

Ham Bone and Beans Soup

INGREDIENTS

- Ham bone, trimmed of fat
- 1 bag mixed dry beans, 16 or 20 oz (see Tips)
- 2 carrots, washed and cut in chunks
- 1 celery stalk, washed and cut in chunks
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 TBSP tomato paste
- 3 TBSPs extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: additional extra virgin olive oil, grated cheese and hot pepper flakes on top of each serving.

DIRECTIONS

- The night before you plan on making the soup, soak the entire bag of dry beans in 8 cups of cold water, after rinsing and checking the beans first (for any dirt/foreign particles).
- If you forget to do this overnight soaking step, see Tips for a Quick Soak alternative.
- Drain soaked beans, rinse and place in a large Dutch oven or soup pot.
- Rinse the ham bone (that you had previously trimmed of fat) and add to the soup pot with the beans.
- Add approximately 8 to 10 cups of cold water and bring to a boil over medium heat with cover partially tilted.
- Note: Be careful and watch the pot because the beans will form a foam that will overflow easily unless you lower the heat immediately when boil begins!

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DIRECTIONS (CONT.)



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Ham Bone and Beans Soup continued...

NONNA'S TIPS

- Turn heat to low and continue slow boiling the beans, stirring occasionally, for one hour (this is the halfway point of the beans cooking).
 - If beans have formed a lot of surface foam, skim it off with a large spoon.
 - While beans continue to cook, place the garlic, the chunks of carrots and celery into a food processor.
 - Chop into small pieces.
 - Place the olive oil into a sauté pan.
 - Heat on low.
 - Add the chopped vegetables and stir until the veggies look wilted.
 - Add tomato paste and continue stirring on and off for one minute.
 - Add tomato paste and veggie mixture to the soup pot and stir.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste, being mindful that the ham will release salt while boiling.
 - Continue cooking beans for another hour or until beans are tender.
 - At this point, you can serve the soup as is or add some pasta and cook a few more minutes until pasta is al dente.
 - Serve hot with a drizzle of olive oil, grated cheese and hot pepper flakes if desired.
- I prefer to soak the beans overnight for better results but, if you forget to plan it, you can follow the quick soak method by rinsing and checking the beans (for any dirt/foreign particles). Add beans to a pot with 10 cups of cold water and bring to a rapid boil. Boil uncovered for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and let it stand for one to two hours, depending on your timeline. Drain beans using a colander and rinse under water. Continue as directed above.
 - If you like your soup a little spicy, add hot pepper flakes (or an entire dry, hot pepper) to the tomato/veggie mixture. If you have young or other people in your family that don't like spicy foods, just offer the hot pepper flakes when serving.
 - The ham will break apart while cooking so you will end up with chunks of ham meat and some bones. Remove the bones before serving but leave the chunks of meat to serve with the bean soup. They're like little treasures of goodness!