E-Newsletter From: Steve Sando <customerservice@ranchogordo.com>
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Subject: Rancho Gordo News: Making Great Beans Better with a Good Tomato Sauce
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RANCHO GORDO®

20TH ANNIVERSARY

Some things never change. I can cry at *The Wizard of Oz* when the wizard goes off in the hot air balloon without Dorothy; corned beef needs cabbage; and Italy never fails to cure what ails you.

I was on a brief trip but I did manage to meet some bean growers in Sorana, hang for a bit with my old pal Judy Witts Francini (Divina Cucina), make pizza in Napoli, and finally eat the best carbonara of my life with an old Roman friend.

In Napoli, my favorite dish was the salt cod in a tomato sauce with olives and capers. There weren't many ingredients but they were all excellent and the result was terrific. In Mexico, you'd add chiles. In France, you'd add fennel. But in Napoli, the tomatoes were the star and only allowed to be supported by good oil, some garlic, capers, and olives.

As I was eating it, I couldn't help but think that big fat white beans would be a welcome addition. I've made this at home since returning and I was right.

This recipe is directly from my hosts, ANICAV Associazione and the Greatest Tomatoes from Europe promotion. I've just added the beans. It's very Italian to flour and gently fry the fish before adding it to the tomato mixture but I'm not sure it really makes the dish better. It's an extra step and the next time I make it, I think I'll experiment without.

Ingredients

600 g salt cod, soaked for 24 hours with several changes of water
Extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves of garlic, one whole and one minced (divided use)
Fresh parsley and basil stalks, to taste
500 g whole peeled canned tomatoes
100 g olives
30 g capers
2 cups cooked, drained Rancho Gordo Royal Corona beans

Flour, as necessary
Salt and pepper to taste
Sunflower oil, as necessary
Makes 4 to 6 servings

Method

For the salt cod stock:
(If you have very clean salt cod with nothing to clean, simple vegetable stock or even chicken stock will be fine.)
Fillet the salt cod and cut into even portions. Set aside.
Prepare a stock with the trimmings, bones, and skin:
Sauté them gently in a little extra-virgin olive oil, one unpeeled clove of garlic, and the basil and parsley stalks.
Add 2 liters of cold water.
Bring to a boil and cook until the stock has reduced by half (about 1 liter in all).
Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Discard the solids and reserve the stock.
For the tomato sauce:
Sauté the remaining minced garlic clove in extra-virgin olive oil with the olives and capers. Cut half of the tomatoes in half, and keep the others whole; add to the sauce. Add the cooked beans and allow them to heat through.
Add the salt cod stock and stir to combine.
For the fried salt cod:
Dry the salt cod fillets well, coat lightly in flour, and fry in plenty of sunflower oil at 170°C.
To finish the dish:
Place the fried salt cod fillets in the sauce for 3 or 4 minutes, making sure you turn them a couple of times.
Serve hot.

This recipe uses salt cod but I think this sauce would be terrific for any firm white fish. Or just the beans! If you don't have fish scraps or don't want to use it, thin the tomato sauce out with a little chicken stock, vegetable stock, or even water.
Salt cod you buy in the states mostly comes from Canada and is sold in cute wooden boxes. I am nuts for it. The day before cooking, soak the salt cod in cold water. Change it several times before you're ready to start, then basically treat it as you would any fish.

Making gnocchi in Napoli with my new BFF, Jeanne Fratello of The Jolly Tomato. The gnocchi ended up in a simple tomato sauce with mozzarella and then baked.

Some people think it's a crime to use canned tomatoes when fresh tomatoes are in season. I think they're two different ingredients. Good canned, Italian tomatoes are like nothing else. The American canned tomatoes seem to have really gone downhill with very few tomatoes, green shoulders, and little flavor.
If you've grown good tomatoes at home or you know a farmer with superior tomatoes, I fully support you, as long as you don't give me grief about my San Marzanos in a tin.

Royal Corona Bean
$6.95

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Marcella Bean
$6.95

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Jesús Helguera and the Art of the Mexican Calendar

Our annual calendars often feature the artwork of Jesús Helguera with campy but sweet scenes of an idealized Mexico. They've been a Rancho Gordo tradition for at least 15 or 16 years. Our own Karla Moreno wrote a tribute to Helguera on our blog and hopefully, it will get you a little excited about this year's calendar. No hints as to which image it will be!

The inevitable question is how you can get one. We start including them with all of our retail orders starting with the holiday season, which traditionally is the day after Thanksgiving. We keep including them in orders until we run out. Some years that's in December and others we end in the Spring. This year looks to be all kinds of trouble for holiday shipping, so we'll probably start a little early. We also have the calendars in our Napa store.
Read about Helguera on our blog.

Some favorite varieties available to ship now:

Ayocote Negro Bean

Christmas Lima Bean

Yellow Eye Bean

I always laugh when it starts to get cold and people pretend to shiver and then say, "It's bean weather!" My eyes roll and I want to scream, "It's always bean weather!!!!" but I don't. I just smile and suggest a good soup. This is my moment of zen. — Steve

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