

Refried Beans with Flour Tortillas and Pickled Red Onions

Makes: 4 servings

Time: 20 minutes with cooked beans

I do most of the cooking in my house, not because my wife isn't a really good cook (she is), but because I just enjoy it a lot more than she does. When I used to go away on trips and she stayed home, I would pretty reliably return to find a half-opened can of refried beans in an otherwise empty fridge. This always struck me as a little melancholy until I realized that this was not for lack of other options, but that she just really loves refried beans and is pretty delighted to eat them for dinner. Now that I think about it, she's right. Refried beans usually get the side-dish treatment, but there's no reason they can't or shouldn't be the main event. With a few garnishes and some flour tortillas for scooping, that's exactly what they are. And whether you start with home-cooked beans or not, actually frying, mashing and seasoning them yourself makes a huge difference.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup lard, bacon fat, or drippings from Mexican chorizo, 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, or 1/4 cup good-quality vegetable oil
- 3 cups drained cooked or canned pinto, pink, or black beans (reserve the liquid if you cooked them yourself)
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste
- Salt and pepper
- Pickled red onions (optional, see method below)
- Flour tortillas for serving

Instructions

1. Put the fat in a large skillet over medium heat. When it is hot, add the beans. Mash with a large fork or potato masher until they're beginning to break up.

2. Add the onion, cumin, and cayenne and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Continue to cook and mash until the beans are more or less broken up (some remaining chunks are fine) and the onion is lightly cooked, about 5 minutes more. Thin with a little reserved cooking liquid or water to adjust the consistency. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Garnish pickled red onions and/or anything else from the list below, and serve with flour tortillas.

Quick Pickled Red Onions

Put about 1/3 cup vinegar (red wine, sherry, or apple cider) in a medium skillet. Squeeze in the juice of a lime and stir in 1/2 teaspoon each of salt and sugar. When the mixture bubbles, add a

thinly sliced red onion and cook over high heat, stirring, until the onions soften a bit a turn pink, about 2 minutes.

More Garnishes For Refried Beans

- Minced fresh or pickled chile
- Chopped fresh cilantro
- Sliced radishes
- Chopped seeded tomato
- Grated cheddar, Monterey Jack, or Chihuahua cheese, or crumbled queso fresco
- Crumbled cooked fresh or chopped smoked chorizo
- Sour cream or crema
- Hot sauce
- Limes wedges or zest

—Recipe from [How to Cook Everything: Completely Revised Twentieth Anniversary Edition](#)