

From Ronda's Front Porch to Yours

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The Origin of Hoppin' John

Like many holidays, New Year's Day is rich in tradition especially when it comes to food that garnishes the family table. A traditional New Year's Day menu will include greens or cabbage and black-eyed peas, all to bring wealth in the new year. Many versions of the origin and purpose of the foods are circulated but all point back to their southern roots where these foods were inexpensive, easy to grow and provided nourishment.

Hoppin' John is old time recipe that according to foodtimeline.org., was a southern dish made from cowpeas and rice. One story suggests that the name hoppin' john received its name because guests were invited to "hop in, John" and eat with the family.

Black-eyed peas were feed to cattle in the eighteenth century receiving the name, cow peas. In the 1730's, cowpeas multiplied in Georgia and were planted on Jefferson's plantation in Monticello. Hoppin' John was a popular dish with slaves on southern plantations, especially in South Carolina.

With hoppin' john surrounded by such rich history, it still is a popular dish today. There are many variations of the recipe, but traditional recipes include, black-eyed peas, rice and some type of pork, whether it be bacon, ham hock or sausage.

Traditional recipes are cooked on stovetop; however, over the years modern day conveniences have simplified the cooking process. The use of an electronic pressure cooker or slow cooker can reduce cooking time spent in the kitchen but yet not sacrifice the taste of a traditional favorite.

Try this recipe for Instant Pot Hoppin' John from myrecipes.com. This can also be cooked on stove top or in the slow cooker.

Instant Pot Hoppin' John

- 1 lb. dried black-eyed peas
- 1 lb. ham hock
- 1 onion, halved
- 3 garlic cloves
- 4 bay leaves
- ½ lb. bacon, diced
- 1 c. onion, chopped
- 3 ribs celery, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 jalapeno pepper
- ½ t. chopped fresh thyme

1 c. long-grain rice
1 bunch green onions
¼ c. chopped fresh parsley
1 t. coarse salt
1 t. ground black pepper

Directions: Place black-eyed peas, ham hock, halved onion, garlic, and bay leaves with 5 cups of water in an Instant Pot. Turn on the pot's pressure cooker setting, according to package instructions. Cook, covered, until beans are tender, 15 to 20 minutes.

Drain the peas, saving liquid in a bowl. Discard the onion, garlic, and bay leaves. Pull meat off of the ham hock. Shred and reserve meat; discard bone.

Wipe out the pot and turn on the saute setting. Add bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until crispy, about 8 minutes. Add 1 cup chopped onion, celery, bell pepper, and jalapeño. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are tender and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the thyme, 1 1/2 cups water, and 1 cup reserved bean liquid to pot; bring to a boil.

Change heat to rice setting, stir in the rice; cover and simmer until the rice is tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in the green onions, parsley, black-eyed peas, and shredded ham; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Adjust the consistency with additional reserved bean liquid if needed. The Hoppin' John should be moist, but not soupy.

Source: www.recipes.com; www.foodtimeline.org

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