



A LOVE LETTER TO BEANS

a collaborative zine created for the 11th Organic Seed Growers Conference
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CONTRIBUTORS

Hayley E. Park (she/her)

Hayley Park is the founder and farmer at the Underground Seed Company, as well as a graduate student in the Vegetable Breeding Lab at Oregon State University. Her love of fresh air and sunshine led her to farming, where she became enamored with the process of growing seedlings into food and then back into seed again. Hayley aspires to bring humor and practicality to the broader organic seed and vegetable industries, while never losing touch with the humble joy of having dirt melded into her hands. Her favorite bean (this year) is Seneca Cornstalk.

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Kristen Loria (she/her)

Kristen is a bean farmer and organic cropping systems researcher in Ithaca, NY. Growing dry beans started out as a side hustle to vegetable farming, slowly snowballing into a Master's thesis in plant breeding, full-blown obsession, and now Buttermilk Bean, a winter bean club that celebrates the bean diversity of the Finger Lakes region of New York state. With this fledgling project, Kristen hopes to grow a community of small bean farmers by sharing practical, appropriately-scaled equipment. Her favorite bean (this year) is Marrowfat.

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David (Peanut) Oberstein (he / him)

David is a first generation farmer who has split time as a grower and an educator and evangelist for all things CSA, having written a masters thesis about them (and also had four separate shares in 2020). Dedicating his life to the local food system either through farming and farmers market, His passion to build connection with community and provide deep nourishment to those around him was a main motivation to start La Merenda Farm, currently a dry bean CSA. Started with his partner Katie, the farm is motivated by sharing the conviviality that comes from simple, beautiful beans with friends and family. His favorite bean (this year) is Flageolet Vert.

Instagram: @lamerendafarm



Katie Gourley (she/ her)

Katie is a sometimes farmer, sometimes whole grain baker, sometimes writer, sometimes zine maker, always seed and bean nerd of Sicilian and Irish ancestry living on unceded Cowlitz & Clackamas land. Over the years, she has worn many different hats in the food system, including as a researcher, farmer, farmers market manager, cheesemonger, recipe developer, and culinary educator. As one half of La Merenda Farm, Katie runs a dry bean CSA with her partner, David as they work to weave webs of connection via the humble, quietly revolutionary dry bean. Her favorite bean (this year) is Marfax

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AN ODE TO THE HUMBLE BEAN

Motivated by the dwindling diversity on grocery shelves, the threats to global biodiversity small scale bean farmers face, and a love for watching water, soil, and seed spring forth into life, we are a cohort of bean enthusiasts (beanthusiasts)! We are selecting, growing, and sharing beans that help restore and maintain their immense biodiversity as a staple food source. We are not unique in thinking that beans are mystical and magical. We are not unique in being captivated by their diversity. We do, however, believe that we need more community farmers dedicated to growing staple foods. So, here is to your pantries and bellies being filled with beautifully diverse heirloom beans. Join us in making the dry bean sacred again. Cheers!

Why beans? You ask...

Beans are (as are all seeds) entities containing universes: full of stories about place, past, future, culture, humanity. "They are immensely generous, multiplying exponentially from a handful of seeds," seed keeper, activist and farmer from the Mohawk community of Akwesasne, Rowen White, writes. Beans are one of the oldest cultivated food crops and have sustained humans through poverty, famine, and war around the world. They are full of nutrients, they fix nitrogen in the soil, and they are remarkably resilient. They can be baked, souped, roasted, fermented, mashed, schmered, gifted, danced on, placed on altars. Beans are something found in all cultures. They are a rare foodstuff that unites cultures while simultaneously celebrating differences across culinary traditions and ritual. As food historian Ken Albala writes in *Beans: a history*: "Beans are perhaps the one food common and indispensable to all." Beans are food for the people by the people of the people.

Worldwide, beans have often been associated with poverty and therefore subject to class-based discrimination. These associations fail to emphasize the beauty and robustness that beans have brought to the table, feeding and bringing joy even in times of adversity or lack. Our love of bean farming is related to a respect for the concept and culinary philosophy behind *cuisina povera*. *Cucina povera* is an Italian term but a global way of life, meaning literally "poor cuisine" or "peasant cuisine." Many of the recipes we rely on and love today owe their origins to acts of necessity. Developed by peasants who made use of the ingredients and flavors available whenever they were available. It is a cuisine born out of the earth and of making beauty with the simple ingredients around us. It is about making holistic sustenance out of what you have and the humble foods that keep generations alive and resilient. We cannot think of a better representative for this philosophy than the dry bean.



"Beans are a poor man's jewels."

Robert Lobitz, Minnesota Seedsperson;
1941–2006

A LIFE IN BEANS

a series of some small snippets of our lives as bean farmers...

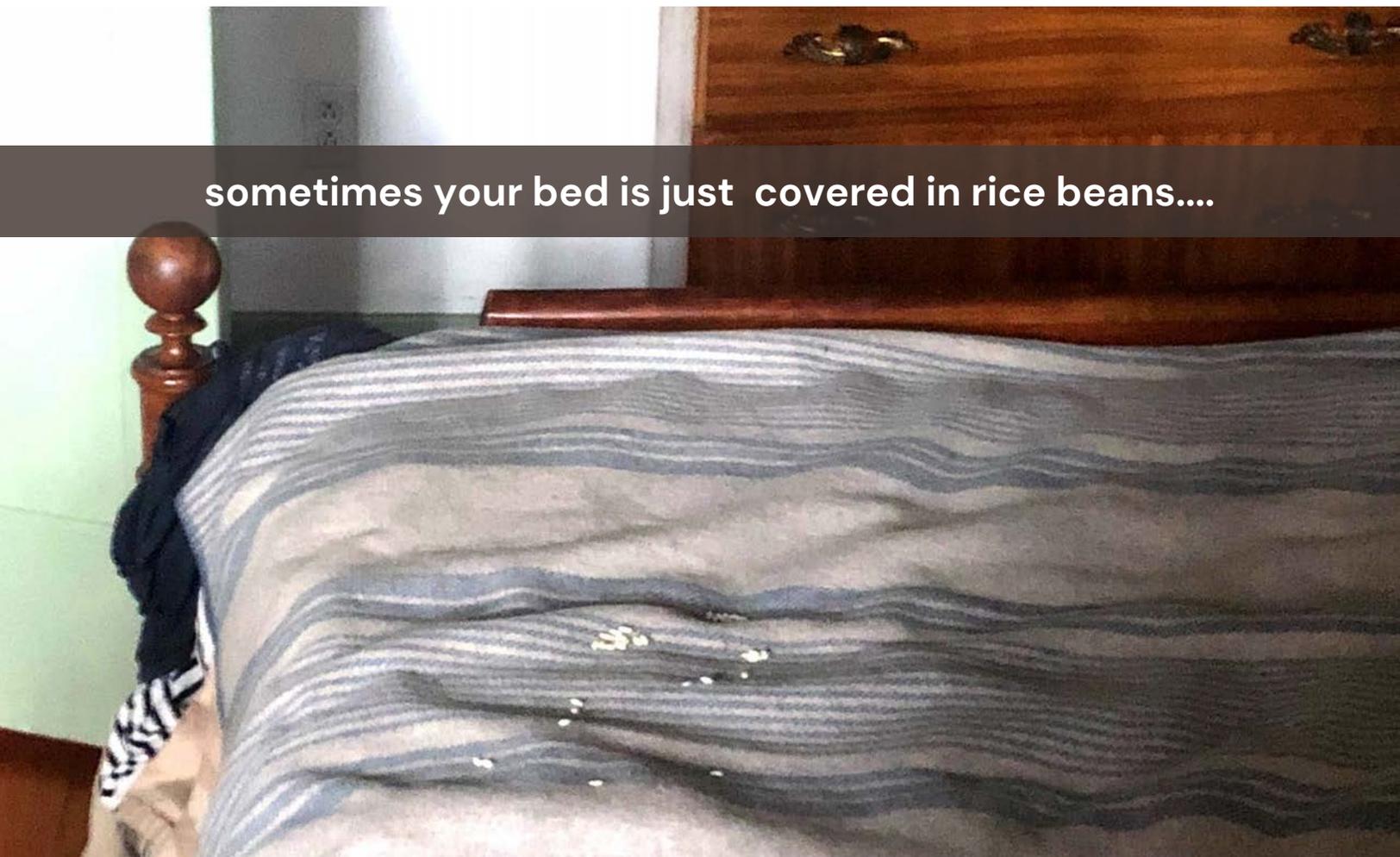
"I don't think there was a time between August–November where we didn't hear a pitter–patter tumble of beans spilling out of our pockets onto the floor where we took off our pants at the end of the day. I can't imagine how many beans are tucked in the unreachable depths behind the dresser."

– Katie & David

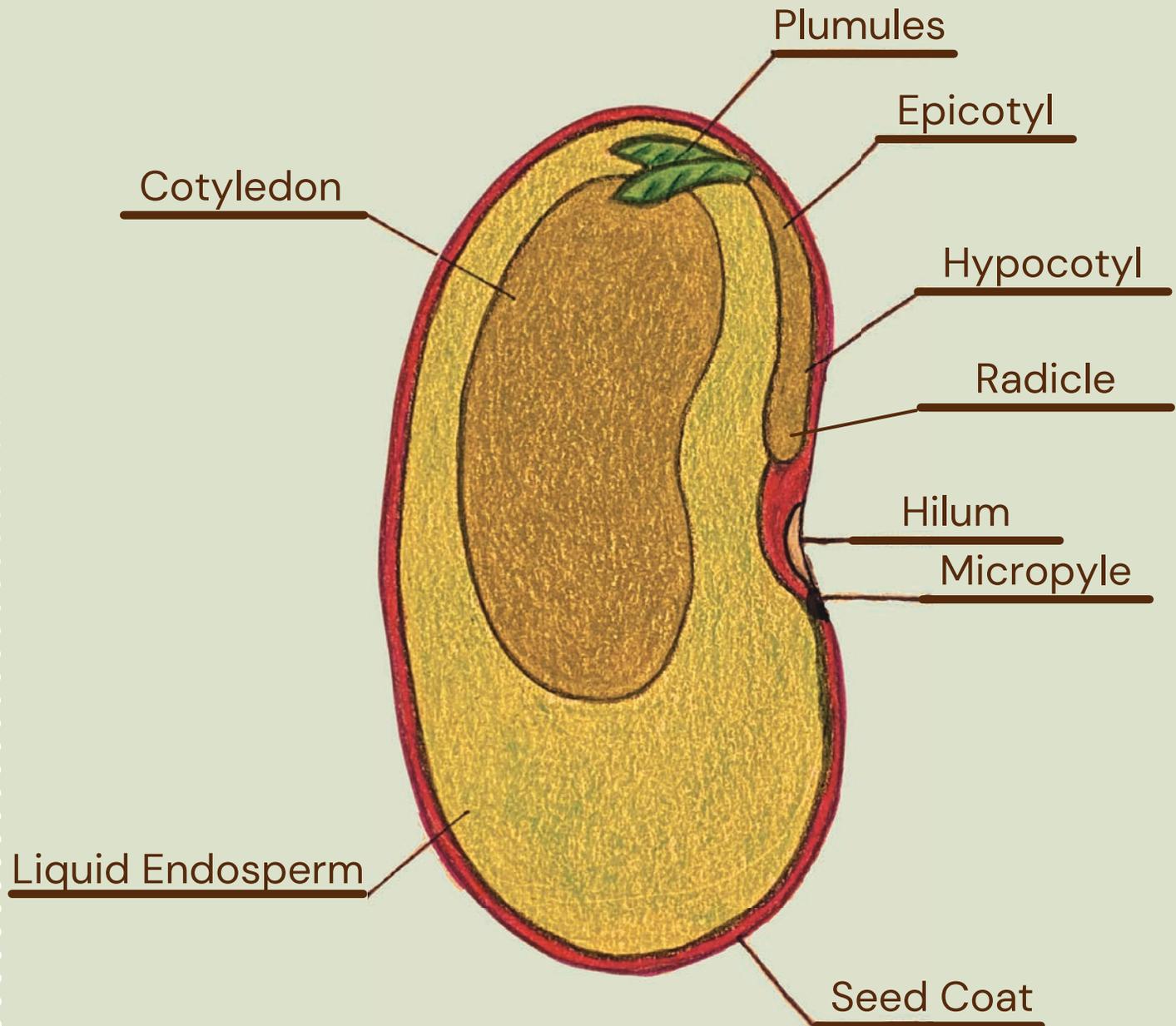


are coat pocket beans the original fidget spinner?

sometimes your bed is just covered in rice beans....



BEAN ANATOMY



BEAN ANATOMY

Cotyledon:

Starch and protein storage organs of the bean seed. These nutrients feed the seedling, and will drop off of the plant after the first true leaves emerge and begin providing nutrients via photosynthesis.

Plumules:

The bud of an ungerminated seed. These will develop into the first true leaves upon germination.

Epicotyl:

The upper portion of the seedling stem, located between the cotyledons and the first true leaves. This region is responsible for extending the stem above the soil surface.

Hypocotyl:

The lower portion of the seedling stem, located between the cotyledons and the radicle tissue. It is the first part of the stem to emerge, responsible for bringing the growing tip aboveground.

Radicle:

The embryonic root tissue of a plant. It is the first tissue to emerge from a germinating seed, and it extends downward into the soil to begin the formation of the root system.



BEAN ANATOMY

Hilum (aka the bean belly button):

The scar left on a bean seed from its attachment point to the pod wall. Also referred to as the eye of the bean seed.

Micropyle:

Minuscule opening in the seed coat to allow for water uptake. This is also the eventual emergence spot of the radicle as the seed germinates.

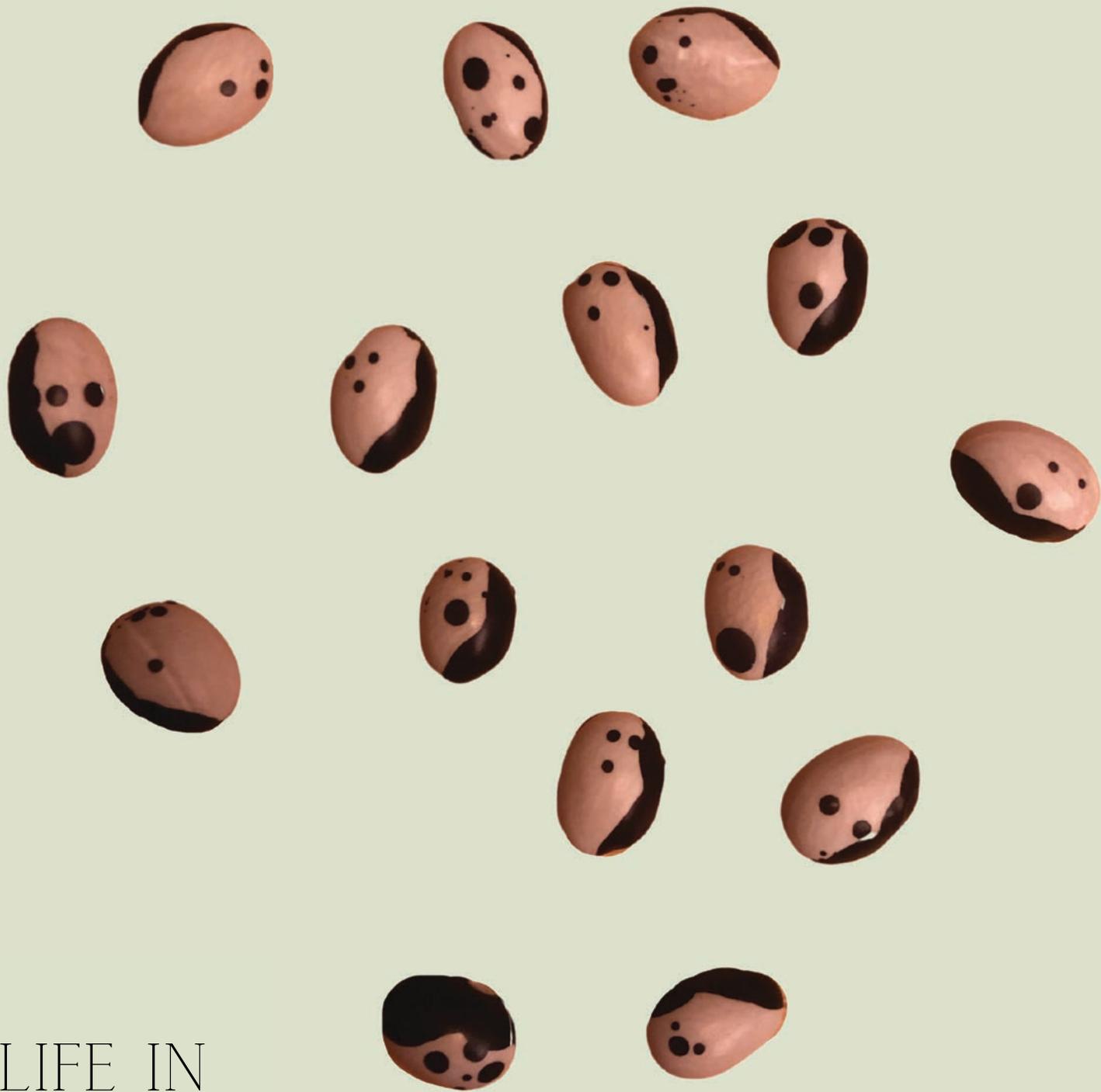
Seed Coat:

Protective covering of the embryo and cotyledons. Is made up of several layers of tissue, although white beans have fewer layers than colorful seeds do. Also referred to as the testa.

Liquid Endosperm:

A thin layer of barrier tissue holds a liquid-filled sac around the developing embryo and cotyledons through much of the seed development process. This liquid contains various nutrients and organic acids that are gradually taken up by the cotyledons for use after germination. By the time a seed is fully mature and ready to be consumed or planted, the liquid endosperm will be entirely absorbed by the cotyledons.





A LIFE IN BEANS

"During the many, many, many hours of pleasantly, tediously sorting beans to prepare for distribution (removing dirt, sorting out splits, watching X-Files or Great British Bake Off), we found constant entertainment in the many faces we discovered on the beans. The smiles of the Tigers Eye and shocked expressions of each Orca bean reflected back the overwhelmingly joyous emotions of being able to touch nearly every bean we grew."

- Katie & David

VARIETIES WE LOVE



WHIPPLE

This is the ultimate Pacific Northwest bean, a rare heirloom from the Willamette Valley! This bean is named after the Whipple family who worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and ran a family co-op outside of Chicago before moving to Douglas Co. Oregon. Mr Whipple was a minister and traveled the country to schools to talk about racial equity. The whipple dry bean made its way to the PNW agricultural community via seed swaps. Whipple is a vigorous plant which produces plump deep purple and white speckled beans. We often talk about these beans in reference to their out-of-this-world cosmic patterning that reminds us of outer space and David Bowie. They have a rich flavor and are an excellent chili-type bean if you're into that kind of thing.

The delicate burgundy speckles on the cream background of these cutshort-type beans are the first thing to catch your attention. The coloration is reminiscent of another small dary bean, Flor de Mayo, or the effect one gets when splattering paint with a toothbrush. Although these beans appear to be favored in the American south and southwest, they still produce remarkably high yields at the 45th parallel north. They're a great soup bean, and a great baked bean, and they hold their speckles after many hours of cooking.



SENECA CORNSTALK

VARIETIES WE LOVE



HUNGARIAN RICE BEAN

This variety was by far the most absurd labor of love we (La Merenda) grew in 2021. It is also the cutest bean we grew, with seeds the size of a large grain of rice. Someday we will tell you the story about how we spent more than 12 hours straight sitting on the living room floor, hand pulling each individual pod off the plant because these tiny pods dry down too tightly around the seed to be liberated by a mechanical sheller. Some day we will tell you about how we filled the house with storms of bean chaff dust. Or how many pairs of socks we ruined that night. Until then, enjoy these beans extra slowly knowing that each seed was tenderly removed one-by-one by our hands (not the recommended processing method at scale, for the record) The rice bean is an heirloom plant dating back in records to the 1870s when it was listed by French heritage seed grower Vilmovin Andrieux in "The Vegetable Garden" It is rich and nutty in flavor with a toothsome and firm texture. They are perfect for any bean salad recipe and cook up much quicker than the average beanie baby, just about 20-30 minutes without soaking. This bean is on the Slow Food Arc of Taste for the Val de Loire region of France.

My friend Dayna pointed out that this has to be David Bowie's spirit bean. Bred by Robert Lobitz, a bean breeder from Minnesota who released 96 varieties of beautiful, unique and productive beans, many of them dual purpose - for snap and dry use. One of the few modern breeders working with heirloom and landrace genetics. He named most of his releases after favorite places in Minnesota. In my garden, Purple Stardust is a big, upright plant with later maturity and much higher productivity than the large-seeded Northeastern heirlooms.



PURPLE STARDUST

VARIETIES WE LOVE



This is a bean that has long flourished in New York state. In the mid-1800s Marrowfats gained renown for their creamy, bacon-like flavor. A farmer friend of Nunda NY, Rodney Graham, still remembers when marrowfats were common in this area. For its rich history Marrowfat is a Slow Food Ark of Taste variety, and it was once known as “White Cornfield”, suggesting that it was originally an indigenous variety. At least several named strains exist; the two I know of are ‘Perry Marrow’ and ‘Munhall Marrow’. It’s a firm, smooth-textured white bean. I used this bean for our annual bean hole celebration in 2021 and it was a real showstopper.

Favorite ways to prepare: baked beans, soup or pasta dish

MARROWFAT

The skunk bean might be one of the most striking dry beans out there. The large, flat beans look much like limas, with white stripes and speckles adorning the black seed coat. These beans have a very long history of selection and stewardship by the Haudenosaunee and Abenaki nations of northeastern North America. They are very well adapted to northern climates, growing very tall and produce an abundance of flavorful, creamy beans.



HAUDENOSAUNEE SKUNK

CENTERS OF ORIGIN: COMMON BEAN

What is a center of origin?

The idea of "centers of origin" for domesticated crops was developed in 1924 by the Russian botanist Nikolai Vavilov. Centers are geographical areas where a plant species or a group of plants first developed.

How many centers of origin are there?

There are 8 widely recognized centers of origin, although up to 13 have been proposed. The major 8 are:

- South Mexican & Central American
- South American
- Mediterranean
- Middle East
- Ethiopian (Abyssinian)
- Central Asiatic
- Indian
- Chinese



Why does it matter?

Centers of origin are the hearts of biodiversity! It is in these regions that plant breeders and botanists can study evolution and find vital wild diversity for use in crop improvement work.

Most dry beans are common beans, *Phaseolus vulgaris*, and actually have two centers of origin where they were independently domesticated by early agriculturalists.

CENTERS OF ORIGIN: MESOAMERICAN



Common bean is just that: common, throughout the Mexican and Central American highlands. Generally the wild members of the species grow above the wet, tropical lowlands but below high altitude regions of 3000m or higher.

~8000 years BP (before present) common bean was domesticated by humans, possibly in the proximity of the region now known as Oaxaca valley (although archaeobotany promises little certainty).

CENTERS OF ORIGIN: ANDEAN



Perhaps you have already noticed the lower diversity of the common bean taxon in the Andean region, shown in yellow on the richness map. This is likely due to a phenomenon known as 'genetic bottlenecking' that occurred when the wild species moved south from Mesoamerica into South America.

Despite the bottleneck, a similar domestication event occurred at roughly simultaneously in the Andes as it did in to the north, ~8000 years BP (before present). Common bean appears to have undergone a domestication event, possibly around southern Bolivia and northern Argentina.

CENTERS OF ORIGIN: OTHER PULSE CROPS



Chickpea/Garbanzo

Cicer arietinum

Domestication date:

~9500 years BP

Center of origin:

Middle East (Turkey)



Tepary Bean

Phaseolus acutifolius

Domestication date:

~2500+ years BP

Center of origin:

Mexico (Sonoran Desert)



Runner Bean

Phaseolus coccineus

Domestication date:

~4000+ years BP

Center of origin:

Mesoamerican



Lima Bean

Phaseolus lunatus

Domestication dates &

Centers of origin:

~4000 years BP (Andean)

&

~1600 years BP (Mesoamerican)

A NOTE ON SNAP BEANS

All this talk about dry beans, we ought to mention a little of the history of the vegetable beans!

Snap beans, including green and wax varieties, have a somewhat murky history. There is no genetic evidence of beans selected just for fresh eating prior to the Columbian exchange, but ethnobotanical linguistics work identified the consumption of fresh pods by both Aztec & Quechua people, who call them *exotl* and *chaucha*, respectively.

As beans began to spread around the world, two secondary centers of diversity sprung up in Europe and China, where selection for vegetable pods was widespread. The snap beans we eat today can mostly be traced to these secondary regions.



A LIFE IN BEANS

"My cat, who is conveniently named Garbanzo, was born a bean lover. Whenever I am cooking up a pot of dry beans, I drop one on the floor for him to play with. It never fails to entertain. If you have a chance to give a cat a bean, I cannot recommend it enough."

- Hayley

Remembering evening walks with the pups to check on the bean patch, summertime golden hour.

The first glimpse of a tiny pod peeking through the leaves, still bound to its dried flower.

Finding a surprisingly plump pod, opening it up too early in the hopes of emergent color and pattern.



"What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work."

Henry David Thoreau, essayist & naturalist
1817-1862

A LIFE IN BEANS

"While walking around our shop, Matt thought he stepped on a snail. We were both kind of sad for a second before we discovered it was only a cooked bean."

- Barb & Matt







Genes Affecting Seedcoat Pattern

P = "ground factor" gene for seedcoat color

P = non-white seed

T = Is seed "partly colored"? (white markings over colored background)

p = white-seeded

T = no*
*seed can also be both striped/mottled and partly colored!

C = Is seed striped or mottled?

c = solid

c^s = striped

c^m = mottled



Heterozygotes: **c/c^s**, **c/c^m**, **c^m/c^s** show "eversegregating mottling", (Commonly seen in F1 generation)

white flowers

t

non-white flowers

T^{cf}

results in similar patterns to **t**, but with more variability in size of white area

size and shape of pattern controlled by:

Z x **Bip**

(zonal) (bipunctata)

tzbip**** = *bipunctata*



'mulldoon'

tzBip**** = *vigarcus*



'soldier'

tz^{sel}Bip**** = *sellatus*



'calypso'

tZbip**^{ana}** = *anasazi*



'anasazi'

tzbip**^{ana}** = *anabip*



'european soldier'

NOTE

Some gene interactions affecting seedcoat pattern have been simplified here for easy reading. Other genes that affect seedcoat pattern:

L, J

Info largely from: *Bassett and McClean, A Brief Review of the Genetics of Partly Colored Seed Coats in Common Bean, 2000*

GENETICS GLOSSARY

Allele: possible variations on a gene at a given locus.

Usually denoted with capital and lowercase letters, i.e. alleles A or a for the A gene. However, some genes have an "allelic series" in which there are more than two alleles for the gene. In these cases, superscript letters are often used instead, i.e. C , C^s and C^m for the C gene.

F1: Short for filial 1 generation, or the first generation after an initial cross between two parents. This is also known as the hybrid generation.

Genotype: Describes what allele or alleles an individual possesses at a given gene (locus).

Heterozygous: The condition of having two different alleles for a gene at a given locus. For example, in a diploid species (such as common bean, or humans!) a heterozygote would have the genotype Aa , for a given gene A .

Locus: fancy term for a location in the genome, usually referring to a single gene's location.



RUNNING A BEAN CSA

the story of La Merenda Farm

The operation of a dry bean CSA for La Merenda farm was an authentic way for us to connect with our friends/family/community over the sharing of the humble beans that inspired us through their stories, their art, and their potential in the kitchen. Since both of us have worked on farms that distribute produce through CSA, we already knew many of the basics of how-to. Many resources exist out there for deciding if CSA is the right model for your distribution, the basics of logistics (home delivery, pick-up sites, at market distribution, etc.), pricing, and marketing can all be found online through sources such as the CSA Innovation Network (www.csainnovationnetwork.org), PNWCSA (www.pnwcsa.org), or FairShare CSA coalition (www.csacoalition.org). What we knew was that we wanted to make sure that we had intentional interaction with our community rather than being nameless, faceless farmers, so our decision making process was always grounded in ways in which we could show up with our full selves while providing food for our community.

With that in mind, we started our marketing directly within our community through word of mouth. We are grateful for our wide web of connections within our friend group of passionate home cooks who appreciate food with a story. As first year dry bean growers, we made cautious estimates of our harvest (on the low end of predicted yields) and decided to sell only as many shares as we thought we could safely accommodate while still meeting expectations of our shareholders. For us, that meant 20 members. For pricing, it was important to build economic justice into our model, so we implemented sliding scale pricing as a form of economic solidarity. This “pay as you can” model allows those who have the economic means to pay more, which in turn allows those who need to pay less the ability to do so. It is a sort of community subsidy model where one group helps to offset the cost for the other group so that a more diverse range of people across the economic spectrum have access to our beans. You can read further about CSA sliding scale pricing on Zenger Farms website (www.zengerfarm.org/sliding-scale-csa-discount). Our shares were priced between \$100-\$125. Economic solidarity was critical to weave throughout our business model from the start. La Merenda beans were planted on stolen ancestral lands of the Kalapuya and Yamhill tribes in the Willamette Valley. We humbly offer our respect and gratitude to the past, present, and future indigenous stewards and caretakers of these lands. As white farmers on lands stolen from Indigenous and Black stewards, we firmly believe in economic redistribution and solidarity economy practices. 10% of each bean share price (not profits) was donated as a land tax to the Black Oregon Land Trust and NAYA. As this was our first season, we pledge to continue pushing ourselves to build reparations materially and immaterially into our farming business.

RUNNING A BEAN CSA

the story of La Merenda Farm

We settled on a monthly distribution of beans because we realize that while storability for dried beans is indefinite, regular community interaction would be important for maintaining connection with our shareholders. Based on the price of our share, we are distributing 5 shares between November and March, with three bean varieties per share, in quantities between three quarters to one pound of each variety. This will ultimately mean that shareholders will receive between 13-15 pounds of beans, which works out to between \$7-8.50 per pound of beans. Our share will also include a bean zine that includes history, recipes, and artwork from ourselves and our shareholders.

As for distribution, we decided to try two separate approaches to see which felt closest to our mission and hearts. We worked an at-home, pandemic friendly porch style pick-up that felt like a cozy place for friends to come and receive their bounty. We provided coffee and home-made pastries because baking is a bond that we share with each other and all those around us and thought it would add a nice touch to help shareholders feel welcomed to spend a little more time with us while picking up their beans. We invited our members to bring their own vessels to receive beans to minimize single use bags (although we had those on hand for anyone who opted out of bringing their own), and provided stickers with the bean names so that people could remember what they were receiving (and to look heca-cute on the member's pantry shelves). We used an antique Czechoslovakian jeweler's scale for weighing out beans to add a quainter and more intimate touch, but truly anything that measures weight or quantity would do...heck, you could unleash your inner bean-counter and tally them one by one if that would satisfy your inner accountant. We offered a three hour window for pick-up to help accommodate our members busy schedules, and acknowledged that there would most likely be some who would forget and we could coordinate their bean distribution privately. Our other system for distribution was doing at home delivery, which was a little less intimate, but also held space for a "Beans about town" playlist, quality time between partners, the opportunity to see people where they will slowly cook their beanie-bounty, and occasionally be invited in for a quick sip of coffee over shared pastry! Both systems have their pros and cons in terms of time and energy involved, so let your heart be your guide for what makes the most sense to you and your farm.

RUNNING A BEAN CSA



RUNNING A BEAN CSA

the story of Buttermilk Bean (Danby, NY)

Buttermilk Bean came about after some years working in CSA farming, regional staple crop systems and a deep dive into dry beans as part of my M.S. in Plant Breeding and Genetics. The winter “bean club” or CSA model was an easy choice, as that is the time of year I have more time as a part-time farmer, and there is a well-established Veggie CSA (winter and summer) here in the Ithaca area that offers “side dish” add-ons from other producers, so I was able to reach a large local audience with an established distribution system via that channel.

As the Finger Lakes region is a historical “breadbasket” for dry beans (though production has declined over the years), it felt important to approach the project as a celebration of that tradition and include beans from other farms rather than just sourcing from my farm. Technically my farm is Lo Rida Farm and the bean club is Buttermilk Bean, allowing for more collaborative management in the future. I also value the diversity of scale between bean farmers in my area – I think sometimes conversations around small farms and heirlooms vilify mechanized approaches to farming or conventionally bred, modern varieties, and I wanted to lift up the organic growers already stewarding larger swaths of land here in the region, who are growing types like black turtle, small red, navy, pinto, cranberry and kidney beans. Those beans are often well-adapted to our area and tasty when eaten fresh, even though they may not have as sexy a seedcoat or story!

The share was comprised of 1/3 heirloom or other specialty varieties that members likely couldn't find anywhere else, and 2/3 “staple” varieties from three other organic farmers in the area. This structure allowed me to offer a lot more shares even in my first year (50 local, 15 mail order mostly for friends and family) and also allowed the shares to be more affordable. Members will receive about 10 different varieties throughout the winter. I valued the heirloom beans at \$9/lb this year due to lower yields and lots of hand labor required, but with the inclusion of beans from larger farmers, the price per pound averaged to \$5/lb, which was a price that felt appropriate for a traditionally humble and low-cost food.

RUNNING A BEAN CSA

the story of Buttermilk Bean (Danby, NY)

Although Lo Rida was the only small-scale farm producing heirloom and specialty types for the bean club this year, a big part of the vision for Buttermilk Bean is thinking about making small-scale bean growing more efficient (and therefore more profitable for farmers and the beans more affordable for more people) via networks of shared, appropriate-scale equipment. The wishlist includes a portable stationary thresher, seed cleaner (like a Clipper) and possibly secondary cleaning equipment such as a Winnow Wizard or small gravity table, as well as one of those old-school foot-powered hand sorting belts. The thresher would be moveable from farm to farm to thresh pulled and dried plants in the field, and the cleaning would take place at a shared barn space. There will be one new grower coming on in 2022, and I hope that shared investment in equipment might help solve the riddle of making small-scale staple crop production more feasible for more farmers...including people without off farm jobs! It's very inspiring to share knowledge and excitement with passionate and scrappy bean growers across the country and feels like such a ripe moment to celebrate and elevate the beautiful bean!



borrowed antique
two row seeder



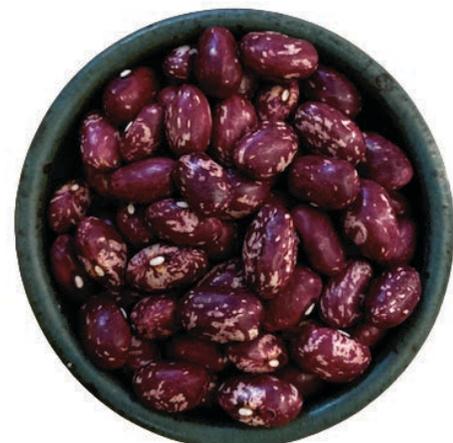
beans alley cropped with
new hazelnut planting



threshing by tractor
tire on old shade
cloth

"My thirsty wanted whiskey, but my hunger needed beans."
Waylon Jennings, singer & songwriter
1937 - 2002

RECIPES



FARMER DAVID + FARMER KATIE'S BASIC BEAN METHOD

To make a generous 3 cups of cooked beans, rinse and sort $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of dry beans to remove any small debris or funky bits your small scale farmers tried very hard to remove for you but may have missed. Soak them in water for 6-12 hours (sometimes we don't even do this!) Drain and place beans in a dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot with enough fresh water to cover the beans by about 1-2 inches. Add 1 or 2 bay leaves, a bit of seaweed (we use a generous pinch of the "soup blend" from Maine Seaweed which has digitata, kelp, alaria, and dulse, or a 5-inch strip of kelp) and a clove of garlic. Bring to a boil and let boil vigorously for ~5 minutes with the lid off, then cover with a lid and turn the heat down to an active simmer. Let cook until they are tender -cooking time will vary widely depending on the variety of beans and how long ago they were harvested so I am not going to tell you how long to cook them! Stir the pot from time to time so the top layer doesn't dry out and you can monitor tenderness. Add water as needed to make sure all the beans are always covered. About half way through cooking, salt the water heavily, it should not taste like the ocean but it should be adjacent to it. When the beans are done, use immediately or store in a jar/ container in their cooking liquid in the fridge. The cooking liquid is a perfect stock for soup! Depending on what dish we are making we will add other things to flavor the pot of beans, some of those might be: rosemary, garlic, onions, carrots, cardamom pods, cumin, dried chilis, sage, coriander seed, the world is your oyster but probably don't put oysters in there.



HOW TO COOK BEANS IN A HOLE

Bean hole beans are a New England tradition, which, according to the Maine Folklife Center, originated in indigenous communities of the Northeast that cooked beans with bear grease in clay pots buried in the ground with hot embers. This culinary practice was adapted by Maine logging camps post-colonization, with the use of salt pork and cast iron cookware. The slow cooking makes the beans more digestible, and incredibly creamy! The plentiful maple syrup and bacon doesn't hurt either.

The annual fall bean hole has become a celebration of another harvest tucked away safely in the barn – 7 seasons of bean bounty for me now. It's also an opportunity to get laughed at by your friends for inviting them to your "bean hole" ;). Whatever, haters! Beans just taste better cooked in a hole.

Supplies:

- Dutch oven or other heavy duty, fireproof pot of your choosing
- Firewood
- 5-8 softball sized rocks
- shovel



HOW TO COOK BEANS IN A HOLE

(Recipe adapted from Maine Grains/Ellie Markovitch)

- 1 pound dried beans: Jacob's Cattle, Marfax, Navy, or another good baking bean
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1/4 pound of salt pork or bacon, chopped or cut into strips
- 2 tbsp molasses
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tsp ground mustard
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper, or to taste

1. Soak beans 6-8 hours or overnight, then drain.

Wake early to dig your hole and start the fire:

2. Dig a round hole, wide enough to fit your pot in with plenty of room around it. Hole should be at least 6 inches or so deeper than your pot is tall. Recommended to dig one to several narrow air chutes around the circumference of the hole if needed, to make sure you have enough airflow at the bottom to get your fire going.

3. Build a fire at the bottom of the hole and continue feeding it for at least a few hours, or until you have 2-3 inches of hot coals. Tuck rocks around the fire as it burns to heat them.

Meanwhile, prep your beans:

4. Add drained beans to pot with molasses, maple syrup, ground mustard, salt, pepper, and chopped onion, mixing thoroughly.

5. Layer bacon or salt pork strips on top of the beans and fill with water, covering contents by one inch. Cover pot lid securely with foil to prevent dirt getting in during cooking.

6. Once you have a plentiful pile of hot embers and the fire has burned down, place your pot on bed of embers and tuck hot rocks on top of and surrounding the pot.

7. Bury pot, covering by a few inches of soil. Leave to cook for at least 5 hours, preferably closer to 8.

8. Return and carefully dig up your pot. Reveal and enjoy!



FAGIOLI AL FIASCO

We (at La Merenda Farm) have recently become obsessed with cooking beans slowly in the oven this way (which has also bred a new obsession with collecting vintage stoneware bean crocks, but this method works with any oven-proof dish). “Baked soup” is what we like to call it, because you can flavor the broth while the beans cook in the oven and when the little bubbling steamy pot emerges you have a pot of soup or stew ready to ladle into bowls with a thick slab of bread and a glug of oil. Simple, humble nourishment at its finest. As Lori Zimring de Mori writes in *Saveur* in 2007 about this traditional Tuscan method for cooking beans: “I’d always considered fagioli al fiasco a perfect example of the Italian genius for making frugality picturesque (and delicious)...the dried beans were dropped one by one through the narrow neck and just barely covered with water. A couple of unpeeled garlic cloves, a sprig of sage, some salt, a few peppercorns, and a generous dose of olive oil were added. Just before bedtime, the bottle was loosely sealed with a wad of flax or muslin and set on a bed of smoldering ashes, the embers spread around it like jewels. While the house slept, the beans cooked—to be eaten throughout the following day.”

1 pound dried beans, soaked

Enough water to cover all the contents in the pot by 1-2 inches

Healthy glug of olive oil, plus more to serve.

A few cloves of garlic, peeled and smashed

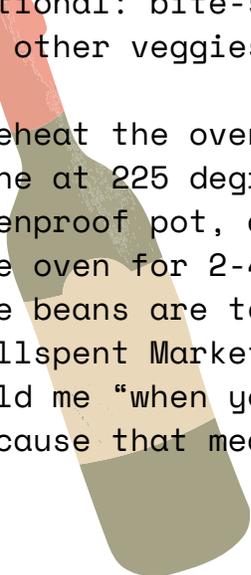
A few sprigs of hard herbs of your choice (rosemary, thyme, sage, etc)

A sprinkling of red pepper flakes

1ish tbsp of sea salt

Optional: bite-sized chunks of carrots, potato, onion, winter squash or other veggies to make your heart sing.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees (I have also seen recipes that are done at 225 degrees). Drain the beans and put them in a large ovenproof pot, add everything except the salt and place the pot in the oven for 2-4 hours until the liquid has mostly been absorbed and the beans are tender and creamy. One time Jim Dixon, owner of Wellspend Market in Portland and fellow fagioli al fiasco evangelist told me “when you can smell the beans, it’s time to add more water!” because that means the top layer is exposed and drying out.



KABOCHA SQUASH, CHICKPEA, AND LEMONGRASS STEW

I became a fan of kabocha squash the first time I simmered it with coconut milk and curry paste. I love how its relative dry texture meant it absorbed liquid, which infused every bite of the squash with flavor. Here, it combines with the ever-versatile chickpeas in a fragrant stew packed with Southeast Asian flavors. If you can't find kabocha, try to substitute another dry-fleshed winter squash, such as acorn, hubbard, or turban.

4 to 6 servings

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and chopped
2 tablespoons finely chopped lemongrass
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more to taste
2 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
1 3/4 pounds kabocha or other dry-fleshed winter squash (see headnote), peeled, seeded, and diced into 1/2-inch pieces
1 3/4 cups cooked or canned no-salt-added chickpeas (from one 15-ounce can), drained and rinsed
1 (13.5-ounce) can full-fat coconut milk
1 cup Vegetable Broth (page 216, Cool Beans) or store-bought no-salt-added vegetable broth, plus more as needed
2 teaspoons liquid aminos or coconut aminos (may substitute tamari), plus more to taste
4 cups lightly packed spinach leaves, chopped
1/2 cup chopped cilantro leaves, plus more for garnish
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice, plus more to taste
1/2 cup chopped roasted cashews

KABOCHA SQUASH, CHICKPEA, AND LEMONGRASS STEW

Pour the oil into a large saucepan over medium heat. When it shimmers, add the onion, garlic, chile, and lemongrass and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables become soft, 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in the red pepper flakes, salt, and ginger and cook another minute or two, until the ginger becomes very fragrant.

Stir in the squash, chickpeas, coconut milk, broth, and aminos. Increase the heat to high to bring the liquid to a boil, then reduce it to a simmer, cover, and cook until the squash is tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Uncover and cook until it reduces and thickens, about 5 minutes. Stir in the spinach a cup at a time and cook, stirring, another minute or two, until the spinach has wilted. If the stew seems too thick, add a little more broth to loosen it.

Stir in the cilantro and lime juice. Taste and add more salt, aminos, and/or lime juice if needed. Top with the cashews and serve hot, on its own, or over rice or another grain of your choice, if desired.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joe Yonan is the two-time James Beard Award-winning food and dining editor of The Washington Post. He is the author of *Eat Your Vegetables*, which was named among the best cookbooks of 2013 by The Atlantic, The Boston Globe, and NPR's *Here and Now*, and *Serve Yourself*, which *Serious Eats*, David Lebovitz, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* named to their best-of-the-year lists. He was editor of *America The Great Cookbook*, a project to benefit the charity *No Kid Hungry*. He writes the Post's "Weeknight Vegetarian" column and for five years wrote the "Cooking for One" column, both of which have won honors from the Association of Food Journalists.



EVERYBODY LOVES BEAN DIP: Rosemary White Bean Dip

You can make bean dip with really any type of bean, but white bean dip really appeals to the masses for its milder flavor and similarity to chickpea hummus. This is an extremely flexible non-recipe but the basic tenets are thoroughly cooked white beans (so they are nice and creamy), herbs, olive oil and salt.

Cook beans via a method of your choice, ideally with salt and herbs in the cook pot. make sure to cook beans until they are nice and creamy.

Cool beans most of the way, drain and add to a food processor with olive oil. Add about 5 T oil per 3 cups cooked beans, 1 T chopped rosemary or other herb, and 3 T lemon juice. Blend until smooth and adjust salt to taste.

Bonus garnish option for serving: heat additional 1 T oil and sizzle an additional herb sprig for a couple of minutes. Add sprig and herb oil as garnish to top of dip.



