

# The Poison Bean Conspiracy

As harvesting time approaches, I have oddly found myself harvesting various things around the farm. Fruits have been the big thing up until now; apples, plums, cherries, apples, berries, apples, hazelnuts, apples, and apples. We'll even be harvesting apples as soon as they get ripe on the tree!

However, the other day Leila informed me that it was now time to start harvesting the beans. The beans were of a special old variety, meaning you definitely couldn't buy them in a store and generally implying that they contain more nutritional value. For those who don't know, the varieties of fruits and vegetables you find at your local grocery store are like one one-hundredth of the possible varieties out there. The reasons you find only such a small amount of these varieties on the shelves is for several reasons. Namely, the shelf-life of said produce (including how long it will stay fresh from the farm in Mexico to your grocery store's produce isle), the presentability of the produce, and of course the production costs of the produce. Basically, anything that reduces the costs of the producer and increases your chance of buying it. You'll notice nutritional value doesn't fall into either of these two categories. Naysayers and those still scratching their heads need only think of iceberg lettuce to get a firm grasp of what I'm talking about.

After fighting through the hordes of thistles and stinging nettles (nettles are like the King Weed here in Österreich), I emerged from the field red, scratchy, and with a big basket full of beans. A portion of said beans were then promptly chopped up and thrown into a mutton soup. I eagerly prepared myself for an evening of deliciousness.

Leila informed something new to me about beans, something I'm sure is kept in mind by producers. Falling under the liability category, beans generally create a natural chemical poison that will keep you seated on the toilet for a significant amount of unpleasant time. The poison breaks down at a temperature a bit below boiling, so if you cook the beans well enough, they'll be safe to eat. If anyone reading this is old enough to remember (probably not), your parents or your grandparents would always tell you to make sure to cook beans thoroughly. This is why.

Anyone see where this is going, yet? I gobbled down my bean-mutton soup the same way I gobble down everything that doesn't include tomatoes, avocados, or bleu cheese (my three most-detested food groups) and didn't think much of it. Everyone around me was eating it as well. Now, I've had two stomach viruses since I came to Austria so when the first wave of pain went through my stomach, my first groan was one of exasperation. Heeere we go again.

It didn't hit me until about midnight and I found myself firmly seated at the toilet. As an old boss pointed out to me, when it comes to health issues and being sick, the asshole is the boss; and if the boss ain't happy, *no one's* happy. Gastrointestinal problems are the fucking worst. Lucky for me this time (in comparison to my previous two stomach viruses where I was moaning in agony the entire night), around two in the morning I finally vomited and the pain waves left. I was still queasy, but at least I could fall asleep. Oof.

Upon waking the next morning and discussing with the rest of the family who wasn't at

work or at school, I learned that Leila had gotten hit as well and was sick all night. Oddly enough, though, the rest of the family was totally fine with the soup (clearly it must have been one'a'them *gene-specific poisons*). When Leila finally was able to emerge from her room, she was convinced that the soup just wasn't cooked long enough. Once again she reiterated the natural state of beans (i.e. poison until aptly cooked) and said we would have to cook the soup again really well (at least 30 minutes) before eating them again. Even though I agreed at the time, I was still suspicious.

That night, two new helpers arrived; a couple from New Brunswick\*. They were really easy to get along with and talk to and very eager to help around the farm. It was agreed between Hartwig and Leila (my “host-parents”) that we would once again eat the soup for dinner tonight. I was to cook it *well* for 30 minutes.

\*For those who don't know, in New Brunswick there is a local dialect called Shiak that is a mix between English and French that only people in New Brunswick can speak and even understand. Now you know.

Man, I cooked that shit near boiling for at least 45 minutes—I even burned the bottom. I had absolutely no interest in making the boss unhappy two nights in a row. So when the Canadians arrived that night and the soup was getting spooned up, I still hadn't shaken my suspicion and decided not to eat it. However, I found myself with a dilemma. I felt that the two newcomers should be warned of the probabilistic danger of the soup (33.3% poisoning rate so far), but at the same time I didn't want to make it seem like they were being invited into a household to be served poison. I also felt it might be a little insulting to Hartwig, who was sitting across the table, if I just up and announced the food he had just served unfit to eat. In the end I decided to not eat, keep my mouth shut, and keep my eyes on the Canadians. A bit after dinner 10 o'clock rolled around and the couple decided to go to bed (which is early for us ex-insomniacs that still prefer to go to bed around 12 or 1 in the morning). Hartwig went downstairs as normal and I stuck around in the kitchen to use the internet. I was famished at this point and I finally felt it safe to eat something else without insulting anybody, so I whipped up a bunch of butterbrot (home-made ryebread with organic butter. MmmMM) and munched it while I continued surfing around on the computer. Hartwig came up while this was happening and gave me a really accusing look.

“You should have eaten more of the soup.” He said.

I looked at him and shook my head.

“Didn't trust it.”

He looked for a moment like he was going to start berating me before it was replaced by a look of understanding and a small shrug. He went upstairs to go to bed without saying anything else, leaving me there with my computer.

No more than 30 minutes later I heard the hall door open again. I looked to my right and saw the male Canadian come through, hunched over and making his way to the bathroom. Quickly.

Ding ding! We have a winner. I was correct in my suspicions and even happier with my butterbrot.

The next morning the poor guy's girlfriend met me in the kitchen and informed me of what I already knew (putting our poison rate at 37.5%). Later Leila (who didn't have any more of the soup, either) insisted that it must have been something else in the soup, because as I had cooked the living hell out of it, the poison bean-chemical couldn't have possibly withstood the heat. While I wasn't about to agree or disagree with her about the subject, I sure as hell

wasn't about to eat any more of that soup and I'm certainly not planning on ever eating those beans again. I'll take the iceberg lettuce-equivalent of the bean family from now on, thank you very much.

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Summer, 2012  
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