

**It doesn't rain but it pours.** If you live in northern New England and it's April, that's both literally and figuratively. As if April wasn't bad enough already with mud season, someone had to throw in Tax Day. Sure, I knew it was coming but I was too busy skiing to start in March let alone February.

**With a week to go, I'm scrambling to get through all the forms.** I think I've said it before but I'll say it again. It's not the difficulty; I can add and subtract. (Heck, I can multiple and divide too.) It's the complexity, the arcane language and wading through all those forms. Before you go and recommend one, I already use one of those software tax packages. Except for the one W2, the pile of 1099s and receipts from the dentist, home office expense and the like, I'm not shuffling paper. The majority of the slogging is from one screen to another. It may be automated but the whole thing still feels like a quagmire. Come to think of it, all those forms and receipts are still a lot of paper.



**That's what I get for being part of the gig economy.** Gigs – sounds like fun doesn't it. Not only is it a cute little word but it reminds me of musicians. While it definitely has its benefits, it's not always as cool as it sounds. The gig economy is all about contract work, part-time and temporary jobs. Musicians, writers and artists have been doing it forever.

**Now, everybody is getting in on the action.** Corporations, large and small, are hiring gig workers to fill gaps and manage the ebbs and flow of business. Some gigs are fulltime and last for months. They're the consultants, software developers and graphic designers who come on board for big projects. I'm guessing H&R Block has been hiring gig workers like crazy for the past month or so.

**Not all gigs are nine to five.** Many are for a few hours a week – the teacher who tutors your reluctant fourth grader. Some giggers start young – the middle schooler who walks your dog. Some are seasonal. Think of the guy who cuts your grass every summer. Others, like your Uber driver, start and finish a gig in less than an hour.

**Long or short, it doesn't matter.** Before you know it, the gig is up and it's time to find a new one.

**I love gig work because it opens the door** to all sorts of interesting, new people, experiences and places. From the everyday to special occasions, I'm delighted to cover it. I've written about celebrations and tragedies as well as history, religion, traditions and the lack-of. Every story is a challenge. Every story is an adventure.

**Gig work isn't perfect.** You're generally on your own for health insurance, retirement savings and whatever other benefits a company might offer. Forget about paid vacation time, sick days or holidays. If you don't work, you don't get paid. Then, when it comes to filing your taxes, gone are the days of a single W2. With multiple employers, you have a pile of W2s and/or 1099s plus a bunch of self-employment driven deductions. As I said, it's not difficult; it just takes a while, like forever.

Happy tax season and bon appétit!

## Poverty Stew with Cilantro-Lime Salsa Verde

*Whether you get a refund or need to write a check, this hearty stew will get you through all the shuffling and calculations. If you need to write a really big check, skip the chicken. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

- 1 pound dried black beans
- 2 bay leaves
- 12-16 ounces hot (or sweet) Italian sausage, casings removed
- Olive oil
- About 3 pounds chicken breasts, bone-in, skin-on
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon or to taste pureed chipotle in adobo\*
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/4 cup espresso or strong coffee
- About 4 cups chicken stock or broth
- [Sweet Potato Polenta](#) or plain polenta cooked according to package directions
- Cilantro-Lime Salsa Verde (recipes follows)



Rinse and soak the beans overnight in 10-12 cups water.

Drain and rinse the beans, put them in a pot, add water to cover by 3-4 inches and 1 bay leaf. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to very low, cover and simmer until tender, 45 minutes-1 hour.

Meanwhile, lightly coat a casserole with olive oil and heat over medium-high. Breaking it up into pieces, sauté the sausage until cooked through, remove from the pan, drain and let cool. When it is cool enough to handle, finely chop the sausage. Reserve.

Season the chicken on both sides with salt and pepper. Place the chicken in the casserole, skin side down and cook until lightly browned, 2-3 minutes per side. Remove the chicken from the casserole and reserve.

Put the onion, carrots, celery, bell pepper, spices and oregano in the casserole, season with salt and pepper and sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Stir in the wine, espresso, sausage, beans and remaining bay leaf.

Add the chicken and wiggle the pieces about half way down into the beans, add enough stock to cover the beans plus about an inch. Bring everything to a simmer and transfer to the oven.

Reduce the heat to 350 degrees and cook until the chicken is cooked through, about 30-45 minutes. Remove from the oven and let sit for about 30 minutes.

When cool enough to handle, remove the chicken from the casserole. Discard the skin and bones and cut or tear the chicken into bite-sized pieces. Stir the chicken back into the beans.

*The stew is best if be covered and refrigerated for several hours or overnight.*

Reheat the stew on the stovetop or in a 350-degree oven until bubbling.

Serve the stew with a spoonful of [Sweet Potato Polenta](#) and a dollop of Cilantro-Lime Salsa Verde.

*\* Toss a can of chipotle peppers along with the adobo in a small food processor and process until smooth. Transfer to a clean glass jar, store in the refrigerator and use as needed.*

### Cilantro-Lime Salsa Verde

Zest and juice of 1 lime

2 cloves garlic

1 scallion, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon or to taste roughly chopped jalapeno

About 2 cups cilantro leaves

1/4 cup or to taste extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt to taste

Put the lime zest and juice, garlic, scallion and jalapeno in the bowl of a small food processor and pulse to chop and combine. Add the cilantro and olive oil, season with salt and process until finely chopped and well combined.

Let the salsa sit for at least 30 minutes before serving. Can be made ahead, covered and stored in the refrigerator. Serve at room temperature.