

Bean Fritters for the Zoom Generation

Fried patties are a delicious Russian culinary tradition..

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How to use up your quarantine buys deliciously. **Jennifer Eremeeva / MT**

If you have a dining room table, chances are that in the last ten days, it's been hijacked by your local branch of ZGU (Zoom State University). Mine certainly has, which is why I've diverted dinner to the coffee table until the semester ends.

This is no bad thing. The season for hearty roasts and slow braises is certainly over, but we are still a few weeks away from the [shashlik season](#). The coffee table format inspires communal meals that are more robust appetizer than proper main course. These lend themselves admirably to watching something on TV or playing a board game. Added bonus: Clean-up is much easier.

We've limited ourselves to one trip to the grocery store a week. With two days to go until the weekly trip rolled around, I found myself out of suitable coffee table fodder. I delved into my pantry for inspiration and came out with two tins of chickpeas and some panko breadcrumbs.

With eggs, herbs, and yogurt in the fridge, an admirable coffee table dinner was only minutes away: chickpea fritters with lemon yogurt dipping sauce.

Like lentils and buckwheat, beans are an excellent source of affordable protein, fiber, iron, essential antioxidants that fight against cancer and fatty liver. Beans are also incredibly versatile moving effortlessly through the year in stick-to-your-ribs recipes such as chili, cassoulet, or hearty soups like Italian Ribollita to the light summer salads of the Georgian supra, where citrus and vinegar pair perfectly with beans' meaty umami flavor.

Bean fritters are more substantial than hummus or a bean spread but can come together almost as quickly. While they are best consumed right out of the skillet, they do very well the following day with an egg on top for breakfast or with lots of peppery greens and labneh inside some chewy lavash.

This recipe is a template that will work for any beans you have on hand, and the infographic offers spice and herb pairings for red, lima, white, and black beans as well as chickpeas. These are designed to be vegetarian, but see possible meat pairings for those who can't imagine dinner without it.

Add a crisp salad, good quality olives warmed with garlic and olive oil, and tangy yogurt dip, and that's dinner.

No table required.

Basic Recipe: Spicy Bean Fritters

See spice mixes, cheese and herb combinations below

- 2 15-oz tins beans or 4 cups rehydrated beans
- 2 eggs
- 3 tsp spice mix
- The zest and juice of one lemon
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 cups fresh herbs, chopped finely
- 5 scallions, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, grated on a Microplane
- 1 cup all-purpose flour for dredging
- Grapeseed oil for frying
- 2 cups yogurt
- Olive oil

White Beans

- 2 tsp Herbs de Provence
- 1 tsp dried sage
- 1 tsp toasted fennel seeds
- Goat cheese

- Fresh Herbs: combine fresh sage, tarragon, and parsley
- Optional Meat: sage or fennel-flavored sausage, cooked and crumbled.

Red Beans

- 1/2 cup walnuts, ground in a food processor
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp dried summer savory
- 1 tsp red pepper (spicy paprika or Aleppo pepper)
- Red onion (swap for scallions)
- Fresh herbs: celery leaves or lovage, parsley, and cilantro
- Sulguni or Munster Cheese

Black Beans

- 1/2 cup pistachios, ground in a food processor
- 2 tsp coriander seeds, toasted and crushed
- 1 tsp Aleppo Pepper or paprika
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 3 additional cloves of garlic
- Fresh herbs: cilantro, mint, and parsley
- Sharp Cheddar cheese
- Optional Meat: chorizo sausage, cooked and crumbled

Lima Beans

- 2 tsp dill weed
- 1 tsp toasted fennel seeds
- Fresh herbs: fresh dill, parsley, and basil
- Asiago cheese
- Optional Ham: shaved ham

Instructions

- Rinse the beans well under cold running water.
- Zest the lemon and then juice it.
- Combine the beans, cheese, spices, garlic, salt, lemon zest, and half of the lemon juice, scallions breadcrumbs, eggs, and one cup of the fresh herbs in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade.
- Pulse 8-12 times until the mixture is the consistency of wet sand with small chunks of cheese and beans. Take care not to over process, or it will turn into a lousy hummus. Test the mixture by squeezing it — if it keeps its shape, the mixture is perfect. If it doesn't, add a bit olive oil in 1 tsp increments.
- Form the mixture into balls slightly larger than a golf ball, then flatten them with the palm of your hand until they are 1/2 inch thick.
- Mix the flour with a sprinkle of each of the dried spices you've used, then turn it out in a shallow pie dish. Dredge the patties in the flour mix.
- Fill a skillet (preferably cast-iron) with oil until it is 1/4 inch deep and place over medium-high heat. Test the oil with a small chunk of the patty batter: if it sizzles upon

impact, the oil is hot enough.

- Fry the patties until they are golden (about 3 minutes per side). Line a baking sheet with paper towels and place the patties on the paper to dry briefly.
- While the patties are frying, whisk the yogurt with the remaining lemon juice and fresh herbs and drizzle olive oil over it.
- Serve the patties hot with the dipping sauce.

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