for the squash. Set the squash and garlic aside to cool.

Once the squash is cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh and measure roughly 1 cup of the cooked squash. Remove the bulb of garlic from its foil wrapping.

Place the pumpkin seeds in a food processor and pulse until they are coarsely ground. Add the 1 cup cooked squash, the black beans, chipotle(s), adobo, pimentón, vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste. Squeeze the bulb of roasted garlic into the food processor.

Pulse a few times until you have a slightly chunky paste. Scrape down the sides with a spatula to make sure the mixture is evenly pureed. With the motor running, slowly add the olive oil through the feed tube of the food processor. Puree until smooth.

Check the dip for seasoning and adjust as necessary. Garnish with pumpkin seeds, onion, and fresh herbs. Serve with chips or vegetables for dipping.

The Rancho Gordo Thanksgiving Guide. Please visit www.ranchogordo.com for more information and ideas.

SALADS

WILD RICE & HEIRLOOM BEAN SALAD

Serves 6 to 8

My pal Alexis Handelman, the creative brains behind the beloved (but now, sadly, closed) Alexis Baking Company here in Napa, had me over a few summers ago for a meal. It was all delicious but she made a composed salad with heirloom beans that just knocked my socks off.

I asked her if we could have the recipe for Thanksgiving and she said no! She wanted to readjust it for the seasonal vegetables that would make it even better. If this meant another dinner party, I was all in!

The Thanksgiving version turned out to be even more memorable. As I ate seconds (and thirds), I thought, this dish is great because it's delicious, its focus is seasonal New World food, and it was substantial enough that my vegetarian friends would feel plenty of love. So often they are an after-thought and Thanksgiving should really be about making everyone happy.

Don't let the ingredient list or techniques scare you off. It's elaborate but easy. Mostly you are preparing the different parts and then gently composing the finished dish on a platter. Watching Alexis' face as she entered the dining room with this big beautiful dish, bursting with well-deserved pride, really made me think this is going to be a terrific holiday season.

For the salad:

2 cups cubed Sugar Pie pumpkin squash (or other winter squash)

½ red onion

Extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

10 large Brussels sprouts

4 cups cooked, drained Rancho Gordo [Christmas Lima](#), [Ayocote Morado](#),

[Royal Corona](#), or other firm heirloom beans (you can also use a combination)

4 cups cooked [Rancho Gordo Wild Rice](#)

1 cup dried cranberries, rehydrated in water or brandy

1 fresh Fuyu persimmon, quartered and thinly sliced

2 cups baby arugula (rocket)

1 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves (basil or cilantro would also work here)

For the vinaigrette:

¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 to 2 teaspoons grainy mustard

2 tablespoons minced fresh herbs such as lemon thyme, chervil, or marjoram

Salt and pepper

For the garnish:

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds

1 cup toasted walnuts or pecans, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Toss the squash cubes and onion with a liberal amount of olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Transfer to a baking sheet and roast until tender, turning if necessary, 15 to 20 minutes. Once the onion is cool enough to handle, cut it into ½-inch dice.

Meanwhile, separate the leaves from the Brussels sprouts, discarding the tough cores. In a steamer, steam the leaves until bright green and just tender, about 3 minutes.

To make the vinaigrette, in a bowl, whisk together the olive oil, red wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, mustard, and herbs. Add salt and pepper to taste.

The Rancho Gordo Thanksgiving Guide. Please visit www.ranchogordo.com for more information and ideas.

SALADS

WILD RICE & HEIRLOOM BEAN SALAD (CONTINUED)

In a large serving bowl or platter, combine the beans, wild rice, and diced roasted onion. Mix in about half of the vinaigrette. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper or more vinaigrette. Transfer to a large platter.

In another bowl, combine the roasted squash, Brussels sprouts, cranberries, persimmon, arugula, and parsley. Add about ¼ cup of the remaining vinaigrette and mix gently to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper or more vinaigrette. Scatter this mixture on top of the bean-rice mixture.

Sprinkle the pomegranates and walnuts over the top of the salad and drizzle with the remaining vinaigrette.

Notes on cooking this dish:

I'm not a huge persimmon fan but I'll eat them. I took my first bite of this salad and rather rudely said, "It's really good but I think I'd add more vinegar and up the acid level a bit." Alexis nodded and then I took another bite, this time with the persimmon. Never mind. This was perfection! My advice would be to make sure there's enough persimmon so you get a little bit with most bites. You also want to make sure you use a firm Fuyu persimmon (rather than Hachiya, which are used more for baking). If you can't find a persimmon, you can use a crisp apple instead.

To keep things sharp and distinct, as well as beautiful, Alexis dressed the different components and then lovingly composed her platter. My tendency would be to put all the ingredients in a bowl and then just toss, but Alexis proved me wrong.

Alexis rolled her eyes when I started asking about exact proportions and vegetables. She basically made the base the beans and wild rice and everything else was based on what was available at the market. This is a fairly accurate account of what she made but she stresses that you can improvise with whatever looks good. I think that's all fine and dandy but many of us are not as talented as Alexis Handelman.

The most important thing is to have fun. I'm confident your guests, all of them, will love this.

SALADS

CACTUS SALAD WITH TOMATOES, CHILE & CILANTRO

Serves 6 to 8

When planning this meal, our real goal was to replace green bean casserole. We know it's a favorite of many but we much prefer cooked dried beans somewhere on the menu, obviously. The tart cactus paddles are delicious and the crunchy fried tortilla strips make it indulgent. This recipe comes from our own Cecilia Ortiz, who you can find working in our Napa store and on special projects like this. If you don't want to fry tortilla strips, you can garnish the salad with pumpkin seeds instead.

1 pound cactus paddles, thorns removed and cleaned
1 tablespoon plus 1½ teaspoons salt
1 garlic clove, peeled
1 small piece of onion, plus 1 large onion, finely diced
2 tomatillo husks (optional)
2 medium tomatoes, finely diced
1 bunch of cilantro, finely diced
1 chile serrano, finely diced
½ teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Mexican oregano](#), crushed
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 tablespoon [Stivalet Banana Vinegar](#)
¼ cup crumbled queso fresco
Avocado slices for garnish
Fried tortilla strips or roasted pumpkin seeds for garnish

Cut the cactus into 1-inch strips.

In a saucepan, boil 5 cups of water with 1 tablespoon of salt. Once the water has started to boil, add the garlic clove, the small piece of onion, the tomatillo husks (if using), and the cactus. Cook until the cactus is tender and dark green in color, about 15 minutes.

Once cooked, drain the cactus and discard the other ingredients. Set aside. In a large bowl, combine the diced onion, tomatoes, cilantro, and chile serrano. Add the oregano, oil, banana vinegar, and 1½ teaspoons of salt. Rinse the drained cactus with cold water. Drain again and add to the bowl; mix well. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Serve the salad cold and garnish with the crumbled queso fresco, avocado, and tortilla strips or pumpkin seeds.

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SALADS

AYOCOTE SALAD WITH PICKLED MUSHROOMS

Serves 4 to 6

You can serve this as a room-temperature salad, or pile it on top of toasts for an appetizer. The fried onion rings are an indulgent topping, but not necessary if you don't feel like dealing with that step.

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for serving
½ of a white onion, thinly sliced
12 ounces wild or cultivated mushrooms, sliced
1 teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Oregano Indio](#)
3 sprigs fresh thyme
3 cloves garlic, sliced
½ cup Rancho Gordo [Pineapple Vinegar](#) or apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2½ cups cooked, drained Rancho Gordo [Ayocote Blanco](#), [Ayocote Morado](#), or [Ayocote Negro](#) beans
2 cups shredded radicchio or other sturdy green
½ cup fresh parsley leaves, roughly chopped
Red pepper flakes to taste
Grated Pecorino or Parmesan cheese for garnish (optional)
Fried onion rings for garnish (optional; see right)

Heat the oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms, oregano, and thyme. Cover and cook until the mushrooms begin to release their juices, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another 2 minutes. Add the vinegar, ½ cup water, the sugar, salt, and pepper and bring to a simmer.

Simmer for 2 more minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. Remove the thyme sprigs. (Ideally, you want to make these ahead of time and

refrigerate for 2 to 3 days before serving. Bring to room temperature before serving.)

In a serving bowl, gently combine the pickled mushrooms, beans, radicchio, parsley, and red pepper flakes to taste. Add a splash of olive oil; taste and adjust the seasonings. Garnish with cheese and/or fried onion rings.

TO MAKE THE FRIED ONION RINGS: Line a baking sheet with paper towels. Thinly slice 1 large white onion, then separate the rings. In a wide bowl or plate, mix ½ cup flour with a generous pinch of salt. Toss the onion rings in the flour to coat evenly. Pour a thin layer of vegetable oil into a 10-inch cast-iron skillet or heavy frying pan. Turn the heat to high and heat the oil until it is very hot and shimmering, but not smoking. Add the onion rings in batches and fry, turning occasionally, until lightly golden. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to cool.

SALADS

ROASTED PEPPER & ROYAL CORONA SALAD WITH PUMPKIN SEEDS

Serves 2

I often indulge in jars of roasted red peppers from Trader Joe's. But I do roast fresh poblano chiles, often. If I have a couple, I will roast them over the gas flame on my stovetop, turning, until blistered all over. If I have more than a couple, I dry-roast them on a very hot comal (a cast-iron skillet would work too). I put them in a large bowl and cover the bowl with a plate to steam for about 15 minutes, then I remove the charred skins with my fingers or scrape the skins off with a serrated knife.

1 cup roasted poblano chile strips (from 1 large or 2 medium poblanos; see note above about roasting)

1 cup roasted red bell pepper, cut into squares

¼ white onion, finely chopped

1½ to 2 cups cooked, drained [Rancho Gordo Royal Corona](#) beans

1 teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Oregano Indio](#)

Olive oil and [Rancho Gordo Pineapple Vinegar](#) (or other mild vinegar), to taste

Salt and pepper, to taste

½ cup roasted pumpkin seeds

In a serving bowl, combine the poblano strips, roasted red pepper, onion, and Royal Corona beans. Add the Oregano Indio, crushing it with your hand. Season to taste with olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper.

Just before serving, sprinkle with roasted pepitas.

ALUBIA BLANCA, WATERCRESS & HERB SALAD

Serves 2

In her seminal book, *The Mexican Gourmet*, author Maria Dolores Torres Yzabal includes a salad with just half cilantro and half watercress. I was intrigued by this and started making it at home. I came to love the slight bitterness of the watercress, but I wanted something that could stand on its own so I came up with this version, which is basically a third each of watercress, parsley, and cilantro, with some beans tossed in for a little indulgence. It makes the salad more substantial, too.

Watercress is a somewhat neglected green these days but try and add it to your repertoire. It's loaded with vitamins A, C, and K, plus it tastes great.

1 cup torn watercress

1 cup chopped cilantro

1 cup chopped parsley

½ red onion, very thinly sliced

*1 cup cooked, drained [Rancho Gordo Alubia Blanca](#) beans
(or other white beans)*

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Extra-virgin olive oil to taste

Fresh lemon juice to taste

In a serving bowl, combine the watercress, cilantro, parsley, and onion. Add the beans. Season to taste with salt, pepper, olive oil, and lemon juice.

SIDE DISHES

FARMER'S MARKET STUFFING

Makes about 6 cups

I developed this stuffing mix back when I was selling beans at the Marin County Farmers Market in San Rafael, in the parking lot of the wonderful Frank Lloyd Wright building that houses all the county offices. The original ingredients were from all the vendors on my row that I liked and had good product. Not everyone made the cut!

3 cups chicken broth

1½ cups dried [Rancho Gordo Wild Rice](#) (about 9 ounces), rinsed and drained

1 cup water

2 teaspoons [Rancho Gordo Mexican oregano](#)

1 pound ground bison or ground beef

3 medium poblano chiles or green bell peppers, roasted, cleaned, and skinned

2 medium red (Bermuda) onions, chopped (about 2 cups)

1 cup pecans, chopped and lightly toasted

Combine broth, wild rice, 1 cup water, and Mexican oregano in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to boil, then reduce to a soft simmer until the wild rice is tender, stirring occasionally, about 55 minutes. Drain.

In a heavy, large skillet over medium-high heat, sauté the bison meat until cooked through, breaking up with a wooden spoon, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the ground meat to paper towels and drain. Add the chiles or peppers and the onions to the the skillet. Saute over medium heat until the vegetables are soft, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the wild rice and reserved meat to the skillet. Sauté until heated through. Stir in the pecans. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl and serve. If using as stuffing, cool completely before filling bird.

(The stuffing can be prepared a day ahead. Cover and refrigerate once cool. Reheat in a covered baking dish for 20 minutes at 350°F.)

HEIRLOOM BEAN GRATIN WITH PANKO-HERB CRUST

Serves 4 to 6

The first year I made this for Thanksgiving, I replaced the mashed potatoes with this dish. The news brought some concern among my traditionalist friends but once we were eating, there wasn't one complaint! I like mashed potatoes (or butter with some potatoes, as it might be called) but I find this dish much more satisfying and much easier to make.

*½ pound dried Rancho Gordo [Royal Corona](#), [Ayocote Blanco](#),
or [Large White Lima beans](#), sorted and rinsed*

½ yellow onion, diced

2 cloves garlic, minced

3 tablespoons olive oil

¾ cup Panko bread crumbs

1 tablespoon butter, softened to room temperature

1 tablespoon Rancho Gordo [Mexican oregano](#) or [Oregano Indio](#)

¾ cup Monterey Jack cheese, grated

In a stockpot over medium-low heat, saute the onion and garlic in 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. When soft, add the beans. Make sure the beans are covered by an inch or two of water. Bring the beans to a boil for 10 to 15 minutes and then lower to a gentle simmer. Cook the beans until soft, anywhere from 1 to 3 hours. If the water is running low, add warm water from a teakettle, as desired.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a medium bowl, add the Panko, the butter, the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, the Mexican oregano, and the cheese. Toss well. Drain the beans (reserving the liquid for another dish) and add to an oven-safe casserole. Evenly top with the bread-crumble mix. Bake for 30 to 45 minutes. The sides should be bubbling and the bread crumbs should form a crust.

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SIDE DISHES

HEIRLOOM BEAN & POTATO CASSEROLE

Serves 4 to 6

Dust off your favorite baking dish for this hearty vegetarian side dish loaded with fennel, leeks, mushrooms, and beans, and topped with potato slices for a festive presentation. For a vegan dish, you can substitute vegetable broth for the half-and-half.

2 to 3 medium potatoes (about 1 pound), very thinly sliced
3 tablespoons olive oil or butter (divided use), plus more for finishing
12 ounces mushrooms, sliced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 head fennel, trimmed and chopped
2 small leeks, white and light-green parts only, chopped and rinsed
1 carrot, peeled and chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme or rosemary, plus more for finishing
1 tablespoon flour
3 cups drained cooked [Rancho Gordo Yellow Eye beans](#) (or other mild beans)
1 cup half-and-half

Preheat the oven to 400°F; set aside a deep, round baking dish.

Bring a pot of water to a boil, then add the potato slices. Parboil for about 4 minutes. Drain, then set aside to dry.

In a skillet over medium-low heat, warm 2 tablespoons of the oil. Add the mushrooms and a pinch of salt; stir until mushrooms have released most of their juices, about 5 minutes. Remove and set aside.

Add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the skillet along with the fennel, leeks, carrot, garlic, and thyme; cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the flour; cook another 5 minutes.

Stir in the beans, reserved mushrooms, and cream; cook until well combined, about 3 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasonings with more salt and pepper, as desired.

Fill the baking dish with the filling and top with two layers of potato slices, arranging them in a circular pattern. Drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with thyme, salt, and pepper. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the potatoes are golden. Raise the heat to 425°F and bake until the potatoes are crisp around the edges, about 10 minutes more. Allow to cool briefly before serving.

SIDE DISHES

BAKED WHITE BEANS WITH TOMATO SAUCE & CHEESE

Serves 2 to 4

If you have a larger casserole dish, you may need additional cheese to cover the whole dish. I don't think many will complain about extra cheese. This recipe can also easily be doubled or even tripled if you have a very large dish.

4 tomatoes from a can of whole tomatoes, chopped roughly
½ cup tomato juice, reserved from the can
½ yellow onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon [Rancho Gordo Oregano Indio](#)
Salt to taste
2 cups cooked, drained Rancho Gordo [Royal Corona](#), [Ayocote Blanco](#), or [Alubia Blanca beans](#)
4 sprigs of thyme, leaves stripped and stems discarded
1 cup grated mozzarella cheese (low moisture, not fresh)
⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 475°F.

In a blender, combine the tomatoes, tomato juice, onion, and garlic; blend until smooth.

In a saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat until it starts to shimmer, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the tomato mixture and stir well. Add the oregano and bring to a simmer; continue cooking for 15 minutes. Add salt if needed.

In a small baking dish, combine the cooked beans with the tomato sauce and thyme. Top with the two kinds of cheese. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes. The top should be browned and the beans bubbling.

SAVORY BEAN & EGG PUDDING

Serves 2 to 4

This dish is inspired by a Jacques Pepin recipe I came across. It's light and substantial at the same time, and nothing like what you'd imagine until you actually make it. Pepin called it a gratin but to me it's more of a pudding. You can use any type of bean here. White beans are prettier by far but I think the dark beans are more interesting. I've tried many cheeses and I've ended up liking a mix of Swiss and Parmesan. Don't go overboard—it's just a little for topping.

1 tablespoon butter for greasing the dish, softened to room temperature
2 cups cooked, drained heirloom beans (I've used [Moro](#), [Royal Corona](#), and [Cranberry beans](#))
2 large eggs
2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
½ cup heavy cream (whipping cream)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tablespoon grated Swiss cheese
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a small gratin or baking dish.

Place the beans, eggs, garlic, cream, salt, and pepper in a mixing bowl. Blend well with an immersion blender. You can also use a standing blender or even a food processor.

Pour the mixture into the buttered mold and top with the grated cheeses. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes. The top should be browned and the center should be set. If the center is still liquid, keep baking for 10 more minutes.

SIDE DISHES

ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BEANS & PANCETTA

Serves 6 to 8

Brussels sprouts and pancetta are a winning combination, often spotted on the Thanksgiving table. Monica in our customer service department discovered that heirloom beans are a welcome addition to this dish! Rancho Gordo sells a few different types of Xoxoc dried xoconostle (sour prickly pear) from Mexico. Monica used the dehydrated sweet xoconostle (green box) here.

For the Brussel sprouts:

1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon salt

Pinch of cumin

4 oz pancetta (or about 4 slices bacon), cut into ½-inch pieces

2 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Yellow Eye beans](#) (or other mild beans), drained

Roasted pumpkin seeds and chopped [Xoxoc Dehydrated Sweetened Xoconostle](#) for garnish (optional)

For the balsamic-shallot dressing:

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 shallots, thinly sliced

⅓ cup balsamic vinegar

⅓ cup chicken broth

1 tablespoon butter

¼ teaspoon minced fresh thyme

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a bowl, combine the Brussels sprouts with the olive oil, salt, and cumin. Arrange in a single layer in a baking dish. Sprinkle with pancetta. Roast

until Brussels sprouts are golden, about 20 minutes.

While the Brussel sprouts are roasting, you can make the dressing: In a large skillet or saucepan over medium-low heat, warm the 1 tablespoon oil. Add the shallots and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the vinegar, broth, and thyme. Increase the heat to medium, bring to a simmer, and cook for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat. Add the butter and swirl until melted. Season with salt and pepper.

Pull the Brussel sprouts from the oven; add the beans and gently combine. Return to the oven and roast for 20 to 25 minutes more. Everything should be nicely roasted and crispy.

Remove the baking dish from the oven and transfer to a serving platter. Drizzle with the balsamic-shallot dressing. Top with pepitas and chopped xoconostle (if using). Serve warm.

SIDE DISHES

BOETTICHER FAMILY CORNBREAD

If you think Texans are passionate about their chili, you should hear them rant about cornbread. From my pal Taylor of Fatted Calf, via his mother (thank you, Ma'am!), here is the Boetticher family cornbread recipe.

2 tablespoons butter
1½ cups yellow cornmeal
½ cup flour
3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups milk (divided use)
1 cup buttermilk
2 large eggs

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Place the butter in a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron skillet and preheat in the oven for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, mix the cornmeal, flour, sugar, salt, and baking soda. Stir in 1 cup of the milk and the buttermilk. Add the eggs and blend thoroughly.

Pour the batter into the hot skillet and carefully pour the remaining 1 cup of milk into the batter. Don't worry that it looks too runny. DO NOT STIR. The milk will sink and form a custard-like layer.

Place in preheated oven and bake until golden, 30 to 35 minutes. Serve while hot.

ROASTED SWEET POTATOES

This is a favorite side dish of mine. I use one sweet potato for every two people, but it never hurts to make a little extra for second helpings!

Sweet potatoes (about one sweet potato for every two people)
Olive oil
Salt
[Rancho Gordo Oregano Indio](#) for sprinkling

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Peel and cube the sweet potatoes. Toss with olive oil and salt and let sit for about 10 minutes.

Spread out the sweet potato cubes on a sheet pan and roast until browned around the edges, about 25 minutes. Shake the pan occasionally during cooking.

Lightly dust with [Rancho Gordo Oregano Indio](#) and serve warm.

THE TURKEY

HERBED ROASTED TURKEY BREAST

Serves 4 to 6

If you like turkey but aren't up for roasting a whole bird, this recipe is for you. It is based on a recipe from *Ottolenghi: The Cookbook*, by Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi (Ten Speed Press, 2013). We've added some of our favorite Rancho Gordo ingredients to the marinade.

¼ cup fresh parsley leaves
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves
1 garlic clove, peeled
½ cup white wine
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons Rancho Gordo [Pineapple Vinegar](#) (or 2 tablespoons lemon juice)
½ teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Mexican oregano](#) or Oregano Indio
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon salt
½ tsp black pepper
½ small organic or free-range turkey breast (about 2 pounds)

In a food processor or blender, combine the fresh herbs, garlic, white wine, olive oil, lemon juice, vinegar, oregano, cumin, salt, and pepper. Process until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes.

Place the turkey in a glass container or bowl and pour the marinade over it. Make sure the turkey is covered in the marinade. Massage the marinade into the meat, cover the container, and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Remove the turkey from the marinade (reserve the marinade) and transfer it to a roasting pan. Place in the oven and roast for 15 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 400°F and continue to cook for 15 minutes. Reduce the

temperature again to 350°F. Cook until the turkey is done, another 30 to 45 minutes. To check for doneness, stick a small knife all the way into the center; it should come out hot. If the meat starts to burn before it is done, cover it with foil.

To prepare the sauce, heat up the reserved turkey marinade in a small saucepan and simmer for 15 minutes, until reduced by about half. Taste and season with some more salt and pepper.

Remove the turkey from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes. Slice it thinly and serve with warm sauce.

To serve cold, let the meat cool completely and then slice. Adjust the seasonings of the sauce once it is cold and serve on the side.

THE TURKEY

SOUTHWESTERN TURKEY POSOLE

Serves 6 to 8

This posole recipe originally called for chicken, but turkey lends a rich, unique flavor and we thought it would be a perfect fit for the Thanksgiving table, or for the next day if you have leftover turkey meat (use the roasted turkey bones to make a stock!).

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 medium white onions, chopped fine
8 cloves garlic, minced
1/3 cup tomato paste
3 tablespoons [Rancho Gordo New Mexican Red Chile Powder](#)
1 tablespoon Rancho Gordo [Mexican oregano](#) or [Oregano Indio](#)
3 1/2 cups turkey stock
4 cups cooked [Rancho Gordo prepared hominy](#), plus 2 cups of reserved cooking liquid (see right for cooking directions)
About 6 cups cooked, shredded turkey
Salt and pepper

GARNISHES:

Thinly sliced radishes
Chopped white onion
[Chile de Árbol Salsa](#)
Rancho Gordo [Mexican oregano](#) or [Oregano Indio](#)
Thinly sliced Romaine or iceberg lettuce
Quartered Mexican limes or key limes
Cubed avocado (optional)
Tostadas (optional)

Heat oil in 5-quart pot over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and cook until soft. Add tomato paste, chile powder, and oregano, stirring until all ingredients are warmed through and well mixed. Add the turkey stock, plus

the 2 cups reserved posole-cooking liquid, and the cooked hominy. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a low simmer for about 30 minutes. Add more stock or water until you reach the desired consistency.

Add the shredded turkey, stir, and then add salt and pepper to taste. Serve in individual bowls and allow your guests to garnish as desired.

HOW TO COOK RANCHO GORDO DRIED HOMINY: Sort and rinse hominy. Soak for 8 hours in cold water, then drain. Add to a large pot with 1 roughly chopped onion and cover with 2 inches of fresh water. Bring to a hard boil over high heat for 5 minutes, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cook hominy uncovered until chewy and tender but not chalky, approximately 2 hours. Hominy usually flowers, like popcorn, when finished. Reserve 2 cups of cooking liquid for later use, then drain. One pound (or 2 cups) dried hominy yields about 7 cups when cooked, and substitutes for canned hominy in recipes with none of the rubbery texture.

DESSERTS

CHAMPURRADO DE CAFÉ

Half the fun of Thanksgiving day is hanging out with friends and family and waiting for the bird. If it's a cold day, hot drinks take the sting out of the frosty weather. A guest nursing a mug of this champurrado is in no hurry to go anywhere.

4 cups whole milk
3 tablespoons [Rancho Gordo blue corn pinole](#)
½ cup brown sugar
3 spoonfuls instant coffee (or regular coffee)
2 teaspoons of vanilla extract

In a medium pot, combine the pinole and milk and stir well to combine. Add the brown sugar and the coffee. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, for 15 minutes or until thick; don't let it boil. Remove from heat and add the vanilla. Serve hot. Grate a bit of cinnamon over the top if desired.

GIVING THANKS

I'm thankful that you've read this far! Of course I'm also thankful for my family, my friends, my fellow employees here at Rancho Gordo, our customers (both wholesale and the consumers), our growers and producers. On behalf of the staff and producers here at Rancho Gordo, I hope you have a great Thanksgiving Day.

—Steve

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE WITH STRAWBERRIES

This dessert was inspired by our friend Connie Green of Wine Forest..

6 ounces [Rancho Gordo stoneground chocolate](#), about 1¾ tablets, broken into chunks
3 tablespoons brewed coffee or water
1 tablespoon salted butter (optional)
½ teaspoon vanilla (optional)
3 very fresh eggs, separated
1 pint strawberries or other berries

In a heavy saucepan, combine the chocolate and 2 tablespoons coffee over low heat and stir until the chocolate is melted and has a thick, creamy consistency, adding the remaining 1 tablespoon coffee if needed. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter and vanilla, if using. While the chocolate is still hot enough to cook the egg yolks slightly, add the yolks, one at a time, while stirring constantly. Let the mixture cool for just a bit.

In a large bowl, using a handheld mixer, beat the egg whites until they hold a soft peak. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold the chocolate mixture into the egg whites just until combined. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

Meanwhile, hull and slice the strawberries and place in a bowl. Add the sugar and stir to combine. Let stand at room temperature until the juices are released, at least 30 minutes. (The strawberries can be refrigerated, covered, for up to 1 day.)

Transfer the mousse to 4 ramekins or pretty cups for serving. Top with strawberries and whipped cream, if desired, and serve.

FOODS THE AMERICAS GAVE THE WORLD

AGAVE
CACAO
SARSAPARILLA
SASSAFRAS
CORN
QUINOA
SQUASH
SUNFLOWER
WILD RICE
AVOCADO
GOOSEBERRY
BLACKBERRY
SAPOTE
BLUEBERRY
CACTI (NOPALES AND TUNAS)
CASHEW
CRANBERRY
ELDERBERRY
**GRAPES (PARTICULAR SPECIES
ARE NATIVE TO N. AMERICA)**

POTATOES
GUAVA
MAMEY
PAPAYA
PERSIMMON
PINEAPPLE
RASPBERRY
**STRAWBERRY (PARTICULAR
STRAINS FOUND IN CHILE AND
COLOMBIA)**
ACHIOTE
BEANS
CHILES
CHAYOTE
TOMATILLOS
LAMBS QUARTERS
TOMATO
**MUSHROOMS (NOT EXCLUSIVE
TO THE AMERICAS)**
PEANUT
PURSLANE