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Rinse beans under running water. Pick over for stones. Place in pot and cover with water. Bring water to the boil. Allow the beans to steep in the water for 4 hours. Pour off the soak water (you are not losing any vitamins or minerals) and cover the beans with fresh water. Bring to a simmer and add the chopped onion, garlic, epazote, bay leaf, and chile. Simmer for 2 to 3 hours or until tender. Add salt to taste. You may serve them as is or puree them in a food processor, blender, or food mill as is done in Yucatan, Mexico. If you decide to puree them, drain off some of the liquid and reserve so that your puree is not too watery. Serve the black bean puree with fresh limes or a dash of sherry or rum.

### ***FAJITAS WITH MARINADE***

Fajitas, currently the rage in big cities as far distant as Paris, were originally cowboy fare and cowboys know a good thing. Fajitas, as prepared on the Sonoran, Chihuahuan, and Texas ranges by camp cooks were the inner diaphragm muscle of the steer known as the skirt steak. Skirt steak is a little tough, has great flavor, and used to be dirt cheap until becoming fashionable. Since it has become not only hard to find but expensive, I have substituted flank steak. If you can find skirt steak, use it instead of flank if you prefer to be traditional.

The success of your fajitas depends upon your

marinade, lots of good salsa and guacamole, and a stack of hot flour tortillas with which to envelop everything.

- 1 and 1/2 to 2 pounds flank steak*
- Juice of 2 limes - 5 Tablespoons*
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce*
- 2 tablespoons olive oil*
- 2 cloves garlic, minced*
- 1/2 teaspoon granulated garlic*
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper*
- 1 onion, sliced plus 1 tablespoon oil*
- 2 green chiles (Anaheim or pasilla)*

Prepare marinade of lime juice, soy sauce, olive oil, garlic, granulated garlic, and pepper. Cut 4 shallow slashes across the grain of each side of the flank steak. Place steak in a glass dish and pour in marinade, rubbing the garlic into the slashes. Marinate for at least 2 hours at room temperature.

The greatest error committed in the name of barbecuing is placing meat over the fire while the coals are too hot. We have all experienced black, raw chicken from a patio barbecue. The secret is to allow the coals to reach the white ash stage.

Light the coals at least 45 minutes before you need them. We like a combination of good briquets and mesquite. Use an electric starter. Stay away from fluid starters due to the chemical residue. When the coals are covered with white ash, use a stick or tool to

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tap off some of the ash. Place the grill over the coals and allow it to get hot. Put on the steak. Exact timing depends upon the thickness of the meat. You will need 6 to 7 minutes per side for rare; 8 minutes per side for medium; 10-12 minutes per side for well done. While you are grilling the meat, place the 2 chiles on the edge until they are charred.

When cooked to your preference, remove the steak to a cutting board and cut across the grain making thin, uneven slices. Remove most of the charred skin, stems, and seeds from the chiles. Cut into strips. Saute the onion in a little oil for 2 minutes just to sear. Before serving toss the meats strips, the onion, and chile strips together. In restaurants they pile everything on searingly hot cast-iron plates or griddles.

Serves 6 as long as you have plenty of salsa and tortillas.

### **CHIMICHURRI SALSA**

This salsa is a specialty of Argentina where it is served abundantly with their highly prized steaks. Most people upon tasting chimichurri, assume it to be more complicated than it is. It is freshness and simplicity and it happens to be a favorite of my twelve-year old twin sons, staunch members of the pizza and hamburger generation. This pleases me immensely