The Nature of Beans

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The Nature of Beans

Oh beans, solving so many human needs and creating a few social faux pas in the process. That may be nature’s way of telling us to take ourselves less seriously. Beans are delicious, come in a wealth of flavors and preparations, and are a good source of vegetable protein. They can be attractive in the garden too. Growing the quick, verdant vines studded with three pointed leaves is really easy and can be satisfying—It’s probably because it reminds me of growing bean sprouts in cups as a kid. Also, maybe the schoolyard rhyme has something to do with the memories too.

~ beans beans, the musical fruit ~

The leaves are heliotropic, meaning they follow the sun during the day, ending in a closed, upright “sleeping” position at night. I find the edible scarlet runner beans the most attractive. The extra tall vines produce tiny, intricate blooms in the brightest firecracker red imaginable, like a festival on a vine that, unsurprisingly, comes straight out of Central America. The stalwart favorite of many a home gardener, the ubiquitous green bean, also originates from the Americas. It wasn’t until the 16th century that Europeans had even glimpsed the common bean, let alone made it part of their cuisine. The green bean we know today didn’t develop until several hundred years later, when pods where bred to be edible, with far less fiber and no strings.

~ the more you eat, the more you toot ~

Native Americans famously grew beans as part of the three sisters method of agriculture. To do this, a few corn seeds were planted in the middle of a mound, beans sown around them to climb up the corn stalks and add nitrogen to the soil, and scratchy-leaved squash grown around the base of it all to act as a weed suppressor and a barrier for corn-hungry wildlife. Knowing their produce was safe probably gave these people a greater sense of relief that their hard work would pay off.

~ the more you toot, the better you feel ~

These are the beans we offer at the farm, but they’re nothing to sneeze at. They are hands down one of the best veggies of summer, and utterly worlds apart from frozen beans, or heaven forbid, canned beans. I shiver at the thought of those cold, army-green pustules that swam in off-green juice. All I could do in elementary school was hope that the lunch lady didn’t splash my pizza slice with any of that foul liquid. Now I can simply say no to that nonsense. Steamed fresh beans is the way to go in my opinion. A little butter, salt and pepper, and you’re ready to go!

~ so let’s have beans for every meal ~

Andrew Croft

Green Beans and Pecans served with a Maple Vinaigrette

Serves: 4 Ready In: 30

Ingredients
1 pound of green beans
1/2 cup pecans
1/8 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Directions
1. Preheat the oven to 400F.
2. Spread the pecans onto a cookie sheet and allow backing for 6 minutes, tossing the nuts halfway through.
3. Pull out of the oven and allow nuts to cool.
4. Bring a pot to a boil on the stove.
5. While waiting, cut the tough ends of the green bean and wash slightly.
6. Place trimmed beans into the pot of boiling water with 1 teaspoon of salt for 4 to 5 minutes.
7. Remove the beans from the pot and run cold water over them until they are cool. Then allow beans to drain.
8. Roughly chop the pecans.
9. In a large bowl, whisk the oil, vinegar, mustard, maple syrup, pepper, and remaining salt together.
10. Add the green beans and pecans, then toss.
11. Serve and Enjoy!

recipe by Shannon Babb
On the Farm News

Today I would like to introduce you to Bryce Ewell. Bryce is one of our outreach interns here on the farm and found us through contact with Jennifer Reeves. His sights were set to work on the farm and his experience primarily with corn, wheat and alfalfa as a conventional farmer, he was an easy choice to be a part of the team. His desire is to obtain knowledge with organic cropping systems to one day combine the knowledge with conventional for good harvests and overall find sustainability.

His major is in agronomy with an emphasis on biotechnology and crop genetics. This is his drive in order to fulfill his desires to become a plant breeder and to have his own farm one day. Currently with our farm he works primarily with the kids camp by teaching them about agriculture focusing on organic and sustainable management.

Learning that most people of our young generation have little to no interest in agriculture, Bryce feels driven to show and teach knowledge about agriculture and locally grown foods to our next generations. His experience with teaching kids has been eye opening. Teaching such young learners who are so curious and attentive, and who already have a knack for growing plants, he said, “the younger kids of 10-12 years old are surprisingly so knowledgeable about it already.” Looks like things may be looking up for our future as we are sharing such humble teachings to our children.

As Bryce nears the end of his internship with us, he advocates how important he feels that being flexible, creative, open and willing to help others is an essential part in his work. To be creative and to look outside the box is what makes all the pieces come together. He wants to stay knowledgeable and keep sustainable agriculture and locally grown food alive. It is never too early or late to begin down this humble road. Thank you so much Bryce for all you do.

Eric Manrique

What you might see in your next box

lettuce
kale
chard
tomatoes
peppers
cucumbers
zucchini
beans
carrots

Endless buckets of beans!

One of our favorite and most consistent veggies...Kale!