

(Black-Eyed) Peas + Love



Wedding
light

The third in the Jewhungry August Love Stories come courtesy of one of the blog's co-founders, Jeremy. Jeremy is an amazing storyteller and an incredibly creative soul. I wish we were next-door neighbors. We'd probably get fired from our jobs because we'd be on our porch swings sipping spiked Arnold Palmers all day. Sounds like heaven. I dare you not to fall in love with him through his word.

It was the black-eyed peas. Isn't that where all great Southern Romances start? They should. I guess that isn't really where it started. But that is definitely when I knew my life was about to change. Those black-eyed peas made me open up my eyes a little wider; they made me take notice. I mean come on, y'all. A man who will hand you a bowl of black-eyed peas and a slice of cornbread when the rest of the world looks

at you like you've lost your mind? That's a man you need to pay attention to, that is a man you should keep. If I were Scarlett O'Hara I would have required a fainting couch. Instead I grabbed my bowl of peas, took in a deep breath, gave a wry-smile and went on my lunch break.



Love is Funny



Whitney's Wedding Weekend (say that 10 times fast)

I started working in a restaurant during graduate school because that's what graduate acting students are supposed to do. Actors work in restaurants. I guess actors are really supposed to be waiters, but I am far too clumsy to jump in the deep end like that. Honestly, I'm as likely to fall down as I am to take another breath. Volunteering to carry a tray full of drinks would be disastrous for everyone involved. I needed to work up to something like that, so I started out in the shallow end as a host.

Being a host at a busy downtown Chicago restaurant is not as glamorous as it may sound. Aside from looking up and having Maya Angelou or some hot baseball player in my face, there wasn't a lot to brag about. Why do people act like fools when they go out to eat? Working at that welcome desk was like working in a pressure cooker. There was always a new drama, someone was always upset and everyone was hungry. It was

pretty miserable.

When I look back on that time in my life it's pretty clear to me that I had "dropped my basket." Why did I stand at that desk night after night after night organizing a dining room for \$12 an hour? Oh, right. It was so I could avoid thinking about how my life was in the toilet. I had moved to Chicago to study theatre. Exciting! I had arrived with a boyfriend and a plan. By the time I got out of school I had no boyfriend and my only plan was to not end up back in Arkansas with my parents. Everything had changed and it was not necessarily for the better. I should probably have been doing something more productive with my time than handing out menus and putting asses in chairs, but I couldn't. I was stuck.

By the time Andy arrived I had almost given up. This was it. I would just be a host for the rest of my life. There are worse things. There are far worse jobs. I wasn't a garbage man. Being a garbage man is worse than being a host, right?

I noticed Andy on his first day of training because I had never seen a restaurant manager smile so much. He was like a little miniature Sun. He was glowing. When you're training to be a manager in a restaurant they make you work in all of the different departments. It's supposed to help you become acquainted with how everything works. It's mostly just low level torture.

His first week of training was in the kitchen. There he was behind the line in his little chef's outfit smiling like a dang crazy person. No one has ever looked so happy standing in front of 1400 degree charcoal grills. No. One.

I was on my lunch break and was super excited because we had a new special. It was pork medallions over a bed of greens and black eyed peas. The only trouble was I didn't want the pork. I just wanted a huge bowl of those black eyed peas and a slice of cornbread. It reminded me of home. I was willing to pay

whatever I had to for those peas. I placed my order and waited.

The Chef came over to me.

You want the pork special without the meat?

Yep. I just want the black eyed peas.

Just black eyed peas? That doesn't make any sense.

I'm from the South. That's how we do. Is it a problem?

No.

Thank you.

I waited. My order did not come up. Finally I took matters into my own hands. I walked over to the only friendly face in the kitchen. I explained my order to Andy and explained the situation. I had paid for the peas, I just needed somebody to make them happen.

You just want a bowl of black eyed peas?

Yes, please.

Ummm. Okay.

I watched as he walked over to where the peas were kept. He took a bowl, filled it and handed it to me. I smiled and walked away.

I smiled because in that moment I knew that I had just met my husband. I know it sounds goofy, but it's true. I knew when he handed me those black eyed peas that it was done. There were years between this moment and our first date. Years. I was not ready to be dating someone and he was in a relationship. That was...almost 10 years ago?

I am always on a quest to add meaning to what is happening in

my life. How did this happen? What does that mean? I really believe that Gd is sending us messages all the time. I'm constantly trying to figure out what they are. What is He trying to tell me? I ended up working in that restaurant for a lot of reasons. I met wonderful people, I had amazing experiences. I learned so much about myself and about how the world works. That restaurant helped me to become a grown up. When I really think about that place, what I know for sure is that it brought me my husband. Yeah. Gd works in mysterious ways.



Give Peas a Chance

Hoppin's John

WHAT:

1 large yellow onion chopped (whatever kind of onion you love

can be used)

3 carrots chopped

3 celery sticks chopped

2 15oz cans of black eyed peas

1 15oz can of whole kernel corn

2 10oz cans of Rotel (I'm from the South, ya'll)

10 oz frozen Lima beans thawed (you can use canned if you like)

2 cups rice (I use brown rice because Dr. Oz says so...2 bags of Uncle Ben's 90 second rice will do the trick)

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

Salt & Pepper to taste

HOW:

Whisk olive oil and vinegar together in a small bowl and set aside.

Everything good starts with a fried onion, y'all. Fry the onion, celery and carrots in olive oil until tender. You don't want these veggies crunch and you don't want them mushy. It's a delicate balance. Do what's right for you. I don't think this takes more than 5ish minutes.



Hot and Fresh

I use a lot of canned veggies because I'm always in a hurry. You can use frozen veggies if that's your thing. The measurements aren't hard and fast rules. Don't be scared to experiment with the amounts of stuff you've got. Mix your fried onion/carrot/celery goodness with the black eyed peas and other veggies. Combine everything until you've got a real good distribution of all of the ingredients. Toss in the oil & vinegar mixture. Stir that around until everything is coated. Add salt and black pepper to your liking. This makes a really great vegetarian dinner or side dish. Enjoy!