

HEALTHIER TRADITIONS COOKBOOK

Soul Food

19 Southern American Classics

Red Beans
& Rice

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HEALTHIER TRADITIONS COOKBOOKS

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We are pleased to share this edition of the Transamerica Institute® *Healthier Traditions Cookbook* series focused on soul food. Though based on recipes that have been beloved for centuries, we offer substitutions to make them healthier for you—such as using healthier and less added oil, less sugar, and more vegetables. We most recently updated this book in 2021 to add two more vegetable-focused dishes, even more nutrition information, and this introduction to offer more background information and recommendations for using the book.

Though the name was not coined until the 1960s, soul food has a long and complicated history in the US, beginning centuries ago during the slave trade. The recipes in this book represent different regional histories, drawing from various parts of the African diaspora. Though many soul food recipes are not commonly thought to be particularly nutritious, it is also true that the common perceptions of the cuisine actually neglect much of the traditional food and cooking methods brought from other countries and even practiced in earlier centuries in America. To learn more about the cultural and gastronomic history of African Americans, we suggest looking into resources such as the [California African American Museum](#), the [Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture](#), and the [San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora](#) for more information.

Some of the recipes in this book represent entire meals. For example, the Gumbo or Black-Eyed Pea Soup can be enjoyed all on their own (or accompanied by a side such as rice or a salad). Other dishes can be combined to make a balanced meal. For example, the Red Beans and Rice can be combined with the Cabbage Slaw for a well-rounded vegetarian meal. Also, the Smothered Pork Chops could be served with the Collard Greens and Candied Sweet Potatoes. Serve any of them with an unsweetened iced tea or refreshing water with lemon, if desired.

Many of these recipes can be easily made vegetarian or vegan. Here are several suggestions:

- For the Gumbo, use equivalent amounts of chickpeas, mushrooms, and cauliflower instead of chicken, sausage, and shrimp.
- For the Red Beans and Rice, leave out the sausage and add ½ tablespoon smoked paprika.
- For the Banana Pudding, leave out the eggs, use a plant-based milk (such as oat milk or almond milk), and use vegan vanilla wafers.
- For the Peach Cobbler, use a plant-based milk and substitute coconut oil for butter (but note that it won't form coarse crumbs when mixed).
- Substitute vegetable broth for any recipes that call for chicken broth.

You can also substitute other ingredients based on what fruits, vegetables, or pantry staples you may have on hand. For example, the collard greens in any dish could be substituted for any other hearty green—such as kale, mustard greens, or turnip greens—and the black-eyed peas could be substituted for any small white bean, pinto beans, or even black beans. Hot sauce, red pepper flakes, or cayenne can be added to any savory dish to make it spicier, if desired. And you could substitute almost any fruit in equal volume into the banana pudding or peach cobbler that you'd like. We would suggest pear or figs in the pudding, or apples or cherries in the cobbler.

We truly hope you enjoy trying these recipes and learning from the cooking tips and cultural tidbits shared throughout the book. Please let us know if you have any feedback about this book and would like to receive copies to share with your community group, patients, or other people who might be interested.

Special Thanks

TO COLLABORATORS AND CONTRIBUTORS



Association of Black Women Physicians

Transamerica Institute® (TI) is proud to collaborate with the ABWP, for the *Healthier Traditions Cookbook: Soul Food*, in order to promote healthy eating and wellness through healthier twists on soul food classics.

Dietitian | Christina Badaracco, MPH, RDN, LDN

Christina works as a healthcare consultant, focusing on advancing the role of nutrition in healthcare. She applies her expertise in healthcare and public health research, policy, and practice to support diverse stakeholders in improving care delivery and health outcomes. She also regularly writes, teaches, and develops trainings and clinical programs about nutrition, culinary medicine, and sustainable agriculture—including directing award-winning culinary medicine trainings for healthcare professional associations, developing five cookbooks for the Transamerica Institute, coauthoring *The Farm Bill: A Citizen's Guide* and *Mix It Up: The Culinary Medicine Cookbook for Mixing Things up in the Kitchen*, and co-developing a culinary medicine course at the Georgetown University School of Medicine and lifestyle medicine program for MedStar Shah. Christina previously worked for Avalere (a healthcare advisory firm), the US Environmental Protection Agency, Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, NIH Clinical Center, and other organizations. Christina serves as past-president of the DC Metro Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, board member of Slow Food DC and member of Slow Food's Food and Farm Policy Team, member of the Academy CEO Advisory Council, and founder of the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative's nutrition working group. Christina completed her dietetic internship at Massachusetts General Hospital; earned her MPH from UC Berkeley; and earned her AB in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, with a certificate in Italian Language and Culture, from Princeton University. Christina was selected as a 2025 Outstanding Dietitian of the Year by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Learn more about her at www.christinabadaracco.com or follow her on Instagram @cbadarac.

Dietitian | Suzanne Hollander, MS, RD, CSP

Suzanne Hollander is a Los Angeles-based registered dietitian nutritionist working in both clinical and private practice. As a clinical dietitian at UCLA, Suzanne works with multidisciplinary medical teams focused on the treatment of pediatric and adult clients with complex nutritional needs. Suzanne is a Board Certified Specialist in Pediatric Nutrition. In private practice, Suzanne enjoys working with children, families, and adults who are seeking motivation and education that will solidify sustainable, healthy lifestyle change. Suzanne attended the University of Virginia as an undergraduate and completed her Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition and dietetic internship at New York University.

Producer | Meeno Peluce

Meeno Peluce began his adventure in Amsterdam, Kathmandu, and southern India. After living on the road with his nomadic parents in his early years, he came to Hollywood for a period as a successful actor. As an adult, he's gravitated to the other side of the lens and has been a professional photographer and filmmaker for the past 25 years. Meeno's wife, Ilse, is his production designer and all-around aesthetic partner in crime. Their children are their full-time muses, and they do shoots all around the world disguised as family adventures, always returning to their urban homestead in the hills above East LA that they call Skyfarm. He has shot album covers for top artists and done advertising campaigns for major products.

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DISCLAIMER: All recipes assume that produce is washed and ready for consumption. Nutrition facts are per serving and do not include optional toppings (unless otherwise stated).

Cornbread



1 hour



Serves 10



Cornbread is typically very high in added sugar—sometimes making it as sweet as cake. This entire recipe contains just 1 tablespoon, helping to minimize the amount of simple carbohydrates.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, melted*
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 jalapeño peppers, ribs and seeds removed, minced
- 1 tablespoon safflower oil
(or another high-heat cooking oil)

*Replace with 3 tablespoons of olive oil for a more heart-healthy option.



Replacing the refined white flour with whole grain flour boosts the fiber and vitamins in this recipe.



Skillet cornbread is a lighter alternative to fried, hot water cornbread and avoids the trans fats.

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F
2. Combine all dry ingredients in medium bowl. Stir in buttermilk, butter, and eggs until just combined. Mix in jalapeños.
3. In 10-inch oven proof skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat and spread to coat entire skillet. Pour batter into pan, then remove from stove and place in oven. Bake 15-20 minutes, until toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean/dry.

NUTRITION FACTS

167 calories, 8g fat, 4g saturated fat, 345mg sodium, 21g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 3g sugar, 5g protein

Cornbread Dressing



2 hours



Serves 12



Cornbread dressing recipes commonly use butter and processed meats. This version uses a healthy olive oil to cook the vegetables and broth to provide moisture, helping to lower total saturated fat as well as preservatives.



This recipe uses fresh herbs to give it delicious flavor while reducing the need for added salt. Reducing sodium may improve heart health!

NUTRITION FACTS

175 calories, 9g fat,
3g saturated fat, 363mg
sodium, 19g carbohydrate, 3g
fiber, 4g sugar, 5g protein

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cornbread loaf (see previous recipe), cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 large onions, diced
- 4 celery ribs, diced
- 1 medium red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 large egg

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread cornbread cubes in single layer on large baking sheet. Bake until dry and lightly browned, ~20 minutes. Let cool.
2. In heavy skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, and bell pepper. Sauté until onion is golden, 10 to 12 minutes. Place vegetables in large bowl. Add cornbread, herbs, salt, and pepper. Mix gently. In separate bowl, whisk together broth and egg. Add broth mixture to cornbread and toss.
3. Transfer mixture to 13x9x2-inch (or similar) glass baking dish. Bake dressing uncovered until crisp on top, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Let stand 15 minutes before serving.

Fried Cabbage



30 minutes



Serves 6



This side dish cooks up quickly, perfect for a healthy weeknight side dish.



Cabbage is a type of cruciferous vegetable—along with relatives such as broccoli, kale, and turnips—that are known for their cancer-fighting properties.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium head green cabbage, shredded
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 5-10 minutes. Add cabbage, salt, pepper, and smoked paprika. Stir frequently, until tender, about 5 minutes.



Cabbage is rich in fiber and potassium, two nutrients that promote heart health.

NUTRITION FACTS

76 calories, 5g fat, 0g saturated fat, 215mg sodium, 8g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 5g sugar, 2g protein

Collard Greens



1 hour



Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 pounds collard greens, thick stems removed, coarsely chopped or torn
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon hot sauce (optional)



Many collard greens recipes call for bacon or smoked turkey, adding unhealthy preservatives such as sodium nitrite. This recipe instead derives its smoky, spicy flavor from hot sauce and smoked paprika.

DIRECTIONS

1. In large pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, salt, pepper, and paprika. Stir frequently until onion is translucent, about 10 minutes longer. Add garlic, stir, and cook for another 1-2 minutes. Do not let the garlic burn.
2. Add greens and sauté until they begin to wilt, 5-10 minutes. Stir in broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and let simmer, removing lid occasionally to stir. Cook until greens are very tender, about 30 minutes. Remove lid and simmer about 10 minutes longer to reduce liquid.
3. Season with hot sauce.



Acclaimed poet Langston Hughes wrote about collard greens in his poem, "Cultural Exchange":

**"In the pot behind the paper doors
on the old iron stove what's cooking?
What's smelling, Leontyne?
Lieder, lovely Lieder
And a leaf of collard green.
Lovely Lieder, Leontyne."**

NUTRITION FACTS

99 calories, 4g fat, 0g
saturated fat, 215mg sodium,
12g carbohydrate, 7g fiber,
3g sugar, 5g protein

Coleslaw



20 minutes



Serves 6



Coleslaw actually originated in Ancient Rome and was brought to America when the Dutch founded New York in the 18th century, bringing with them the dish called "koosla" (which means "cabbage salad"). So, while it doesn't come from the same cultural roots as the other recipes in this book, it is now commonly eaten throughout the South.



This slaw recipe is written to use purple cabbage, but feel free to substitute any cabbage you may find at your grocery store or farmers market, such as green cabbage or Savoy cabbage. You can also experiment with other ingredients such as thinly sliced apple or radish.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 large carrots, shredded (about 2 cups)
- 1 medium head red or green cabbage, shredded (about 1½ lbs or 6 cups)
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon celery seed
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup mixed seeds (eg, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds)

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine cabbage, carrots, and parsley in a large bowl.
2. Whisk together all remaining ingredients except seeds in a small bowl. Pour over shredded vegetables and toss well to combine. If time allows, cover and refrigerate for an hour.
3. Top with seeds right before serving.

NUTRITION FACTS

159 calories, 10g fat, 2g saturated fat, 258mg sodium, 16g carbohydrate, 5g fiber, 8g sugar, 4g protein

Black-Eyed Pea Soup



45 minutes (+8 hours if using dried black-eyed peas)



Serves 4



Feel free to substitute any hearty greens—such as collard greens, beet greens, or turnip greens—in this recipe based on what you find easily at the grocery store or market, or what you may be growing yourself at home.

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Once hot, add onions, celery, and carrots. Cook 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the garlic and spices, stir to combine, and cook for 1 more minute.
2. Stir in the cooked black-eyed peas, diced tomatoes, and broth. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cover and simmer the soup for about 15-20 minutes.
3. Add in the chopped greens and stir to combine. Just before serving, stir in vinegar. Serve hot in bowls and top with parsley, if desired.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium sweet onion, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cups cooked black-eyed peas (about 2 cans, drained, or cooked from 1 cup dried peas)
- 1 15-ounce can low-sodium diced tomatoes
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 3 cups chopped kale
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh parsley, chopped (optional)

NUTRITION FACTS

281 calories, 12g fat, 3g saturated fat, 620mg sodium, 20g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 2g sugar, 23g protein

Oven "Fried" Okra



Look for this zesty vegetable in markets and stores during the summer (in season). Find frozen okra during the winter.



This baked version of a fried classic makes for crispy, satisfying okra without as much added fat.



Try using this healthier method of oven "frying" for other vegetables, such as zucchini, eggplant, or mushrooms.

DIRECTIONS



1 hour



Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups whole grain cornmeal

1 teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

½ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon cayenne (optional)

2 eggs

2 pounds (about 4 cups) fresh okra, ends trimmed, cut in ¼-inch pieces

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In medium bowl, combine cornmeal, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and cayenne (optional). In separate small bowl, beat the eggs with 2 tablespoons of water.
3. Coat okra pieces in egg and drench in cornmeal mixture. Spread on baking sheets in single layer.
4. Bake until crisp, 30-40 minutes, tossing once or twice during baking.

NUTRITION FACTS

117 calories, 2g fat, 0g saturated fat, 320 mg sodium, 21g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 1g sugar, 4g protein



To make a simple, homemade sausage that is healthier than store-bought varieties, cook together ground turkey or chicken and your favorite spices right on your stovetop.

Dirty Rice



1½ hours



Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups uncooked brown rice
- 3½ cups low-sodium beef broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons safflower oil (or another high-heat cooking oil)
- 1 pound mild turkey or chicken bulk sausage or links with casings removed
- ¾ pound chicken livers, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 celery ribs, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced



Chicken livers are a good source of iron, a mineral important for the health of blood cells and muscles. Flavorful spices, herbs, and fresh vegetables boost the flavor while minimizing total sodium in this recipe.

DIRECTIONS

1. In medium saucepan, add rice and beef broth and bring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, stir and reduce heat to low and add bay leaf. Cover and simmer ~45 minutes, until rice is tender and most liquid is absorbed. Remove bay leaf. While rice cooks, move on to step 2.
2. In large heavy pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add sausage, chicken livers, onion, celery, and green pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, about 10 minutes or until vegetables are soft and meat is lightly browned. Add garlic, salt, pepper, oregano, thyme, and cayenne and stir frequently, about 2-3 minutes more. Mix in cooked rice. Serve with green onions sprinkled on top.

NUTRITION FACTS

281 calories, 12g fat, 3g saturated fat, 620mg sodium, 20g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 2g sugar, 23g protein



Red beans have a lot of fiber, which promotes heart and gut health. We added even more fiber, vitamins, and minerals to this recipe by using whole grain brown rice in place of traditional white rice.



Red Beans and Rice is traditionally made on Mondays in Louisiana. Why? "Before washing machines, women in New Orleans would do laundry by hand – using a crank and wringer, sometimes boiling the clothes. And on laundry day, they needed to prepare a dinner that didn't need a lot of TLC. Thus the tradition of making red beans on washday, Monday."

Source: Gerdes, C. (2012, July 2). Red Beans and Rice: A Monday Tradition. National Geographic Blog.



Providing more than 20 grams of protein per serving, this nutritious pairing can be accompanied by a vegetable side (such as cabbage or collard greens) to make a complete meal.

Red Beans & Rice



2½ hours



Serves 12

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse and sort beans. Place in large pot or bowl and cover beans completely with water. Soak 6 hours or overnight.
2. In large heavy pot, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Add sausage and cook about 5 minutes, until it begins to brown. Add remaining 1 tablespoon of oil, onions, celery, bell pepper, salt, and pepper, and cook about 10 minutes, until onion is translucent. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 45 seconds longer.
3. Add beans to pot along with enough water to barely cover. Add bay leaves and basil. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook 1½ to 2 hours, until beans are tender, removing lid to stir occasionally. Add more water, a splash at a time, if the beans need more time to cook.
4. In a separate pot, cook brown rice in water according to package instructions. While rice cooks, remove lid from beans and continue cooking to thicken the beans, about another 30 minutes.
5. Remove bay leaves from beans and mix with rice. Beans can be made ahead of time, cooled, stored in airtight container in refrigerator and reheated just before serving.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds dried red beans**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- ½ pound Andouille sausage, sliced into ½-inch disks and quartered**
- 2 medium onions, chopped**
- 2 celery ribs, diced**
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped**
- ⅛-¼ teaspoon cayenne to taste (optional)**
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 6 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 2 teaspoons dried basil leaves**
- 2½ cups uncooked long grain brown rice**

NUTRITION FACTS

360 calories, 6g fat, 1g saturated fat, 374mg sodium, 65g carbohydrate, 27g fiber, 3g sugar, 21g protein

Gumbo



1½ hours



Serves 8

DIRECTIONS

1. Season chicken with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper. In large heavy pot, heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook until lightly browned on both sides, about 5 minutes per side. Remove chicken from pan and set aside.
2. In the same pot, add remaining 1 tablespoon of oil. Over medium-high heat, cook onion, bell pepper, and celery, stirring frequently. Cook about 5-10 minutes, until lightly browned. Sprinkle in flour and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until mixture is browned. Add garlic, Worcestershire sauce, remaining salt and pepper, cayenne, and paprika. Cook 1-2 minutes, until fragrant. Add sausage and cook, stirring frequently, until browned, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in broth and tomatoes, scraping bottom of pan for any brown bits. Simmer over medium heat for about 25 minutes, until soup is thickened.
4. Add okra and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Cut cooled chicken thighs and add to pot. Add shrimp and cook until they are cooked through, about 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat and top with chopped parsley.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{3}{4}$ **pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ **teaspoon salt, divided**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper, divided**
- 2 tablespoons peanut or safflower oil (or another high-heat cooking oil), divided**
- 1 large onion, chopped**
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced**
- 3 celery ribs, chopped**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ **cup whole wheat flour**
- 6 cloves garlic, minced**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ **cup Worcestershire sauce**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ **teaspoon cayenne (optional)**
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ **pound Andouille sausage, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices**
- 4 cups low-sodium beef broth**
- 1 14-ounce can low-sodium diced tomatoes**
- 2 cups chopped okra**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ **pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ **cup fresh parsley, chopped**

NUTRITION FACTS

235 calories, 9g fat, 3g saturated fat, 624mg sodium, 13g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 4g sugar, 25g protein



Gumbo is commonly served with a scoop of white rice. Use brown or red rice for a more nutrient-dense and colorful alternative.



Gumbo represents Louisiana's melting pot of cuisine and culture, especially African, French, and Native American. Variations of the dish represent the combination of food traditions passed down across generations, mirroring the blending of many flavors in each bite of gumbo.

Source: Owens, M. (2000). Louisiana's Food Traditions: An Insider's Guide. Folk Life in Louisiana.

Black-Eyed Peas



1½ hours
(excluding soaking)



Serves 10



Since the Civil War, black-eyed peas have often been thought to symbolize prosperity and good fortune in America. They are therefore sometimes eaten at the start of the new year—often in a dish called Hoppin’ John, made with black-eyed peas and rice.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound dried black-eyed peas**
- 2 tablespoons safflower oil**
(or another high-heat cooking oil)
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 4 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika**
- ½ teaspoon cayenne**
(optional)
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth**
- 2 cups water**
- 2 bay leaves**



Black-eyed peas are a good source of folate, a vitamin important in making new cells. One cup provides more than half of daily folate needs!

DIRECTIONS

1. Place peas in large pot and cover with water by 2–4 inches. Soak overnight.
2. In large pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and stir frequently, until onion is translucent, about 8 minutes. Add garlic, salt, pepper, garlic powder, smoked paprika, and cayenne pepper. Cook another 2 minutes and add drained peas, broth, water, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer, covered, about 45 minutes to 1 hour until the peas are soft.
3. Using the back of a spoon, smash some of the peas and stir mixture together to give it a creamier consistency. Taste and re-season. Remove bay leaves before serving.

NUTRITION FACTS

115 calories, 3g fat, 0g saturated fat, 214mg sodium, 16g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 2g sugar, 5g protein

Jambalaya



1 hour



Serves 8



Feel free to substitute the ham for an equal amount of another meat of choice (such as chicken or sausage), kidney beans, or tempeh.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 2½ cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon safflower oil (or another high-heat cooking oil)
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 medium bell pepper, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- ½ pound reduced sodium cooked ham, chopped
- 1 14.5-ounce can low-sodium diced tomatoes
- 1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¼ cup flat leaf parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. In large saucepan, heat rice and chicken stock over high heat. Once boiling, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for about 35 minutes. At this point, rice will not be fully cooked through and some broth will still remain. (After the rice has been cooking for about 15 minutes, move on to step 2.)
2. In large heavy pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, pepper, and celery and sauté, stirring frequently, until onion is translucent, about 10 minutes. Add garlic, salt, pepper, paprika, thyme, cayenne, and ham, and stir frequently for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes, shrimp, and rice with stock. Cover and cook 5-10 minutes more, until rice is soft and shrimp is cooked through. Garnish with parsley.



Using brown rice in place of white rice increases fiber and vitamins.

NUTRITION FACTS

239 calories, 5g fat, 1g saturated fat, 440mg sodium, 26g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 4g sugar, 21g protein



Neck bones have been eaten traditionally because they are a very inexpensive cut of meat. Though the bones yield a small amount of meat per pound, it becomes tender and delicious after simmering for several hours on the stove or in a slow cooker.

Neck Bones



4½ hours



Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon safflower oil
(or another high-heat cooking oil)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 pounds pork neck bones, cut
into several pieces
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
(or white vinegar)
- 4 cups water

DIRECTIONS

1. In large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Season neck bones with salt and pepper and brown on both sides (3–4 minutes per side).
2. Place onions and garlic in bottom of slow cooker. Place browned neck bones on top of onions. Sprinkle in thyme and add vinegar and water.
3. Cook on high heat about 4 hours, until meat is tender and falls off bones. Serve with onions.

NUTRITION FACTS

233 calories, 11g fat, 3g
saturated fat, 267mg sodium,
7g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 4g
sugar, 26g protein

Pan-Fried Catfish



30 minutes



Serves 4



If you can't find high-quality catfish, you can substitute any mild white fish, such as flounder or rockfish. Look for wild-caught varieties, when possible.



Calories and fat are much lower in this catfish recipe than in the traditional battered and deep-fried version. A light dredging of spiced flour and pan-frying gives this catfish a crisp exterior.

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine flour, cornmeal, seafood seasoning, paprika, and pepper in a flat dish (plate or small baking pan). Dredge fish in flour mixture.
2. In large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add floured fish to skillet and pan-fry until golden brown, about 5 minutes per side. Pan-fry in batches if needed, depending on the size of skillet and fillets. Transfer fish to towel-covered plate to remove excess oil and serve warm.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole wheat or spelt flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon seafood seasoning
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 catfish fillets, up to 6 ounces each, rinsed and patted dry
- 4 tablespoons peanut oil

NUTRITION FACTS

339 calories, 19g fat, 4g saturated fat, 176mg sodium, 12g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 0g sugar, 30g protein

Smothered Pork Chops



2½ hours



Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons safflower oil
(or another high-heat cooking oil)**
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper, divided**
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder**
- 4 bone-in pork chops, approx.
¾-inch thick/6 ounces each**
- 2 medium onions, sliced**
- 2 tablespoons whole wheat or oat flour**
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth**

NUTRITION FACTS

375 calories, 19g fat, 4g saturated fat, 600mg sodium, 12g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 6g sugar, 36g protein

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. Season pork chops with ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and garlic powder. In large oven-proof skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Pan-fry chops in batches, 3-5 minutes per side or until golden brown. Remove pork chops from pan and transfer to a paper towel-covered plate to drain excess oil.
3. Reduce skillet heat to medium-low. Add onions, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper, and stir often until onions are soft, about 15 minutes. Onions should caramelize but not brown. Add flour to the onions and stir constantly, about 2-3 minutes. Slowly add chicken broth while stirring and scraping the pan. Turn heat to high, bring to a boil, and then reduce heat and simmer about 5 minutes, until slightly thickened.
4. Return pork chops to skillet and ladle onion gravy over chops. Cover with lid and transfer to oven. Bake 1½ hours, until very tender and meat falls off the bone.
5. Set pork chops aside on plate. Place skillet on stove over medium-high heat. Stir frequently while simmering to allow gravy to reduce, about 10-15 minutes. Return pork to skillet and ladle with gravy.



Skipping the batter-fried pork and choosing a lean chop makes for a lighter version of this Southern classic.



Choosing low-sodium broth or stock for cooking helps lower daily sodium intake, which can help prevent high blood pressure and promote heart health.



To make a balanced meal, serve each pork chop over a whole grain (such as brown rice or barley) to soak up the delicious sauce and a large serving of green vegetables.



INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- ½ cup orange juice (not from concentrate)
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 4 large sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds), cleaned, sliced into ½-inch disks

NUTRITION FACTS

173 calories, 6g fat, 4g saturated fat, 66mg sodium, 29g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 10g sugar, 2g protein

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In large bowl, whisk together butter, orange juice, maple syrup, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Toss sweet potatoes with mixture and spread into 9x13-inch lightly buttered casserole dish.
2. Cover dish with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 15-20 minutes.



1½ hours



Serves 8

Candied Sweet Potatoes



Leaving the skins on the sweet potatoes increases gut-healthy fiber.



Sweet potatoes and yams are not the same thing! The sweet potato is in the Morning Glory family while yams are related to lilies and grasses. Sweet potatoes are what we typically find in American grocery stores. Yams are imported and native to Africa and Asia.



Some recipes for candied sweet potatoes call for more than 1 cup of sweetener (sugar, maple syrup, etc.) for 4 potatoes. This recipe uses just 3 tablespoons of syrup plus a splash of orange juice; feel free to reduce the amount of syrup even further—or omit entirely—to minimize the sugar content.

Sweet Potato Pecan Pie



2 hours



Serves 12

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups pecan halves
- 2 large sweet potatoes (about 1 lb), peeled and cubed
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 4 large eggs
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- 1 prepared or homemade pie crust

FOR HOMEMADE CRUST

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup cold butter
- 2-3 tablespoons ice water



This recipe lets the delicious sweet potato flavor shine, reducing the need for added sweeteners.



Using whole grain flour in the homemade pie crust adds a deeper flavor, in addition to fiber and vitamins.

DIRECTIONS

1. To make crust, sift together flour and salt and then cut in butter with a fork or fingers until forming pieces the size of peas. Add ice water, one tablespoon at a time, and mix until the dough forms a ball. Refrigerate for 30 minutes, until firm. Preheat oven to 425°F. Roll out crust on a floured surface and transfer to a 9-inch pie plate.
2. To blind bake, prick crust with fork several times to prevent bubbles from forming and bake for about 10 minutes, until crust begins to turn golden. Remove from oven and let cool.
3. To make pie, heat oven to 350°F. Spread pecans on rimmed baking sheet and toast in oven for about 6 minutes. Toss pecans about every 2 minutes to keep from burning. Set aside once toasted.
4. Place sweet potatoes in medium saucepot with about 2 cups water. Bring to a boil over high heat, and then cover with lid and reduce heat to simmer. Cook until potatoes are soft, about 15-20 minutes. Drain excess water and mash sweet potatoes over low heat. Add butter, brown sugar, and molasses to sweet potatoes. Remove from heat. In separate bowl, beat eggs, milk, vanilla, salt, cinnamon, and orange zest together. Slowly stir in sweet potato mixture.
5. Pour sweet potato filling into pie crust. Arrange pecans over filling. Place pie dish on large, rimmed baking sheet. Bake at 350°F until filling is set, about 20 minutes, watching to prevent pecans from burning. Remove pie from oven and cool before serving.

NUTRITION FACTS

305 calories, 22g fat, 7g saturated fat, 208mg sodium, 24g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 9g sugar, 6g protein

Banana Pudding



45 minutes



Serves 8



Try making your own simple vanilla wafers or buying an organic version to avoid preservatives and unhealthy oils that are common in store-bought varieties.



Bananas are high in potassium, an electrolyte that is especially important for healthy muscles and blood pressure.



Sources are inconclusive about how banana pudding came to be associated with Southern cuisine. It could be due to the increase in banana imports through the port of New Orleans in the 19th century. Banana pudding recipes first used sliced sponge cake with sliced bananas. In the 1920s, cooks started swapping out the traditional sponge cake for a more convenient base: vanilla wafers.

Source: Moss, R. How Banana Pudding Became a Southern Icon. Serious Eats.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups 2% milk
- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 ripe medium bananas, thinly sliced
- 30 vanilla wafers

NUTRITION FACTS

257 calories, 7g fat, 3g saturated fat, 204mg sodium, 44g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 29g sugar, 6g protein

DIRECTIONS

- In a large saucepan, whisk together the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Whisk in milk. Heat over medium-high heat, whisking continuously, until bubbles form. Remove from heat.
- In a medium bowl, beat the eggs. Temper the eggs by pouring about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the warm mixture slowly into the eggs, whisking vigorously. Pour egg mixture back into the saucepan and continue cooking over medium-high heat, whisking constantly until it thickens and begins to bubble and is near pudding consistency.
- Transfer mixture to a bowl and add in vanilla, continuing to whisk until mixture is combined.
- Spread a thin layer of the pudding into a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -quart casserole dish. Arrange half of the vanilla wafers on top of pudding and then layer half of the banana slices over the wafers. Layer half of the remaining pudding on top of the bananas, then remaining vanilla wafers, then remaining banana slices, and finally top with the remaining pudding.

Peach Cobbler



1 hour



Serves 8



Peaches are unfortunately one of the most pesticide-laden fruits. To avoid these potentially toxic chemicals, look for organic peaches at your grocery store or farmers market.



Making this recipe outside of peach season? Look for frozen peaches at the grocery store—they will still be packed with flavor and have no added sugar (unlike the canned variety).



This recipe uses half whole wheat flour to provide more fiber and vitamins than refined white flour.

INGREDIENTS

FOR FRUIT

- 6 large peaches, pitted, peeled and sliced into thin wedges
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

FOR TOPPING

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm 2% milk

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. In 8x8-inch glass baking dish, combine peaches, sugar, lemon juice, and cornstarch. Bake in oven for 10 minutes.
3. While peaches bake, combine both flours, sugar, baking powder, and salt in large mixing bowl. Cut small chunks of butter into flour mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in milk until just combined.
4. Remove peaches from oven and drop rounded spoonfuls of topping over them. Bake until topping is golden, about 20–25 minutes.

NUTRITION FACTS

201 calories, 9g fat, 6g saturated fat, 198 mg sodium, 28g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 15g sugar, 3g protein

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