

Black Bean Soup

<http://userealbutter.com/2014/01/10/black-bean-soup-recipe/>
from *Fine Cooking*

1 cup dry black beans OR 2 15-oz. cans of black beans with the liquid
3 thick slices of bacon, diced (optional)
3 tbsps olive oil (2 tbsps if using bacon)
1 large yellow onion, finely diced
1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups chicken broth (low sodium is recommended)
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tbsp tomato paste
1/4 cup dry sherry
salt
pepper

Prepare the beans: If using dried beans, pick the beans over for rocks or other debris. Soak the beans overnight in a medium bowl covered with water a few inches above the beans. Drain the beans. If cooking the conventional way on the stove, place the beans in a large pot and cover with water that is at least 2 inches above the beans. Bring the pot to a boil then reduce to a simmer, leaving the pot uncovered. Simmer for 1-2 hours until the beans are tender (add more water if it starts to get low and dry – you don't want it to dry out). If using a pressure cooker, place the beans in the pressure cooker, add 6 cups of water and 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil (something neutral to help reduce foaming). Lock the pressure cooker down and set to high (if you have a choice). Heat on high and let cook for 10 minutes, then turn off the heat and let the pressure cooker naturally release (it naturally cools down which takes another 15-30 minutes). Reserve 1 cup of the bean liquid. If using canned beans, reserve the liquid from both cans.

Make the soup: Cook the bacon (if using) in a large stock pot on medium high heat. When the bacon is just crisp, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. If you aren't using bacon, heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a large stock pot on medium high heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, and garlic to the pan and sauté until soft. Purée HALF of the black beans and the chicken broth together in a blender or using an immersion blender. Stir the cumin and oregano into the sautéed vegetables and let cook for a minute. Stir the tomato paste into the vegetables until incorporated. Add the black bean purée, the remaining black beans, and the reserved bean liquid into the pot. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes. Stir in the sherry and season with salt and pepper before serving. Serves 4.