

*A Provocative Question at the Dinner Table with*

# BEN JAFTE

CREATIVE DIRECTOR,  
PRESERVATION HALL

As a musician and the Creative Director of Preservation Hall, Ben Jaffe has traveled extensively. That is why, for him, the last meal would be a leisurely affair, gathered around a table in his home in New Orleans with his family and his band. "Eating in New Orleans is so much more than sitting down and grabbing a bite," Jaffe said. "Food is a special time; it's family time." His meal of **Red Beans and Rice**, a New Orleans staple, is also the epitome of savoring time, as the "perfect pot" can take anywhere from six to eight hours to cook. The whole process begins the day before, with soaking the beans, and is methodical, tranquil, easily segueing into an evening spent telling stories and drinking red wine.



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Ben Jaffe is the creative director of Preservation Hall and plays tuba and double bass with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band.





Photos by Kenny Morrison

*"People from New Orleans don't understand why others try to cook so fast, eat so fast. What are you rushing off to? Everything is right here."*

– BEN JAFFE

## RED BEANS AND RICE

### INGREDIENTS

1 to 2 pounds dried red kidney beans (Ben prefers Camellia brand, which are grown and packaged in Louisiana)  
2 to 3 bay leaves  
2 to 3 cups of rice (your favorite type)  
Olive oil  
Salt, to taste  
Water, for both beans and rice

The night before, wash the red beans in a colander in the sink to remove any debris. Put the beans in a big stainless-steel pot and cover them with water, then let them soak overnight.

The next day, drain the water, then add fresh water approximately 2 inches above the beans. Bring the water to a boil over high heat. Add bay leaves, occasionally stirring the beans. Let boil on high for 30 to 45 minutes, then turn the heat down to a low simmer. Cover the pot with aluminum foil and put the top back on to create a seal. Continue to stir every 15 to 20 minutes. Do not let the beans stick to the pot.

The beans should always look a little soupy, like a gravy, not refried. As the beans cook, they will absorb some of the water so be sure to add water as you go along. Also, occasionally sprinkle in some salt.

After approximately 4 to 5 hours, take a big spoon and start to mash the beans based on your preferred texture.

The beans will cook for approximately 6 to 8 hours total and should reach a creamy texture.

About half an hour before serving the beans, take your favorite rice and rinse it in a bowl over the sink, approximately 4 to 5 times until the water is clear.

Put the rice in a pot on a medium flame. Stir in a little olive oil. Let it cook for a few minutes, then add water: 1 ½ cups water for every 1 cup of rice. Bring it to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cover with aluminum foil, let cook for 15 to 20 minutes, and fluff it up with a spoon.

Serve beans over rice and enjoy.

