

Susie Q starts a tradition of her own

OFF *the* SHELF

Growing up in the Santa Maria Valley, Susan Righetti remembers food being the center of every social gathering. Meals featured regional staples, such as Santa Maria-style barbecue.

Not only was she influenced by her maternal grandmother, Adeline Maretti, and mother, Rosalie Minetti, but her father, Clarence Minetti, co-founded Far Western Tavern in Guadalupe when she was 9.

In 1981, she launched her own culinary project, **Susie Q's Brand**, packaging items that paid tribute to the regional flavors she had savored and knew so well.

She started out selling bags of Santa Maria pinto beans, grown by her husband, rancher Paul Righetti.

"So many people had been asking at the restaurant if we could sell the beans and they could prepare them at home," recalled Mrs. Righetti, who, indeed, was sometimes called "Susie Q" as a girl. "We just bagged

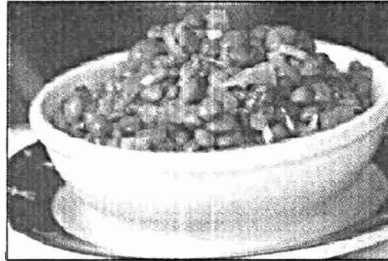


MIKE ELIASON / NEWS-PRESS

them up with the recipes."

Since then, the line has expanded to include all the fixings for a Santa Maria-style barbecue, including seasonings, red oak grilling chips, salsa, citrus rib glaze, pinto bean seasoning, strawberry glaze pie filling, beef jerky and more.

The products are sold at select retailers, including Costco, Albertsons and Vons, online at www.susieqbrand.com, and at Far



COURTESY PHOTO

Western Tavern.

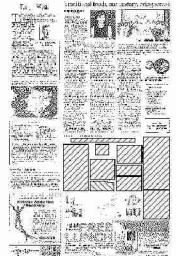
Susie Q's Brand was mentioned in a section on Santa Maria pinto beans in "Renewing America's Food Traditions: Saving and Savoring the Continent's Most Endangered Foods," released last year by Chelsea Green Publishing Co.

—Karna Hughes

SANTA MARIA PINQUITO BEAN SALAD

- ½ pound Santa Maria pinto beans
- 2 green scallions
- 1 small red onion
- 1 bell pepper or Fresno jalapeno pepper
- ½ cup Mission olive oil
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- Juice of 1½ lemons
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro leaves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon oven-roasted Sonoran garlic

Soak the pinto beans in a bowl overnight. Drain the water and place the beans in a cooking pot with fresh water. Boil uncovered for 1½ hours or until tender but firm. Meanwhile, grill the scallions, onion and pepper until slightly caramelized or charred on the outside, then dice. (Choose either a jalapeno or a bell pepper, depending on your tolerance for



heat.) Drain the beans and place them in a large glass mixing bowl and combine with olive oil, vinegar, lemon juice, diced vegetables and cilantro. Season to taste with salt, pepper and roasted garlic. Chill for several hours, then toss with spoons just prior to serving.

Source: Far Western Tavern in Guadalupe via the California Farm Bureau Federation, as printed in "Renewing America's Food Traditions: Saving and Savoring the Continent's Most Endangered Foods" edited by Gary Paul Nabhan (Chelsea Green Publishing Co., \$35)