

Tepary Cuisine

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American Indian Food and Lore

If the mass media are any indication of national trends, the United States is currently undergoing a revival of bean consciousness. From *Gourmet* magazine to *Woman's Day*, we are monthly treated to articles giving us recipes for pink beans, white beans, red beans and black beans; large limas, baby limas, pintos and garbanzos.

The typical consumer may be overwhelmed when presented with such diversity, but it takes a true bean aficionado to know what is left out of these commercially contrived lists. I am speaking of teparies: white-brown, beige, red-brown and speckled.

I first became aware of teparies about ten years ago while researching recipes for the cookbook *American Indian Food and Lore* (Niethammer, 1974). One reference quoted an elderly Papago as saying that in the past tepary beans had been a particularly good traveling food because human beings could be well-nourished by eating these beans just once a day, whereas they would require two servings of another kind of bean. Smugly, I attributed this to typical aboriginal food ethnocentricity. Then about the time my book was published, Doris Calloway et al (1974) jolted me out of my own ethnocentricity by showing that teparies are more nutritious than certain other beans.

Alas, no one could ever accuse today's Americans of choosing their diets on the basis of nutrition and the few who do are regarded with some suspicion (hence the perjorative term health food "nut"). The Calloway study caused barely a ripple in the world's dormant tepary awareness. Despite their superior protein and mineral scores, it seems the only chance for teparies to take their rightful place alongside other beans in the glossy and colorful magazine layouts is for them to be regarded as particularly delicious. Once "discovered" by Craig Claiborne, James Beard, Julia Child and other culinary superstars, the relative rarity of teparies will no doubt elevate them to gourmet status.

But before the realization of this fantasy, there is work to be done, particularly as regards the "delicious" aspect of the plan. It is unfortunate that some of us palefaces who have adopted teparies from the Bean People have done more harm than good in our attempts to introduce them to our own race. Blinded by our delight with their nutritional and horticultural aspects, we attempted to cook them just as we did other beans, leave the seasoning to a last-minute bit of this and dash of that, and serve them unadorned from a big pot.

The results have too often been bland, uninteresting, and even undercooked. Those of our friends and students who might have become converts were unimpressed or worse, especially when later confronted by the flatulence (gas) which is a result of eating undercooked beans.

Eventually it became evident that if teparies are to regain the popularity they enjoyed in centuries past and, more importantly, be regarded as an acceptable food in the fast-approaching next century, they will have to be incorporated into a cuisine more contemporary and varied than that relished by the Papago of a hundred years ago.

Because tepary beans are not alone in their forgotten status, I have written another cookbook entitled *Ancient Foods for Modern Kitchens* (in press) which attempts to incorporate teparies as well as cactus fruits, mesquite pods and edible greens into today's typical dishes.

Several of the recipes from this cookbook are printed at the

end of this article, but first, let us discuss various methods and steps for softening and cooking the rock-hard dried beans.

Presoaking—the Controversy

Because teparies seem to dry out more completely than other beans, it is essential that they be presoaked. Beans which have been stored a while should soak about 12 hours. Very fresh beans need slightly less soaking and have even been known to start sprouting during a long soak. During the soaking time they will absorb quite a quantity of water. The more water they take up, the easier they will be to cook, so use plenty. You can figure that two cups of dried beans will swell to about five cups during soaking.

Some controversy surrounds the question of what to do with the soaking water that is not absorbed. Some people think that this contains important nutrients and should be retained and used as cooking liquid.

However Dr. L. B. Rockland of the Western Regional Research Center of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has been looking into bean cooking methods and feels that the dried beans should be soaked, rinsed and drained, then cooked and drained again. He contends that the water contains anti-nutritional factors that inhibit the utilization of proteins and that discarding the water doesn't appreciably change the mineral and vitamin content of the bean dish.

If you are using beans which have been stored it will be helpful to add 1/8 teaspoon baking soda to the soaking water for each 1 cup of beans.

Cooking—Many Choices

Commercially, teparies are available only in brown and white. The white variety is mild and similar to other small white beans while the brown ones have a hardier flavor.

I've always had difficulty estimating the exact length of time it might take a pot of teparies to cook, a fact I formerly blamed on my forgetfulness and inattention to detail. I have recently been most delighted to discover that the fault lies not with me but with the nature of the bean itself. Studies under the direction of Dr. Ann Tinsley at the University of Arizona School of Home Economics have shown that cooking times for teparies vary much more widely than times for other beans. Once again, science has validated reality.

Although cooking times may fluctuate depending on freshness, location of the fields, type of tepary and other yet undiscovered factors, it can generally be assumed that teparies will take considerably longer to cook than other beans.

With a heavy cast iron pot or an electric slow cooker plan on eight to twelve hours of cooking although beans stored for many years may take even longer. A pressure cooker will complete the job in anywhere from one-half hour to an hour and 15 minutes. Never fill the pressure cooker more than half full and use at least two quarts of water.

Some bean cooking experts suggest bringing water to boil in a pot and then adding the beans as a method of quickly softening the bean coat. It is also suggested that if you find you must add water during cooking, it should be hot water as a reduction in cooking temperature seems to have a toughening effect on the beans.

As chef you should also understand that a tepary that has finally become soft is not necessarily a fully-cooked bean. You must continue cooking the teparies until they have lost their

starchy raw flavor, which with conventional methods may be as long as two additional hours.

As with other beans, teparies should be fully cooked before the addition of molasses, brown sugar, tomatoes, tomato sauce, catsup or vinegar. When added during cooking these ingredients tend to have a hardening effect.

Although teparies do take considerably longer to prepare than most of our modern convenience foods, the problem need not lie in the way of greater popular acceptance for teparies. Whatever cooking method you prefer, it makes sense to cook three or four times as many beans as you'll need for one day, and divide the remainder into portions to be frozen for future fast-food meals.

Use the recipes below as suggestions and starting points. Develop your own creative uses for teparies, remembering, especially if you are a vegetarian, to combine them with wheat and corn for high protein scores.

Consider the development of delicious tepary recipes as a challenge for the future. And that goes for you, too, Craig and James and Julia.

CAMPING BEANS

"Instant" or pre-cooked beans are a very ancient form of traveling food. Sheila Moller contributed this recipe to the *Sonoran Heritage Recipe Exchange*, part of a class on desert food:

2 cups teparies or other beans
2 cloves garlic
1 onion
salt and pepper to taste

Clean the beans and soak them overnight. In the morning chop the garlic and onion and add to the beans. Cook until the beans are soft. Smash some of the beans against the side of the kettle or crockpot with the back of the spoon then stir them into the cooking liquid to form a thick, rich broth. Stir often and be careful that the beans do not burn. Season to taste.

Spread the beans on a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan and allow to dry out thoroughly. After the beans are dry they can be broken into chunks and taken on a backpacking trip. To fix them in camp, add water, heat and eat.

BEST BEAN LOAF

The outer covering of greens not only adds texture and visual appeal, it helps you get the loaf out of the pan in one piece.

5-6 large leaves savoy cabbage or chard
1 1/2 cups mashed tepary beans
1 1/2 cups cooked bulgur or rice
1 cup grated zucchini
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1/4 cup whole wheat bread crumbs
2 beaten eggs
1 teaspoon dry basil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

In a large saucepan of boiling salted water blanch the cabbage or chard leaves for about 3 minutes or until they are pliable. Drain the leaves in a colander and pat them dry. Line a well-greased loaf pan, 8½ by 4½ by 2½ inches, with as many of the leaves as are needed smooth side down to cover the bottom and sides, leaving enough overhang to fold over and cover the top.

Try to mash the teparies with as little liquid as possible. Combine

with the remaining ingredients and mix well. Spoon the mixture into the loaf pan, rap the pan sharply on the counter to expel any bubbles and smooth the top. Fold the overhanging leaves over the mixture and cover the pan with foil.

Place the loaf pan in a larger flat pan, pour in an inch or two of hot water into the larger pan and bake the loaf at 350° F for 1 hour or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the loaf stand for about 10 minutes to settle. Unmold on a platter, blot up any liquid with paper towels. Garnish the platter and slice with a very sharp knife.

Serve with a sauce such as spiced tomato, yogurt flavored with mustard, garlic and tahini, or Sunflower Tomatillo Sauce.

LAYERED TEPARY ENCHILADAS

The combination of teparies, corn and cheese makes this dish rich in protein without meat.

- 2 cups cooked teparies
- 1 cup cooked corn kernels
- 1 small can tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup shredded longhorn or jack cheese
- corn tortillas
- chili powder or chili paste to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin or to taste
- oil

Heat oil in small frying pan and fry tortillas one by one briefly until limp but not crisp. Combine teparies, corn kernels and tomato sauce. Season to taste with chili and cumin. For each individual serving, place a tortilla on a plate, add a layer of beans, then repeat twice ending with beans. Top with shredded cheese. Makes two servings.

TUSCANY-STYLE BEANS

- 2 cups cooked teparies (preferably white)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2-3 tablespoons minced fresh sage
- or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 large or 2 small tomatoes
- salt and pepper

Drain the beans. Heat together the butter and olive oil in large frying pan or sauce pan. Add the beans, sage and salt and pepper. Core the tomato, chop coarsely and whirl in a blender until pureed. Add to beans. Cook until hot.

PASTA E FAGIOLI

- 2 1/2 cups cooked teparies
- 1 1/2 cups bean liquid
- 8 ounces shell macaroni
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups sliced carrot
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 cups diced, peeled tomato
- 1 teaspoon dried basil leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup steamed broccoli spears
- grated Parmesan cheese

Cook macaroni following package directions. Meanwhile in hot oil in a large skillet saute onion, carrot and garlic until soft but not brown. Add tomato and spices. Cover pan and cook gently for 15 minutes.

In a large saucepan or kettle, combine beans, macaroni, and vegetable mixture. Add the bean liquid. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer 15 minutes until flavors blend. Stir often to prevent sticking. At the end, add broccoli spears, heat, and turn into attractive serving dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serves 8.

BEAN BREAD

The presence of mashed beans in this recipe tends to inhibit the formation of gluten in the flour, the substance that holds the crumbs together and makes nice slices. Thorough beating of the dough can overcome this problem, however, so use a food processor, a table mixer, or your good strong arm. The dough is a bit too thick for a hand held mixer.

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup shortening or margarine
- 1 1/2 cups moist mashed beans
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1 3/4 cup sifted flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Cream shortening and add sugar, beating until fluffy. Add egg and beat. Add beans which have been mashed with enough bean broth to make them moist but not soupy and beat. Add dry ingredients and beat for 4 minutes.

Spread in a greased and floured loaf pan and bake at 350° F for 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

TEPARY VEGETARIAN PATE

So rich it tastes sinful; so healthy you can supper on hors d'oeuvres alone. The best appliance for this is a food mill or food processor. A blender can be used but you'll need to add more bean broth to make the mixture wetter.

- 2 cups cooked teparies or other beans with very little broth
- 1 stalk celery
- 1 large carrot
- 1 onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1-2 cloves garlic
- 1/4 cup sunflower seeds
- 2 tablespoons wheat germ
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon wine vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon basil
- 1/4 teaspoon oregano

Chop celery and carrot and steam or cook in a little water until tender. Chop onion and garlic and saute in oil. Grind sunflower seeds to a meal in blender or mill. Combine teparies, cooked vegetables, sunflower meal, wheat germ, soy sauce, wine vinegar and spices and process until smooth.

Add one of the following flavor combinations or invent your own:

- 1/4 teaspoon cumino
- 2 tablespoons green taco sauce or chopped green chiles
- OR
- 2 tablespoons sherry
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans

References

- Calloway, D. H., R. D. Giaque and F. M. Costa. 1974. The superior mineral content of some Indian foods in comparison to federally donated counterpart commodities. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition* 3: 203.
- Niethammer, C. 1974. *American Indian Food and Lore*. Collier-MacMillan, New York.