



It's funny how many of my recipes spring from leftovers. Earlier in the week, I made salads for my church's Feed the Hungry program, and I had a can of chickpeas (garbanzo beans), a shallot and a jalapeno left over. At our house, we were having grilled chicken-rosemary burgers, and I was looking for a side that wasn't potatoes. I remembered the chickpeas and it all came together -- in my head and in the pan! What a great change from corn or potatoes, which are go-to veggies where Matt is concerned. The good news is that all of us like this recipe, it's fast and easy, and something different!

Chickpeas and Pancetta

What a great twist for a side dish! We often eat chickpeas or garbanzo beans in salads. This version, perfect for dinnertime, is warm and light. The pancetta (you could substitute bacon) adds a chewy, salty bite, and there's just a touch of heat from the jalapeno. This is going to be one of our stand-by sides.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 can (15 ounces) of chickpeas or garbanzo beans, rinsed, drained & patted dry
- 2 to 3 ounces pancetta, cut into small chunks
- ½ shallot, minced
- ¼ large jalapeno, minced (remove seeds for low heat)
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 sprig of rosemary

Put the olive oil in the pan and warm over medium heat. Add the pancetta and let the fat render. Cook the pancetta for 4-5 minutes – leave it a little chewy (not hard or overly crispy).

Add the shallot and jalapeno. Cook for just a minute or two, being careful not to burn the shallot.

Next, add the chickpeas, 2 Tablespoons of butter, black pepper to taste, and the sprig of rosemary. Let the butter melt and coat the peas.

When the chickpeas are warmed through, remove the rosemary (discard), and the dish is ready to serve. You can take the pan off the heat and cover, if you need to hold the chickpeas while other food is being prepared.

I used rosemary for extra flavor, because I served the chickpeas with chicken burgers that included rosemary. You could just as easily substitute a sprig of thyme if that works better with your main protein. Leave the herb whole so that it's easy to remove.

I purposely didn't add salt because pancetta is plenty salty on its own.

This side dish came together rather spontaneously and gave us a very happy and tasty surprise. We definitely will make this again.

By the way, pancetta is Italian bacon made of pork belly meat that is salt cured and spiced with black pepper and sometimes other spices. I use pancetta in a lot of my recipes. Regular bacon is a perfectly acceptable substitute.

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