

Beans en Escabeche

Adapted from Yvonne Ortiz's *The Taste of Puerto Rico* by Alicia Kennedy

Serves 4-6 | 25 minutes

Kennedy prefers a white bean or chickpea or any mild bean for this, and she admits to using canned beans during Puerto Rico's hot season to avoid using the stove. The quantities make about 4-6 servings, but it's the kind of recipe that doesn't need careful measurements. As she says, "it's equal parts olive oil, sofrito, and vinegar," and it's easy to scale up or down. And while the original calls for the easy accessible white vinegar, we like the extra flavor from Katz Gravenstein apple cider vinegar. While Kennedy eats with plantain strips, we also like these beans on a good tortilla chip, like the ones we carry from Portland's Hot Mama Salsa.

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup sofrito (recipe below)

1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced

Salt to taste

1-2 cups cooked chickpeas or white beans

¼ cup Katz Gravenstein apple cider vinegar

1 cup Pimento-stuffed Spanish or similar pitted green olives

Step 1 In a medium pot over low heat, heat the olive oil and sofrito.

Steps 2 Add the onion and season with a bit of salt, keeping in mind that the sofrito has salt already and that olives will be added later. Stir and continue to stir occasionally until the onion is translucent; you don't want it to brown.

Steps 3 Once the onion has cooked, add the beans and vinegar. Let the pot simmer about 10 to 12 minutes, then remove from heat, stir in the olives (slice them if they're large), and let cool completely. Serve at room temperature.

Sofrito

The Caribbean sofrito, which can vary from island to island, is similar to the Italian soffritto and the sofrito made in Spain. All combine different aromatic vegetables and herbs that provide the flavor base to a variety of dishes. The Italians use onion, carrot, and celery, and Spanish cooks combine onion and tomato. Puerto Rican sofrito leans on fresh herbs more, and also includes some kind of fresh pepper. But as Kennedy says, "you should make it with your heart." Here's a rough guide.

A small onion

4 cloves garlic

5 ají dulce pepper (see notes)

1 Cubanelle or bell pepper (see notes)

1/4 to 1/2 cup finely chopped recaó (see notes)

1/3 cup cilantro, stems included, finely chopped

Salt to taste

A drizzle of olive oil while blending

Step 1 For the sofrito, chop everything together finely or blitz in a processor or blender with little salt and a drizzle of olive oil.

Ingredient Notes Aji dulce peppers have the same floral flavors as habaneros or Scotch bonnet peppers, but without the capsaicin heat. If you can find the heatless Habanada peppers, use those. Cubanelles are similar to yellow banana peppers, thin-skinned and not too hot. An Anaheim pepper makes a decent substitute, but follow your heart and use any combination of sweet and hot peppers that you like.

Recaó is what they call culantro in Puerto Rico, but the cilantro-like-but-stronger herb, aka *Eryngium foetidum*, might be hard to find (check small markets serving the Latino community), but you can just use an entire bunch of cilantro (large), and let cool completely. Serve at room temperature.