



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

We often feature legumes in January for two reasons: 1) bean recipes are popular, and 2) legumes bring good luck in the New Year. Yet we have never featured the grand champion of beans-for-good-luck lore: black-eyed peas. Black-eyed peas are in the group of beans called cowpeas, often referred to as crowder peas because of the way the beans crowd together in the pod.

A savory rice pilaf is central to the lucky legend. Hoppin' John, a traditional West African dish, was made often in the southern United States because it was economical to make, a one-pot meal, and a real crowd pleaser. A Charleston version of the recipe first appeared in print in 1847 with just 3 ingredients: "One pound of bacon, one pint of red peas, one pint of rice." The red peas listed here are red cowpeas that have a black-eye in the center. Red cowpeas are firm and have a deep, meaty flavor.

While the creamy white legume we know in the north as black-eyed peas is not the traditional bean for this dish, it's what was available in 1907 when Hoppin' John moved north. Black-eyed peas have a sweet, mild flavor that is rather earthy. Unlike red cowpeas and other dried beans, preparation of black-eyed peas is similar to lentils. Black-eyed peas don't have to be soaked and cooking times are relatively short: 40 to 60 minutes at a simmer or 10 minutes in the pressure cooker. Beware: there is a fine line between undercooking leaving an unpleasant crunch in the middle and overcooking turning them to mush. When in season, black-eyed peas are available fresh as shell beans requiring an even shorter cooking time. You can also find them frozen, canned, and dried.

Besides mixing with grains for pilaf, black-eyed peas are excellent in salads and soups. If you're looking for some luck in the New Year, tonight's gonna be a good, good night for makin' Chef's version of Hoppin' John with Black-Eyed Peas. Live it up!

RECIPE for health

JANUARY 2017

featured food:

BLACK-EYED PEAS

Hoppin' John

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Serves 5-7

- 2 T. olive oil (divided)
- 2 T. butter (divided)
- 2 c. long-grain rice
- 5 c. chicken broth (divided)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 t. kosher salt
- 2 bacon strips, 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 1/2 c. small diced onion
- 1 c. small diced celery
- 1 c. small diced carrot
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seed and dice
- 3 cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed well (divided)
- 1 t. apple cider vinegar
- 1 T. chives, finely chopped
- 1 T. fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat your oven to 350°F.

For the rice: In an oven-proof sauce pan or Dutch oven over medium heat, warm 1 T. olive oil and 1 T. butter. Add rice; stir while cooking for 3-5 minutes or until you smell a light nutty aroma. Add 2½ c. of chicken broth, bay leaf, and kosher salt and lightly stir; bring to a boil and then cover the pot and put in preheated oven to finish cooking for 15-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and keep warm.

For the beans: In a sauté pan over medium heat, warm 1 T. olive oil; add bacon and cook until rendered. Remove bacon from pan and set aside (for gravy). To the rendered bacon fat in the pan add onions, celery, and carrots and sauté for 5 minutes. Add garlic and jalapeno pepper; sauté for one minute. Deglaze pan with ½ c. of chicken broth. Add 2 cans of black eyed peas. Warm over low heat.

For the gravy: In a blender or food processor, add one can of black-eyed peas, 2 c. of chicken broth, and 1 T. of butter; blend until smooth. Add cider vinegar. Transfer to a sauce pan; simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Stir in chives, fresh thyme, and reserved bacon. Taste; add salt and pepper as needed.

To serve, add rice pilaf with a scoop of beans in a bowl. Offer gravy on the side.

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