RECIPE

White bean and ham soup

A pot of navy beans and a smoked ham hock simmered until the broth goes creamy, an easy dinner that fills the freezer.

MAKES

8 servings US Metric

TOTAL

4 h

Ingredients

- [ ] 1 lb dried navy beans, sorted and rinsed
- [ ] 1 smoked ham hock (about 12 oz)
- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 1 large onion, diced
- [ ] 2 carrots, diced
- [ ] 2 celery ribs, diced
- [ ] 4 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 1 tsp dried thyme
- [ ] ½ tsp black pepper
- [ ] 6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- [ ] 1 tbsp cider vinegar
- [ ] 2 bay leaves
- [ ] 4 cups water, plus 8 cups for the soak

Method

1. Rinse the beans and pick out any stones. Put them in a large pot with 8 cups of water. Bring to a boil, boil for 2 minutes, then cover and take off the heat. Leave for 1 hour and drain.

2. In the same pot, warm the oil over medium heat. Cook the onion, carrots and celery for 6 to 8 minutes, until soft. Stir in the garlic, thyme and pepper for 1 minute.

3. Add the beans, ham hock, bay leaves, broth and 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil, then turn it down to a gentle simmer and cover with the lid set a little open.

4. Simmer for 2 to 2½ hours, stirring now and then, until the beans mash easily against the side of the pot. Water boils at about 203 °F here and dried beans are slow to soften, so plan on a quarter longer than a sea-level card and start testing at 1½ hours. Add a splash of water if the beans are no longer covered.

5. Lift out the hock and the bay leaves. When the hock is cool enough to touch, pull off the meat, chop it, and throw away the bone, skin and fat.

6. Stir the chopped hock meat into the pot. Mash about a cup of beans against the side of the pot to thicken the broth. Bring back to a boil, simmer 10 minutes, then stir in the vinegar. Taste before you add any salt: the ham carries plenty.

7. Cool in shallow containers for no more than 2 hours, then refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze in single portions for up to 3 months. The soup thickens as it sits, so thin it with water. Reheat to a boil.