

Brazilian Rice and Beans

Elaine Harder

Thanks for your sermon this morning. It reminded me of an experience I had when Rick Janzen was still Service Programs Director in SK.

Many years ago, Rick Janzen, Yolanda Alfaro and Wally Kroeker (a sponsor from NPMC) travelled to the southern US border to learn more about the migration of Central American refugees. We visited shelters on both sides of the US/Mexico border and arrived at this one particular border shelter run by the Catholics just after they had started serving supper. They were not well funded, and we arrived just as supper was to be served. A few of the people had been fed, but several of the men stepped out of line and guided us to the front of the line where hundreds of hungry souls were waiting, many of them children. Some refugees were helping in the kitchen, preparing and serving the food. They insisted that we eat first and heaped a healthy serving of rice and beans on our plates. We had actually eaten not that long before we arrived there and our guilt was showing. Yolanda, Wally and I were very hesitant to accept this generous portion of rice and beans partly because we were not hungry, and partly because we were truly tired of rice and beans and largely because we knew there would be meagre portions to follow. Rick saw our discomfort. Quietly he leaned over to me and said "if you don't accept this, the only thing they can offer us, and can't eat with the people, we don't belong here."

That has stayed with me through the years as I visited with many refugees in their homes and while travelling in Colombia. It was always difficult to refuse food no matter what time of day, whether I was hungry or not, even if it was served from hollowed out gourds in a dusty makeshift shelter. Sometimes it was difficult to choke down food that I was unfamiliar with, but Rick's words stayed with me. If I could not accept their hospitality and the only gift they could offer, I did not belong. Not only that, but how could they trust me?

After our bellies were more than full, we were immediately surrounded by these desperate souls looking for help to get out of their situation. Sadly, we were not in a position to help any of them. We could only listen and offer words of comfort and hopefully support, but they were so gracious and grateful to have us visit. It was a truly humbling experience.

*Perhaps the recipe the guests were served was like the **Brazilian Rice and Beans** recipe found in *More with Less*, page 103.*

Soak overnight:

2 c. pinto or kidney beans

8 c. water

Cook about 2 hours or until tender.

In a saucepan, cook together about 4 c. of 2-4 of the following vegetables in large pieces:

Potato, chayote, cabbage, pumpkin, okra, carrot

Cook just until tender.

Sauté together in a skillet:

½ lb. ground meat (beef or pork)

¼ lb. smoked meat (bacon, sausage, etc.)

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 medium onion, chopped

1 t. Worcestershire sauce

2 T. tomato paste

1 t. coriander

1 bay leaf

Salt and pepper to taste

Simmer 30 minutes.

Join beans, vegetables, and meat mixture and heat together 2 minutes.

Serve with rice.

(Josef Soares, Recife, Brazil)