

Cuban-Style Black Beans and Rice (Moros y Cristianos)

From the episode: *A Latin Celebration*

Serves 6 to 8 as an entree and 8 to 10 as a side dish

Serve this recipe as a side dish or as a main course with a simple green salad. It is important to use lean—not fatty—salt pork. If you can't find it, substitute six slices of bacon. If using bacon, decrease the cooking time in step 4 to eight minutes. For a vegetarian version of this recipe, use water instead of chicken broth, omit the salt pork, add 1 tablespoon of tomato paste with the vegetables in step 4, and increase the amount of salt in step 5 to 1½ teaspoons.

INGREDIENTS

Table salt

- 1** cup dried black beans , rinsed and picked over
- 2** cups low-sodium chicken broth (see note)
- 2** cups water
- 2** large green bell peppers , halved and seeded
- 1** large onion , halved at equator and peeled, root end left intact
- 1** head garlic , 5 medium cloves removed and minced or pressed through garlic press (about 5 teaspoons), remaining head halved at equator with skin left intact
- 2** bay leaves
- 1 1/2** cups long grain white rice
- 2** tablespoons olive oil
- 6** ounces salt pork , cut into 1/4-inch dice (see note)
- 1** tablespoon minced fresh oregano leaves
- 4** teaspoons ground cumin
- 2** tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2** medium scallions , sliced thin

- 1 lime , cut into 8 wedges

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Dissolve 1½ tablespoons salt in 2 quarts cold water in large bowl or container. Add beans and soak at room temperature for at least 8 hours and up to 24 hours. Drain and rinse well.
2. In large Dutch oven with tight-fitting lid, stir together drained beans, broth, water, 1 pepper half, 1 onion half (with root end), halved garlic head, bay leaves, and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to simmer over medium-high heat, cover, and reduce heat to low. Cook until beans are just soft, 30 to 40 minutes. Using tongs, remove and discard pepper, onion, garlic, and bay leaves. Drain beans in colander set over large bowl, reserving 2½ cups bean cooking liquid. (If you don't have enough bean cooking liquid, add water to equal 2½ cups.) Do not wash out Dutch oven.
3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Place rice in large fine-mesh strainer and rinse under cold running water until water runs clear, about 1½ minutes. Shake strainer vigorously to remove all excess water; set rice aside. Cut remaining peppers and onion into 2-inch pieces and process in food processor until broken into rough ¼-inch pieces, about eight 1-second pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary; set vegetables aside.
4. In now-empty Dutch oven, heat 1 tablespoon oil and salt pork over medium-low heat; cook, stirring frequently, until lightly browned and rendered, 15 to 20 minutes. Add remaining tablespoon oil, chopped peppers and onion, oregano, and cumin. Increase heat to medium and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened and beginning to brown, 10 to 15 minutes longer. Add minced garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add rice and stir to coat, about 30 seconds.
5. Stir in beans, reserved bean cooking liquid, vinegar, and ½ teaspoon salt. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to simmer. Cover and transfer to oven. Bake until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender, about 30 minutes. Fluff with fork and let rest, uncovered, 5 minutes. Serve, passing scallion and lime wedges separately.

TECHNIQUE

WHAT IS SOFRITO?

A sofrito serves as the fundamental flavor base for many Cuban dishes, including this one. The combination of onion, green pepper, and garlic (and often cumin and oregano) is a close relative of the French *mirepoix*, which features onion, carrot, and celery.



TECHNIQUE

DEEPLY FLAVORED BLACK BEANS AND RICE

1. ENRICH BEANS Simmering the beans in water and chicken broth bolstered with salt, garlic, bell pepper, onion, and garlic adds extra flavor.



2. RINSE RICE Washing excess starch off the rice with plenty of cool running water helps the grains cook up fluffy, not sticky.



3. DEEPEN SOFRITO FLAVOR Lightly browning the sofrito vegetables and spices with the rendered salt pork adds complex, meaty flavor.



4. ADD BEAN COOKING LIQUID Cooking the rice and beans in the reserved bean cooking liquid plus red wine



vinegar imbues the dish with flavor.



5. BAKE IN OVEN Baking the beans and rice eliminates the crusty bottom that can form when the dish is cooked on the stove.



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