

03 June 2020

Dear Jessica,

I hope you are well and are finding some time to enjoy all of the sunshine at the moment!

Thank you so much for signing up to participate in "Food For Thought" (the working title for this project). Over the last few months I've been thinking about some of the cultural anxieties that are often prevalent in discourses surrounding bodies and food, especially online. While acknowledging those anxieties, this practice aims to create space to centralise care within a discourse about food and eating. Or, 'heck that noise, let's talk about something nice'.

In this box I have included the ingredients to make my Very Basic Bean Chili with Rice. I started making bean chilis when my boyfriend went vegetarian (for a whole six months lol) but they soon become a staple of my meal rotation when I was living alone. This Very Basic Bean Chili is a relatively quick and low-effort meal, which felt manageable for me after a long day of work or uni while still being warming, comforting and filling. It's also v easy to double or quadruple the recipe to make loads for the freezer. My new flat has a TINY freezer (literally just one shelf, it's madness) so I don't do that so much anymore, but I used to love having a frozen chili on standby to whack in the microwave when I don't have time to think about food!

I'm a big fan of spicing things up by adding in any random leftover vegetables I have lying around. I like using red peppers (I would have sent you some but didn't think they would survive the post) or red chilis. I have also been known to grate up a carrot or a courgette to bulk the whole thing out. Feel free to go wild and add anything else you have in your kitchen - I'd probs add them in at the onion stage. I've included the chili powder in its own packet, add the amount you'd like for the heat level you enjoy! I like things a little spicy, so about a teaspoon.

So here is how I make it...

I usually forget to do this, but I like to open my cans as the very first thing I do so I don't get stressed later in making the meal having to wrestle with a tin opener as everything is burning. So I open my tomatoes and my kidney beans, drain out the weird liquid the beans have been sitting in and rinse them with water.

[Optional?] If I'm feeling extra, I will rinse my rice in a strainer a few times at this point and then leave it to soak. This removes some of the starch from the rice so it has a fluffier texture when it is cooked (according to the internet, the source of almost all of my culinary knowledge!). You *should* do this until the water runs clear as you are rinsing it, but I usually get bored after a couple of minutes.

Next, I peel and dice a small onion and my garlic. I put a splash of oil or fry-light in a small saucepan over a medium-low heat and add in my onion first with a pinch of salt and let that cook for about five mins to soften. This always takes longer than I expect and it needs to be stirred regularly!

Then I add in my garlic (if I add it too soon it will burn!), followed by some chili powder, cumin and smoked paprika. This can fry for a second so it smells nice but JUST before it burns I add in the tinned tomatoes, crush them up with a wooden spoon, and then tip in the kidney beans. I add some extra water if the kidney beans aren't covered and then let things simmer for 15-20 mins.

This is a good amount of time to make some rice! I pop the rice into a small saucepan with just over double the volume of cold water (a bit over 150ml) and turn the heat up high to bring this up to a boil. Once it starts bubbling, I turn the heat to low and put a lid over the rice. It should only need another 12-ish mins from this point to absorb that water and cook nicely.

That should be it! I check the bean chili for seasoning (usually just a bit more salt and a crack or two of black pepper) then put the rice in the bottom of a bowl and top with the chili. I will grate some cheese on top if I have some, or some sour cream can be nice as well.

Then it is time to sit down and enjoy!

I hope you enjoy making and eating this meal! It's really straight forward and simple so kind of therapeutic for me to make. After you have finished, I would like for you to think about the question '**what does care look like in your kitchen?**'. Please respond by writing about a specific meal, perhaps with some thoughts or a story or simply instructions how to make it. You can put these thoughts in the stamped envelope included in your box and send it back to me. I would love to read your letter and attempt to make your meal.

Finally, this project forms part of a practice-as-research project that I am undertaking for MA Performance Practice as Research at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. I am hoping that I will be able to use some of your responses within a video performance that will be shared online during Brink Festival (22nd-26th June) and write about them in my dissertation. If you consent for your responses to be used in this way, there is a form within the envelope that you can fill in and return to me.

Thanks again for taking part, and I'm very much looking forward to hearing back from you!

Love roz