

New World's Pan-blackened Stringbeans is the single most-ordered dish at the cafe. I receive requests for the recipe via e-mail, snail mail, by telephone and in person. I love when a diner walks right up to our open kitchen on a busy night with his or her plate of blackened beans and exclaims that he needs to know how to make them. Ironically, with proper ventilation, this dish is a breeze to prepare.

Essentially rooted in a classic, Szechuan stringbeans, the idea of just-cooked, still-crunchy, nice-and-spicy beans with an essentially American twist is a hit at any party.

Serves 4-6 , Ric-ter Scale:

2 pounds fresh stringbeans, stems picked off
1 batch New World Cajun Seasoning
2 tablespoons safflower or sunflower or corn oil

New World Cajun Seasoning

1 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
4 teaspoons ancho chile powder
3 teaspoons cornmeal
1 teaspoon dry oregano
1 teaspoon dry thyme
3 teaspoons kosher salt
3 teaspoons finely ground black pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon onion powder (not flakes)
1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder (not granules)
Fold together thoroughly

Be sure that your kitchen is properly ventilated before you attempt to blacken any food indoors. Open the windows and doors and disable the smoke detectors. (Don't forget to hook them back up again afterwards!)

If you don't want to smoke up the house, you can always prepare this dish outside. Heat the skillet to white-hot indoors, then, when you are ready to put the beans into the pan, bring everything outside. Scoot, though; the skillet should be kept hot enough to blacken the beans for a minute or two.

Fill a medium-sized pot three-quarters full of water. Bring to a rolling boil while you preheat a cast-iron skillet or heavy wok until very hot, about ten minutes over high heat.

Plunge the stringbeans into the boiling water and cook them for 30 seconds, until they are bright green, forkable but still a bit crisp. Drain

the beans but do not rinse them, and put them in a work bowl big enough to toss them around in. Add the oil and toss to coat them evenly. Sprinkle the seasoning over the beans and toss to coat evenly.

When you are ready to blacken them, dump the beans into the hot skillet. If your skillet is small, this may need to be done in batches. Don't overload the skillet. Using tongs, move the beans around to blacken them evenly in the seasoning. The idea here is to char the spices, not the beans themselves.

Serve the beans mounded on fresh greens with lemon wedges, with 1/2 cup of Creole Remoulade Sauce (see recipe below) for dipping.

Ric's Mustard Remoulade Sauce

This is a killer sauce that we also serve with Chilled Shrimp or Oysters.

2 tablespoons paprika

3/4 tablespoons Tabasco sauce

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/4 teaspoon celery salt

1/4 cup Pommerey mustard

1/3 cup Dijon mustard

1/2 teaspoon file gumbo powder

1/4 teaspoon dried tarragon

1 teaspoon grated or finely minced onion

1 teaspoon grated or finely minced scallion

1 teaspoon grated or finely minced celery

1 cups safflower or sunflower or other neutral-flavored oil

In a food processor, combine all the ingredients except the oil and process well. Then, with the machine running, add the oil in a steady stream to emulsify.

