

VELVET BEAN RECIPES

TRANSLATED FROM *RECETARIO DE COCINA* BY DR. MARTIN L. PRICE

A WORLD NEIGHBORS PUBLICATION (HONDURAS)

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ECHO TECHNICAL NOTE

A CAUTION FROM ECHO

We are making this available in spite of misgivings about the safety of consuming larger amounts of velvet beans. Has there been a failure of the bean crop in your area, but velvet beans are abundant? If so, it is almost certainly better to make use this high protein bean than to suffer hunger or protein malnutrition. I believe it was just such a situation that first prompted the development of these recipes. Is the food situation a bit less desperate than that, but people still do not have enough to eat? If so, I would use velvet beans in moderation and not every day. Are there plenty of alternative sources of protein? If so, do something else with the velvet beans.

Some years ago I read a study that set out to determine in what ways college graduates differed from those who had not been to college. The only point I remember is that they supposedly had developed a greater tolerance for ambiguity. There is certainly something in mankind that wants things to be clear cut and plain. What politician has ever won an election by saying "On the one hand But then on the other hand..."? We crave certainty. In the case of the safety of velvet bean, I hope you have developed a tolerance for ambiguity. I know what you want to hear is either do or do not eat it. At present the answer is ambiguous.

We have discussed the issue of whether velvet beans are safe for use as a human food in past issues (EDN 24-4). My own conclusion was that I would cautiously eat them if I did not have enough to eat or my diet was lacking in protein. Otherwise I would eat them infrequently if at all, and then only in small quantities. A recipe book can make everything look very straightforward and safe. It has not been proven to be safe. But it is safer than trying to live without protein. (I imagine other beans could be made to fit into these interesting recipes).

Milton Flores (see recipes section) shares his own experience. "Although many people are eating the velvet bean in more than one way, we are careful to caution them to use it with care. We have observed symptoms such as drowsiness and headaches. This is especially true when people mix several [velvet bean] dishes at a time. In my own opinion, some people are more sensitive than others are. I can stand only one cup of velvet bean coffee and one or two velvet bean tortillas at one time. When we have cooking demonstrations, with several dishes prepared and offered at the same time, it is usual that a couple people report symptoms like those I have mentioned. Most people, however, do not seem to be affected in any way."

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Keep in mind that there may be differences between varieties. It is conceivable that beans that have been stored a long time may be less toxic. Considering how widely velvet beans are being grown and how productive they are, it is a shame that the research community is not addressing these problems more vigorously. Thankfully two professors at two different undergraduate Christian colleges are working on it as they are able, but their research budgets are minuscule. We will keep our network abreast of their findings.

In EDN # 24 I made the following recommendation concerning "coffee" made from velvet beans. "If buying coffee was hard on my budget, I would drink velvet bean coffee in moderation. If neither I nor anyone in my community had problems, I might drink it freely after a time." Based on tentative findings from Dr. Myrman at Judson College, I would change that. Until further research has been done I personally would not drink more than an occasional cup of velvet bean coffee. Dr. Myrman has told me verbally that there is 250 mg of dopa in an 8-ounce cup of velvet bean "coffee" (sometimes misleadingly called "nutrificafe.") The beginning dosage for treatment of Parkinson's disease is 600-800 mg dopa. So a person drinking 3-4 cups of velvet bean coffee a day is easily getting this amount. [A question to doctors in our network -- are there medical applications for Parkinsons victims for whom medicines are not available?]. We eagerly await his written report and will share the findings and a summary of the literature in an upcoming issue of EDN.

(By the way, CIDICCO has a new report on using velvet bean as a green manure in citrus plantations. It is available free from them in Spanish, and soon in English. Apdo. Postal 3385, Tegucigalpa M.D.C., Honduras, Central America).

HOW ARE VELVET BEANS USED IN FARMING SYSTEMS?

Use of velvet beans as an inter-crop with corn has doubled or even tripled yields of corn by peasant farmers in some situations. The degree of improvement presumably depends on how poor the soil was initially. The vines also make great forage and keep down weeds during the dry season. The mulch remaining after they are cut down keeps the soil more cool and moist for the new corn crop. You are referred to EDN 23 for a discussion of its use. If you do not have that issue, request our Technical Note on green manures. We always have trial seed packets available for our overseas network.

RECIPES

Note to recipes: My Spanish has its limitations. When I was not certain of a word I put in parenthesis the word and my translation).

Milton Flores has sent us a 77-page recipe book that was developed by El Rosario, one of World Neighbors' projects in Honduras. (Milton directs the International Center for Information on Cultivation of Cover Crops (CIDICCO), an affiliate of World Neighbors.) Roughly half of the recipes are for velvet beans. ECHO has translated 13 of the recipes into English. CIDICCO is making plans to translate the entire book into English. You can write them for details.

When I visited the World Neighbors project in Honduras a few years ago they were in the midst of a drought. The crop of common beans had failed, but the velvet beans produced abundantly. This led to efforts to incorporate velvet bean into local recipes. Additionally, new recipes were developed based on their work with soybean, after changes to improve the taste and consistency.

You can order the 77 page recipe book (in Spanish only) from Milton Flores, CIDICCO, Apdo Postal 3385, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Central America. It is called *Recetario de cocina*. The price is only US \$4.00, but airmail postage is \$6 in the Americas and \$10 elsewhere (it was published for local use, so printing is not compact).

VELVET BEAN FLOUR OR "NUTRI-FLOUR"

Ingredients

5 pounds of velvet bean

Preparation

iron skillet). Stir them constantly with a wooden spoon for about 15 minutes. When the beans begin to pop open and turn a (rosado=pinkish) color, remove from the fire and leave to cool. When cool, mill the finest

Note: For each 5 pounds of beans you will produce 3-1/2 pounds of flour. It is desirable to make a good following recipes calling for "nutri-flour."

NUTRI-COFFEE

_____:

1 pound of velvet bean

4 tablespoons of (dulce de cana raspado = grated sugar cane or cane syrup?)

2 cinnamon sticks (optional)

_____ : Clean the beans well, then wash and dry them in the sun. (This can be done either the previous day or on the same day.) When dry, toast the beans in an iron skillet or a pan until they become quite dark.

Allow to cool. Grind in a hand mill and you are ready to make the coffee.

To prepare the coffee, bring the water to boil. When boiling, add the nutri-coffee at the rate of one teaspoon

Note: You can prepare a quantity of nutri-coffee, but be sure to keep it in tightly sealed cans to preserve its palo tostado y molido = regular coffee roasted and ground) with one pound of nutri-coffee.

Ingredients:

1/2 pound of corn

2 sticks of cinnamon

pimienta olorosa?)

1 pinch of salt

1 tablespoon of vanilla (optional)

11 cups of water

8 tablespoons of powdered milk (optional)

_____ : Clean, wash and dry the beans in the sun (can be done ahead of time or on the same day). Toast on a low fire, on an iron skillet or a pan. Toast well but without burning. In the same way toast the

Dissolve the powdered milk with 11 cups of water and bring to a boil with 8 (cucharadas grandes = heaping tablespoons?) of nutri-chocolate. Boil for 12 minutes. Add the salt, sugar and vanilla to taste and it is ready to serve.

Note: You can prepare a large amount of nutri-chocolate and keep it in tightly sealed cans or jars to keep the flavor and aroma. You can also serve it as a refreshing cold drink or make candy (if a refrigerator is available) for the family or for sale.

NUTRI-DRINK

Ingredients:

1/2 pound of velvet beans
 1 pound of corn
 2 sticks of cinnamon
 sugar to taste
 1 pinch of salt (optional)
 6 (vasos medianos = cups?) of water

Preparation: Prepare and toast the beans as for nutri-chocolate. Also toast the corn and cinnamon. Grind it all very finely and mix well. Mix 6 teaspoons of the mix in 6 (vasos medianos = cups) of water. Strain it through a fine strainer. After straining add the sugar to taste and a pinch of salt if desired, and it is ready to drink.

NUTRI-CHILATE (Chilate is a Central American drink made from chile, cacao and toasted corn)

Ingredients:

1/2 pound of velvet beans
 1 pound of corn
 1 tablespoon of seeds of (culantro de castilla = coriander?) or cinnamon stick pieces to taste.
 sugar to taste (optional)

Preparation: Prepare and toast the beans as for the nutri-chocolate. Toast the corn and the coriander seed or cinnamon stick pieces. Mix with the previously toasted beans and mill together.

To prepare the drink, add one tablespoon of the mix in each glass of water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 12 minutes. Add a pinch of salt, and sugar to taste.

Note: You can add 3 tablespoons of powdered milk or a glass of milk. Any unused mix should be kept in tightly sealed cans or jars to preserve the aroma and taste.

NUTRI-ATOLE (NUTRI-PORRIDGE)

Ingredients:

1/2 pound of velvet bean
 1 pound of corn
 2 cinnamon sticks
 1 pinch of salt

1 tablespoon of vanilla
sugar to taste

Preparation: Prepare and toast the beans as for nutri-chocolate. Toast the corn and cinnamon sticks. Mix with the toasted beans and grind together.

To prepare the nutri-porridge add a tablespoon of the mix to each glass of water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 12 minutes. Add the pinch of salt, vanilla and sugar to taste, and it is ready to drink.

Note: You can add 3 tablespoons of powdered milk or one glass of milk. The mix that remains can be kept tightly sealed in cans or jars to preserve taste and aroma.

FRIED VELVET BEANS

Ingredients:

1/2 pound of velvet beans
1 small onion
1 clove of garlic (optional)
1 medium sized sweet chili
butter to taste
salt and cumin to taste

Preparation: Clean the beans and cook them for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. When the skin is broken remove from the fire. Wash the beans as you would for corn tamales and discard the skins. Grind in a hand mill or (en piedra = pound with a stone?) to make a fine smooth paste.

Add the onion, garlic, chili and fry in very hot lard. Then throw in the ground beans, which have been mixed with a little water. Add salt and cumin to taste. Fry about 8 minutes and it is ready to serve.

Note: You can add hot chili, according to taste.

NUTRI-TORTILLAS

We have come across two methods for making our traditional corn tortillas more nutritious, both involving adding a portion of velvet bean. We present them both so you can choose for yourself.

Ingredients – first method:

12 ounces of corn
4 ounces of velvet bean

Preparation: Cook the corn the way you regularly do for tortillas. Cook the velvet bean for 1 1/2 hours separately. This is necessary to end up with a tortilla with an agreeable color. Wash the corn and beans, trying to remove all of the skin from the beans. Grind the corn and beans in a mill. Mix well to form a smooth dough and it is ready to prepare the improved tortillas.

Ingredients – second method:

1 pound of corn dough
4 ounces of nutri-flour

Mix the nutri-flour into the corn dough and prepare the tortillas.

NUTRI-TAMALITOS "JUANITA"

Ingredients:

1 pound of corn dough
 2 cups of nutri-flour
 4 cups of water
 1 cup of oil or butter
 salt, pepper (achiote? paprika??) and cumin to taste
 vegetables to taste (patate?), carrot, or potato to taste, cut into small pieces
 tomato, onion, garlic and sweet peppers, all finely chopped
 salt and spices to taste
 1 cup of tomato sauce (optional)
 a banana leaf for wrapping

Preparation: Mix the first seven ingredients in a large pot and cook more or less 20 minutes with constant stirring to keep from sticking. It will be like gruel (very thin) but on taking it from the fire it will thicken.

Separately cook the vegetables and fry slightly with the tomato, onion, garlic, sweet chili pepper, salt and spices. Add a little water to help in cooking. Let drain.

In a piece of banana leaf which has already been cleaned and cooked, place one (cucharada grande = heaping tablespoon) of dough and in the center of the masa a teaspoon of small vegetables and, if desired, a teaspoon of tomato sauce. Wrap and tie if necessary.

Place in a pot with leaves in the bottom so it will not burn, add a liter of boiling water and cook for 45 minutes.

Note: This recipe was suggested by a little 6 year old girl, concerned about helping the poor people of the world.

NUTRI-FLOUR BUNUELOS (FRITTERS OR BUNS)

Ingredients:

2 cups of nutri-flour
 4 cups of wheat flour
 4 eggs
 2 tablespoons of baking powder
 4 tablespoons of sugar
 1 pinch of salt
 1 pound of cane syrup
 1/2 pound of butter
 cinnamon sticks to taste
 8 cups of water

Preparation: Separate the eggs and beat the whites to snow-like peaks. Add the yolks and continue beating a couple more minutes. Add the nutri-flour, wheat flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt and mix well. Add the butter and beat well to form a smooth paste. Form the fritters into somewhat thick rings.

Bake over a moderate fire in greased pans, until golden. You can also fry in place of baking.

Separately boil the water and syrup until it dissolves. If necessary, strain through a cloth. Return this to the pot, add the cinnamon and fritters that have already been prepared. Serve immediately or leave for half an hour.

RAVIOLI

This is a Latin adaptation of a traditional Italian dish. These raviolis are fried rather than baked in the Italian manner. They are made in the shape of what we in Honduras call "pastelitos de perro" and other countries call "empanaditas." They are very nutritious because of the combination of wheat flour and nutri-flour.

Ingredients:

2 cups of nutri-flour
2 cups of wheat flour
3 sticks of margarine
1 cup of tepid water

Preparation: Mix the two flours in a bowl. Open a hole in the center and add the margarine. Stir with a fork or with two spoons with a cutting motion.

Gradually add the water to form a smooth dough that does not stick to the bowl. You may not need all the water, or you may need to add a little more. If necessary, finish the mixing with your hand, being careful not to overdo it as it will make them fall apart when fried.

Divide the dough into 4 parts and stretch each piece on a flour-covered table with the help of a rolling pin or bottle. It should end up neither too thin nor too greasy. Cut circles from the dough using the mouth of a glass.

In the center of each circle place a teaspoon of filling, fold into the shape of a half-moon, being careful not to spill the contents because they will pop while frying in the grease. Form an edging on each and press down all around the edge with a fork.

Fry in hot lard or oil (if it is cool, the dough comes apart) until they are golden brown on both sides. Serve over a leaf of lettuce, cover with tomato sauce and sprinkle with finely grated dry cheese and finely chopped parsley.

Ingredients for the filling:

1/2 cooked chicken or any other available meat
2 cups of cooked spinach (any green leafy cooked vegetable)
1 large tomato
1 onion
2 cloves garlic
salt to taste

Preparation: Cut up the meat into small pieces or chop finely, without bones or skin. The spinach or other leafy vegetable should be carefully washed and cooked over a low fire, with only the water that remains on the washed leaves. When cooked, cover and steam a few minutes with the tomato, onion and well chopped garlic. Season with salt. You can also cook the leaves together with the tomato, onion, garlic and salt.

When cooked, mix with the chicken (or other meat) and the filling is ready. Prepare a tomato sauce to cover it.

Note

them like sweet pastries.

CHAMPURRADAS, TOASTED CRACKERS TO EAT WITH COFFEE

_____:
4 cups of wheat flour

2 tablespoons of baking powder
1 cup of sugar

1 cup of water
1/2 cup of sesame seeds (optional)

_____ : Mix the two flours and baking powder. Form into a cone with a hole in the middle. Into the whole mix add the sugar, lard and knead forcefully, adding small amounts of water. You may not need all knead it. The masa should remain porous and

Form small balls from the dough and place them in ungreased pans. Mash down or flatten like tortillas

sprinkle with sesame seeds and make cuts with a knife like you were making (un moderate fire until they are golden brown. You can keep them in tightly closed cans for some time.

NUTRI-BREAD

_____:
2 cups of nutri-flour

6 eggs
4 ounces of (crema = real butter?)
4 ounces of margarine

1 tablespoon of vanilla
2 tablespoons of baking powder

powdered cinnamon to taste
1 teaspoon of salt

_____ : Vigorously beat the sugar, (mantequilla beating well into the mix. Mix the two flours with the baking powder and salt and strain through a (

Little by little add alternately the flour mix and milk into the sugar mix. Beat well between each addition. Finally add the cinnamon and the vanilla. Pour the dough into greased pans or molds and bake over a

Note: You can use this same recipe to make wheat and soy flour bread, using 2 cups of soy flour in place of