

RANCHO GORDO presents

EMILY NUNN'S HEIRLOOM BEAN DIARIES



12 MEMORABLE BEAN DISHES
WITH A SOUTHERN TWIST
FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE COMFORT FOOD DIARIES

"...because I finally realized that I don't have to eat beans the way the world (and my upbringing) have always told me to. Neither do you."

WELCOME TO MY HEIRLOOM BEAN DIARIES.

It's just past 7 a.m. and I'm wide awake, cooking a pot of glorious heirloom beans. My house smells amazing.

I've always loved beans: as an American Southerner, one of my favorite comfort foods has always been a soupy pot of pintos and cornbread.

But something different is going on here. Every week, for a couple of months now, I've been cooking heirlooms that are mostly new and unusual to me. After a lifetime of soaking a sack of grocery store pintos, then cooking them with a little side meat or a ham hock (which is absolutely delicious), I have felt like Dorothy when she lands in Oz: everything is magical and technicolor now. And I'm just getting started.

What I'm saying is: I've happily surrendered to the heirloom bean lifestyle. You can, too.

I'll be honest: When friends ask me to go pass along my recipe for, say, the lovely but messy bean composition I built and posted on Instagram, I have replied something along the lines of this: "Oh, it's nothing at all, just a platter smeared with nutty-spicy Romesco sauce then piled with beautiful, tender Eye of the Goat beans, a few shreds of salty ham that fell off the hock I'd cooked them with. And then, a bit of olive oil, a squeeze of lemon juice, some crumbled cotija cheese, and pickled red onion to top it all off." La-di-da.

But that's a bit disingenuous of me. Yes, it's super-easy to make really good beans: you hardly need a recipe. But have I always had a jar of homemade Romesco, that wonderful elixir made from toasted almonds and roasted red peppers, standing by in my fridge, to add to a bowl of beans? No. Nor have I been a regular onion pickler, buttered-bread-crumble fryer, onion-confit maker, or a devoted chimichurri blender. I wasn't always the kind of person who keeps simply cooked beans in her fridge just in case she desperately needed to compose something really good to eat in a pinch.

Now I am. Because I finally realized that I don't have to eat beans the way the world (and my upbringing) have always told me to. Neither do you. To me, this feels slightly scandalous. But beans are a part of every culture, so you may as well do what you want to do with them. I invite you to create your own heirloom

bean lifestyle.

In my former life, I might have made meaty bean chili or attempted a giant archetypal cassoulet with the confit duck legs poking out like a crime scene, which people would talk about for years to come. (I definitely want to do that someday.) But lately, using beans this good, I've leaned toward a simple garlicky bean salad with greens, a dip that makes a perfect, quick snack with crackers or crudités, or a room temperature composed platter in the style of Italian antipasti, with beans as the star, asserting their most vibrant personalities. And the dishes I've come up with are just as comforting as my beloved pintos.

Comfort! I wrote an entire book on the topic (*The Comfort Food Diaries*). It has become an absolute requirement in the age of anxiety. So, it's important that you not stress out. Just cook a pot of beans and go where the day takes you.

That's exactly how this all started for me, with Christmas Limas, which I'd received as a gift in a big box of assorted Rancho Gordos. These purple mottled beauties, which would make a gorgeous necklace strung on a silk cord, became my gateway heirloom bean almost by accident.

As I walked out the door to drive 6 hours to Atlanta (where I'd be Giant Poodle-sitting for my cousin Toni while she was away), I had the presence of mind to put the beans in the car along with my other essentials. When I got there, the fridge was relatively bare, except for a lot of yogurt, a red bell pepper, some scraggly carrots, garlic and 2 shallots among a drawerful of unused items from a Blue Apron subscription. But it turns out I had all I needed to make a very simple but extremely sublime pot of Christmas Limas, which have a chestnutty flavor with hints of grassiness. Aside from the dog, I was alone when I made them, but I kept saying aloud: Oh, my God, oh my God. And then of course I posted them on Instagram.

I could have eaten nothing but Christmas Limas for the rest of my life, but I kept experimenting, progressing from soup pots to simple salads, to fancier composed dishes, and back to simpler pots.

Below you'll find a dozen of my favorite dishes I've been fixing—so far. I'm still experimenting, and not

stopping any time soon. I've also included some sauces, toppings, and my spoonbread and sour cream corn muffin recipes, which are good with any pot of beans.

Before you start: some cooking notes. If you want delicious simple beans to eat straight from the pot, follow the great advice on the Rancho Gordo 1 lb. bag. (I like to make sure the beans have about ½ to 1 inch of liquor on top by the end, so I check to make sure the water is not cooking down too far.) But if my recipe calls for two cups of “simply cooked beans,” that just means make them with the usual aromatic vegetables—onion, celery, carrot, etc.—cut into big chunks so they can be discarded after cooking, leaving you with plain beans. (I also like to use giant chunks of Parmesan rinds or a piece of country ham.) Just remove the beans from their delicious pot liquor (which you should store them in) with a slotted spoon so that you can use the liquid for something else, like soup stock or adding flavor.

Some of the recipes are essentially layers of sub-recipes, and are included at the end, along with other items that should keep you happily in beans while you create your own personal bean style.

All recipes make two large servings unless otherwise noted.

#1. EFFORTLESSLY MAGNIFICENT CHRISTMAS LIMAS

Serves 2 to 3 depending on how hungry you are

These beans scream: you don't need Christmas to have a pot of beans worthy of the holiday itself.

½ pound Rancho Gordo Christmas Limas, sorted, rinsed and soaked for 4 to 6 hours

1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped

2 large shallots, chopped

1 carrot, peeled and chopped

2 large garlic cloves, peeled and smashed but not chopped

1 large branch of rosemary, intact

4 tablespoons or so of extra virgin olive oil

For serving: *Lemon wedges, flaky salt, and olive oil to drizzle at the table*

1. After they've soaked, drain and rinse the beans, then place in a large heavy-bottomed pot, with water to cover by about 2 inches, and bring to a boil.

2. Meanwhile, add all the remaining ingredients. Let the beans and vegetables simmer on high for a few minutes, then turn the heat down to a low simmer and cook, stirring gently (you don't want to bash them up) to make sure they're not sticking, and adding water if it gets too low. I like to end up with about an inch of liquid over the beans, because I love the pot liquor so much.

3. When all of the beans are almost perfectly tender, about 40 minutes to 90 minutes, remove the rosemary branch and add salt to taste (about ½ teaspoon). Cook a few more minutes until they are indeed perfectly tender but not mushy.

4. To serve: spoon the beans and an even share of their liquor into bowls; you don't want people fighting. At the table, encourage people to drizzle some good olive oil over the beans and offer them plenty of lemon wedges for squeezing, and nice flaky sea salt. Trust me: this is the cherry on the sundae.

#2. DOMINGO ROJO STUFFED AREPAS

Serves 2 to 3

On my way home from Atlanta, with my giant box of beans in back, I stopped at my friend Wyler's house, where we decided to make stuff-your-own arepas. We've done this many times, but this time they starred some of my new beans, which elevated the South American corn cakes to a markedly higher level (we'd been using canned black beans). I cooked some Domingo Rojos, while Wyler and our friend Mary went to the grocery store for other fillings that struck their fancy. When they returned, Mary leaned over the stove to try a spoonful. "Mmmm," she said. "They taste like boiled peanuts." Which we all love. We could have eaten them on the spot and called it a night, but by this time I'd made the simple arepa dough, which Wyler immediately began to fry up brown and beautifully in one of her ancient cast iron skillets. Soon we had a table covered family-style with plates of gorgeous avocado slices and smoked salmon, crumbled goat cheese, sour cream, jalapeño slices, Crystal hot sauce, lime to squeeze over it all, plus cilantro. You can put anything in an arepa, but I never leave out beans. By the time dinner was over we had each built and eaten about three. Then we played Bananagrams. A great night.

For the beans:

½ pound Rancho Gordo Domingo Rojo beans, sorted, rinsed, and soaked for 4 to 6 hours

Aromatics for cooking: half an onion, celery in big pieces, a small piece of ham, some olive oil—whatever you'd like (optional)

For the arepas:

2 cups arepa flour (I like P.A.N. brand, which is readily available where I live)

1 cup warm milk

1 cup water

½ cup sliced scallions

½ cup finely grated cheddar or Monterey jack

½ cup frozen shoepeg or fresh corn (optional)

Oil for frying (I use coconut oil)

Fillings of choice (see note above)

1. After they've soaked, drain and rinse the beans, then place in a large, heavy-bottomed pot, with water to cover by about 2 inches. Add the aromatics, if using. Bring to a boil for 10 to 15 minutes, then lower the

heat to a simmer and continue cooking until tender (45 to 90 minutes), stirring to avoid scorching, and adding extra water as needed to keep beans covered by about an inch.

2. Place the arepa flour in a bowl; slowly add the warm milk then the warm water, stirring as you go. Stir in the cheese. Fold in the remaining vegetables and let sit for 10 minutes, covered. Form the dough into balls and flatten (you want them about the size of a small burger). Heat a thin layer of coconut oil in a cast-iron pan over medium heat; add the arepas and fry until golden, about 5 minutes per side. Keep warm in a low oven until ready to serve.

3. At the table, split the arepas to make a pocket and stuff with beans and your favorite fillings, or try ours, mentioned above. It's up to you. Shredded meat or chicken are also traditional. I ate the remaining beans the next morning for breakfast with a leftover arepa crumbled on top.

#3. THYME AND GARLIC ROASTED CAMPARI TOMATOES ON CREAMY CALIFORNIA CASSOULET BEANS WITH BAKED RICOTTA

After I'd finally gotten back home to my own kitchen with my box of Rancho Gordos, my bean horizon really began to open up. This dish in particular is a good example of how two things that are wonderful on their own become outrageous together. I'd bought a container of Campari tomatoes at a roadside stand and they were pretty but a tiny bit mealy, no good for a salad. Oven roasting them turned them jammy and delectable, the perfect foil for these cassoulet beans, especially when you drop feta or ricotta on top of the tomatoes as they cook, toward the end, and turn on the broiler for a minute or two.

For the tomatoes:

A pint or more of Campari or cherry tomatoes, cut in half

A few sprigs of thyme

4 to 5 cloves of garlic, peeled and mashed

Olive oil, a few tablespoons

Flaky salt and freshly ground pepper

1 cup of ricotta or crumbled feta (or the two mixed together)

For the beans:

2 to 3 cups of simply cooked Rancho Gordo Cassoulet beans, at room temperature, dressed with a squeeze of lemon juice, olive oil and a bit of salt or a few tablespoons of my Sherry Garlic Vinaigrette (page 11)

¼ cup chopped mint

Chimichurri Sauce (page 11)

Handful of Burnt Onions (page 12)

1. To make the tomatoes: Preheat the oven to 425°F. In a large bowl, combine the tomato halves, thyme, garlic, and enough olive oil to coat. Toss gently, using your hands. Spread out in a large Pyrex dish (these will be slightly juicy) and roast, moving them around gently now and then to prevent burning, until they've released their juices and begun to caramelize, about 45 minutes. Remove the garlic and thyme. If you're using cheese (I heartily suggest you do), spoon/crumble it over the tomatoes when they're almost done, then continue to roast for about 7 more minutes. If you turn on the broiler at the very end, it will brown a little, which is pretty and delicious.

2. To assemble, toss your dressed beans with the mint, pile them on a big plate or shallow bowl, then top with some of the tomatoes and cheese (how much is up to you; I like a lot). Drizzle with a bit of Chimichurri, then sprinkle with some of the Burnt Onions. You can do this on one serving platter to bring to the table.

#4. SPICY COCONUT BLACK BEANS WITH SWEET POTATO AND SHREDDED KALE

Serves 4

I couldn't wait to try this dish, adapted from the now defunct vegetarian restaurant on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Angelica Kitchen, using my new heirloom black beans. Sweet potatoes and beans love each other so much, and the dish gave me an excuse to make a lot of black beans, some to include in my fancy dish and the rest to eat with salsa and toasted corn tortillas. I like to squeeze a lot of lime juice over this at the table. You could substitute a couple of teaspoons of Thai red chili paste in lieu of the jalapenos while sautéing the onion, for a different kind of heat.

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups diced onion (2 medium)
2 teaspoons coarse sea salt, or more to taste
2 large sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch chunks
5 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 jalapeno peppers, with seeds, minced (or more to taste)
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 (14-ounce) can coconut milk
1 bunch kale leaves cut into strips crosswise
2 cups simply cooked Rancho Gordo Midnight Black Beans (add more if you like a beany-er ratio; I encourage it)
Juice of one lime
2 limes cut into wedges
1 cup chopped cilantro, at the table for garnish

1. Heat oil over medium heat in a large saucepan. Add the onion and a pinch of salt; sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the sweet potato, garlic, jalapeno, ginger, coriander, and turmeric; sauté for 5 minutes. Add 3 cups water, coconut milk, and the remaining salt; raise the heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes.
3. Add the kale and cooked black beans. Cover and simmer until the kale is tender, about 10 minutes. Add the juice of half a lime. If too soupy, continue to simmer until thickened. Taste for salt and pepper.
4. Serve with a large spoonful of jasmine rice, garnished with cilantro and more lime slices to squeeze over at the table.

#5. LARGE WHITE LIMAS TWO WAYS

Did I mention that I used to list Lima beans as one of the two foods I will not eat? (the other is fried chicken livers). And honestly? Now I want to marry Large White Limas and move with them to an island far away from civilization. The flavors in this simple pot of soup beans are so sweet and delicate that the dish needs very little seasoning before serving; you should be careful not to over salt it in both versions. One is straight up, the other is tweaked with cream and cumin.

½ pound Rancho Gordo Large White Limas, sorted, rinsed, and soaked for 4 to 6 hours
2 to 3 large Parmesan rinds (I like to use a lot; ask the grocer to save them for you if they don't sell them in the cheese department; they're essential!)
2 to 3 large carrots, peeled, quartered lengthwise, and sliced into ½ inch pieces
1 medium white onion, chopped
Extra virgin olive oil
Fresh lemon juice for serving (optional)
Kosher or flaky sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup or more heavy cream (optional)
½ teaspoon of ground cumin (optional)

1. Drain and rinse the beans, then place in a large, heavy-bottomed pot, with water to cover by about 2 inches. Add the Parmesan rinds. Bring to a boil and let cook for about 5 minutes, being careful not to scorch the beans. Reduce to a simmer. Add the carrots, onion, and a splash of olive oil to the pot.
2. Continue to cook until tender, about 45 to 90 minutes. If you're having the basic version, taste for salt, then serve the beans with their liquor, in bowls accompanied by olive oil and lemon juice for diners to add at the table.
3. For the creamy version, pour off about a cup and a half of the pot liquor (reserve this), stir in about a half a cup of cream; season with cumin to taste, but be careful. I use about a half teaspoon. If it's too creamy, correct by adding more of the pot liquor and simmering a bit longer.

#6. NOT SAD DESK LUNCH SALAD

Serves 2 (but you'll probably eat it all in one sitting and pretend like you'll skip dinner later)

#NOTSADDESKLUNCH is a hashtag on Instagram, which speaks to the kabillions of us who are now part of the gig economy. We work at home and don't have the luxury of heading out with our colleagues to the corner diner. This salad, which I originally started making with chickpeas and which people go nuts over even though it's stupid simple, is actually something I wish they'd served at the Red Flame diner in NYC, back when I ate way too many grilled swiss on rye with a slice of tomato and fries. It's light and balanced so you don't fall asleep at 2 pm but it has that lovely legume protein. You don't really have to use the olive-oil-based dressing I recommend. You can just splash it with sherry vinegar and season it with flaky salt (essential) right before you eat it, along with some Wasa Crispbread and a piece of good cheese. Obviously, this is great to eat at home or to take to an office. Or in bed when you're depressed or just lazy.

2 cups of simply cooked white heirloom beans, at room temperature (I've used Marcellas, Alubia Blancas, and the California Cassoulets, which were my favorite)

1 large English cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped into ½-inch pieces

1 pint or more small (cherry/grape) tomatoes cut in half or quartered depending on size

2 tablespoons (or more) finely chopped red onion

Handful of basil and mint, chopped or sliced into chiffonade

Garlic Sherry Vinaigrette (page 11)

Salt and pepper

1. Just put it all together, dress it, and gobble it up.

#7. PRETTY ALUBIA BLANCA AND RADICCHIO SALAD WITH PECORINO

Serves 2

This one is a classic for a reason. It's simple, beautiful, and delicious. It's also great using Cranberry beans in place of the Alubia Blancas. The ratio: to every cup of beans I use about an equal amount of sliced radicchio (but more is delicious, too) and ¼ cup of pecorino chopped into tiny cubes.

2 cups of drained, simply cooked Rancho Gordo Alubia Blanca beans, warmed

Half a small head of radicchio, sliced crosswise into pretty ribbons (about 2 cups)

½ cup pecorino cheese, cut into tiny cubes

Garlic Sherry Vinaigrette (page 11)

Black pepper

1. Drain the warmed beans and place in a bowl with the radicchio and pecorino. Toss with several tablespoons of the dressing, season with plenty of freshly ground black pepper, and serve immediately.

#8. LUXURIOUS HEIRLOOM BEAN DIP

(makes 2 cups; to serve with pita chips or crudités)

I had some Marcellas in their liquor in the fridge, which I'd cooked without knowing what I would do with them. I had pita chips, and I needed a snack. The end. I could eat this every day. And it wouldn't be an unhealthy idea.

2 cups of simply cooked, drained Rancho Gordo Marcella beans (cooked with half an onion and parmesan rinds), some cooking liquid reserved

1 large clove garlic, blanched in the microwave, then smashed

1 tablespoon chopped shallot

2 to 3 sage leaves

1 teaspoon creamy peanut butter

2 tablespoons ricotta

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling

Juice of ½ large lemon (2 to 3 tablespoons), or more to taste

Pinch of cayenne

½ teaspoon salt, or more to taste

Optional garnishes: red pepper flakes, Zaatar, or Burnt Onions (page 12)

1. Place all of the ingredients in a blender or food processor and give it a whiz; you may need to add a few tablespoons of the leftover bean-cooking liquid to get the right consistency, depending on your beans and their mood. Adjust seasonings.

2. Drizzle a bit of olive oil on top and garnish with a sprinkle of red pepper flakes or Zaatar or Burnt Onions.

#9. EYE OF THE GOAT BEANS AND ONION CONFIT STEW WITH CHIMICHURRI, PICKLED RED ONION, AND COTIJA CHEESE

Serves 2

This recipe is a good example of how creating that bean environment can mean a fast and extremely delicious supper. The Onion Confit and the Chimichurri Sauce can be whipped up in a flash and keep for over a week in the fridge, and you should always have Pickled Red Onion in the house.

2 cups simply cooked Rancho Gordo Eye of the Goat beans, with their cooking liquid (I used a shallot cut in half, a tiny piece of country ham, and a carrot in 3 large pieces, removed at the end, of course)

1 cup quick Onion Confit (page 11)

Pickled Red Onion (page 12)

Crumbled cotija or feta cheese

Chimichurri Sauce (page 11)

1. To a pot of cooked beans and their liquor, add the Onion Confit; reheat until all is very warm. To serve, place in two bowls and top with some Pickled Red Onion and a tablespoon or two of the crumbled cheese. Drizzle with Chimichurri Sauce.

#10. PLATTER OF MARCELLA BEANS WITH SPICY GARLIC BROCCOLI RABE ON WHIPPED RICOTTA, TOPPED WITH FRIED RYE BREADCRUMBS

I love a simple supper of a big brothy pot of beans and greens, but I'd been doing that dish way too often. So, I decided to turn the idea into a kind of composed salad. Again, it's all about layering what you have. I like to serve this dish at room temperature. And each of these separately-made ingredients can be used with your beans in various endless combinations. The whipped ricotta is so basic. And fried rye breadcrumbs are also good on pasta or other vegetables.

2 cups simply cooked Rancho Gordo Marcella beans, dressed in a few tablespoons of Mustard Vinaigrette (page 11)

1 recipe Spicy Broccoli Rabe with Garlic (page 12)

Whipped Ricotta (with parmesan) (page 12)

Fried Rye Breadcrumbs (page 12)

Olive oil for drizzling

Fresh lemon juice (optional)

Freshly ground black pepper

1. To assemble: Gently toss together the dressed beans and the Spicy Broccoli Rabe. Spread a pretty layer (not too thick; I did that, and it was too sweet) of the Whipped Ricotta on a serving platter, then top with the bean mixture.

2. Finish with a generous dusting of the Fried Rye Breadcrumbs, a drizzling of olive oil, a squeeze of lemon if you like, and freshly ground black pepper.

#11. CRANBERRY BEAN PLATTER WITH ROASTED RED PEPPER AND PROSCIUTTO

You can serve this simply in a bowl topped with shavings of good Parmesan along with croutons spread with Romesco, or on a platter smeared with the Romesco sauce, which is gorgeous.

3 cups simply cooked Rancho Gordo Cranberry beans, room temperature

2 Roasted Red Peppers (page 12), chopped into half-inch pieces

2 to 3 tablespoons Sherry Garlic Vinaigrette (page 11)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

About ½ cup Romesco Sauce (page 11)

Shaved parmesan cheese

About 8 ounces thin prosciutto slices, cut in half and folded attractively

1. Place the beans and peppers along with Sherry Garlic Vinaigrette to taste in a bowl and toss together. Taste for salt and pepper, then allow the mixture to sit at room temperature for an hour or two.

2. To assemble the platter, spoon the sauce on the platter and spread it out attractively; spoon the bean mixture on top (also attractively; we are not animals). Place the folded slices of prosciutto fetchingly among the beans. Top with Parmesan that you have shaved in nice long, wide strips. Season with plenty of freshly ground black pepper and serve. (I made this with Romesco on the platter and without, instead using the Romesco on French bread croutons. Both are nice.)

#12. PINTO BEANS FLAVORED WITH HAM (SERVED WITH CORN MUFFINS)

I finally reverted briefly, possibly for sentimental reasons, to my iconic yet simple pot of soupy pinto beans cooked with ham, to which I will always be utterly devoted. It was comforting to go back for a moment. (I've also substituted the lovely Yellow Eye beans for pintos here and it was wonderful.) These beans really need nothing more than some black pepper. For the meat, use a small ham hock (ask your grocer to sell you a single one; for some reason, in larger cities, they only sell them in pairs), or 1 small chunk of country ham about the size of two of your fingers, or a piece of side meat about the same size. You could even use 1 or 2 thick-cut slices of bacon cut into large pieces. If you use country ham, the beans won't be greasy. Apparently, when French people make this with the hock, they shred the ham after it's cooked and serve it with the dish. I throw it in the trash or, because I feel bad about wasting food, put it in the freezer where it sits for about a year until I finally throw it away on trash day. This isn't really a recipe per se, but it is really delicious.

1 pound (that's the entire bag) Rancho Gordo Pinto Beans, sorted, rinsed, and soaked for 4 to 6 hours
Ham of your choice (small ham hock, chunk of good country ham, side meat, etc)
Freshly ground black pepper
Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling (optional)

1. Place the beans in a large heavy-bottomed pot along with the ham or ham hock and water to cover the beans by a couple of inches. Bring to a boil (for about 5 minutes), then reduce the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally and adding water if the level gets too low (I like an inch of water on top), until the beans are very tender, 45 to 90 minutes. They should be slightly soupy, not thick like baked beans.
2. Season with freshly ground pepper to taste. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil if you like. (Don't worry about the ham hock poking above the water but do turn it over several times.) You probably won't need salt because: ham hock.

Of course these are great with your basic cornbread, but if you want to be a little fancy try the Magnificent Sour Cream Corn Muffins from my book. My Cheddar Chive Spoonbread (page 13) is also an excellent accompaniment.

MAGNIFICENT SOUR CREAM MUFFINS, FROM THE COMFORT FOOD DIARIES (adapted from Marion Cunningham) Makes 6 large or 12 medium muffins

1 large egg plus one egg yolk, at room temperature
4 ounces (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted, plus more for the tins
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
¼ cup whole milk, warmed
1 scant cup all-purpose flour
⅔ cup white cornmeal
1 tablespoon baking powder
2 tablespoons sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup sour cream or plain yogurt

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease the muffin tins.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg, egg yolk, melted butter, oil, and milk until well blended.
3. In another bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, and salt and stir with a fork until well mixed.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the egg mixture and stir until blended. Finally, stir in the sour cream.
5. Spoon the batter into the muffin tins so each cup is three-quarters full.
6. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the muffins are golden and the edges pull away from the tin; a toothpick should come out clean when inserted into the center. Remove from tins and serve hot. They're also delicious at room temperature or toasted for breakfast the next day.

SUB-RECIPES, EXTRAS, AND ESSENTIALS

ONION CONFIT

3 tablespoons butter
3 large white or yellow onions, cut in half lengthwise, then into ¼ inch half-moons
Salt and pepper to taste
Thyme sprig or rosemary branch
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
¼ cup water

In a heavy bottomed pot, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onions, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until the onions have become translucent and started to turn barely golden, about 5 minutes. Turn down the heat to medium-low, add thyme or rosemary, red pepper flakes, sherry vinegar, lemon juice, and water, and continue cooking for about half an hour, until they are soft, and the liquid is absorbed. Remove the herbs. Correct seasonings. You can store these in the fridge in a jar or Tupperware for about a week.

MY PERFECT MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE

½ cup good quality extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (I really like Trader Joe's brand)
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
½ teaspoon of sea salt (or more to taste)
Freshly ground pepper

Place the ingredients in a jar and shake the hell out of it until it is completely emulsified.

GARLIC SHERRY VINAIGRETTE

1 large clove garlic
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
Freshly ground black pepper

In a mortar, mash the garlic together with the salt with a pestle, until a paste is formed. Whisk in olive oil and sherry vinegar. Season with freshly ground black pepper.

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

Try this drizzled on any bean. I like a white bean + roasted tomatoes + whipped ricotta (baked or cold) + chimichurri. It's also great with the arepas.

½ cup chopped parsley
5 cloves garlic, smashed
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
¼ cup oregano leaves
2 teaspoons red pepper flakes
½ cup olive oil
Salt and pepper

In a food processor or blender (I use my bullet blender for small batch recipes like this), combine the first five ingredients and half of the olive oil; process until it's smooth. You don't want to whip it into a froth. Add the remaining olive oil and process just enough to mix. Season with salt and pepper, then let it rest for about 10 minutes before serving.

ROMESCO SAUCE

This is good on so many types of beans, in combination with many other ingredients. You should experiment!

1 large or 2 small roasted red peppers (next recipe) (you can also use jarred peppers)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 garlic clove
½ cup toasted slivered almonds (I toast mine in a Teflon pan on the stovetop)
¼ cup chopped parsley
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ cup olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients except salt, pepper, and olive oil in a food processor (or use a bullet blender) and process until slightly chunky, but not super smooth. Add olive oil and process again until just mixed. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

ROASTED RED PEPPERS

A terrific addition to room temperature beans, alone or in a salad.

4 to 5 bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and cut in half

About ½ cup olive oil

2 to 3 garlic cloves, smashed

Juice of half a lemon

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Toss pepper halves with olive oil to coat outside thoroughly, then place them on a rimmed sheet pan, cut sides down. Roast in oven, moving them around occasionally to ensure even cooking, for about 45 minutes, until the skin is almost entirely charred. Once they're cool enough to touch, place them in a Zip-loc bag and close it (don't worry; it won't melt) and let the peppers sit until completely cooled, about half an hour. Remove, peel them with your fingers, and place them in a jar or Tupperware with any juices that remain in the pan, a few cloves of smashed garlic, a half cup of olive oil, the juice of half a lemon, ½ tsp (or more) salt and pepper. These will keep in the fridge for over a week.

SPICY BROCCOLI RABE WITH GARLIC

(for 1 bunch; you should make more if it's your thing)

2 tablespoons olive oil

Red pepper flakes (¼ tsp, or more to taste)

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced

1 bunch broccoli rabe, tough ends removed, chopped into longish pieces

Salt to taste

Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add red pepper flakes then toss in the garlic and fry until golden. (Be careful here; you don't want to burn it, but you do want it to be slightly crunchy). Add broccoli rabe to pan, and sauté until tender. Season with salt to taste.

WHIPPED RICOTTA

Use this as a topper or bottom layer for all your bean salads

1 cup ricotta

Drizzle of olive oil

Squeeze of lemon juice

1 tsp grated Parmigiano Reggiano (optional)

Combine ingredients in a bowl and whisk together

vigorously. (If you want to get carried away and cause yourself a lot of trouble you don't need, you can do this in a food processor or a bullet blender.)

BUTTERED RYE BREADCRUMBS

2 slices day-old rye bread (I use seeded)

2 tablespoons butter

For the crumbs: cut the bread into chunks, then process in a food processor or bullet blender (I love these things). In a nonstick pan, over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the breadcrumbs, spread them out, and let them cook, stirring a bit, until they are golden brown and crunchy. You can make extra and store in a jar in the fridge for up to a week, but they're so nice freshly sizzled.

QUICK PICKLED RED ONIONS

These are not an exact science; I've never made a bad batch. You can make a few or a lot.

1 cup cider vinegar

½ teaspoon sugar

½ teaspoon salt

1 medium red onion, cut in half lengthwise then sliced crosswise into thin half moons

Heat the vinegar in a saucepan until it begins to bubble, then stir in the sugar and salt until dissolved. Place the onions in a colander or a large strainer over a large bowl. Slowly pour the hot vinegar mixture over the onions, reserving the vinegar. Place the par-blanching onions in a jar with the remaining vinegar mixture and refrigerate.

BURNT ONIONS

A great topper for hot or room temperature bean compositions.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Slice a large red onion in half lengthwise, then cut each half into ¼-inch half-moon slices. Toss them in a bowl with a bit of olive oil and a little salt so that they separate and are well coated. Spread the onion slices on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper and roast, moving them around a bit to insure even cooking (they won't be perfectly even) until they've turned dark brown. These are good on everything and make a nice foil for ricotta and other creamy ingredients.

MY CHEDDAR CHEESE AND CHIVE SPOONBREAD

1 ½ cups cornmeal (I used Bob's Red Mill Medium; you can use fine as well)

1 teaspoon salt

2½ cups whole milk

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

5 large eggs, separated

1½ cups finely grated, sharp cheddar cheese

½ cup finely chopped chives (or more, to taste)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a large soufflé dish or 3-quart oval pan, or another similarly sized dish (I have also used a 9-inch square and a spring-form).
2. In a large bowl, mix the cornmeal and salt with a fork.
3. In a medium saucepan, bring the milk to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer. Slowly stir in the cornmeal mixture, whisking until it begins to thicken. Cook for about 3 minutes—continuing to whisk!!—then remove from heat. Stir in butter.
4. In a small bowl, beat the egg yolks. In a larger bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Once the cornmeal mixture has cooled a bit, stir in the egg yolks. Stir in cheese and chives. Next, gently fold in the egg whites. (If you don't know how to do this correctly, it's worth it to go on YouTube and learn. It makes a difference.)
5. Pour the mixture into the soufflé dish and bake for 40 minutes. The middle should be soft, but not loose and definitely not liquid. Serve immediately with lots of butter.

AN AFTERWORD FROM STEVE SANDO OF RANCHO GORDO

I sometimes believe that the Internet was invented so that I might meet people like Emily Nunn. Her name was vaguely familiar to me and I had heard of her book, *The Comfort Food Diaries*, but it was through Twitter that we became pals. Her posts were smart, sharp, honest, and occasionally vulnerable. I fell for her and it's a rare thing for one of us to post without the other responding.

I was very shy in asking if she'd consider working on a booklet like this. I never know what the protocol is for this kind of thing. Emily embraced the project and as you can see, produced something for the ages.

This booklet has some great ideas and recipes but most importantly, we learn how to cook in new ways from one of my favorite people.

You can follow Emily on Twitter: @EmilyRNunn

This booklet was produced without photographs and minimal graphics to save on your printer ink.

**Many photos of the finished dishes can be seen at
<https://www.ranchogordo.com/pages/emily-nunn>**

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