

A Taste of Local History

By Susie Iventosch



California Rancho Beans

Photo Susie Iventosch

Rancho Style Beans

(serves 10 as a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

2-3 tablespoons olive or canola oil
 2 medium onions (one yellow, one red), peeled and chopped
 1 teaspoon Tajin Clasico (chili-lime seasoning available in the spice section of your grocery store)
 1 teaspoon powdered coriander
 1 teaspoon powdered cumin
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 3 16-ounce cans of pinto beans, drained and rinsed
 Juice of 1/2 large lime, or one small lime
 2-3 tablespoons of your favorite hot sauce (we use Valentina Salsa Picante)
 1/2 cup grated cheese

DIRECTIONS

In a large frying pan, heat oil and add onions. Cook until translucent. Add spices and garlic salt. Continue to cook until golden-brown and spices become aromatic. Add beans and mix well with onion mixture. Stir in lime juice and hot sauce. Just before serving, sprinkle cheese over the top of the beans and continue to heat until cheese begins to melt. Serve!

*If you want to add cooked chicken or beef to the beans, you could easily make this a main dish and serve with warmed tortillas.

Adobe Rancho Cooking Class

Sunday, July 20, 4 to 7 p.m.

Wilder Ranch House

2 Wilder Road, Orinda

Cost for the event: \$150 per person

For reservations and/or more information: www.moragaadobe.org

For information on Epicurean Exchange: <http://www.epicureanexchange.com>

For more information on Rancho style foods and cooking:

<http://factcards.califa.org/ran/food.html>, and

<http://forums.egullet.org/topic/60935-california-rancho-cooking/>

The Joaquin Moraga Adobe is located at 24 Adobe Lane in Orinda.

Chef Charles Vollmar, owner of Epicurean Exchange in Orinda, will be holding a "hands-on interactive" cooking and dining experience at the Wilder Ranch House in Orinda from 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday, July 20. The theme of the event is "Early California Rancho Cooking" and Chef Vollmar will prepare authentic dishes reflective of this period. All proceeds will benefit the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe and their efforts to preserve the adobe, which is the oldest surviving building in Contra Costa County. It is recognized as a California State and National Historic Landmark.

According to the Moraga Adobe website, the adobe was built in 1841 by Don Joaquin Moraga as one of two of the original homesteads on a 13,316-acre land grant from the Mexican government. The mission of the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe is to transform this historic landmark property into a history and learning center, dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the early settling of California's East Bay region, with particular emphasis on the Rancho period, which fell between the Mission period and the Gold Rush. The adobe and the surrounding grounds will depict the lifestyle and cultural experiences of the settlers.

In my research for what constitutes "Early California Rancho" cooking, I found two widely varying descriptions. One resource indicated that beef, beans and tortillas were a mainstay, highly seasoned and cooked in the Spanish style. The other shunned the idea that the "Rancho" diet consisted of beans, beef and corn, but rather placed more emphasis on the bounty of garden and farm and dishes included roasted and stuffed sweet chiles, clay pot quail or dove, spit roasted chickens, butternut squash enchiladas, crab enchiladas, squash blossoms, wild boar sausage, jalapeno and sweet-hot jellies and preserves, lots of quesada fresca, citrus and herbs, and prawns and shrimp in everything from chili to tacos. Oh, and plenty of wine!

Chef Vollmar has a vision of early California Rancho cuisine as a combination of these two ideas, with meals incorporating beef, pork, and seafood as well as frijoles and corn.

"We will prepare dishes in each of the meal categories and I plan to choose something a little different and out of the ordinary for the event," Vollmar said. "What we do best is to set up the format for people to gather for a common cause, (in this case the Joaquin Moraga Adobe preservation), explore the food and the culture, and sit and share the meal just as they would have done, at a very large table, in the California Rancho period."

Because I needed a dish to accompany my homemade chicken enchiladas, I decided to run with the beef, beans and tortillas definition of Early Rancho Cooking. And, while I am certain the rancheros raised their own beans, dried them and boiled them, I find opening a can of pinto beans can be nearly as satisfying ... and a whole lot quicker to prepare! So, if you are inclined to boil your own pinto beans, just make this same recipe, but cook the beans according to the directions on the package before adding the remaining ingredients. Also, because individual tastes for seasoning and spice vary, don't hesitate to add or subtract from the quantities I've listed in the recipe. These are a perfect accompaniment to any sort of grilled meat, and especially to enchiladas!

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Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website:

www.lamorindaweekly.com.

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

Lynn's Top Five

Downsizing Can Save You Money!

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

It all sounded so easy and straightforward: downsize and buy something smaller ... maybe in Rossmoor? Maybe a townhome or condo? And now that you've successfully negotiated yourself through the crazy ups, downs and mazes that involve listing, selling and buying a home in the 2014 Bay Area real estate market, you are exhausted and just ready to be done, right? But wait ... there's more! You need to cram your current lifestyle down - substantially! So after you sign those deals and pour everyone a celebratory Mai Tai, it's time to strategize and embark upon your next challenge: living smaller.

Embarking on this journey can save you a lot of money down the road. Not only does having less mean fewer square feet to pay for living in, but it also means you don't have to pay so much to move. Another benefit? You can avoid paying for storage while you re-orient yourself into your new, more compact lifestyle. So let's chat about five money winning ideas

that will keep your moving costs down and erase some carbon footprints going forward!

1) Clear the clutter! Colleague and realtor Janice Colby with Keller Williams says that even before you put your home on the market you should really "tackle one room at a time and divide your items into three piles: keep, donate and toss!" Do you need three shovels? How many knife blocks are you going to hold onto? Can we start over with just a few fresh spices and condiments?

2) Family photo albums - If your husband (like mine) spent more time behind the lens than in front of it as your family grew, then I know you have shelves and closets spilling over with photo albums. Time to take apart those old albums, keep a few originals or negatives of some truly special moments, and then scan and put the rest on a storage medium or to the cloud! Be sure to create at least one backup and make copies for family members, and put a copy in your

fire-proof safe or safe deposit box. There, you've freed up a couple of hundred square feet already!

3) Old tax returns and other records - Do you really need the paper copy? Whether you keep it on your computer "desk top" or archive it onto another format, go paperless - you will be much happier! Check with your financial advisor - do you even need paper monthly statements anymore? Not only can you shred recent years that your broker provides you online, but think of the closet space and overhead you just freed up by turning them off going forward!

4) The kid years - This is by far the toughest event in every parent's life - sorry, it's not the tearful first day at kindergarten, prom or graduation - it's the tossing of the clay pots, the collages and maybe that mission project from elementary school! What to do: create one selective memory box for each child and hold onto it until they have a home of their own. It's not easy, but just remember you are

not the Smithsonian! And even they have to edit their collections - frequently!

5) Hire help! Getting too emotionally involved as you go through things? Becoming indecisive? The best money you may ever spend is hiring a professional organizer to help you. Not only can they help you edit yourself, they can also help you donate (think tax deduction!), gift to family (something a relative or friend might cherish), and list more valuable items on E-Bay (you may make enough to pay for the organizer and the mover).

And if this isn't you quite yet, just you wait: your turn will come! So start editing now, start thinking before you casually toss that sweater you never use into a drawer already crammed full of things you never see. Let someone else discover that treasure and pay you for the pleasure, or use it as a charitable opportunity; either way, it's a terrific step towards a clutter free life and a great compli-

ment to your plans for financial security and independence.



Lynn Ballou is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional and co-owner of Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in Lafayette. Lynn is also a Registered Principal and Branch Manager with LPL Financial (LPL). The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendation for any individual. Financial Planning offered through Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, A Registered Investment Advisor and a separate entity. Securities offered through LPL Financial, member FINRA/SIPC.

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