



## WELL SEASONED

BY SUZANNE PODHAIZER

# Ham & Bean Soup from Scratch

**T**his recipe is designed to create a flavorful pot of legumes first, and then to use them and their cooking liquid to make a hearty soup.

Why do I call for adding some of the same ingredients at two different points in the cooking process? The onion and carrot that are stewed with the beans will sort of dissolve into the background, and the second round of onion and carrot—briefly sautéed and added to the soup pot after the beans are thoroughly cooked—will remain at the forefront.

Ham and beans go swimmingly together, although bacon would be a delightful substitute. Don't eat meat? Increase the amount of oil to compensate for the loss of pork fat, and continue with the instructions as written.

### FOR THE BEANS:

Three cups Marfax beans, unsoaked. No Marfax available? Try pinto or navy beans.

A pot of water or some sort of stock if you prefer.

One large onion, chopped.

One large carrot, cut into half-moons

Four cloves garlic, smashed

Sage, bay leaves, oregano, rosemary, celery seed, chili flakes (I like smoky, earthy Urfa biber), salt, freshly ground black pepper

Wash the beans several times, cover quite generously with fresh water or broth in a pot of substantial size, and bring to a

simmer. (Beans will double or triple in size as they're cooked, so you'll need to make sure that you have enough space and enough liquid to facilitate that change.)

While the pot's coming up to temp, add the onion, garlic and seasonings. I toss in at least a tablespoon of salt at this point. Generally, adding aromatics at the beginning of the soup-making process is a wonderful idea.

What I won't add to an early-stage bean pot are acidic ingredients—such as tomatoes or tomato sauce, vinegar or citrus juice. Why? Acidic ingredients can significantly prolong the cooking time—even double it. I'll also add the meat later on, as its texture will not benefit from a multi-hour boil. Have a nice meaty ham bone? That's a different story...toss it in!

Simmer until the beans are tender, adding liquid when needed and salting in increments. Then, turn the pot to low while you complete the next step.

### GUSSY UP THE SOUP

A splash of olive, sunflower or avocado oil

A nice slice of ham from one of our lovely local farms, perhaps around a pound or so, chopped

One medium-large onion, chopped

One large carrot, cut into quarter moons

Two stalks celery if you like it, diced

Green cabbage, slivered, or perhaps shredded kale or Brussels sprouts

Next, place a smidgen of oil in a large skillet and add the chopped ham. Turn the heat to medium to begin rendering out some of the ham fat. Then, increase the heat to medium-high to brown the ham pieces, stirring occasionally.

When the ham is browned to your liking, scoop it out of the pan and add it to the bean pot. Now, toss the onions and carrots into the pan so they can cook for a bit in the pork fat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are translucent, or perhaps a touch browned on the edges. Add the celery and cabbage (or other brassica of your choice). Cook until the vegetables are softened, or lightly caramelized, your call. Add the whole shebang to the pot, stir, and turn up the heat to bring the soup back to a simmer.

### THE FINISHING TOUCHES

A high quality vinegar, such as cider, sherry or white wine, to taste

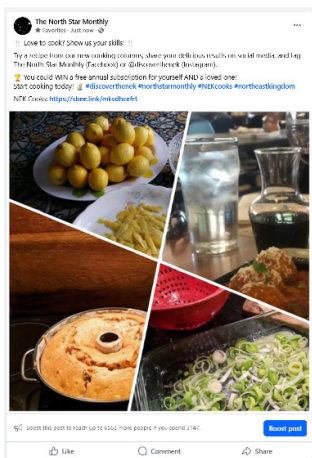
Additional salt, pepper, herbs, chili flakes, nutmeg, more celery seed...whatever makes the soup delicious as you taste and season

Taste the soup, consider what it might be missing, and season it to taste with vinegar, salt, pepper and all of the herbs and spices you desire. Keep tasting until you're convinced that this is the best bean soup you've ever tried. Then serve.

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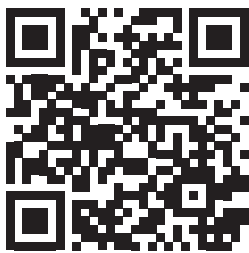
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