

# RANCHO GORDO SOUP



All kinds of good soups  
to help you through the winter  
(or any season),  
to use up your leftovers,  
to feed a crowd and to enjoy  
Rancho Gordo heirloom beans  
every day.

# FARRO SOUP

One of my favorite cookbooks of the last few years has been Pamela Sheldon Jones' *Cucina Povera*. On the surface, it's Tuscan peasant cooking, especially right after the war when supplies were meager, but for me it's really about the genius of the Italian kitchen. Take something good and keep paring it down to its most most basic. This kind of cooking means only the best ingredients as you can't cover them up with cheese or butter. The theme is Italy but you can apply it to almost any cuisine. I can't recommend the book enough. This recipe is inspired by the Zuppa di Farro in *Cucina Povera*. I've made it a little soupier. I've kept it a farro soup with beans instead of a bean soup with farro but I did reduce the amount of farro and increase the beans. I also left the beans whole. I'm sure you would mash them in Tuscany but I prefer the whole bean. Obviously, you can have fun experimenting but remember that the farro is very filling. If you are using good, heavy olive oil, you really don't need any meat but if you could always add some pancetta to the onions, garlic, carrot and celery but I don't think it needs it.

*1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus a little more for drizzling at the end*  
*1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped*  
*1 large or 2 small carrots, peeled and finely chopped*  
*1 stalk celery, finely chopped*  
*2 cloves garlic, minced*  
*1 1/2 cups whole farro*  
*6 cups liquid (vegetable stock, chicken stock, bean broth or a combination)*  
*1 cup cooked Rancho Gordo [Alubia Blanca](#) or [Marchella](#) beans*  
*Sea salt and ground pepper*  
*1/4 cup chopped celery leaves (or flat leaf parsley)*

In a medium soup pot, heat the 1/4 cup of olive oil over medium heat, saute the onion, carrot and celery until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and farro and continue cooking for 2 minutes, mixing well. Slowly add the liquids, allowing the farro to absorb some. Cook for 30 minutes until the farro is tender, stirring frequently.

When the farro is cooked, add the beans. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in warmed bowls, garnished with the celery leaves or parsley and a drizzle of olive oil.

# WHITE BEAN, BACON AND CORN SOUP

If all of your ingredients are perfect, you can allow yourself to cook simply. The temptation for me is to keep adding and adding but it rarely makes things better. How do you better a creamy runner bean? Is there a meat eater who doesn't love bacon? Buy the best and enjoy them at their simplest.

Serves 2 to 4

*About 2 cups cooked white beans such as Rancho Gordo [Alubia Blanca](#) or [Royal Corona](#)  
2 to 4 strips thick-cut bacon  
About 2 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels  
6 to 8 cups chicken stock  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Avocado oil to taste*

In a soup pot, cook the bacon over medium-low heat until it is browned and the fat has rendered, about 8 minutes. Remove the bacon and let drain on paper towels. Once cool, chop and set aside.

In the same pot over medium-low heat, sauté the corn in the bacon fat until soft, about 3 minutes. Add the white beans and chicken stock and cook, stirring gently, until warmed through. Return the chopped bacon to the pot and season to taste with salt and pepper. Finish with a few drops of avocado oil.

# RUSTIC RANCHO GORDO YELLOW EYE BEAN SOUP

Another simple soup I love is this one featured in the *New York Times* in a profile they did of Rancho Gordo. We've had many "Pinch me!" moments but being featured in the Times was one of the most important.

*"Yellow Eyes are a perfect soup bean. They are naturally soupy and are neutral enough to work with good vegetables. This vegan soup is the perfect example."*

Serves 6 to 8

*For the beans:*

*3 cups Rancho Gordo [Yellow Eye](#) or [Yellow Indian Woman](#) beans, soaked 4 to 6 hours*

*1 carrot, peeled*

*2 ribs celery, halved*

*1 onion, quartered*

*1 head garlic, halved across the equator*

*Stems from 1 bunch Italian parsley, tied in a cheesecloth sachet*

*2 tablespoons kosher salt*

*1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper*

*1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil*

*For the soup:*

*1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling*

*3 large carrots, peeled and diced*

*5 ribs celery, diced*

*2 leeks, white and light green parts only, diced*

*1 head garlic, cloves peeled and finely grated*

*1 1/2 teaspoons red chili flakes, plus more to taste*

*2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary*

*1 cup canned whole San Marzano tomatoes, drained and chopped*

*1/2 cup chopped Italian parsley*

*Rustic bread, sliced*

*1 clove garlic, halved*

1. Prepare the beans: Drain the beans and place them in a large pot. Add 3 quarts cold water, the carrot, celery, onion, garlic and parsley stem sachet. Bring to a boil, skimming off any foam that rises to the top. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer and cook until the beans are soft and creamy, but not falling apart. (Start checking after 25 minutes; the fresher the beans, the shorter the cooking time.) Add the salt, pepper and olive oil. Discard the sachet and vegetables. Let the beans cool in the liquid.

2. Prepare the soup: Pour the olive oil into a large pot set over medium heat. Add the carrots, celery, leeks, garlic, chili and rosemary. Cook until the rawness of the vegetables is just gone, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook until slightly caramelized, about 3 minutes more. Add the beans and their cooking liquid, bring to a boil and simmer until the vegetables are tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Just before serving, add the parsley. Toast the bread slices. While still hot, rub them with the garlic halves, then tear into large pieces. Ladle the soup into bowls and top each with a few toasts, then drizzle with olive oil.

# CARIBBEAN BLACK BEAN SOUP WITH ROASTED GARLIC AND TOMATOES

I really could live on bowls of soup just like this. The secret is in the caramelization of the aromatics and the deep roasting of the garlic and tomatoes. The recipe can easily be doubled to yield soup for a crowd.

Serves 4 as a first course or as a light meal with accompaniments.

*1/2 pound (about 3 cups) Rancho Gordo [Midnight Black](#) beans, cooked and warmed in their broth*  
*6 garlic cloves, separated but unpeeled*  
*4 whole Roma tomatoes, canned if not in season*  
*2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling on vegetables*  
*1/2 of a medium yellow onion, chopped (about 1 cup)*  
*1 Jalapeño chile with seeds, chopped*  
*1 medium carrot, peeled and chopped (about 1/2 cup)*  
*1 1/2 teaspoons cumin, toasted and freshly ground*  
*1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Mexican Oregano](#)*  
*1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper*  
*2 cups chicken or vegetable broth*  
*Salt and freshly ground pepper*  
*Sour cream or serving*  
*Avocado for serving*  
*Cilantro for serving*

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Wrap the garlic cloves in aluminum foil and drizzle a little olive oil over them. Put the tomatoes in an ovenproof casserole, sprinkle them with a little salt and drizzle olive oil over them. Roast the tomatoes and garlic for about 20 minutes. Set aside to cool, then remove the garlic skins.

Meanwhile, in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat, warm the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onion, Jalapeño, and carrot and cook, stirring, until fragrant and beginning to caramelize, about 10 minutes. Add the cooked vegetables to the pot with the beans along with the cumin, oregano, cayenne pepper, and broth.

When the tomatoes and garlic are soft and roasted, add them to the beans along with the salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a simmer and cook until the vegetables are soft and flavors are blended, about 15 minutes.

Cool slightly and transfer about half of the beans to a blender. Blend, holding the lid on tightly with a towel to avoid having the beans bubble up and burn you. Return the blended beans to the pot, stir, and adjust seasonings. Garnish each serving with sour cream, cilantro and avocado slices.

# ALUBIA BLANCA-POTATO SOUP WITH CASCABEL CHILE SALSA

This soup is velvety and mild. The salsa has little or no heat but it's loaded with flavor. It's a nice accent to the beans and potatoes. The cream is the sign that this is a holiday.

Like many good dishes, this was born of leftovers. Some beans, some potatoes and some salsa. Voila! A soup course and it's perfect for Thanksgiving. Even with traditionalists, there's some wiggle room with soup. Grandma's green bean casserole may be sacred but you can try out new things for the soup course. And of course beans, potatoes, chiles and this oregano are all indigenous to the Americas and the perfect way to say Happy Thanksgiving.

Serves 2 to 4

*For the soup:*

*1/2 cup cooked Rancho Gordo [Alubia Blanca](#), [Royal Corona](#) or [Ayocote Blanco](#) beans*

*2 1/2 cups cooked potatoes (about 3 medium potatoes), cubed*

*2 cups liquid made up from leftover bean broth, potato cooking water or a combination*

*3 tablespoons Salsa de Chile Cascabel (see below)*

*2 tablespoons Crema Mexicana or sour cream*

*1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Oregano Indio](#)*

*Salt to taste*

*For the Salsa de Chile Cascabel:*

*10 Rancho Gordo [Cascabel Chiles](#), wiped clean, seeds and veins removed, seeds reserved*

*12 ounces canned whole peeled tomatoes, drained*

*3 garlic cloves, roughly chopped*

*1/2 teaspoon salt*

*About 2/3 cup water*

In a large saucepan, add the beans, potatoes and cooking liquid. Blend with an immersion blender (or in batches with a countertop blender) and then gently heat on medium-low heat for about 10 minutes.

When the soup is hot, add the salsa, crema and oregano Indio. Add salt and check seasonings. Serve immediately. Garnish with more oregano, if you like.

*Salsa de Chile Cascabel*

(based on a Diana Kennedy recipe)

Toast the chiles over medium heat on a comal or dry skillet, turning them constantly so that they don't burn. Remove from heat.

Toast the seeds to a deep golden brown, turning constantly or they will burn.

Blend all ingredients together for a minute or two in a blender, adding a little more water if necessary; the sauce should have a loose consistency, but will thicken as it stands.

# SHRIMP AND BEAN SOUP

I have a weird, almost obsessive love of shrimp. My dream vacation would be on a Mexican beach, probably in the state of Veracruz, lying in the shade after body surfing and drinking cold beer with a bucket of cooked shrimp nearby.

This velvety soup is also an admirable vehicle for my favorite crustacean. It's simple and delicious and you make most of it ahead of time and save the shrimp for the very end.

Serves 4

*1 small onion, chopped fine*  
*3 cloves garlic, smashed*  
*2 tablespoons olive oil*  
*1 teaspoon cumin, ground*  
*1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Mexican oregano](#)*  
*1 serrano chile, chopped fine, seeds and veins removed if you want a mild soup*  
*Salt to taste*  
*2 cups Rancho Gordo [Cranberry](#) beans, cooked, and their liquid*  
*3 cups chicken broth*  
*1 can chopped tomatoes*  
*1 pound peeled shrimp*  
*1 tablespoon butter*

In a pot, sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil over medium-low heat until fragrant. Add the cumin, oregano, chile and salt and allow to soften.

(You can omit the chile if you don't like spicy food, or remove the seeds if you want to tone down the heat.)

Add the beans and their liquid, the tomatoes and the broth and allow to cook for about 20 minutes. Then puree all the ingredients either with an immersion blender, or in batches in a blender. Taste and correct the seasoning.

When you're about ready to serve, reheat the soup over medium heat, then add the shrimp and allow to cook through, about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the butter and serve.

# CRANBERRY BEAN AND CABBAGE SOUP WITH KALE PESTO

So much of a person's success is dependent on relationships and help from others you meet on the path. From the beginning, Brian Streeter, resident chef at Cakebread Cellars, and the whole Cakebread family have supported the idea and reality of Rancho Gordo. Brian, and especially Karen Cakebread (now with her own Ziata Wines), made sure I was part of the American Harvest Workshop and always found clever ways to expose Rancho Gordo's heirloom beans to new chefs and food writers.

Brian recommends a glass of Cakebread Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir with this soup.

Serves 6

*3 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Cranberry](#) beans, with cooking liquid*  
*Salt and freshly ground pepper*  
*4 tablespoons olive oil*  
*3 ounces pancetta, diced*  
*2 yellow onions, minced*  
*4 carrots, peeled and diced*  
*3 celery stalks, diced*  
*3 garlic cloves, minced*  
*1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley*  
*1/2 head green cabbage, diced*  
*2 cups peeled and chopped plum tomatoes*  
*3/4 cup dry red wine*  
*1 1/2 teaspoons sugar*  
*4 cups chicken or vegetable broth*  
*1 bay leaf*  
*Salt and freshly ground pepper*  
*1/4 loaf ciabatta or other coarse country bread (about 1/4 pound)*

*For the pesto:*

*1 small bunch dinosaur kale*  
*2 garlic cloves, chopped*  
*1/4 cup pine nuts*  
*1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil*  
*2 tablespoons grated pecorino romano cheese*  
*Pinch of salt*

To prepare the soup, heat a large pot over high heat. Add 3 tablespoons of the olive oil and the pancetta and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pancetta starts to crisp, about 2 minutes. Add the onions, carrots, and celery and cook, stirring, until the vegetables soften, 2–3 minutes. Add the garlic, parsley, and cabbage and cook for about 2 minutes longer to wilt the cabbage. Add the tomatoes, wine, and sugar, stir well, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the beans and their broth, the chicken broth, and the bay leaf and simmer slowly for 10 minutes to blend the flavors.

While the soup is cooking, preheat the oven to 375°F. Tear the bread into large pieces, put them on a baking sheet, drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, and toss to coat evenly. Toast in the oven until lightly browned and crisp, about 10 minutes.

When the soup is ready, stir the toasted bread into the soup and continue cooking until the bread swells and starts to thicken the soup, 5–10 minutes longer. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

To prepare the pesto, remove the central rib from each kale leaf, then roughly chop the leaves; you should have about 2 cups packed chopped leaves. Put the kale in a food processor and add the garlic, nuts, extra-virgin olive oil, cheese, and salt and process until smooth. (You will have more pesto than you need for garnishing the soup; the leftover pesto will keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.)

Ladle the soup into warmed individual bowls. Top each serving with a spoonful of pesto and serve immediately.



# ZUPPA AMERICANA A LA ITALIANA

In the 1980s I was lucky enough to have an Italian teacher who would listen to all my enthusiasm about her native country with patience and grace. I must have been very obnoxious, as only the recently converted can be. I love the music, the art, the gorgeous people and of course the food. I've kept up with my teacher, Gloria, over the years and she's become a Rancho Gordo supporter. Now she's the enthusiastic one! This is her recipe that she created from leftovers but it's worth starting the whole thing from scratch if you don't have necessary components.

Serves 4

*About 2 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Ayocote Negro](#) beans (if you have the time, sauté in some olive oil, minced garlic, tomato paste, and minced fresh rosemary before adding to the soup)*  
*2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil*  
*2 carrots, chopped*  
*1 red onion, chopped*  
*2 celery stalks, chopped*  
*1/2 inch anchovy paste (optional)*  
*Good quality, low-sodium chicken broth*  
*1 cup diced winter squash (such as Zucca Barucca or Buttercup), roasted in the oven until soft*  
*Salt and pepper to taste*  
*Chopped fresh Italian parsley for serving*  
*Shredded Parmesan cheese for serving*

In a large pot, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Add the carrots, onion, celery, and anchovy paste (if using) and sauté until softened, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the beans and thin with chicken broth to desired soupy consistency.

Add the squash and bring to a gentle boil. Check for seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste.

Sprinkle each serving with parsley and Parmesan.

# EASY WHITE BEAN, SAUSAGE AND KALE SOUP

Julia, our manager here at Rancho Gordo, keeps coming up with great family dishes using heirloom beans. I love fancy, fussy multi-step masterpieces but I'm more likely to actually cook dishes like this. They are easy, everyone loves the results and of course the taste is supreme. I also think I'll be doing this on Christmas Eve as it's special enough for the holiday but not so debauched as to compete with the Christmas meal! And it's easy enough to make and still allow for the chef to sample plenty of eggnog.

Serves 4

*2 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Ayocote Blanco](#), [Royal Corona](#) or [Alubia Blanca](#) beans*  
*2 tsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling*  
*1 yellow onion, chopped*  
*1-3 garlic cloves, chopped*  
*2 Italian pork or turkey sausages, casings removed*  
*1 bunch kale, stems and ribs removed, roughly chopped*  
*1 Yukon gold potato, cubed*  
*Salt and pepper*  
*Red pepper flakes (optional)*  
*4 cups chicken or vegetable broth*  
*Rustic bread for serving*

In a soup pot, warm the oil over medium-low heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Stir in the sausage and cook, breaking it up into small pieces, until lightly browned, 3-5 minutes. Add the kale and potato and season with salt and red pepper flakes if you like extra heat. Pour in the broth and 2 cups water. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the potato is soft and the kale is tender, about 20 minutes.

Add the beans to the pot and cook until heated through, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle each bowl with a little olive oil and serve with toasted bread.

# CALDO TLAPEÑO

Many versions of this Mexican soup exist, with mostly the vegetables changing depending on the season. This one is named after a neighborhood in Mexico City. The constants, and the great thing about this soup, are the garbanzos, chipotles, and chicken. They're a fine trio even if they don't seem to be an obvious combination.

The other important factor is your chicken broth. I once had a cooking instructor give me a conspiratorial wink and then confess that she never made her own broth and instead bought it in cans or cartons. I found this bizarre. I can cut as many shortcuts as the next guy, but I don't think you can make great soup without a great foundation, and that's the broth. I have had some really good vegetarian soups, so the issue isn't the meat. At this point, nothing you pull off the market shelf can compare with a good broth. And thankfully, stock is very easy to make. I like to poach a whole chicken to get the broth and chicken meat for this soup, along with plenty of leftovers.

*1/2 white onion, minced*  
*2 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, roughly chopped, with seeds and sauce*  
*1 cup chopped tomatoes*  
*2 garlic cloves, minced*  
*1 tablespoon good-quality lard or olive oil*  
*6 cups chicken broth*  
*1 cup Rancho Gordo [Garbanzo](#) beans, cooked then drained*  
*1 cup peeled and sliced carrots*  
*2 small zucchini, sliced*  
*1 cup shredded cooked chicken*  
*Avocado cubes for garnish*  
*Lime wedges for serving*

In a blender, combine the onion, chipotle chiles, tomatoes, and garlic and puree until smooth.

In a stockpot or large saucepan, heat the lard over medium heat. Add the pureed vegetables and fry, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes. Pour in the broth, bring just to a simmer, and simmer uncovered for about 15 minutes.

Add the garbanzos, carrots, and zucchini and continue to simmer until the carrots and zucchini are barely cooked, about 8 minutes. Add the chicken and continue to simmer until the vegetables are just cooked and the chicken and garbanzos are heated through.

Ladle the soup into warmed individual bowls, garnish with avocado, and serve immediately. Pass the lime wedges at the table.

# GARBANZO AND QUINOA SOUP

Bianca Shiver runs our San Francisco Ferry Building store. She's an enthusiastic cook and loves coming up with new ways to enjoy our products. She adapted this recipe from one she found in *Real Simple* magazine.

I like it especially because it showcases quinoa as a soup ingredient. Here in the states we tend to treat it as a grain. It's nice but so much lighter than rice or farro that I tend not to use it as much as I'd like. For me, soup is the answer. It's a natural and of course the addition garbanzos makes it perfect. You could easily cook up a pot of chickpeas and use half in a hummus and half in this soup.

Serves 6

*4 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Garbanzo](#) beans, plus  
2 cups cooking liquid  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 red onion, chopped  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
Kosher salt and black pepper to taste  
1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Stardust](#)  
6 cups vegetable broth  
1 cup Rancho Gordo [Red Quinoa](#)  
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels  
3 tomatoes, chopped  
Chopped fresh cilantro and lime wedges for serving*

In a large saucepan, warm the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft. Season with 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper and 1 teaspoon of Stardust.

Add the broth and quinoa; bring to a boil, then simmer until the quinoa is tender, about 20 minutes. Add the chickpeas and their cooking liquid, the corn and the tomatoes; cook until warm. Serve with cilantro and lime.

For extra flavor and texture, you can also add crumbled Cotija cheese and/or tortilla chips.

## NOTES ON BROTH

After many years of cooking, it's finally really dawned on me that for the most part, a good soup is only as good as its broth. You can add other ingredients, sometimes expensive, but you should really think of the broth as the foundation of a good soup.

Happily, it's fairly easy to make. Most weeks, I buy a whole chicken, cut it up, and then gently poach it with onions, garlic, carrots, celery and sometimes leftover bones. As the individual pieces of chicken cook, I remove them. The breast is fairly fast and needs to get out of the heat the moment it's done. The other pieces are a little more forgiving. The stock is strained and when at room temperature, it goes in the refrigerator. When the chicken pieces have cooled down, I remove the meat and toss the bones and use the chicken throughout the week. You can fry the poached pieces in reserved chicken fat or olive oil or simply use them in a soup.

A lot of recipes will panic and warn you with a sad desperation that you must remove all the chicken fat from your homemade stock, almost suggesting that canned is better. Yes, that's a good idea, but a little fat of homemade stock is preferable to who knows what is involved with store bought. Also, if you keep your stock in the fridge, the fat clearly rises. It seems to form a protection over the broth and it lasts much longer in the refrigerator. If the fat bothers you, don't use, but leave it while you are storing your broth or stock.

Vegetable broth can be 100% just as delicious and it brings joy to my cheap, er, thrifty old heart. One of my favorite recent cookbooks has been *Decolonize Your Diet*. Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel offer a cuisine based on pre-Conquest foods, mostly vegan and vegetarian. Even if you don't care about the concept, there is a lot of good food to consider. But why not think about how great the Mexican diet was in 1491? The foundation was beans, chiles and corn. Occasionally there was deer, rabbit or fish. Delicious greens were foraged. I always say, who civilized who? In the book, they have a corn cob stock. It's naturally sweet and delicious. It got me thinking about other things to add to a vegetable stock. Why not onion tops, carrot tops, or garlic skins? All the things that normally get thrown into the compost might be better served as broth ingredient. I started saving everything in a bag in my fridge and for the last few Sundays, I've been making this stock and using it throughout the week when I needed a flavorful liquid.

I've also made what I call garbage soup. I use the stock along with any beans I have leftover. Lots of bean liquid? No problem. It's another component. I like to blend tomatoes and some of our Oregano Indio and all together I have a killer soup.

I've been growing lambsquarters in our parking lot here at Rancho Gordo and a handful chopped up and added to this mess is perfect.

For the record, pork stock is handy as a flavoring in sauces and stews but it's too strong to be the base of a soup. Turkey is great, but it's a very particular flavor and perhaps not as versatile as chicken. Fish is also wonderful but that subject must be saved for another time.

# FLAGEOLET AND GREENS SOUP WITH CHICKEN SAUSAGE

Here is another recipe from *Real Simple* that inspired Bianca. There's lots of room for improvisation here so don't get too hung up on the ingredients. If you don't have chicken sausages, use what you have or consider substituting a little bacon or pancetta. If you don't have any of the greens listed, dandelion greens, beet tops or chard would work as well.

Serves 4

*2 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Flageolet](#) beans (slightly mashed)*

*1/2 pound fully cooked Italian chicken sausages, sliced*

*2 tablespoons olive oil*

*2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced*

*6 cups chicken broth (preferably homemade)*

*3 to 4 cups torn dark, leafy greens such as escarole, kale, or collard greens*

*Kosher salt and black pepper to taste*

*Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)*

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, brown the sausage in the oil for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute.

Add the broth, beans, greens, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Simmer until the greens are tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve with grated Parmesan, if desired.

# SWISS CHARD SOUP WITH CHICKPEAS AND BARLEY

I received a lot of emails asking for this recipe when I posted about it on Facebook and Twitter. As I said, I used the wonderful new Turkish clay pot I bought from tulumba.com on a hot tip from Paula Wolfert.

The recipe comes from Greg and Lucy Malouf's beautiful book, *Turquoise: A Chef's Travels in Turkey*. This is a gorgeous book and if you're any kind of fan of Middle Eastern cooking, it's worth your time.

I adapted this recipe a bit as I already had cooked the garbanzos and I prefer the chard a little more al dente.

Serves 6 to 8

*2 tablespoons olive oil*  
*1 small onion, finely diced*  
*3 sticks celery, finely diced*  
*2 cloves garlic, finely chopped*  
*1/2 teaspoon ground allspice*  
*1/2 teaspoon cinnamon*  
*5 sprigs thyme*  
*4 oz pearl barley*  
*1.5 quarts chicken stock*  
*2 bay leaves*  
*2 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Garbanzo](#) beans*  
*1/2 pound Swiss chard leaves (stems removed), shredded*  
*1 long red chile, seeded and shredded*  
*1/2 tomato, seeded and diced*  
*Sea salt*  
*Lemon juice to serve*  
*Greek-style yogurt to serve*

Heat the oil in a large, heavy saucepan. Sauté the onion, celery and garlic over a low heat for 5 to 8 minutes, until the vegetables soften. Add the spices and thyme, then toss everything around in the pan for a few moments.

Add the pearl barley, stock and bay leaves to the saucepan. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer, covered, for around an hour or until the barley is tender. Add the cooked chickpeas and chard and simmer, uncovered, until the chard is wilted.

Add the chile and tomato and season generously with salt and pepper. When ready to serve, remove the bay leaves and the thyme sprigs. Ladle the hot soup into warmed bowls and then add a squeeze of lemon juice and a generous spoonful of yogurt to each.

# CALDILLO DE FRIJOL

Ceci Ortiz is one of our retail advocates in Napa. What she has to work with in our store and warehouse is limited but she loves coming up with creative dishes using our products. Without a proper kitchen, it can be a challenge but she's up to it. If you want the broth to be thicker or creamier, mash some of the cooked beans up and mix them in with the rest of the soup.

Serves 2

*4 tomatoes, cut into quarter pieces*

*1/4 of an onion*

*1 garlic clove*

*2 tablespoons Rancho Gordo [Felicidad Chipotle Sauce](#)*

*1 cup water*

*4 cups Rancho Gordo bean broth, preferably of a bean from the [Rancho Gordo-Xoxoc Project](#)*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*Salt and pepper*

*1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Oregano Indio](#)*

*Tortilla chips*

*2 to 3 cups cooked Rancho Gordo [Prepared Hominy/Posole](#) (optional)*

In a blender, blend the tomatoes, onion, garlic, Felicidad hot sauce, and water.

In a pot over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Strain the blended liquid and pour into the pot (be careful of splatters when the liquid touches the hot oil). Add salt, pepper, and the oregano and stir. Allow the mixture to reach a boil.

Mix the bean broth into the pot and allow the mixture to reach a boil once again.

Serve in a bowl and add tortilla chips and posole (if desired).



# SQUASH AND WILD RICE SOUP

We are lucky to have Heidi Swanson as a friend of Rancho Gordo. Her creativity is endless and when I saw this recipe from her new book, *Near and Far*, I knew I had to try it with our wild rice. Heidi says, “Keep in mind that this soup is all about the lemon ginger rosemary butter playing off the nuttiness of the wild rice and the smoothness of the winter squash.”

Serves 4 to 6

*For the Lemon Ginger Rosemary Butter:*

*1/2 cup unsalted butter*

*Chopped leaves from a 4-inch sprig rosemary*

*Zest of 1 lemon*

*1 teaspoon grated ginger*

*Scant 1/4 teaspoon fine-grain sea salt*

*For the soup:*

*1/4 cup unsalted butter*

*2 medium onions, cut into eighths*

*2 large shallots, halved*

*1 whole serrano chile, stemmed*

*1 tablespoon fine-grain sea salt*

*2 1/2 pounds pumpkin or squash, seeded, peeled, and cut into 3/4-inch chunks*

*9 cups water*

*2 tablespoons fresh ginger juice*

*2 to 4 cups warm cooked Rancho Gordo [California](#)*

*[Wild Rice](#), to serve*

*Plain yogurt and toasted pepitas, to serve*

To make the lemon ginger rosemary butter, heat the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat for about 3 minutes (long enough for it to start to brown a bit). Remove from the heat and immediately stir in the rosemary, lemon zest, grated ginger, and salt. Stir well and let sit for 5 minutes or so. Strain the butter and reserve the pulp to serve separately.

To make the soup, melt the butter in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions, shallots, serrano, and salt. Cook until softened, about 5 minutes, then add the pumpkin and the water (less if you like a thicker soup, though this soup is nice on the thinner side). Bring just to a simmer and cook until the squash is completely tender throughout, about 15 minutes. Note that the time it takes will differ among different squash varieties. Remove from the heat, puree with a hand blender until smooth, and stir in the ginger juice. If you like an even thinner soup, add a bit more water at this point, then stir in more salt to taste.

Serve over a big scoop of wild rice with a dollop of yogurt, some pepitas, the lemon ginger rosemary butter, and a bit of pulp.

## SOPA CAMPESINA

The hacienda that hosts much of the activities of our Rancho Gordo-Xoxoc Project was bustling with guests and meals during our last visit. For now, I have my photos, and this recipe for a very simple soup that seems much more indulgent than it actually is. It's delicious and easy and for me, nostalgic. Please don't try this with commodity beans. It won't work. A simple dish like this needs the best ingredients, like Rancho Gordo heirloom beans.

*1/2 yellow onion, chopped medium*

*2 cloves minced garlic*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*1/2 pound Rancho Gordo [Rebosero](#) or [San Franciscano](#) beans, cleaned and rinsed*

*Sea salt*

*3 corn tortillas, preferably a little stale, cut into very thin strips*

*Oil for frying*

*1 teaspoon Rancho Gordo [Oregano Indio](#)*

*Limes for garnish*

In a large pot, saute the onion and garlic in the olive oil on medium heat until soft, about 6 to 8 minutes. Add the beans and cover with about 2 inches of water. Turn the heat to high and bring to a full, rapid boil for 15 minutes. Turn the heat to low and allow the beans to gently simmer.

Make sure the beans are always covered by about 2 inches of liquid, adding new water as needed. Cold water can seize the beans and slow down the cooking process, so it's best to have a tea kettle or a pan with warm water on hand to add as needed. After about an hour, the beans should begin to soften. Add a tablespoon of sea salt and allow the beans to continue cooking until done. Total time will be between an hour and a half and 3 hours. If it's taking too long, turn up the heat.

While the beans are cooking, heat the oil in a skillet and fry the tortilla strips in the hot oil until crispy. Allow them to drain on paper towels and salt generously.

When the beans are soft, correct the seasoning and add the teaspoon of Oregano Indio. Ladle into bowls and top with the tortilla strips. Serve with limes.

# COOKING BEANS

Normally on a bean cooking day (which frankly is everyday at Rancho Gordo), we put the beans to soak in the morning, after rinsing in lots of cool water and checking for small debris. We cover the beans by about an inch or so. If you haven't soaked, don't fret. Go ahead and cook them, knowing it will take a bit longer.

Heirloom and heritage varieties don't need a lot of fussing if they are used fresh, which I'd define as within two years. You can use a ham bone, chicken stock or as I prefer, simply a few savory vegetables. A classic mirepoix is a mix of onion, celery and carrot diced fine and sautéed in some kind of fat, often olive oil. A crushed clove of garlic doesn't hurt. If I'm cooking Mexican or Southwestern, I will sauté just onion and garlic in mild bacon drippings or even freshly rendered lard.

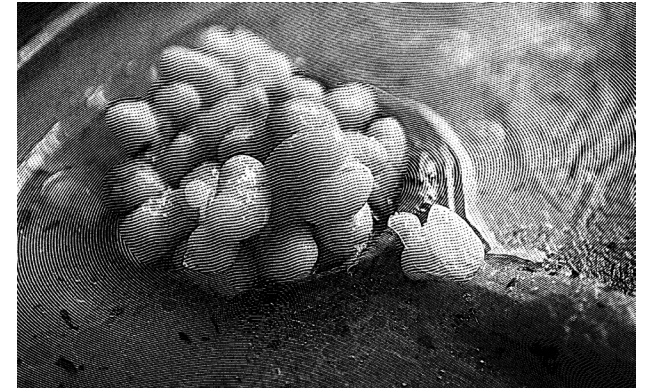
Add the beans and their soaking water to a large pot. You have been told before to change the water and rinse the beans. The thinking now is that vitamins and flavor can leech out of the beans into the soaking water you are throwing down the sink. There is conflicting scientific evidence that changing the water cuts down on the gas. If you want to, do it. If it seems unnecessary, don't.

If you've soaked them, the beans will have expanded, so make sure they are still covered by at least an inch, maybe a bit more. Add the sautéed vegetables and give a good stir. Raise your heat to medium-high and bring to a hard boil. Keep the beans at a boil for about ten to fifteen minutes. After so many years, I think this is the moment that really matters. You have to give them a good hard boil to let them know you're the boss and then reduce them to a gentle simmer, before covering. I like to see how low I can go and still get the occasional simmering bubble. Open and close the lid, or keep it ajar to help control the heat and allow evaporation. The bean broth will be superior if it's had a chance to breathe and evaporate a little.

When the beans are almost ready, the aroma will be heady. They won't smell so much like the vegetables you've cooked but the beans themselves. At this point, I'd go ahead and salt them. Go easy as it takes awhile for the beans to absorb the salt. If you want to add tomatoes or acids like lime or vinegar, wait until the beans are cooked through.

If the bean water starts to get low, always add hot water from a tea kettle. Many believe that cold water added to cooking beans will harden them. At the very least, it will make the cooking take that much longer to bring them back to a simmer. We don't recommend using hot tap water, straight from a water heater. Better to heat the tap water in a tea kettle or pan first.

Once you've mastered this method, go ahead and try some different techniques. Your bean friends will swear by this or that method and you should take their advice, keeping in mind there are few absolutes when it comes to cooking beans, only that it's very hard work to mess up a pot of beans.



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