

Zingermans®

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THINGS FALL APART (BUT THEY NEVER LEAVE MY HEART)*

Over the 38 years we've been in business, I've worried about, talked through, and planned for hundreds of strange scenarios. I'm a planner, and here at Zingerman's we've been forecasting and budgeting and organizing for probably 30 years now. But, as Mike Tyson once famously said, "Everyone has a plan 'til they get punched in the mouth."

I don't think anyone I know in the food world has ever thought about preparing for a pandemic. Having talked to dozens of colleagues around the country, we all seem to be struggling to answer the same questions: How do we deal with unexpectedly having to lay off dozens/hundreds/thousands of people that we've worked with for years? Are we providing better community service by staying open? Or by closing? Can we figure out what the 900 pages of the CARES Act mean? How long will this go on? If it doesn't end for a year, how do we handle that? If it *does* end, what will happen next? Just writing down the questions, I can see why I—and probably most of us—have felt overwhelmed, pretty much daily, for the last few weeks.

On Tuesday, March 11, we had a fundraising dinner at Zingerman's Roadhouse—the closing event in our 5th Annual “Jelly Bean Jump Up” campaign to raise money for SafeHouse Center, the local shelter for victims of domestic abuse. It was a great event. We sold out the 60 or so seats, and it capped a month of fundraising that far exceeded our goal of \$30,000. The next morning, Wednesday, March 12, is probably a day that will live in infamy in at least the food world for a few decades. Almost every restaurant in the country felt a shock that I can only equate to the stock market crash on October 29, 1929. For some, like those in Seattle, it started a bit earlier. For others, a little later. But basically, one day things were relatively fine—we were dealing with not being able to hire enough people, performance issues, food-cost challenges, getting ready to roll out some new products . . . the usual. The next day we were addressing problems most of us had never even thought of.

It's only been just over four weeks, but it seems like four years. Who would imagine that we'd already have adjusted our sales expectations down so much that what we're now celebrating as a “good day” a month ago would have passed for a so-so Monday lunch?

As a history major, two thoughts play around in my head. One is that it's generally said that no war with a foreign power has ever been fought on American soil. The Civil War, of course, was a conflict between American citizens. And small acts of violence that haven't historically been classed as “wars” have been happening to folks on the short end of the social stick every day for centuries. While we've all read articles about the horror of war in northern Syria, of bombs dropping on Bosnian cities, or about farmers trying to make a living growing almonds in war-torn Afghanistan, most of us who've lived our lives in the U.S. are fortunate to have never experienced that daily fear and vulnerability firsthand. This situation feels, as best I can imagine, a *small fraction* of what that might be like. Yes, there were “storm clouds” on the horizon for a while as stories came in from China and Italy about the virus. But, one hopes and believes that, of course, that “won't happen here.” And, yet, it did. One day things were fine; the next day . . . they were more messed up than most of us could have imagined.

I haven't lived through one so I'm not sure the analogy is accurate, but this does feel sort of like

what I imagine living through a war would be. Life, as we knew it for years, has been drastically altered. Stable “successful” organizations all over the country were suddenly, sadly, laying people off. The health care system is overwhelmed. When I read about and talk to health care workers, it sounds like stories of working at the front in a war zone—not enough people, not enough supplies, choices to be made about who lives and who dies. As in a foreign invasion, we struggle to know who might be an “enemy” agent. We've started eyeing everyone we see on the street as a potential “saboteur” who could be carrying the infection. “Curfews” have been imposed. We don't know how long this will go on for. We don't really know what to do. The craziness of the restaurant world that we all love and have learned to live with, the variability in pretty much everything we've all worked with and actually kind of enjoy . . . now seems stable and calm compared to this world where the Coronavirus is calling the shots and we hope and pray that we, our colleagues, and our businesses can survive. In the food business, we've always worried about food safety and worked with the knowledge that we carry our customers' lives in our hands. But this is at a whole new level. I certainly never imagined I was going to go through something like this in the course of my lifetime. And yet, here we are. I try to imagine what it must have been like to own a community-focused restaurant in Paris in 1940. Some came out on the other side, some didn't. How did they survive? What can we learn from them?

The other piece of history in my mind is that, while none of us have been through this before, humanity has, and many times over. Annalee Newitz wrote a great piece in *The New York Times* recently about the history of the bubonic plague in 1666 in London. It was the worst plague since the Black Death had struck back in 1348. London lost over 15% of its population over the course of a year. Roughly 100,000 died in London; 750,000 died in England overall. Newitz's article reminded me of what I already knew: history always repeats. The description of what was happening in London in 1666 when the plague struck all now sounds eerily familiar, equally serious, and at least as difficult. The similarities are striking. (On a light note, Newitz shared that Samuel Pepys buried a wheel of “Parmazan” cheese in his backyard when the city was evacuated.) The good, long term, learning from Newitz's article is that, as we know, the world *did* keep going when the plague receded. While it was a horrible year, and things didn't just return to normal quickly, clearly, England did recover. The plague did go away. And there were restaurants still operating at the end of it.

Throughout our own history of Zingerman's, we have worked through massive inflation, the tragic upheaval of 9/11, the instability of the recession of 2009 . . . In all of those cases, looking back, I can see that we survived—through the fear and uncertainty—by staying true to our values, taking good care of our customers, communicating caringly with our crew, staying in touch with vendors, and maintaining quality. We continued to talk things through collaboratively, to work cooperatively, to

stay as grounded and centered as we could under the circumstances. If I'd gone to med school like my grandmother wanted me to, I might be trying to save lives in a hospital or doing research in a lab to find a vaccine or a cure to end this crisis. Unfortunately, I have nothing to contribute to either of those. So, I'll continue to work to keep our community and our organization as healthy as possible. Try to figure out creative and caring ways through the darkness. Try to listen and be empathic and share struggles as best I can. I'll continue to call colleagues all over the country, hoping that someone else who's smarter has come up with some great solutions. And then keep my fingers crossed, think positive thoughts, rub my rabbit's feet, and, as with all long walks through darkness, hope like hell we can get through to the other side together.

Here at Zingerman's, we're still doing takeout and delivery from our three restaurants—sales are running at about a third or a bit more of what we'd normally be doing. Our Bakehouse isn't down quite that much thanks to wholesale sales to supermarkets and to our Mail Order. Wholesale is hanging in there at our artisan Creamery, Candy, and Coffee businesses. Our training business, ZingTrain, is of course, decimated. The bright note for us is that our Mail Order is very busy. And that we're still being kind and collaborative and cooking and delivering good food. For now at least, for us, and for so many others, that's our new normal. That fundraiser on the evening of March 11 seems like lightyears ago. Eventually, like WWII and like the Plague, this will start to end. Every day I wait to hear good news. At some point, there will be some. When it *does* come, we can say something along the lines of what Winston Churchill said as the British turned the tide of a very long war by defeating the Germans in Egypt in 1942. “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

Whatever happens, I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked with so many great people both here in our own organization and in the food community across the country and around the world. To have bought, sold, served, and eaten so much good food, to have had a positive impact on so many people's lives. I'm not ready to give up yet. As one of our line cooks shared from her work at a previous job, on really rough shifts they used to say to each other, “See you on the other side!”

Arri

*The title is taken from the 1981 song, “Things Fall Apart,” by the artist Cristina, released a few months before we opened the Deli. It was on regular play around my house back in those days. Sadly Cristina passed away, on April 1, from Coronavirus. The lyrics of the song are shockingly poignant for the present situation.

WHAT IF WE MADE RED BEANS AND RICE THE NATIONAL DISH OF THE U.S.?

H

UNGRY? NEED A bit of extra comfort? A big bowl of red beans and rice might be just the ticket! Creamy, rich, slightly smoky, a little bit spicy, and seriously good! Don't know much about red beans and rice? You might want to. It's a marvelous meal, terrifically comforting, and

not really all that hard to make. It does take some time to soak your red beans overnight, and to simmer them with a bunch of smoked, cured, or pickled pork for a few hours until they're tender. This thick, creamy-to-the-tongue bean "stew" is best served with a nice scoop of really good white rice and a bottle of hot sauce on the side to liven it up. Add a half dozen (or more) family and friends to enjoy it with you to share thoughts with while you eat, and you've got yourself a remarkably memorable meal.

It sounds simple enough. And in a sense it is. And yet, at the same time, red beans and rice is almost a world unto itself. A culinary door into community, culture, cooking, and connection. And maybe, just maybe, an entrée to a more caring way to be in the world.

To be clear up front, there are far more extensive studies of red beans and rice than this one. I'm not from New Orleans—the epicenter of red beans and rice culture—and the only beans I grew up with were baked beans that came out of a can. Which, more often than not, my mom heated up after mixing them with slices of all-beef kosher hot dogs. What follows is a look at how one change in ingredients made it so much better here at Zingerman's. About how a small shift in how we view the dish might take it from being a local specialty to a symbol of national unity. And community. Small changes can sometimes lead to large changes in our lives.

On the list of "Twelve Natural Laws of Business" I wrote about in Part 1 of *The Guide to Good Leading*, #8 says, "To get to greatness you've got to keep getting better, all the time!" The statement is not a criticism of what is. Or of what was. It simply means that no matter how much good work we're doing or have done, we can't stand pat if we want to get to greatness; we need to appreciate the moment, and at the same time, search for ways to take things to the next level.

One step up that's on my mind this year is the Roadhouse's shift to start buying Camellia Beans from the Hayward family down in New Orleans. Now that we've made the move to upgrade, I'm not sure what took us so long. Camellia itself is anything but new. The family-owned firm has been working with beans for nearly 150 years now, ever since the Haywards started trading in the Crescent City in the second half of the

19th century. In 1923 they began putting the Camellia brand on their beans and selling them around the country. Putting Camellia red beans to work in the Roadhouse kitchen has been a big eye opener.

We've finally figured out what nearly every New Orleanian has known for ages—Camellia beans bring exceptional quality to the kitchen! Back in the early 1980s when we opened the Deli, Camellia had already conquered the bean-loving city of New Orleans. Camellia beans clearly taste better and have a creamier texture. The compliments started coming on the red beans and rice right after we started using them. And perhaps of even greater note, I think we've gotten more compliments on our chili since we switched to Camellia black beans than I can remember getting in all of our 16 years of making it.

Can there be that much difference in a bean? The simple answer is "Absolutely!" There are thousands of low-price, low-quality options out there. Alternatively, one can seek out something really special—you'll pay a bit more to get it, but you'll benefit from the improved quality of flavor. It's true with chocolate, coffee, beer, and—as anyone who uses Camellia knows—it's totally true with beans. The family has become famous for buying well above the USDA's highest standard

GOOD LUCK AND GOOD EATING

Not only do red beans and rice bring good conversation and an inspiring entrée into American history and constructive collaboration, they might also bring good luck. Which we could all use a bit of right now.

I suppose it's ok to blend cultural good luck charms. In Korea, it turns out, red beans are one of the biggest symbols of good luck. Skip the rabbit's feet, and no need to get on your hands and knees looking for four leaf clovers. Just bring red beans. They're a long-standing symbol of positive, "yang," energy. Tradition tells us that red beans will help ward off ghosts, cast out demons, and ensure an abundant harvest. Makes me think I ought to start carrying a few of them in my pocket every day.

for beans—their minimum is now known amongst Louisiana bean growers as the "Hayward Standard." In a wonderful interview, nationally-renowned master seed saver John Coykendall said in his home state of Tennessee, "Camellia beans? Mercy! I love those things!"

Small Things Lead to Big Outcomes

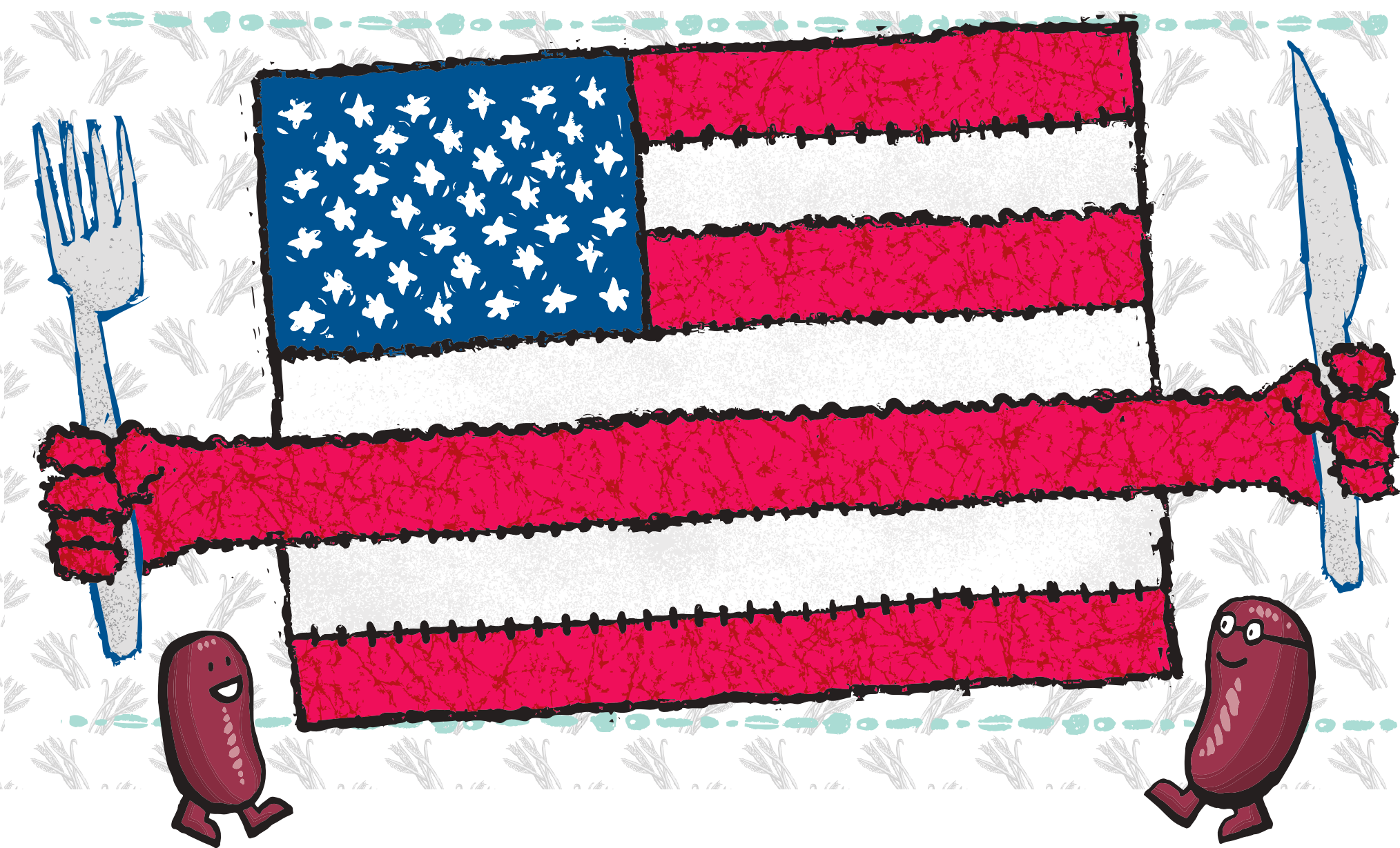
All that said, there's more to this story than just an improvement in quality. I've certainly eaten red beans and rice before. And yet it strikes me how familiar we can be with something or someone on a surface level, and yet, know so little about them. I've certainly been guilty of it a gazillion times over the years. The work to advance beyond the superficial—to learn the more meaningful, less-told stories—is, I believe, one of the great beauties of life. It's what makes us who we are.

In the last year I think I've seen about 65 different discussions, articles, Ted Talks, and the like on the topic of what makes humans human. Various theories abound. But maybe what makes us most human is our ability to tell—and understand—a story. Animals (and please know that I love them—we have four dogs at our house!) seem to live mostly in the moment. But humans, for better and for worse, so often make more of things than just the moment—even if we work hard to be mindful, to take in the details, to stay grounded in the present, we will sooner or later start to drift into our own story-making. If one's mind is quick, and we're not super skilled at mindful self-awareness, the likelihood is that we're making up our own story about something while the storyteller we're listening to is still talking. Like it or not, most of the time that we are in the world inside our heads, everything we've experienced overlays and overlaps. The stories of our youth play out at the same time as the present, intermingled more often than not with what we're hoping for or are worried about for the future.

Anne Lamott said it well: "Your inside person does not have an age. It's all the ages you have ever been and the age you are at this very moment." Which means, I suppose, that the kid who really loved those frozen hot dogs and canned baked beans that my mother used to make is still in there with the adult who greatly appreciates the quality of red beans and rice made with Camellia beans.

Stories of Red Beans

What follows is my northern-kid-who-grew-up-in-a-Chicago-family-that-kept-kosher-and-I-don't-think-had-ever-even-been-to-Louisiana's attempt to get a handle on the story of one of the centuries-old signature dishes of New Orleans—Red Beans and Rice. Having spent the last year asking around about red beans, and trying to listen closely to the answers, reading and



writing and reading some more, it's become clear to me that there's far, far more to red beans and rice than just a simple recipe for how to make it.

I've long believed in the importance of the story behind the food. Storytelling seems appropriate, maybe more for red beans and rice than anything else. Detroit-based storyteller Eric Olsson, also known as "Red Beans and Eric," who writes the blog *Red Beans*, highlighted the importance of storytelling in New Orleans by saying,

New Orleans is a place for storytellers. Ask anyone there or even one outside of the city who simply loves it, and they'll have some anecdote for you about the Crescent City. The story can be about the food, the music, or the culture. It can be a comedy, a tragedy, or an autobiography filled with fantasy, drama, and history. But one thing you'll undoubtedly hear in all the stories, for better or worse, is what New Orleans is really about.

Stories, I've learned over the years, are powerful tools for forming beliefs and for building hope. Whether they're about revolutions, hiking in the rain with your grandparents when you were eight, or red beans and rice, good stories stay with us. They give us comfort. They shape our context. As the Badger says in the book *Crow and Weasel*,

I would ask you to remember only this one thing. The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves.

Telling stories that seed hope—when we combine them with lessons of how to make our dreams and visions become reality—can be highly valuable. Which is how I've come to feel about this story—past, present, and future—of red beans and rice.

Red Beans Roadshow

Pableaux Johnson is a very nice, gregarious New Orleanian, who, among his many other talents, is a terrific photographer and a devoted home cook. He's also very much attached to—and passionate about—red beans! About a decade and a half ago he began what turned into a weekly ritual at his house that later became a traveling pop-up event. Here's how he describes its origins:

It all started with a simple ritual that many Louisiana people take for granted—a simple meal of red beans

and rice served to a table full of friends. A once-weekly chance to gather a group at the house to eat, drink, and talk things out. In New Orleans, traditionalists serve red beans on Mondays, so when I was looking for a centerpiece for a weekly feast, the choice seemed pretty obvious. Since I'd inherited my grandmother's oversized kitchen table, I'd hone my large-format cooking skills and invite 10 friends over for dinner. Simplicity was (and is) key. From the menu (my red beans, my grandfather's skillet cornbread), to the house rules (bring whatchawannadrink, no phones at the table, whiskey for dessert), to the structure (a loose 7:30 on Monday night, different crowd every week). Make everything simple enough and after 15 years, you've got a solid ritual.

Maybe red beans and rice is a ritual we should all engage in? Conversation and cooking? A recipe for a shared set of stories? It sure sounds like something around which *everyone could* come together. Vince Hayward, 5th generation of the Hayward family and now at the helm of Camellia Beans, said

Red beans and rice is not just a dish, it's a part of our identity in New Orleans. The dish spans all lines of culture, economic status, and upbringing. EVERYONE eats Red Beans in New Orleans, and we most often have it as a meal shared with others—friends, family, or some type of gathering. So it's a cultural practice that promotes gathering together to enjoy food and *joie de vivre*.

The Haywards, I suppose, can't help but live—and figuratively breathe—red beans and rice. They're at the epicenter. But still, the point of this piece is that everyone has their own way of making them. I asked Vince's sister Alli where she was on the subject:

telling stories that seed hope—when we combine them with lessons of how to make our dreams and visions become reality—can be highly valuable. which is how i've come to feel about this story—past, present, and future—of red beans and rice.

How do I feel about red beans and rice? Let me count the ways! Well, I love 'em (of course). I cook them often. I go classic, following the direction on the side of our bag which is the way I grew up eating them. To make them creamier, I like to add a little butter and mash a few on the sides of the pot. Andouille Sausage always! Here are a few more examples of my love for our Camellia Red Bean:

As a working mom with a busy life, I have fallen in love with cooking beans in a pressure cooker. Game Changer! (Although, using my grandmother's Dutch oven is my preferred cooking vessel.)

My 4-year-old son has a t-shirt that says Red Bean Kid and I put it on him for school on Mondays (they eat Red Beans and Rice every Monday at his school and pretty much every school here in New Orleans).

Growing up, we even had a dog named Red Bean!

Pushing Through a Spiritual Recession

I've been thinking over the last six months or so that the U.S. is suffering through a spiritual recession. The symptoms, now that I've shifted my social kaleidoscope enough to see them, are very much like those of an economic recession—just plug in deficits of "positive emotion," "care," "kindness," and "spirit" where one would financially focus on falling stock prices, interest rates, and real estate values. In both kinds of recessions life will continue to go on in many ways, but the key indicators which one uses to track these sorts of things have sunk to low levels, so much so that, for many people, it gets hard to function. Maybe, I've started to think, red beans could really help?

Rebecca Solnit says, "We are constantly arriving; the innumerable circumstances are forever colliding in this

RED BEANS AND THE BLUES

You know red beans and rice is good when it shows up in so many songs, right?

When he was 67, Muddy Waters, the Father of Chicago Blues, wrote a song called “Red Beans.” Marcia Ball and others have covered it over the years. Like the dish that inspired it, it’s not all that fancy but it sure is good. About sharing and generosity.

Got my red beans cookin’ . . .
Yeah my red beans is cookin’
When they get done
I’m gon’ give you some

A more modern song on the subject comes from Michael Franti, who sings:

Red beans and rice, red beans and rice, red beans and rice
Make everything nice
Red beans and rice, red beans and rice, red beans and rice
I could eat a plate twice. So nice. So nice. So nice

In 1937 Kokomo Arnold composed a song called “Red Beans And Rice” that speaks to some of the struggles of the African American migration to the North. As is true with all migrations, the change of setting works well in some ways, but brings new problems, dislocation, and discomfort in others. Arnold’s simple blues song says it well:

When I was down in Georgia, I was doing mighty well
When I was down in Georgia, I was doing mighty well
Since I been here in Chicago, I been catching a plenty hell
Says I’m going down to the station, ain’t going to take no one’s advice
Says I’m going down to the station, ain’t going to take no one’s advice
Says I’m going back to Georgia, where I can get my red beans and rice

You almost certainly will have heard “Green Onions” by Booker T. & the M.G.’s, but they also wrote an engaging instrumental called “Red Beans and Rice.” Makes me smile to consider that at the Roadhouse we garnish the Red Beans and Rice with sliced bits of green onions so . . . maybe we could play the two songs together.



one that’s always slightly different depending on the day, and/or on the cook who’s making it. It gets along well with others—you can serve red beans and rice alongside another main course; or it can be the focus of a really fine meal all on its own. Red beans and rice speaks to me of the Native American system for growing beans (and corn and squash) called the “Three Sisters.” It’s a shout out to Africa and the Caribbean and French Canada. It calls up images of Creoles and good cooking, of humility, and a love for the beauty that is always to be found—if we look—in the simple things of life.

Red Beans and Race

My friend—food writer, film maker, culinary historian, new father, and effective cultural communicator—Lolis Eric Elie, is a native New Orleanian. He’s written cookbooks and film scripts and won a collection of awards for doing all kinds of cool things to make New Orleans New Orleans. “Red Beans and Eric” called him, “One of New Orleans’ master storytellers.” He was born in the city on April 10, 1963, seven and a half months before John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas. Clearly he’d have been too young to remember any of it. I was already in 2nd grade, in Chicago, when it happened. At that point in my still short life, politics, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights movement were prominent in the news. But no one I knew had ever breathed a word about red beans and rice. (To Anne Lamott’s point, that little scared 7-year-old version of me—trying to process how a president everyone seemed to admire could be assassinated—is still in my head, helping to write this essay. And I still tear up every time I teach the subject of Servant Leadership and reference Kennedy’s inspiring and generous call to action, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”)

While I was raised with chopped liver, chicken soup, boxed macaroni & cheese, and frozen fish sticks, Lolis grew up in New Orleans with gumbo, oysters, andouille, and jambalaya. From the stories he tells, he ate a heck of a lot better than I did, meals that included regular renditions of red beans and rice. Lolis’s work in the artisan food world is almost legendary. He was one of the original founders of the Southern Foodways Alliance in 1999. He was also one of the writers of the HBO series *Treme*, which included a good bit of footage that referenced food and cooking and culture. His documentary film, *Faubourg Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*, is fantastic. Per the theme of this piece, if you make time to watch it, you’ll hear a very different story of race in this country, and a much better understanding of what New Orleans is about (instead of the more popular proclivity for focusing mostly on drinking, bars, and Bourbon street).

Who better to ask, then, about red beans and rice than someone who knows the city so well? Lolis answered my inquiry with a question of his own: “How many cities in the world have iconic dishes associated with them? A few dozen I’d guess, but not that many in America. Nowhere else in the U.S. are red beans emblematic. But in Haiti and eastern Cuba, around Santiago, red beans beat out black beans. Lots of New Orleans culture came from Haiti, stopped in eastern Cuba after the Haitian revolution, and came to New Orleans.” All good points, and

glance, this meeting, this collision, this conversation, like the pieces in a kaleidoscope forever coming into new focus, new flowerings.” So what if we use red beans and rice for a new arrival, a new collaborative age—a fluid and creative shift of the American kaleidoscope? Eric Olsson writes,

It’s total comfort food. Having red beans and rice is something that was way different from what I grew up on in the Midwest, but once I started making it, smelling it as it cooked, and eating it, it just became something I craved . . . How many meals out there can you name that are cooked by practically everyone in a region, on the same day, and it’s not a holiday? . . . Red beans and rice is that quiet meal in the background of New Orleans. Everyone knows it’s there, but it’s not the one everyone rushes to.

It sounds calming, comforting, and caring. Something we could all use a little of right now.

A National Recalibration and a Culinarily-Driven Reconciliation

I know enough about storytelling to know that if you shift the focus to look through a different character’s eyes, the whole story changes. A small repositioning of perspective can produce some positively beautiful stories, stories that were very different from the ones that would have been told otherwise. A few months ago I wrote an article for “Zingerman’s News” about my long-time friend and partner Frank Carollo who will be retiring next year from the Bakehouse after 28 years. As I was writing, it struck me that although most people’s story of Zingerman’s starts with me and Paul, maybe the real key to our organizational success has actually been Frank? Without Frank’s fine work at the Bakehouse, Zingerman’s would be a whole lot different business than it is today.

Here in this article, I’m going to let the same approach run its course. Turn the lens through which I’m looking and see what I see. Small shifts can beget big changes. Which got me wondering to myself . . . what if red beans and rice—along with, or even instead of, hamburgers and hot dogs—was considered to be THE iconic dish of

the U.S.? What if the story behind red beans and rice was one we all learned when we were kids, the story of how this country came together? What if most everyone in the U.S. grew up eating red beans and rice? What if we all understood that it was totally reasonable that everyone had their own different take or little twist on how to make red beans and rice? And that none of those twists was “right” or “wrong” but that the diversity of making the dish dictated that we respect each other’s way of making red beans while still wanting to eat them cooked in the style we love best? What if we all regularly came together over steaming, comforting bowls of red beans and rice to commune and connect with compassion?

I feel like some beautiful things might emerge from that shift. Rebecca Solnit also once said that when removed from hierarchy and headlines, in difficult times, “ordinary people generally behave magnificently, taking care of each other and improvising rescues and the conditions of survival, connecting with each other in ways they might not in everyday life and sometimes finding in that connection something so valuable and meaningful that their stories about who they were and met and what they did shine with joy.” And everything I’ve learned about red beans and rice tells me that when you put people in the same room with a big pot of it, really positive things begin to happen too. I grew up without red beans and rice, but there’s no reason others have to. As Commander Jean-Luc Picard from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* said: “Things are only impossible until they’re not.” (Take note that in 1978’s *The Official Star Trek Cooking Manual* by Mary Ann Piccard, there’s a recipe for “Dr. McCoy’s Red Beans and Rice!”)

What’s so great about red beans and rice? Why elevate it to be the national dish? Well, it tastes terrific. It’s exceptional comfort food, and we can all use some comfort these days. Red beans and rice speak to me of coming together, of a grounded holistic blending of cultures, of letting each thing be itself, but also of creating a whole that’s far greater than the sum of the individual parts. Instead of fast food and franchises, red beans and rice stands as an example of the excellence of long slow cooking. It encourages a highly personal preparation,

a different, though clearly accurate, take on American history than the standard stories of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown. “And what does red beans and rice mean to you?” I asked. “It’s a joyous celebration and time with family.” Like most folks, it seems, he learned about it at home. “I was always curious about cooking,” he said. “So I got my grandmother to teach me how to make red beans and rice.” His connection to red beans and rice continued into adulthood. After Katrina, “When restaurant owners and folks were trying desperately to return to some sense of normalcy,” he said, “it was the traditional fare—the red beans and rice, the shrimp and crawfish dishes, and saucy bread puddings—that natives needed.”

Lolis’s father, Lolis Edward Elie (who I’ll refer to here as Mr. Elie for clarity of conversation), was born in New Orleans, back in 1928. Mr. Elie left the South at the age of 17. Having suffered through repeated acts of racial discrimination, he vowed never to return. My friend, chocolate maker Shawn Askinosie, wrote in his book, *Meaningful Work*, that our life calling, our vocation, is usually an effort to heal our childhood wound. Shawn’s theory seems to have played out perfectly with Mr. Elie. After a tour of duty in the Army, he attended law school and returned to his hometown where he quickly, passionately, and effectively took up the cause of Civil Rights. “When we got to the civil rights movement,” Mr. Elie shared many years later, “I would have to say that the most important thing that came out of it was a raising of the consciousness on the part of African-American people.” And, he said, “The world that I inherited was a world that said white people were superior, and people of African descent were all powerless. . . . What the civil rights movement did was to remove that,” he went on. “It raised our consciousness.” Mr. Elie died at the age of 89, on April 4, 2017, six days before Lolis’s 54th birthday. From everything I’ve read, he sounds like an amazing man—someone I’d like to have gotten to know and learn from, someone with whom I’d pretty surely loved to have shared a bowl of red beans and rice.

I’m glad that I’ve gotten to know his son, who’s also an amazing individual. In a 2004 oral history done with Southern Foodways Alliance, Lolis shared, “I grew up in New Orleans and I went to college at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. At that time—I was in the South and therefore I wanted to get out of the South for college.” Interestingly, it appears, at much the same age that his father went north as well.

Perhaps then, or perhaps even before then, my pride in being from New Orleans and what that means sort of evolved, and our food is emblematic of us, and certainly in the United States nobody eats quite like we do. So, you know, I’d be making red beans and rice and stuff at school. And so my sense of the food as a part of identity was sharpened then. Part of it also is that I like to cook. And so, you know, it—part of it is just fun, and part of it is it’s sort of a nationalistic statement, a declaration of independence from the rest of the United States, you know.

Which makes me wonder, again, if we were to make red beans and rice the new national dish of the U.S., maybe it would be a redeclaration? And maybe this time it would be “interdependence”? Embracing the reality that in the natural ecosystem of which we’re all a part, we depend on each other’s kindness, support, care, and community contribution?

“How did your father feel about red beans and rice?” I asked his son.

Lolis emailed back, like a poem:
“Loved them.
especially with a pork chop
on the side”

How does Lolis like to eat the dish? “I love red beans and fried chicken as a combination.” I tried the combination at the Roadhouse the next day. He’s totally right. The crisp crust and salty spiciness of the fried chicken is a marvelous match with the creamy porkiness of the red beans.

Red Bean Thinking?

Small shifts, seemingly incidental interactions, can sometimes trigger meaningful outcomes. That’s the story of my connection with Patrick-Earl Barnes. We met on the streets of Soho in New York 15 years ago. I loved his art the moment I saw it. Just last month, a custom piece of art he did for us at the Roadhouse went up in the room to the far left of the front door. Patrick-Earl’s painting

MORE CAMELLIA BEANS AT THE Zingerman's roadhouse

We’ve been using Camellia beans in any number of ways at the Roadhouse. First and foremost is, of course, Red Beans and Rice. But they’ve been equally impactful in these two menu staples as well:

Huevos Rancheros

This long-standing breakfast favorite at the Roadhouse was elevated when we started using Camellia’s pinto beans for the *refritos*. Creamier, more flavorful. The little things that add up to make a difference.

Ancho Beef Chuck Chili

The chili at the Roadhouse has always been good. But it got even better last year when we switched the black beans to Camellia. All of a sudden we started getting more compliments on the chili than ever!

is very much in sync with the spirit of what we work so hard to do at the Roadhouse: unique storytelling that brings together history, creativity, diversity, personality, positive vibration, artfulness, and collaboration. In the same way that we’ve worked to make the Roadhouse a one-of-a-kind restaurant, rooted in the diverse foodways and folkways of American culture, Patrick-Earl created a one-of-a-kind piece for us to hang here.

Patrick-Earl is, like Lolis, from Louisiana. In his case though, he hails from Shreveport, about as far to the northwest as you can get from NOLA and still be in the same state. And yet, he too grew up eating red beans and rice. I asked him what he remembered about red beans:

We would soak the red beans overnight in the slow cooker. In the morning, the beans would be drained and fresh water was added along with various seasonings, bell pepper, onions, garlic, bay leaves, with maybe turkey necks for seasoning or sausage. The crockpot was set to 4 hours at low temperature. When we returned home, the house would be smelling like red beans. The rice was cooked, cornbread was baked,

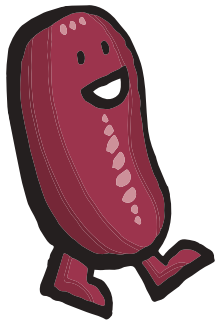
itself is taken to be perishable, to be made again each time it disappears or is destroyed. What is clung to is the spirit which makes art possible. And the African idea of this spirit is very different from the European idea. European art attempts to imitate nature. African art is concerned with reaching beyond and beneath nature, to contact, and itself become a part of *la force vitale*.

Which I think also sums up red beans and rice. It’s perishable, to be made again each time we eat it. *It’s all about spirit*. It reaches deep, and when we connect around it, it pushes us to reach deep, too. And red beans and rice, in the world of good food, history, and creative culture, are *la force vitale*.

One Last Stir of the Red Bean Pot

These are, clearly, challenging times. Author James Baldwin—who references red beans and rice in his novel *Just Above My Head*—insisted that “we made the world we’re living in and we have to make it over.” Which brings me back to the idea of shifting the culinary

what if every school system told the story of red beans and rice? what if we all, across the country, honored red beans and rice, a blending of africa and america, the caribbean, and europe?



and the table was set for my father/ mother and the “4 P’s”—Pamela, Pierre, Phylanda, and me. Good food and great family life.

Again, the beauty in Patrick-Earl’s short anecdote evokes the idea of coming together, shared stories, and memorable and meaningful connection. We weren’t eating red beans when we talked, but the quality of the conversation certainly called for them.

When he and his brother Pierre drove the piece out to Ann Arbor, we got to spend a few hours sharing thoughts. He talked about how he moved out of doing intellectual property research into painting, how he honors the stories of people he’s met in the characters he paints. One of Patrick-Earl’s pieces, entitled “Art is how you think,” became—with his permission, of course—the illustration for the inside drawing in “The Art of Business” pamphlet I put out in December of 2018. I love the statement so much because it summarizes so much of my own worldview. Maybe the approach to the seismic—or maybe it’s better to say “kaleidoscopic”—shift in American culture would be, “Red beans and rice is how you think”?

James Baldwin wrote,

Art for art’s sake is not a concept which makes any sense in Africa. The division between art and life out of which such a concept comes does not exist there. Art

kaleidoscope. What if we remake the world we’re living in by making, eating, and sharing red beans and rice? And not just making it ourselves, but using it to create community the way that folks like the Shayas, Pableaux Johnson, and others have? And what if at a national scale, as I suggested earlier, we decided that Red Beans and Rice, rather than hamburgers or hot dogs was the national dish. What if every school system told the story of red beans and rice. And what if the significant contributions to American culture, the culture that in this context begot red beans and rice were, as Lolis said, no longer English and German, but instead learned from people who’d come from revolutionary Haiti, from Cuba, fled the British invasion of French Canada to another French colony far to the South? What if we all, across the country, honored red beans and rice, a blending of Africa and America, the Caribbean, and Europe? And in the process we pay homage to its full flavored, hearty simplicity, and appreciate a meal that tastes good any day of the year?

Red beans and rice is a story of coming together, both in its making and its eating. It’s a story of long slow cooking rather than fast food; of giving things time to come together and gel in ways in which *everyone* comes out ahead, rather than rushing into some sort of competitive win-lose kind of world. So, what if those were the things that most of us held up as the image of our success, in cooking and in community? Maybe, just maybe, red beans and rice would do what Mr. Elie senior said of the Civil Rights movement—“It raised our consciousness.” 🍲

MAKING RED BEANS & RICE AT HOME

Emily Shaya grew up in Georgia, but after a decade or so of living in New Orleans she's clearly deeply committed to some serious red beans and rice thinking. Last year, after a month of crosstown competitions, she was awarded the official title of Red Bean Queen of New Orleans. From all my red bean research, everyone seems to use pork, but which kind and which cut varies from cook to cook. You can play around to make the dish your own. I've seen andouille sausage, ham hocks, pickled pork, bacon, and more! **SERVES 12**

EMILY SHAYA’S RED BEANS AND RICE

INGREDIENTS

- Emily’s Red Beans**
- ¼ pound bacon, roughly chopped
 - ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1 medium-size yellow onion, diced
 - 1 medium-size green bell pepper, diced
 - 2 celery stalks, diced
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
 - 1 tablespoon hot sauce (such as Tabasco), plus more for serving
 - 1½ pounds dried red kidney beans (soaked overnight)
 - 1 large smoked ham hock (about 12½ ounces)
 - 2 quarts chicken stock
 - 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
 - 1 bunch scallions, green parts only, sliced
- Emily’s Rice**
- ½ cup canola oil
 - 1 large yellow onion, diced
 - ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 2 teaspoons kosher salt
 - 2 cups uncooked rice—Emily uses Jasmine, we swear by Carolina Gold (see sidebar below). Both will make a great meal!
 - 3 cups chicken broth or water

DIRECTIONS

- Emily’s Red Beans** Place a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat. Add bacon and olive oil, and cook, stirring often, until fat drippings are rendered, 3 to 5 minutes. Add onion, bell pepper, and celery, and cook, stirring often, until onion is translucent but not too broken down, 3 to 5 minutes. Add bay leaf, paprika, and hot sauce.
- Drain, rinse, and sort soaked red beans; add beans and ham hock to pot. Pour in chicken stock, covering beans. Increase heat to high, and bring mixture to a boil, skimming off and discarding foam from surface. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer until beans are tender, 3 to 4 hours. Remove ham hock about the last hour of cooking and cut meat from bone. Chop ham meat, and add to beans, stirring to further break beans apart. (Check beans periodically to ensure they aren’t boiling and sticking to the bottom of the pot.)
- Remove and discard bay leaf. Stir in salt, sugar, and, if desired, more hot sauce just before serving. Serve beans over Emily’s Rice. Garnish with scallions, if desired.
- Emily’s Rice** Heat oil in a saucepan over medium-high. Add onion, butter, bay leaf, and salt, and cook, stirring often, until onions are soft and translucent, about 6 minutes.
- Add rice and stir well. Stir in chicken broth and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook 15 minutes.
- Remove pan from heat and let stand 5 minutes covered. Fluff rice with a fork.
- Ladle a healthy helping of red beans into warm bowls. Place a scoop of the cooked rice in each. Garnish, if you like, with sliced green scallions. Serve some hot sauce on the side for those who like their red beans on the spicy side!!
- And, although it’s not written into the recipe, I know that Emily would add something along the lines of, “While you’re cooking and eating, share thoughts, show love, and make some meaningful connections.”

DON’T FORGET THE RICE!

Anson Mills’s Organic Carolina Gold Rice—Special Stuff from South Carolina

Pairing world class red beans with anything other than totally awesome rice seems a culinary mismatch. At the Roadhouse we use one of the best white rices I’ve ever tasted—the organic Carolina Gold rice we get from Glenn Roberts at Anson Mills in South Carolina.

For those of you who don’t know or don’t remember the background, the original Carolina Gold rice is thought to have come to the Carolinas at the end of the 17th century. In time the rice came to dominate the culture, cuisine, and economics of the Carolinas, much like the olive tree did in regions of Southern Italy. In the mid-19th century it was exported to Europe and Asia and many of the best European cookbooks (including those directed towards the nobility) specifically called for it by name! Unfortunately, production volumes of Carolina Gold went down drastically after the Civil War. The loss of slave labor and the fact that this old grain wasn’t well suited to using new industrial machines, being heavy to harvest, made it hard to grow in the cost-effective ways that other newer varieties were being produced. It declined so dramatically that it completely died out—the last recorded commercial crop (until its recent revival) was gathered in 1927. For most of the 20th century, Carolina Gold was nothing more than a trademark owned by a large rice company that didn’t even grow Carolina Gold rice but liked the name.

In the late ’90s a few folks started growing it anew which was great. As you probably know, we’ve been selling and cooking a good bit of that Carolina Gold rice for the last couple of years. But as good as that one was—and it was darned good—this new arrival of organic Carolina Gold grown by Glenn Roberts and crew at Anson Mills (from whom we get our amazing grits and other incredible corn meals) is about ten times better! I can’t say enough good things about Glenn’s good work. He’s changed the landscape of great American grains. As Kay Rentschler wrote in the *New York Times*, “Mr. Roberts’s grander mission [is] to restore the pedigree of antebellum low country cuisine.” Getting Carolina Gold Rice of this caliber out to the world was a big step forward in making that mission a reality!

Field Ripening

Anson Mills’s Carolina Gold rice is fully ripened in the field before being brought in. As it does with any other produce, proper field ripening is a huge factor in getting full flavor development into our food. Just as it does with Michigan stem fruit that’s fully ripened on the tree, it makes a major difference in the flavor of the rice.

Organic Growing

Glenn is adamant that raising rice without sprays isn’t just the right thing to do for environmental reasons, but also because it has a hugely positive impact on the flavor of the rice.

Emulating the Old Hand-Pounding Methods—Germ and a Bit of Bran Retained

The rice is finished using a mill designed in Japan specifically for Glenn to do this rice in a way that would emulate the 19th century hand pounding. At that time, slaves took the husk off the rice and prepared it for cooking in the kitchen by hand pounding it with poles. The hand pounding was done right before the rice was prepared, assuring an exceptional brightness of flavor. The process also broke up the grains just a bit, altering the texture and eating experience of the rice in the process. Unlike commercial rice polishing which takes out the germ and the bran, the hand pound emulation leaves a bit of the bran on the rice grains—as a result you’ll see a bit of a “black eye” on some of the grains—and more importantly adds to the flavor of the rice. Leaving the germ in enhances the flavor enormously. As a result, this Carolina Gold is not “enriched” as other American white rices are. (Because the germ—and hence the rice’s natural oil—is left in, the rice is a perishable product and needs to be stored in the freezer or refrigerator.)



“New Crop” Rice

As with so many foods (coffee comes to mind, as does olive oil, tea, etc.), the newly harvested versions of agricultural products have a freshness, and brightness of flavor that you lose as the months pass. While properly stored rice will be “good” for years, that freshness is lost in a matter of months. Glenn’s commitment to field ripening, germ retention, and quick freezing have all made it possible for us to get at this amazing “new crop” flavor. The rice is really exceptionally flavorful; a bit sweet, almost buttery and creamy to my northerner’s potato-prone palate.

The rice is remarkable on its own. Teamed up with those killer Camellia red beans, it’s a match made in red beans and rice heaven.

WE CAN SHIP YOU CAROLINA GOLD! LOG ONTO ZINGERMANS.COM!

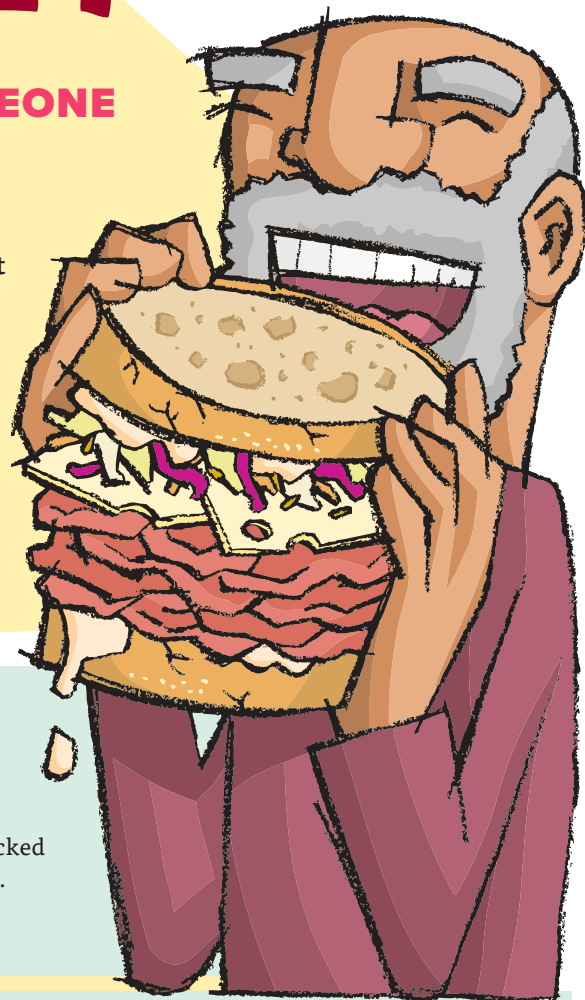
MOTHER'S DAY, FATHER'S DAY, ANY DAY!



A GOOD DAY TO SEND A GIFT TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE AND APPRECIATE

I started, probably out of habit, to make a list of gift ideas for Mother's Day. And then I remembered that since this newsletter is for May AND June, that I could do one for Father's Day, too. And then I realized . . . why are they even different? I mean, while it's true that one person's father might love bacon or beef, it's probably just as likely that he likes a good book or a box of chocolates? And while your mother might certainly swoon over artisan chocolates, it's really just as likely that she'd love a subscription to the Mail Order Bread Club or dinner for two at Miss Kim. Here in 2020, we have every reason to just suggest some great gifts and let you decide—after all, who knows your loved ones better than you?

Ari



ZINGERMAN'S MAIL ORDER

Sending artisan food from shore to shore, straight to your door!

How about a Reuben Kit shipped to a significant person in your life? Or, there's the Bread of the Month Club, the Coffee Club, the Bakery Club, a custom box of gelato, and more!

The world of artisan food at your fingertips. Most of what you'll find across the Zingerman's Community, professionally packed and shipped straight to someone you love! Head to zingermans.com to send some of the Deli's delights anywhere in the U.S.

*As we go to print, we are grateful to report orders and shipping dates are booking up fast, so don't delay.

ZINGERMAN'S BAKEHOUSE

Handmade breads and artisan pastries

In town? Come on by the Bakeshop and put together your own assemblage of artisan offerings from the dozens of breads and pastries baked every day!

BAKE!

Nationally-known school for home bakers

Time for that long-dreamed of BAKE!-cation? Everything from a few hours to a few days of wonderful baking lessons from BAKE!'s amazing instructors! If we haven't reopened yet, try a virtual class.

ZINGERMAN'S CANDY

Handmade candy bars and brittles, and the coolest little Candy Store in the state

A box of Zzang Bites—handmade peanut butter and honey nougat, Muscovado brown sugar, Virginia Runner peanuts, and a hint of sea salt—all dipped in dark chocolate.

Or how about a dozen different chocolate bars from various origins, gift-tied with a ribbon? A beautiful and educational gift for any chocolate lover.

ZINGERMAN'S CATERING AND EVENTS

Preparing everything for parties from platters to plated meals for many hundreds of people

Dinner for 15, or 50, of your close friends, served and staffed at your home!

ZINGERMAN'S COFFEE

Roasting really fine beans from around the world

Estate-grown and micro-lot coffees roasted in small batches. Buy at the Cafe or order online at zingermans.com.

ZINGERMAN'S CORNMAN FARMS

Nationally awarded and lovingly restored 1830s events center for weddings, meetings, celebrations of all sorts

A wedding? A recommitment ceremony? An intimate dinner for a small group? A big anniversary party? Even farm fresh chef inspired meals to-go. So many options!

ZINGERMAN'S CREAMERY

Artisan goat cheese, hand made cream cheese, gelato, and more

Swing by the Cream Top Shop to score some artisan cheese, chocolate gelato, or all sorts of great goodies. We're happy to help you put together gift boxes or cheese platters of all sizes! Local home delivery is also available!

ZINGERMAN'S DELICATESSEN

Celebrating 38 years of serving full-flavored traditional food

Or, swing by in person to put together a box of handmade cheese, traditional cured meats, estate olive oils, traditional vinegars, honeys, tinned fish, jam, and so much more. You can even get local delivery!

ZINGTRAIN

Training seminars, workshops, and keynotes about the Zingerman's approach to business, leadership, and life

If you know someone in a leadership role, the gift of a ZingTrain seminar could be a game changer!

ZINGERMAN'S ROADHOUSE

Really good American food, beer, wine, fried chicken, BBQ, fresh fish, oysters, and much more

Dinner for two! Or four? Or one? A bottle of sparkling wine on the table and a handmade card waiting when they arrive can easily be arranged! Or if we haven't reopened yet, delivery and drive-thru pick up is available!

ZINGERMAN'S PRESS

Books and pamphlets about progressive leadership, organizational design, and life, all designed here and printed locally

How about a set of the four parts of *Zingerman's Guide to Good Leading*?

The set of all 30 "Secret" pamphlets is both beautiful and educational.

ZINGERMAN'S FOOD TOURS

Food and wine-focused small group travel around the world and the US to great restaurants, artisan producers, wineries, breweries and much more

The gift of a lifetime, one they'll never forget!

A week in Spain? Croatia? Hungary?

We're booking now for later in 2020 and 2021!!

MISS KIM

James Beard Foundation-recognized restaurant serving traditional Korean food made with local ingredients

Dinner for two! Give a taste of terrific Korean flavors with roots that go back centuries to the various regions of the Korean peninsula! Grab a gift card, carry out, or delivery.



thank you!!

To all the health care workers in our community,
around the country, and across the world!

To all of our amazing customers for their support,
care, and encouragement!

To everyone who works in the Zingerman's Community for
working to so quickly adapt and still provide great service!

To all of our artisan vendors around the world for continuing
to craft great food and drink through all of this.

We appreciate you all greatly! Here's to positive things to come.
Carry out, and carry on!

from everyone in the zingerman's
community of businesses



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3711 Plaza Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108
734.761.2095 | zingermansbakery.com



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