

Red Beans & Rice

by Charlotte Hancock

Red Beans and Rice is a favorite food staple on the family table if you live in Louisiana, yet when we first moved to New Orleans from Mississippi, my mom didn't even know how to cook them. Once she and my brother first filled their forks with the little red beans mixed with white fluffy rice and spicy sausage, they found a new food heaven. My mom quickly made this a regular in her meal plans.

I hated red beans! I realize this might be an offensive statement if you live in New Orleans, but I did not like them, did not want my mom to cook them, and I fought not to eat them. My case against red beans was supported by my dad who also did not like the little red devils. Every time my mom made them, we both complained rigorously against them.

Our battle against red beans came to a boiling point one night when my dad arrived home from a hard day at work. When he walked into our small kitchen and saw what was on the stove for dinner, he looked at my mom and said.

“I go to work in this heat every day and when I come home I expect a good meal. The next time I come home and find red beans for supper I will throw you, the pot, and the beans out the door!”



Photo by J.D. Moss

As I listened to my dad's declaration, I decided to add my voice of defiance and said that I would open the door for him and throw the lid out too! This did not stop my mom from cooking red beans, and my dad never threw her or the pot out the door, but she did not cook them as often.

I smile as I look back at that night because somewhere in my late thirties, I tried Red Beans again and decided they weren't that bad. Now I cook them occasionally and every time I always remember my dad's last stand against red beans and rice!

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What makes it great!

1 lb. Dried Red Beans.
10 cups of water.
1 teaspoon olive oil.
1 Lg Diced onion.
2 stalks celery diced.
1 bell pepper.
2 Garlic cloves. (Whole)
1-teaspoon black pepper.
1/4 -teaspoon cayenne.
1 Tablespoon Kosher salt.
2 Bay leaves.
2 cups of Ham chopped into cubes.
1lb polish or green-onion sausage.

Cooking tip!

Never add acidic foods to beans at the beginning of the cooking process because it will keep the beans from softening correctly.

A little history!

This meal was traditionally served on Mondays and cooked with the leftover meats from Sunday dinner. Monday was also washday when clothes were washed by hand, and a pot of beans could sit on the stove and simmer without much attention.

Rinse the beans 3 or 4 times and place them in a pot with the water. Bring the pot to a boil and cook for 10 minutes.

Place the olive oil and chopped seasonings (onions, bell pepper, celery, and garlic,) in a skillet and sauté for 10 minutes and add them to the pot of beans.

Add the salt, pepper, bay leaves, and cayenne to the beans.

Take the ham and sauté in olive oil until brown and add it to the beans.

Take the sausage and cut into 2-inch strips, slice those in half and brown on both sides. Once the sausage is cooked add them to the beans.

Cover the pot and turn the heat to medium-low and simmer for 2 to 3 hours. Keep an eye on the beans to make sure they do not stick.

Serve with hot rice.