**Jamaican Red Bean Soup**

From Southern Homecoming Traditions by Carolyn Quick Tillery

**Ingredients:**
- 2 cups dried kidney beans, soaked and drained
- 10 cups water
- 2 TBS vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 1 large green pepper, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper, seeded and minced
- 6 green onions
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 2 tbs thyme
- 1 cup coconut milk
- ½ tsp allspice
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp salt

**Instructions:**
1) Pick over beans, remove foreign objects. Soak overnight in cold water to cover beans by 2 inches.
2) Drain and rinse. Place in large soup pot and add water. Bring to a quick boil. Reduce heat to medium. Cook 1 hour, adding more water as necessary to prevent beans from sticking.
3) Drain beans, reserving 5 cups liquid; set aside.
4) Sauté onions, green pepper and garlic in oil 5 to 7 minutes.
5) Return beans to the pot containing sautéed vegetables. Add cooking liquid and remaining ingredients except salt. Simmer 1 to 1 ½ hours over low heat. Add salt to taste.

**Sweet Potato, Kale & Black-eyed Pea Soup**

From Soul Food Live by Alice Randall & Caroline Randall Williams

**Ingredients:**
- 1 TBS olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- 1 celery stalk, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 5 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 TBS dried thyme
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes, or more to taste
- 1 quart chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 ½ cups mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 (14.5) can diced tomatoes, including juice
- 8 cups kale leaves, collards, or mustard greens, torn

**Instructions:**
1) Heat the olive oil in stockpot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, and celery and cook, stirring, until the vegetables just begin to get soft, about 5 minutes.
2) Add the garlic, fresh and dried thyme, and crushed red pepper. Keep stirring. Pour in the sweet potato broth and tomatoes with their juice. Keep stirring. Raise the heat to high, bring to a boil, and add the kale. Cover, reduce the heat, and simmer for 45 minutes.
3) Add the black-eyed peas and continue to simmer, covered, until the flavors meld and the greens are completely tender, about 15 minutes more. Season to taste with salt, and add more red pepper flakes if desired.
Bring It to the Table: Grow your own food.

The food industry wants us to believe that growing our own food is difficult. Most stores that sell food plants and seeds sell genetically modified varieties that yield produce with less taste and nutrition—and they are designed so you can’t save the seeds for next year’s planting.

Do you have any space to grow food where you live? (A sunny window sill, patio, rooftop, deck or little bit of yard?

What kinds of foods could you grow in that space?

What kinds of herbs do you like the flavor of? (For example, cilantro, parsley, dill, basil or stevia.)

Where could you grow herbs where you live?

How to Sprout Lentils (or other dry beans) in a Jar

- 1/2 cup dry lentil beans
- Quart jar, Jar band, small piece of cheesecloth, thin clean sock or piece of panty hose and a rubber band

1. Pour lentils into the quart jar. Rinse lentils two times in lukewarm water. Use your hand to cover the top of the jar and let the water run out through your fingers while holding the lentils inside.
2. Add just enough water to cover the top of the lentils by about an inch.
3. Put cheesecloth or thin sock over the top of the jar. Let sit about 12 hours or overnight.
5. Turn jar on its side so lentils spread out evenly. Set on a sunny windowsill.

You’ll have sprouts in about 5 days. Sprouts are very high in vitamins and other healthy nutrients! Eat them on sandwich-es, in salads or by the handful.

Grow a food garden with OKT

- Do you live within our four target neighborhoods (SECA, Baxter, Eastown or Garfield Park)?
- Are you pregnant or a parent to children under age six?
- Do you have economic challenges?
- Do you have health challenges you can address by growing your own food?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you may qualify to be an Our Kitchen Table food gardener. OKT has the resources you need. OKT offers gardening classes, soil testing, gardening tools, starter food plants, garden coaches, containers and soil—all free to qualified gardeners!

If you are interested, email, oktable1@gmail.com or call, 616-206-3641.
**Healthy Food Heritage: Beans**

Black beans, pinto beans, navy bean, and kidney beans originated in Central and South America. No other food group has a more health-supportive mix of protein-plus-fiber than these legumes. A one-cup serving of black beans provides about half the daily fiber needed by an adult and 15 grams of protein (the equivalent of eating 2 ounces of chicken or fish). This protein-fiber combination helps maintain a healthy digestive tract, good blood sugar levels and heart health. Eating black beans may help prevent type 2 diabetes, heart attacks and colon cancer.

Don’t throw out the water you soak your dry beans in! It contains important nutrients leached from the beans—and reduces flatulence. Brazil, along with India, grows more black beans than any country. The Brazilian Food Pyramid includes them as a separate food group on its Food Pyramid.

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**Pyramid Schemes: Too Much Junk on MyPlate**

Who’s health does the USDA food guidelines ensure? The food industry’s healthy profits. They lobbied to pervert the original pyramid submitted by the USDA nutritionists who were charged with creating it.

The first revised pyramid:
- Altered wording to emphasize processed foods over fresh and whole foods
- Downplayed lean meats and low-fat dairy choices to calm the Meat and Dairy Industries.
- Increased the servings of bread, cereal and pasta from 3-4 to 6-11 servings to appease the wheat growers.
- Lowered the 5-9 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to 2-3 servings
- Moves white-flour foods out of the “eat sparingly” category.
- Changed wording about eating junk food from “eat less” to the less meaningful “avoid too much.”

The pyramid was again revised in 2005. Its complicated design and wishy-washy guidelines did little more to ensure good nutrition while continuing to pander to the profits of the food industry. The over-simplified MyPlate does little to promote fresh, organic fruits and vegetables or 100% whole grains but continues to endorse the meat and dairy industries.

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Here is the original food pyramid developed by Dr. Luise Light, one of the nutritionists charged with designing the original pyramid in the ‘80s.

When she saw the changes made because of industry pressure, she predicted that America would see an epidemic of obesity and diabetes and resigned from her position.

Sad to say, her prediction has come true.

Suggested reading:
*What To Eat* by Luise Light

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Food Justice, Food Workers and a Living Wage

In May 2014, the Michigan Legislature passed a bill increasing Michigan’s minimum wage to $9.25 an hour by 2018. Most likely, this decision was made to undercut the Democratic Party’s statewide ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour. While, raising the minimum wage is a step in the right direction, it ignores the larger issue of a living wage, especially as it relates to workers in the food industry.

A Living Wage is different than a minimum wage. It takes inflation into account inflation and addresses what an individual actually needs to earn in order to live in the current economy. Many organizers around the country are calling $15 an hour a Living Wage and have won campaigns to get such an hourly wage passed.

These $15 an hour campaigns are mostly being organized by workers in the food industry, restaurant workers, those in retail and the fast food industry. These food industry workers have been among the most exploited in the US in recent decades. They are challenging a system that has made billions in profits by paying low wages.

Almost all workers in the food industry earn an unjust wage—from migrant workers and those working in food processing plants to grocery store clerks and people in restaurants, institutional food cafeterias and fast food chains. In both the restaurant and agriculture industries, minimum wage laws do not apply. Migrant workers are at the mercy of whatever farm owners want to pay them; people working for tips in restaurants have a whole different minimum wage standard applied to them.

For instance, the minimum wage for tipped workers in Michigan is $2.65 an hour. The 2014 minimum wage law would increase that to a meager $3.52 by 2018. Imagine working for those wages and relying on the generosity of the general public—especially when larger numbers of people in the US are experiencing poverty.

As an organization that promotes and practices food justice, Our Kitchen Table (OKT) supports the efforts of food workers who are organizing to demand a livable wage and better working conditions. Check these out:

- Restaurant Organizing Committee, rocunited.org
- Fast Food Forward fastfoodforward.org
- The migrant worker group, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, ciw-online.org

OKT knows that more and more people want to eat local, nutritious food that is chemical- and GMO-free. However, it is equally important that we demand that growers, migrant workers, restaurant workers and fast food workers be paid a living wage, have safe working conditions and have the right to organize fellow workers.

When we enter a grocery store, shop at a farmers market, eat at a restaurant or look at food labels, we should ask:

- How were the workers who provided us with this food treated?
- What is the wage that these food workers make?
- Is it a living wage?
- Do these food workers have the right to organize?
- Does this food we are about to purchase and eat promote food justice?

OKT recognizes that workers in the food industry need justice, too!