

The Arikara Beans featured in tonight's Moroccan Spiced Stew come from Full Circle Farm in Carnation, Washington. Slow Food USA has placed the Arikara Bean on the US Ark of Taste, a catalog of over 200 noteworthy native foods in danger of extinction. This designation promotes awareness of the historical importance of such foods before they are lost and forgotten. According to the Slow Food website:

"The Arikara Yellow Bean was a primary food crop for the Mandan and the Arikara American Indian tribes of the Missouri Valley—the former is the bean's name bearer. Both its hard shell and its tendency to hold shape make the Arikara Yellow an excellent dry bean. Arikara Yellow plants are extremely prolific in producing these yellowish-tan seeds as well as very drought-resistant, making them the ideal market bean plant. However, because the Arikara Yellow bean does not fit the established classes for dry beans in North American, there is no ready market for the this bean and thus the bean's existence is seriously threatened."

As we bring our spring season of Evening Meals at School to a close it seems an appropriate time to recognize the work of all those who contribute to the realization of each meal. Every community dinner requires the help of about 25 volunteers organized under the gracious tutelage of Danah Feldman, who miraculously rounds up folks to hang posters, set-up, greet, cashier, serve, bus, wash dishes, wrap silverware, break-down, and clean up. A special thanks to Julie Bottjen, from Lopez Community CSA, who will be assisting Danah in the future. We would like to acknowledge and thank the fabulous women who have helped us in the kitchen: Nancy, Dana, Sam, Wendy, Deborah, Sue, Munirah, and Hanifah. We greatly appreciate Sue DuMond and Matthew Rabel's contributions to the website and graphic design. The staff of Vortex deserves kudos for accommodating the monthly disruption caused by the Evening Meals. Thanks to Helen for her welcoming bagpipe tunes that signal to everyone (including the kitchen staff) that the meal is about to begin. Very special thanks to the Heller Family and Nancy Rankin for contributions too numerous to mention.

Of course our community dinners would not be possible without the provisions from our local farmers and gardeners. The Carter Family generously dipped into their ground lamb supply to provide meat for tonight's meal. The Arikara Beans were procured by Nancy Rankin from Full Circle Farm and the Emmer Farro was transported from Bluebird Grain Farms by Debbie Hatch. Heller Family Farm donated the greens for our salad, with chard coming from Kim and Todd's garlic patch and Lopez Harvest. Jean harvested sorrel and fresh herbs from her garden. The rhubarb was collected by Dana Cotton and family, Joe Thornton, and Randy Waugh (who has also donated his luscious Chicaoji Hot Sauce). Blake Johnston and Julie Bottjen from Lopez Community Farm supplied eggs for the dessert. Blossom Grocery provided other odds and ends to make our meal complete.

Our profound thanks to all who gather with us monthly to celebrate the earthly delights of our burgeoning local foods movement. Grow fruitfully and join us again in September.

Food is so primal, so essential a part of our lives, often the mere sharing of recipes with strangers turns them into good friends. That's why I love this community. ~Jasmine Heiler

Moroccan Spiced Stew with Heirloom Arikara Beans

Serves 4

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 yellow onion, cut in half and thinly sliced
3 garlic cloves, minced
½ tsp red pepper flakes
1 tsp ground coriander
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground fennel
½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 Tbsp paprika
1-14 oz. can diced tomatoes
3 cups cooked garbanzo beans (or 1½ cups dried)
2 bunches spinach, chard, or mustards thinly sliced
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
Optional-1 lb ground lamb, crumbled and sautéed

If using dried beans start their preparation the night before. Pick through the beans to remove any rocks or debris.

In a heavy bottomed soup pot, cover the beans with 3 inches of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove beans from the heat, make sure they are covered by at least 3 inches of water, partially cover the pot and allow the beans to sit out over night. The next day drain the beans and rinse them well. Return beans to the soup pot, cover with 3 inches of water, bring to a simmer over med-high heat, and cook until partially tender.

In a separate sauté pan cook onions in olive oil until limp and lightly browned. Add garlic and all dried spices and cook until garlic is fragrant and onions are evenly coated with spices. Add onion mixture, optional cooked ground lamb, and diced tomatoes to mostly cooked beans, adding more water as needed to cover stew by 1 inch. Continue to simmer until beans are tender. Take stew off the heat and immediately add greens and stir until wilted. Taste for salt and pepper. Garnish with chopped parsley before serving.

Pilaf of Ancient Emmer Farro Wheat

Serves 4

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 onion, diced
1 cup dried emmer farro
3 cups water, veg or chicken broth
1 tsp salt
1 cup finely chopped fresh herbs such as thyme, parsley, sorrel, lovage, tarragon, or chives
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a heavy bottomed saucepan sauté onion in olive oil until translucent. Stir in emmer farro until grains are well coated with olive oil. Add 3 cups of chosen cooking liquid and salt and bring to boil. Cover saucepan with a tight fitting lid, reduce heat to low, and simmer until grain is tender but chewy, about 50 minutes. Remove emmer farro from heat, stir in chopped herbs, taste for salt and pepper, and serve.

Rhubarb Custard Squares

Makes an 8" by 8" pan

1½ cups flour
½ tsp salt
12 oz cold butter, cut into ½" piece-we used cultured butter which contributes a bit of a 'tang' to the recipe
¾ cup brown sugar
1½ cups oats
3 cups rhubarb pieces (½ inch pieces)
3 eggs
1½ cups sugar
3 rounded Tbsp flour
4 Tbsp butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter an 8" by 8" baking dish. In the bowl of a standing mixer or food processor combine flour, oats, brown sugar, and salt. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Press mixture evenly into baking dish, bringing crust up an inch on all sides of dish. Whisk together eggs, sugar, flour, and melted butter. Gently mix in rhubarb pieces. Pour custard mixture over crumble crust. Bake for about 25 minutes or until top is puffed and nicely golden brown. Cool and cut and enjoy!
